

Module 2 - Topic 1 - Active Citizenship

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Topic Description

"This topic focuses on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to, and have a fair say in, the society in which they live"

It explores issues of learning through active citizenship, one of the most powerful indicators of a learning city.

Topic Objective:

To raise awareness of the importance of participating in local, regional, national and transnational discussions, influencing the development of the society of tomorrow, enabling the individual to make solutions regarding the challenges facing him/her, whether directly or in-directly.

To motivate learners to "take action" on issues and topics facing them today, initiating instant participation.

Target Audiences:

There are a variety of target audiences for this topic. Initially there are the local government professionals, elected representatives and decision-makers who will need to see the importance of learning as a generator of wealth and stability. Secondly there are those members of the community, workers, educators and volunteers, who exist to activate and enlarge the educational process in ways that are not always in the book - Parents, Guardians, Doctors, Lawyers, Counsellors, Councillors, Scout and Guide leaders, Political and Religious Leaders and many others in the community. These are the people who will need to apply the tools and techniques described and move the wheel of education in a forward direction. All of these can profit from the seminars this topic generates.

Lesson 2.1.1 - Active Citizenship in the knowledge-based Society

Lesson Focus:

This lesson focuses on finding a mutual definition of Active Citizenship, exemplifying what can be achieved through active citizenship and revealing the conditions on which active citizenship is built.

Lesson Objective:

To raise awareness of the importance of citizens participating actively in local, regional, national and transnational discussions, hereby influencing the development of the society of tomorrow and highlight the importance of Active Citizenship as one of the foundation-stones of the knowledge-based Society.

Key topics to be addressed in this lesson:

What do we understand by "Active Citizenship" ?

What can be achieved through Active Citizenship ?

Is there any meaningful parameters by which we can measure Active Citizenship ?

What is the foundation for Active Citizenship and how do we secure it ?

Suggestions for Learning Leaders.

Before the session:

Find examples on how active citizenship from one person or a group of persons has influenced the development of the local or regional community that you are in - places that has been build, areas that has been changed, cultural or social activities that has taken place etc.

Session plan:

Make a short presentation of the Lesson objectives.

- a) Hand out questionnaire 1 in the Toolbox. Give the group 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Don't collect it.
- b) Find a common definition of what "active citizenship" is - use the groups answers to question 1 as jumping-off point for a debate, and compare the answers with the definition of "Active Citizenship" from the EU-Commission: Making an Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality. "The focus of active citizenship is on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to and have a fair say in the society in which they live".
- c) List the groups examples of what can be achieved through active citizenship (question 2)
- d) Evaluate with the group on the answers to question 3. Does this group define itself as "active citizen" ?
- e) Carry out the exercise outlined in question 4

Lesson 2.1.2- Active Citizenship in the Learning City

Lesson Focus:

This lesson highlights the importance of Active Citizenship in the development of a learning city. It uses quotations and Case Studies and invites the course students to examine the advantages of active citizenship for stimulating active learning.

Lesson Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to increase understanding of the role of active citizenship in a learning city and to focus in on the ways in which it can be used to improve learning.

Key topics to be addressed in this lesson: How does Active Citizenship combine with Lifelong Learning and why is it important in a knowledge-based Society ?

Suggestions for Learning Leaders

Divide the class into groups of three. Ask them to come up with a joint list of the ways in which they have actively helped the learning of others in whatever way they choose to interpret the word learning.

In the same groups of three, give out to each group 3 quotations from the list in toolbox item 2. Ask them to develop a short presentation for the others about the content and implications of each quotation. Bring to plenary and hear the presentations. Come to an overall conclusion about what is meant by active citizenship and the 10 best ideas from the presentations.

Distribute Toolbox Item 3. Divide the class into pairs and ask one person to act as questioner (counsellor) and the other as resposdee. Bring to plenary and discuss the results and implications of a mentoring system in education.

