

## Workshop Community-based education and learning as part of ULLL

Thursday 10 May 2012

### Notes taken

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#### Points of Clarification

*Types and Conditions of Service Learning: Associations with Responsibility, Self-Efficacy and Wellbeing. J. McGuire/M. Brow*

It was explained that there is a separate feedback/evaluation process for the community organisations involved in the service learning system and the survey presented focuses solely on participant experience.

Service learning is distinguished from volunteering in that the service is built into the learning objectives of the learner; there is an intentional process of applying service to learning.

*A Review of Two Community-based, Adult Critical Literacy Projects in Malta. Carmel Borg*

By “death of indigenous knowledge” the presenter was referring to the gradual decline of craft and agricultural based industries and their associated knowledge base.

Participants came to the project through meetings with key leaders (the mayor, priest etc.) and local stakeholders in the community.

#### Points Arising in Discussion

A common issue was the importance of relevance of content to the target groups. Where possible content should be developed jointly with participants rather than imposed by the provider. This ensures engagement, effective learning and the articulation of rich and varied individual experiences/perspectives. Carmel Borg described the process of generating themes through preliminary consultation – asking the questions “What is troubling you?” “What is challenging you?” (called the acclimatisation phase). First meetings are also used to set boundaries.

Community interaction with the student body (through service learning) provides an effective vehicle for building alumni links. This in turn strengthens community partnerships as alumni want to “give back” to the University.

The theme of conflict was discussed (in terms of conflicting interests or priorities). Where learner groups are self-selecting, this is largely avoided or tends to arise outside the sessions. Conflict can also be avoided through careful management of the group

environment e.g. not allowing one group or individual to dominate. This requires skilful facilitation. In the service learning model, it is the role of Faculty to intervene and mediate. Conflict however can also be a creative force.

Employers require a range of attributes over and above academic skills. Employability skills can be developed through work in the communities – both local and global. How can students be motivated to get involved? There is an ethical dimension to this which needs to be built into reflective thinking – "the dilemma of the interventionist".

It can be difficult to apply pedagogical approaches applied in the community to teaching in the university because of the limitations set by the institution. For example, the formulation of content through dialogue is often not possible in a university as it may not be sufficiently focused on learning outcomes. However some principles can be applied in, for example, assessment through the use of open book exams. An important role of continuing education is often 'to subvert' usual HE practice.

Effective community education does not just happen. It requires training and skilful intervention.

There is an issue of cultural dependency around how people express their knowledge. In effective community education knowledge is co-produced not transferred, therefore, avoiding dependence. Action research study circles also help avoid this dependency.