Community-based education and learning

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Presentation

- Are there ways in which we might help to create a more equal society?
- How can individuals and groups be engaged and supported in pursuing their goals?
- What spaces are there for individuals and groups?
- What makes for effective partnerships?
- What does this mean for professional development?
- What kind of vision might bring all this about?

Community Education and Equality

Accessibility   **Opportunities**

Learning environment
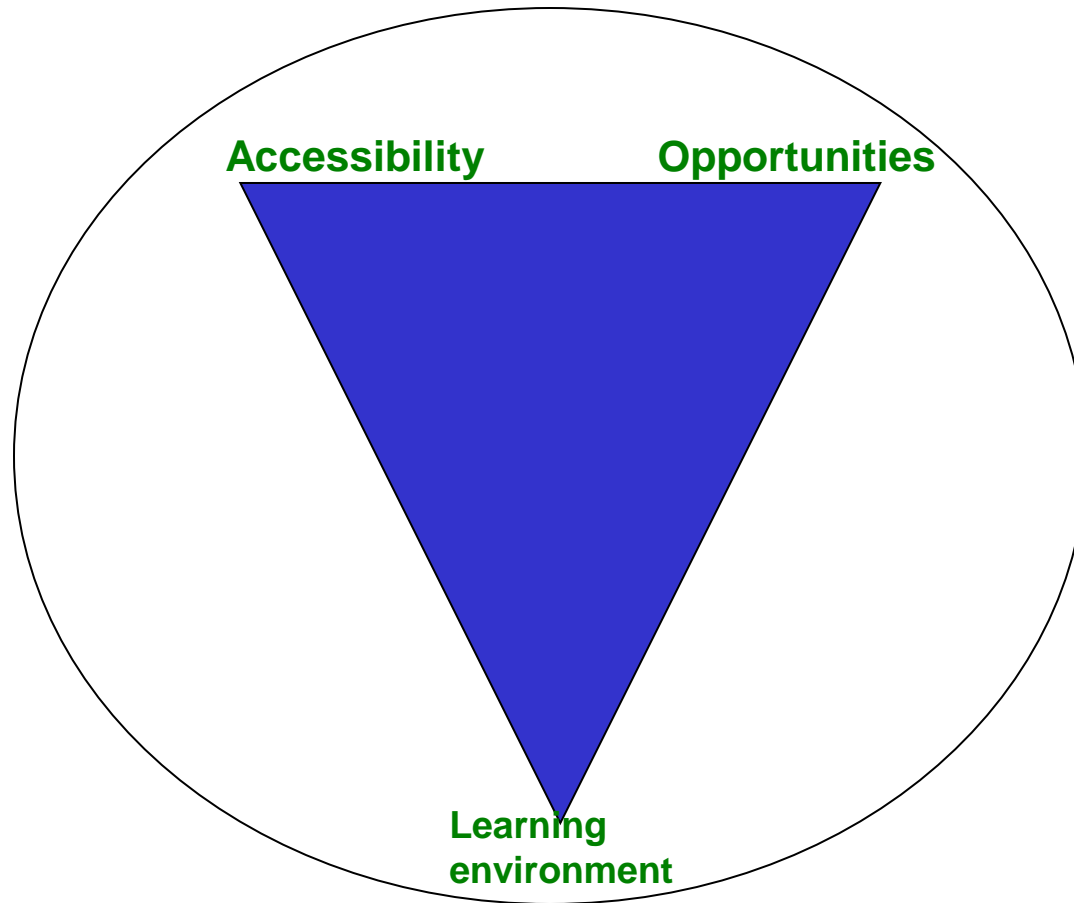
SOCIETY

From Yusuf Sayed (2010) EFA Global Monitoring Team, UNESCO

Working in communities

Both these pictures represent communities but often we view the term as if it can only be positive

Lifelong Learning in Communities

- Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding

- Social process that takes place in interaction with people

- Both these processes have to be in operation for learning to take place

- Learning always takes place in the context of a specific community and society that sets the basic conditions for the learning possibilities.