Lesson 2.1.3 - Volunteering for Active Citizenship in a Learning City

Lesson Focus:

This lesson examines the role of volunteering as an expression of commitment to learning in a learning city. It provides case studies and examples of good practice.

Lesson Objective:

The objective of this lesson is to give understanding and knowledge of volunteering and instil an enthusiasm for the subject.

Suggestions for Learning Leaders:

Ask the class what it understands by the word volunteering.

Distribute toolbox item 4. Divide the class into 3 groups, each one to discuss one of the stories. Then to make a presentation to be discussed between everyone.

Distribute toolbox item 5. Ask the class whether this is or is not a more attractive model of volunteering. How might it work in your own country? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Finally Get the class to develop a powerpoint presentation on volunteering and active citizenship for presentation to the town council.

Toolbox - Item 1 - Questionnaire for lesson 1

What is “Active Citizenship” ?

Q 1 How would you define an “active citizen” ?

Q 2 Do you know of any examples, where active citizenship from a person or group that has influenced the development of the local or regional community that you are in - places that has been build, areas that has been changed, cultural or social activities that have taken place etc. ?

Yes ____ No ____

If yes, please describe the change they have made ?

Q 3 Would you define yourself as an “active citizen” ? Yes ____ No ____

Q 4 How can we - as community and nation - secure the best possible foundation for making the present and future generations Active Citizens ? Think of 3 ideas ten share with the others. Make a list of all the ideas.

Toolbox - Item 2 (2 pages)

Quotations around Active Citizenship

1. 'Dia Viou Paedaeia in the time of Plato was the idea that the whole purpose of education is to develop people who will contribute to their communities' (Norman Longworth Lifelong Learning).

2. 'There are three "urban realities" that prevent people moving from an adaptive culture (one that merely adapts to constraints such as new technologies, global financial markets, etc.) to a sustainable culture (one which encourages contribution and participation).' These are

- ⌚ They don't exist as full "participant citizens". They are excluded. At least, they feel excluded.
- ⌚ They don't live together with the other components of the community. They do not believe that they belong to an urban community. They don't feel as if they share basic common goods and a common destiny. Social, economic, cultural fragmentations and separations within the city have increased in the last 20 years despite the 'explosion' of information and transportation systems. Belonging is still to be constructed.
- ⌚ They don't work together to define and implement common goals for the urban community. Each active group of citizens is fighting to achieve its own specific goal. Co-operation remains a difficult process.

(Dr. Riccardo Petrella, Professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, and President of the European University of the Environment)

3. 'Learning enables people to play a full part in their community and strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation. It helps us fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art, and literature. The Learning Age will be built on a renewed commitment to self-improvement and a recognition of the enormous contribution learning makes to our society.' The UK Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett,

4. The city of Espoo goes one step further. It has established Youth Councils and elderly people's councils as an adjunct to city decision-making. The latter for example serves as the interface between third age people and municipal administration. It represents their point of view and influences decision-making in the city. It also promotes opportunities for greater participation in the learning life of the city as well as the management of housing, social and health services, social security matters, culture and leisure activity for third age citizens. Espoo City Youth Council operates in a similar way. It is an elected body under the city board with 30 members aged from 13-20 years. The objectives are to increase the influence of young people in city decision-making, and to look for new ways of activating initiatives and ideas which allow them to play a fuller part in city life. In these ways, active citizenship becomes integrated into all parts of the learning life of the city. (Prof N Longworth, Lifelong Learning in Action)

5. In Japanese families many people keep their own learning diary, including details of significant learning events and achievements during the year. It is celebrated annually in the learner's own family, usually on birthdays. The acceptability of that process in other cultures may be questionable, but the principle is one that can be adapted. (NIER Japan)

