

Service learning:
reflections via the
lens of lifewide
learning and
career.





SERVICE LEARNING

Experiential learning offer BA and MA sociology students

Work on live projects determined by not-for-profit sector in Nottingham

- Researching unpaid internships
- Community cohesion – developing creative resources for schools
- Supporting community led initiatives on hate crime interventions
- Campaigns and activism

Service learning is directed by a social justice approach

Social justice is prioritised over employability outcomes

LIFEWIDE LEARNING

‘entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people ... develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society’

UNESCO definition of adult learning cited in Reischmann (2014:294)

Employability challenge

‘...the prevailing policy narratives in a range of Asian and European countries constitute a dominant discourse of ‘learning to acquire employability’, or what has been referred to as the ‘learning for earning’ narrative’.

Cited in Reischmann 2014:289

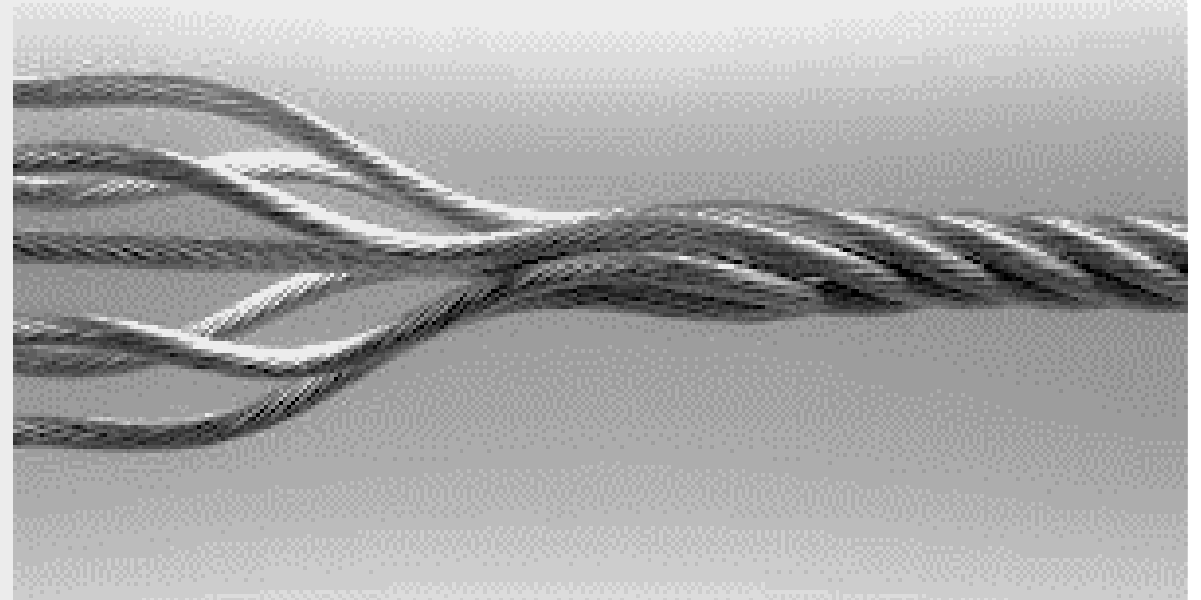
Service learning is complex and tricky - we might argue lifewide

Service learning and 'career'

From a sociological perspective career is deemed to be any social strand in a persons life – Goffman 1961

A strand can therefore be seen as any activity and development that can trace a personal narrative of a situated actor (Gee, 2017)

Academic
Work
Family
Relationships
Housing
Leisure
Citizen



Are likely to experience transition – interrelated? Providing tension?

Student voice

Disciplinary

Theory and application
Cross module learning
Independent thinking
Sociology brought to life
Knowledge of topic deepened
Feel like a sociologist

'We get to use the knowledge we learn in lectures in the real world'

Social justice

Citizenship and voice
Community perspectives
Benefit to self and others
Perspective on privilege
Mutual benefit

*'Feel more a part of Nottingham'
'Got a real taste for what HC is'*

'Career'

Leadership skills
Communication
Teamwork
Professionalism
Negotiation skills
Widen career prospects
Networking opportunities
Gained experience for after university

*'Widened my career thinking'
'Influenced what I want to do within my chosen career.'*

Lifewide learning

Think outside box
Leadership and communication
Negotiation skills
Impact beyond own experience/benefit
Challenged to develop new skills
Working on real projects with real people
Become more personable
Have an open mind

*'Get proper stuck in'
'Be adventurous'
'They're adults'*

External Examiner Voice

The Service Learning Module stands out as an example of an innovative course that allows students to see the connections between theoretical work and real-world social problems. It also provides an excellent opportunity for developing transferable skills that will be useful to students after they graduate.

Dr Lynne Copson

The course is a leading example of Applied Sociology within the sector.

Dr Cinnamon Bennett

When I took up this role, the course team were bedding in an innovative and distinctive curriculum based around the theme of Public Sociology. This is an exciting initiative which is now having a national impact via the British Sociological Association. The emphasis on applying knowledge to real world issues is evident across the module content and assessment at levels 5 and 6. It has been gratifying to see this philosophy become firmly established with greater clarity of assessment expectations and tasks.

Dr David Skinner

Concluding thoughts

- Service learning appears to have created opportunities for lifewide learning and career presenting.
- Result is a less instrumental focus on employability and a more authentic and purposeful experience for students
- But, there are challenges in the current HE context to embedding lifewide learning

References

Goffman, E (1961) 'The moral career of the mental patient'. In Asylums, New York: Anchor

Gee, R (2017). Chapter 11. Contemplating 'career' across disciplines: reflexive explorations of 'career' in Barnard, A. (ed.) (2017) Developing Professional Practice in Health and Social Care. London: Routledge. Pagination will be forthcoming.

Reischmann, J. 2014. 'Lifelong and Lifewide Learning – a Perspective.'

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