Supporting learning
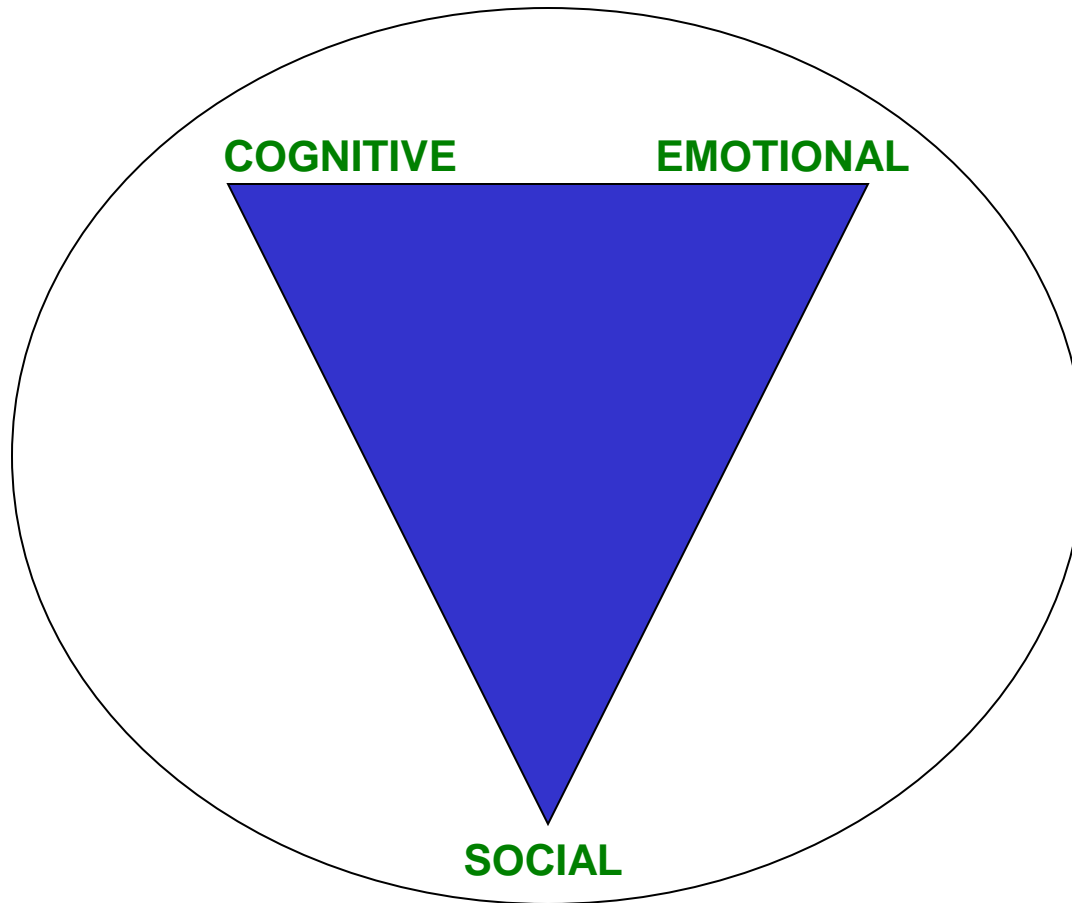
Community and Society

From Illeris, K (2004) '*The three dimensions of learning*' NIACE

Building knowledge and understanding

- Create a curriculum that assumes that people are knowledge rich;
- Ground it in the life situations of adults;
- Prioritize working together rather than individualism;
- Enable people to fulfill their social and personal, as well as their economic needs;
- Focus on learning for democratic renewal.

Family literacy

- Flexible curriculum that responds to the learners and gives them both choice and challenge
- Group work that builds a positive learner identity
- Positive tutor-student & student-student relationships
- A sense of shared experiences and values amongst participants

Improving community health

- Research shows that poor health and premature death is caused by the structural factors of inequality and poverty and the ways that these material conditions cause psycho-social distress in later life.

- Participation in education has an impact on emotional resilience enabling people to deal more easily with adversity and stressful social conditions.

Domains of Wellbeing

Physical

Environmental

Environmental

Spiritual

Social

Environmental

Environmental

Psychological

Health issues in the community

- Involved participants investigating the health issues that were of concern to them.

- These issues included housing, diet, lack of play facilities and mental health.

- Participants investigated the issue in groups, presented it to those able to take action about it such as medical staff and local politicians and then instigated action to try to change things.

- This led to an increase in individual and collective self-efficacy that made a real difference to their personal and collective health.

Engaging Young Adults

- Participation in programmes helped young adults gain:
- More *confidence* in their own abilities to take decisions
- An improved capacity to *communicate* with those in power
- Greater ability to exercise their role as *citizens*

Participating in decision - making

- Active participation of young adults in decision making is vital but their views are often marginalised.

- This can lead to an emphasis on their problems rather than their contributions.

- If young adults are positioned as key partners then their views are recognised as relevant and taken seriously.

- Collaborative working where all partners - universities, practitioners and local decision makers - work together to value young adults' knowledge can achieve this.

Building community capacity

- Sharing information and research through, for example, participatory action research;
- Identifying areas of commonality and developing collaborative alliances;
- Seeking 'created' rather than 'invited' spaces;
- Identifying and trying to overcome power imbalances.

Working democratically in anti-racist work

Collaborative anti-racist work

- White majority community has to address its responsibilities to understand and counteract racism and recognise the links between different forms of inequality.

- Anti-racist education has to speak the language of rights, of life chances, of dismantling structures

- Has to come from those that have experienced racism and inequality

Working in Partnership

collaboration is everything

Why work in partnership?

- To avoid individualism, and ensure that organisations are not working in conflict
- To add value through sharing resources
- To broaden the scale and scope of intervention through access wider networks
- To tackle complex social issues that one organisation could not tackle on its own

Partnerships between universities, practitioners and participants

- All the examples provided have involved knowledge exchange where the partners have contributed their particular expertise to the debate often leading to expansive learning.

- Universities have contributed their research knowledge and have themselves learnt from proactively engaging with the lived experience of practitioners and participants.

- Effective collaboration takes account of the wishes and circumstances of everyone rather than matching perceived problems with a standard model of support leading to synergy of purpose.

Professional development

- Help develop a critical approach to their own further professional development.
- Manage conflicting interests.
- Learn to self-evaluate.
- Focus on evolving more open, participatory and democratic relationships between educators and their constituencies.

Conclusion

- Non-specialists should have a role in critiquing the views of experts' blind spots however expertise is defined.

- So collaborative partnerships between universities, practitioners policy-makers and students can be really effective.

- 'Even a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. It causes a smouldering discontent…and produces a demand, however stammering, for more interests and chances. Where we see ferment, there has been some of the yeast of education' (Margaret Davies,1913).

Conclusion

- We need to be open to mutual recognition of the different perspectives and ways of seeing the world that we bring and to be prepared to challenge and debate through the 'education of desire'.

- Hope and desire have creative roles in encouraging the development of imaginative and transgressive solutions to seemingly intractable difficulties.

- It is about education that moves away from individualised, deficit models of learning and brings about change in understanding both self and society that leads on to a more equitable life for everyone.