6. 'I live in a particularly beautiful area of Southern France. My village of some 300 souls is one of those villages perchés and one of the 100 most beautiful villages in France. The view from my office opens out across the valley onto the Canigou, a 9000 foot mountain, snow-capped for 10 months of the year. In the foreground are peach, apricots, almond, cherry and nectarine trees which, during blossom time, form a rich carpet of pink, white and green on which, it seems, one could float into El Dorado. Prades, the nearest town, comprises about 7000 inhabitants. Its secondary school and college are fed by the families of the town and the many villages around. On its curriculum at all levels are languages, including English and German, Biology, Music, Geography, Mathematics, as well as a host of other subjects. I am not the only

British resident of this paradise. Among our small community of 100 people are a much-travelled world-class biologist who was secretary to the Prince of Wales environmental trust, a former teacher trainer in geography, a mathematics teacher who has taken early retirement, 3 English as a foreign language teachers, 2 former Opera singers also trained in music teaching, a former dietician and a former professor of German. These are just the skills I know about. The application of logic seems to point to the marriage of these talents with the schoolchildren who might benefit from them, enriching their learning world with the stories, adventures and experiences of those who have personal immersion in the subject, and from time to time giving the teachers a rest from the stress of the school-day. And if asked, all of those people would be happy to devote a few hours a week, a month or a year to making their knowledge and assistance available. But of course we have not been asked, and I am not aware of any school which has begun to explore the wealth of human talent and expertise in its own community.' Such stories are to be found everywhere and there are many reasons why it does not happen.

(Norman Longworth: Making Lifelong Learning Work)

7. 'Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. The coming decade must see the implementation of this vision. All those living in Europe, without exception, should have equal opportunities to adjust to the demands of social and economic change and to participate actively in the shaping of Europe's future'.

'Memorandum on Lifelong Learning for Active Citizenship in a Europe of Knowledge' in December 2000.)

8. '...values and responsibilities as well as skills and competencies. Social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy are 'what every child should have more than a glimmer about' on leaving primary school.' Children should learn such things by being themselves active citizens, much in the same way that service education involves its students in solving community problems as part of their curriculum. All students, children and adult, should take part in the political processes, by experiencing democracy at work in the classroom and the school through class representatives and committees. 'Rights are balanced by responsibilities,' it says. Children should be taught to become 'active citizens,' and to play a full and energetic part in local democracy.

The report from the UK Advisory Group on citizenship headed by Sir Bernard Crick

9. Of course citizenship is at the heart of lifelong learning. Indeed in many countries it presents no surprises. Classroom democracy is a commonplace in Finland, and in many parts of Europe, Australia and Canada. Children exercise their democratic right to say what they think about their school, its teachers, the curriculum and the system within in which they are being educated. In some countries it may be seen as a blueprint for anarchy. It is certainly subversive in the wholly positive way that education generally, and lifelong learning particularly, is subversive. Used responsibly, it encourages the sort of critical thinking and holding of authority to account so important to the exercise of democracy in a world of change. It produces rounded human beings with a knowledge of who they are and a detached and mature sense of self-esteem, able to see through the rhetoric and the inventions, and to weigh values, possibilities, probabilities and desirabilities.'

(Longworth – Making Lifelong Learning work)

Toolbox - Item 3

Your contribution to the Learning of Others

Everyone has talents, skills, knowledge and experience to offer to others. Working for and with each other is a great strength for a community. Modern technology makes it easier to communicate in new ways to do this. Here we ask a few questions about your potential contribution to the learning of others

1. Your talents, skills, experience and knowledge

1.1 Knowledge and Experience- please list which subject areas you have a working knowledge of, which might be useful for others studying these topics eg mathematics, engineering, language, accountancy, banking, plumbing, psychology etc - the list need not be confined to work.

