Community Engaged Learning

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Overview

- Community Engagement Context

- TILT Student Community Engagement Group

- Community Engaged Learning at NTU

- Examples of Current Practice at NTU

Community Engagement Context

- **International**
  - United States - 3rd core area of work alongside research and teaching, and increasingly calling for it to run through all parts
    - Service Learning – predominant student form of CE
    - Campus Compact
  - Canada – Not defined as core mission, but Universities starting to define in own missions, e.g. Simon Fraser – aspires to be 'Canada's most engaged university'

- **Europe – varying levels of engagement/structures**
  - Europe
    - Europe Engage
    - Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement of Higher Education
  - Ireland –
    - Campus Engage – National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 refer to civic and community engagement as one of the "three core roles of higher education"

Community Engagement Context

- United Kingdom
  - Variety of approaches on institution level
  - No UK wide coordinated approach – but engagement with 'business community' historically been the main area of focus
  - NCCPE (established 2008) – public engagement in research
  - 2018 UPP Foundation – Civic University Commission

- Nottingham
  - 'Universities for Nottingham' – Joint Civic Engagement Plan - reporting in July

- NTU
  - University Reimagined– recommendations include community engagement across all areas of work
  - Bringing together existing good practice in NTU – TILT Group for Student Community Engagement
  - Changes in CenSCE – towards a community engagement lens

Community Engagement Context

- Definitions – difficult to do in this area of work!

- 'Defining in the Doing'

- Broad definitions which encompass all CE work, e.g.:

- Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (US)

"a method of teaching, learning and research that describes interactions between universities and their communities (business, industry, govt, NGOs, and other groups) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity"

Community Engagement Context

- Narrower definitions of curriculum based CE –

"Community Engaged Learning (CEL) (formerly referred to as service-learning) combines academic coursework with the application of institutional resources to address challenges facing communities through…

- – engagement that addresses societal needs identified by a community
- – intentional integration of learning objectives co-created with community partner(s)
- – student preparation and ongoing critical reflection
- – clearly articulated benefits for students, community, and campus partners (e.g. faculty/instructors, MSU Center for Service-Learning & Civic Engagement)
- – opportunities to critically examine social issues and situate self within a community setting"

Michigan State University

- TILT SCE group will be developing definitions and a framework for NTU student community engagement during 19/20

Student Community Engagement (SCE) TILT Group

- In February of this year, around 40 NTU colleagues from across all 3 campuses, representing a range of professional and academic roles came together to share practice and aspirations around student-community engagement at NTU (curricular and co-curricular).

- Participants were asked if they'd like to formally constitute a TILT group and if so what its purpose & principles should be and what they see as the key challenges & benefits of this kind of work.

- Colleagues wanted a strong value base to underpin this work, with many emphasising mutual benefit, collaboration and attention to local needs.

- Challenges raised related not just to systems and structures but to potentially conflicting agendas at NTU, e.g. the individualised nature of students' employability running counter to the reciprocal benefit for communities SCE colleagues were seeking.

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MUTUALITY of BENEFITS

BENEFITS

ENGAGEMENT
COHORT   COMMUNITY
CV   employability

STUDENTS

staff & student
Partnership between staff & student
— Belonging.
— less parent-child
  more equal relationship

developing students' voice
COMMUNITY OVER
students value this relationship building.

INDIVIDUALISM.

STAFF

— embedding opportunities for staff.

avoiding COMPETITION over CVs

changing students' attitudes

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

ALTRUISM not
INSTRUMENTALISM. TRANSACTIONALISM.

engaging with why
— is this a beneficial on my CV.

BENEFITS TO OTHERS COMMUNITY.

INDIVIDUALS

AVOIDING
BOX-TICKING

☑ VOLUNTEERING.

ORGANISATION
"implicit.
— e.g research for an organisation.

HIGHLIGHT THE BENEFITS

People may engage for one reason —
— e.g. CV points
but they derive unexpected unanticipated benefits.

giving students long term HABIT of volunteering.

