Community Service Learning
- Developing Definitions and the Curriculum

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Introduction

Understand service learning as a pedagogical approach, the myriad of definitions that exists within the literature;

Will have begun to craft a definition that aligns with their cultural context and curriculum;
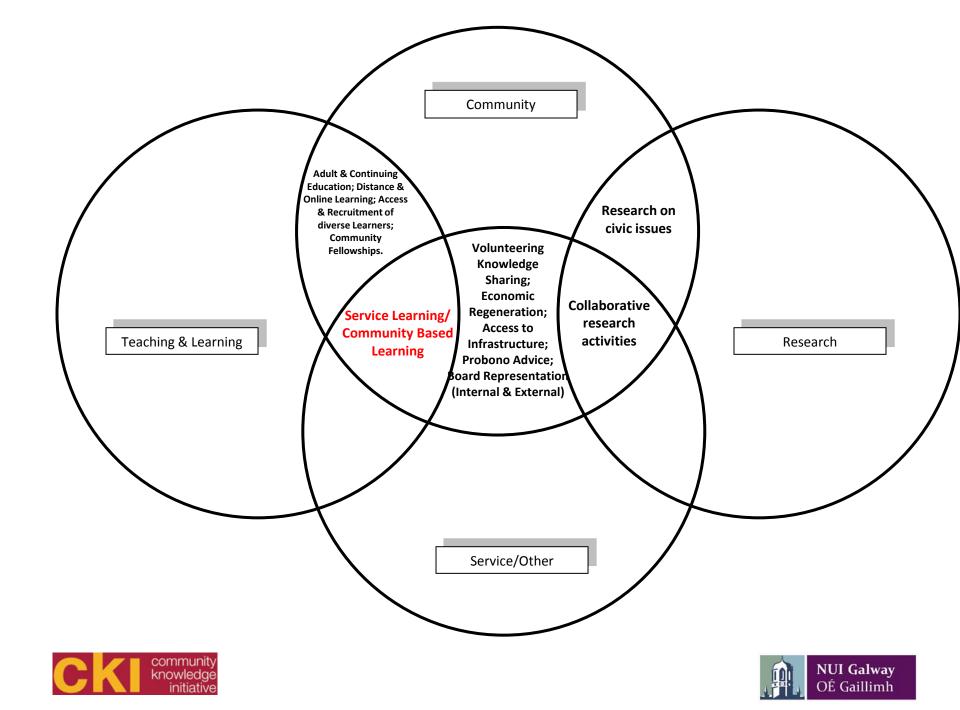
Have some fun!

Civic Engagement

The concept of 'civic engagement' in higher education encompasses a <u>wide range of approaches</u> to develop the civic skills, interests and participation of students, staff and institutional management. Examples include community-based learning (or 'service learning'), volunteering, community-focussed research, participative and collaborative research and educational initiatives etc. Such initiatives commonly reflect the norms and values of reciprocity and diversity and are often explicitly linked to social inclusion.

Gonzalez-Perez et al. (2007).

Community

Teaching & Learning

Research

Service/Other

Adult & Continuing Education; Distance & Online Learning; Access & Recruitment of diverse Learners; Community Fellowships.

Research on civic issues

Volunteering Knowledge Sharing; Economic Regeneration; Access to Infrastructure; Probono Advice; Board Representation (Internal & External)

Collaborative research activities

Service Learning/ Community Based Learning

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Volunteering – Clubs, Societies & Off Campus

Knowledge sharing – public seminars and engagement

Service Learning

Pedagogies for Civic Engagement

Student Rag Week!

Board Membership

Engaged Research - Research with/by/for/in community

Public Intellectualism

Pro bono advice/consultancy

Defining Service Learning

"… an academic strategy that seeks to engage **students** in activities that enhance academic learning, civic responsibility and the skills of citizenship, while also enhancing **community capacity** through service."
(Furco and Holland, 2004, 27)

'seeks to develop in students an ethos of civic and social responsibility – an understanding of the **engaged role individuals must play** if communities and democracies are to flourish"
(Zlotkowski, 2007:43)

"a form of experiential education that combines structured opportunities for learning academic skills, reflection on the normative dimensions of civic life, and experiential activity that addresses **community needs or assists individuals, families and communities in need**"
(Hunter & Brisbin, 2000, 623)

'definitional anarchy' (Sandmann, 2008)

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Service learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students:

a) participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs, and;

b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility.

(Bringle & Hatcher, 1995)

Characteristics

- *Learning linked to academic discipline;*
- *Integration of theory and practice;*
- *Theory viewed in a real world context;*
- *Enhancement of Community University Partnerships;*
- *Credit awarded for the learning (not time within the community);*
- *Reflection strategies underpin the process;*
- *Community becomes a teaching tools and partner;*
- *Experiential learning underpins the process;*
– *the chameleon (Boland and McIlrath, 2012)*

Research to Date – general findings

- SL has + impact on student personal/interpersonal development;
- SL + Impact on cultural understanding and reducing stereotyping;
- Instils commitment to service:
- + Impact on academic learning (Students and Academics) & understanding of discipline in real world context
- Contributes to career development
- SL improves student satisfaction with institution & more likely to graduate
- Academic satisfactions with quality of student learning
- Lack of resources pressing concern for academics
- Lack of academic reward is a barrier to implement SL
- Community Findings (satisfaction with students, service is useful and enhances university relations)

NUI Galway Rationale

Senior Managers At NUI Galway

- strategic commitment to the region
- building a resource for the community
- maturing opportunity for students
- belief in experiential learning
- concern about drift from public to private domain
- an opportunity for niche marketing
- gives an entrepreneurial edge
- challenges traditional academic practices

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Cultural Drivers - Ireland

Our history – Famine of 1850s, Colonisation, Country of division and conflict 1969 to 1996 (peace process)

Connection to Community – Meitheal (farming) Island People and Survival

Immigration and concerns for others in crisis – led to charitable forms of giving internationally – many international Irish NGO's

Chameleon

Groups Work

Questions 1 – What are the cultural drivers and rationale for community service learning?

Place on Post Its on the Wall!

Groups Work

Question 2 - What might be the characteristics of community service learning in a Flanders/Belgian Context?

Place on Post Its on the Wall!

Groups Work

Questions 3 – While looking/studying the Post Its, might it be possible to craft a culturally appropriate definition of Community Service Learning?