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1.2 Talents and Skills - please list your practical skills eg tennis, public speaking, meditating, teaching, piano-playing

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1.3 Please indicate if you are able to perform any of the following tasks for others and the amount of time per month (hours) you may be able to spare on this.

		yes	no	time
1	Delivering a course on some aspect of my speciality			
2	Being a 'Study-buddy' to someone			
3	Being a 'shoulder to lean on' at the end of an email line			
4	Regular 'learning' meeting with someone who lives or works close by			
5	Coaching a sport/skill			
6	Using my home for a study group			
7	Organising courses in the pub or other place			
8	Managing a learning project			
9	Advising someone starting off			
10	Carrying out a Learning Audit with someone			
11	Other (please state)			
12				
13				

Toolbox - Item 4

Case Study 1 – From the Brisbane advertiser

Brisbane Launches International Year of Volunteers in Queensland

BRISBANE LAUNCHES IYV WITH THE BIGGEST CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTEERING THE STATE HAS SEEN.

Sunday December 3rd, 2000 will long be remembered as a red letter day in the history of volunteering in Queensland.

It was without doubt the biggest and most impressive showcase of volunteer effort this state has seen. Stretching over a six kilometre route from Kurilpa Point to the City Botanic Gardens, it took the 6000 participants in the parade one and half hours to pass through city streets.

With everything from mounted police to fire trucks, belly dancers and performers on stilts, dogs and balloons along with bands of all kinds, it had all the colour and sound of one the city's major public events. There were groups from a huge range of sectors; from the arts, heritage, sport, emergency services, aged care, child & youth care, environmental, health, disability, education, multicultural, social justice, advocacy and community welfare.

Adding their own significant contribution to a year when volunteering has achieved unparalleled recognition were the Olympics volunteers, and those who are ready to serve next year in the Brisbane Goodwill Games 2001, and the Westpac volunteers.

As the parade transformed into a festival at the Riverstage, the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care & Minister for Disability Services, Anna Bligh, and the Minister for Emergency Services, Stephen Robertson joined Premier Peter Beattie to officially launch the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

The launch was without a doubt a "for volunteers, by volunteers" event. In all, more than 100 volunteers contributed to the success of the Parade & Festival in roles such as Parade Marshals, Festival Guides, Performer Supporters, Promotions, Parade Assembly and staffing the Event Hotline.

The primary goals for the Brisbane launch were met with amazing success. The Volunteers Parade & Festival allowed us to:

- showcase the strength and diversity of volunteering,
- recognise the huge contributions of volunteers across all sectors, and
- bring the community together to celebrate those involved in volunteering.

Media coverage was comprehensive with many radio stations running announcements and Channel 9 running a peak time community announcement in the lead up to the event. Channel 7, Channel 9, Channel 10, ABC and SBS covered the event in their main evening news bulletins.

Many thanks to our supporters including Quest Newspapers, Channel 9, Westpac, the State and Federal Governments, Queensland Police and Brisbane City Council whose contributions added to the success of the day.

The Brisbane launch of the International Year of Volunteers 2001 was a truly exciting occasion! Thanks to everyone who volunteered, organised, performed, marched, photographed, promoted, assembled and partied on Sunday 3 December. Bring on IYV 2001

Case Study 2

In another national project organized by the British charity 'Community Service Volunteers', budding contributors were invited to join the 'Yellow Pages Make a Difference Day.' The Yellow Pages refers to the sponsor of the event, being a subsidiary company of British Telecom. As the title indicates this was a day event to encourage participation in community improvement projects, and followed a successful British television programme describing such work. It provided an opportunity for those who may not want to make a long-term commitment to contribute for a defined period of time. Participants were invited to look around the local community to see what needs to be done. They were encouraged to make this a fun event with a defined outcome - the building of a community shelter or the painting of an old person's house. They were encouraged to join or gather together a group and divide out the tasks of making the outcome happen - one person would be responsible for publicity, another for fund-raising and obtaining sponsors, another for recruiting experts etc.

Each year on 'Make a difference day' the Community Service Volunteers organization provides the publicity leaflets, recruits celebrities to help locally (a good way of motivating people), gives hints on how to volunteer and make things happen, creates a database of projects, approaches national sponsors, encourages national and local media support and in general markets the idea to both organizations and people. It is presented as a fun day out, meeting new people, learning new skills, and accomplishing something which would not otherwise be done.