CHALLENGES

TRUE Partnership?
acknowledge that there are challenges!
to academic staff.

avoid staff-student power relationship
— a more equal power dynamic can be challenging for lecturers
— relinquishing ego
— challenges occur to beliefs, values

The current HE climate.

challenge of
CV ticks.
Instrumentalism
why should I do this?

AGREE MENT

set clear expectations of what can be provided.
— e.g research, quality
— hours.

— challenge.

DIVERSE UNIVERSITY
vs. approach.

NUMBER of ORGANISATIONS OFFERING VOLUNTEERING.

VOLUNTEERING POOL.

organisations may not understand what students & staff can do.

avoid "FREE LABOUR"

ACADEMIC STAFF ENGAGEMENT
— cause time consuming
— workload.

PRINCIPLES

* Mutual benefit ↳ Valuable
* Staff / Student collaboration ↳ Selection
* Joined up approach
* ALWAYS has impact
* Good info for all parties
* Safeguarding (ethics) SDGs
* Inclusion & diversity (volunteers & opportunities)
* Active networking.
* Evaluation & monitoring ↳ Measurability.
* Reflection
* Training provision Quality
* Accessible to all.
* Local needs
* Matching of skills & knowledge
* Disrupting negative perception

Community Engaged Learning at NTU

- Building an understanding of what CEL looks like at NTU through using existing expertise, and trying different models out, but basics:
  - Inside the curriculum
  - Addressing community need
  - Mutuality and reciprocity
  - Learning experience with reflection built in for students
  - Opportunity for students to see themselves as part of society through the lens of their course

- What will make community engaged learning at NTU mutually beneficial and sustainable?
  - Mutual Benefit
  - Multi-phased Model of Engagement
  - Structures & Systems Needed

Mutual Benefit

- SCE Group Members spoke of: Doing 'with' not 'to'; collaborative working; interactionalist not transactionalist relationships with partners

- Mutual benefit is emphasised in most community engagement literature – the need for both students and communities to benefit from meaningful projects (see for example, Bringle and Hatcher, 1996)

- Community partners need to be part of project development, and determine and evaluate the project outcomes (Butin, 2015).

- Relationships with community partners cannot be transactional but need to be 'authentic' (Mitchell, 2008) to ensure that benefit is mutual.

- Duncan and Manners (2012) have called for a UK higher education system which is more porous, dynamic and accessible to wider communities

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Multi-phased Model of Engagement

- Durie, Lundy and Wyatt (2018) helpfully identified that community engagement is multi-phased involving:

- (1) the 'engaging phase', in which relationships and parameters for engagement are developed;

- (2) the 'project phase', in which the now-constrained project is carried out or delivered; and

- (3) the 'follow-on phase', in which evaluation of the completed project and renegotiation of potential future engagements occurs.

- In a T&L environment the danger is that only the 'project phase' is fully recognized – this is where the students are doing the projects

- Time & resources and structures & systems need to be in place for phases 1 and 3 - as raised in various ways by SCE Group members

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Structures & Systems Needed

- Examples included

  - Structured access routes/joined up approach
  - Establish a 'suite' of clearly mapped out options for partners, ie volunteers, Participatory Action Research, community service projects, etc
  - Virtual portal for partners
  - Matching of students and projects/brokering
  - Quality training provision (for students)
  - Coherent approach to ethics/safeguarding
  - Evaluation & monitoring of engagement activities

- Literature urges institutional support for SCE on campuses with a key element of that support being a co-ordinating entity to aid implementation and advancement of SCE activities (Furco, 1999); as well as training, development of networking opportunities, use of space, marketing and communications (Duncan and Manners, 2012).

Examples of Current Practice at NTU

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Humanities@Work

Neville Stankley

"Never hitch a pig to a plough or expect an ox to provide bacon." *Virgil*

- Level 5 compulsory for all Joint Honours Humanities

- 30+ Hours placement activity

- Assessment – Reflective Portfolio

- *"This module… provides an opportunity for you to actively engage in a project to celebrate humanity and the humanities…"*
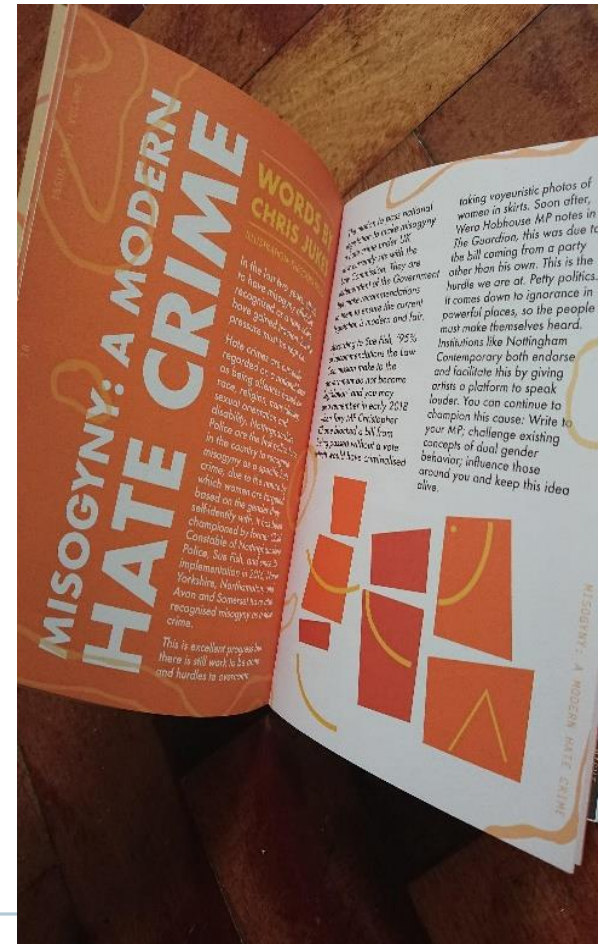
Service Learning in the School of Social Sciences

Service-Learning in the Department of Sociology

- 2013 pilot; 2014 full implementation

- 2018/19 BA Criminology (175), BA Sociology (90), MA Sociology (15)

- Local not-for-private-profit partnerships created and maintained

- Students work in groups from Jan to Easter to address the challenge brought by the partner

Recent projects: Safer Living Foundation, preventing sex offending; Nottingham Citizens research & action against racially motivated hate crime; Bestwood Food bank, measuring food poverty.

Why service-learning?

- Service-learning started as part of a long-term commitment by the department to democratic and progressive change in the city;

- Allows staff & students to practice 'public sociology' or 'public criminology' - responsible for using and applying accumulated theory, methods and skills to pressing social issues affecting the communities around our institution.

- Enables us to work in close co-operation with civil society organisations for mutual benefit and for social justice

- To enact Dewey's vision of the school [sic] as "a genuine form of active community life" (1900, p. 27, cited in Eyler & Giles, 1994).

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Benefits & Challenges

Benefits: enables a recursive relationship between community engagement & the student's academic discipline - an opportunity to theoretically inform practice and learning.

Real benefits to community organisations "I'm now able to take the findings and recommendations back in to the workplace and build upon them – everyone's a winner!" (partner, 2019)

Challenges: large student numbers & no infrastructure to support this; adequate preparation of students; managing partner expectations & relationships

Next steps

- The SCE TILT group is currently drawing up the plans for next academic year

- Institutional pilot for CenSCE to see how a model of support works during next year, working with a number of departments to help to contextualise and 'define in the doing'

- Other members of staff involved in the TILT SCE group will also be developing their own practice and sharing within and outside of the group – others are also doing this today!

- If you are interested in exploring the possibilities for your course, speak to Andy

- Join TILT SCE Group – contact Andrea or Andy

References

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