Make a Difference project examples include a group from Reading, in which 30 employee volunteers packed up boxes of baby clothes for Bosnia. They achieved 1500 boxes in 6 hours on the premise that the 'next person to look in that box would be a Bosnian mum'. In another project a group of 5-8 year olds set out to recruit people to reclaim an inner-city estate park. The playground had been vandalised. 200 young volunteers turned up with their mothers and fathers and completed the job. Such was the commitment and the sense of achievement that the group continued, one of their next tasks being to design and man a float in the following year's procession.

Several groups identified old people as the recipient of their volunteering. More than 200 old people had their houses re-decorated free of charge, using free end-of-line paint and wallpaper donated by local shops and hundreds of willing hands.

Case Study 3 - Questacon

Questacon, the National Science and Technology Centre in Canberra, recognizes the tremendous contributions of Volunteer Explainers. The following relates a story from one of their volunteers.

'I retired from the Commonwealth Public Service in January 1996 and was enjoying a quiet life, with no thought of ever rejoining the workforce. Fortunately, in May 1999 my idyllic, or so I thought at the time, lifestyle changed. I read an advertisement calling for Volunteer Explainers at Questacon. Within a month, along with about 23 other people of all age groups, I found myself attending an information night at Questacon.

We were shown over the various exhibits by Questacon staff during a two hour period and I remember thinking 'I will never remember all this...it's far too complicated for a bloke like me because I don't have teaching experience or a science degree'. My fears were to some extent laid to rest when it was pointed out that there was no point in being a brilliant scientist if you couldn't explain things to people, especially kids.

My application to join the Volunteer Explainers was duly accepted and I undertook a training course conducted by staff. This was the start of what has turned out to be a fascinating and enjoyable experience. The trainers had all worked at Questacon for a number of years and really knew what they were talking

about. In addition they were all extremely nice and very patient...not at all like the teachers I had at school! I was required to undertake at least 16 hours of training sessions and then be assessed on my knowledge and competence as an explainer. I was rather nervous at the prospect of being assessed and failing. I had read my notes over and over again at home and tried explaining various aspects of Questacon exhibits to my family. I was determined to master the complexities on one particular puzzle that had me initially stumped, but, would you believe, I wasn't asked to demonstrate that one.

Happily, I passed the test and became an Explainer. That was when the fun really started. I work a 4.5 hour shift, either morning or afternoon as many days as I desire each week. During school semester we have school groups visiting from all over Australia and sometimes from overseas. These children, of all ages, really keep us busy. Some just want to be entertained whereas others ask detailed questions. If we don't know the answers we can invariably refer them to someone who does.

These days one hears criticism of the younger generation along the lines of 'I don't know what's going to happen to the world and why can't they be like we were'. However, here at Questacon we get to see another aspect, the young inquiring people who will make the discoveries of tomorrow. I met a group of 6 teenaged boys who were dressed like a street gang but were engineering students asking all sorts of probing questions...so you just can't pre-judge is this business.

One day a group of Japanese high school students came in. I was working in a Gallery featuring devices that demonstrated the principles of physical forces. They were interested in everything except a simulated earthquake...said they had real ones at home!

One of the great pluses of working at Questacon is the other people one works with. They are of all ages from students to retirees and from all walks of life. There are scientists, teachers, military personnel, former Antarctic expeditioners, police, public servants, housewives, tradespeople, to name a few. They all have one thing in common. That is they are all interesting and have a story to tell. I have not met a more stimulating group of people in my life as I have here at Questacon. In addition I have had a million laughs. As a bonus, my cholesterol level has declined, my waistline has receded but unfortunately my hair is still falling out. Seems one can't have everything'

Toolbox - Item 5

'Taking your elderly neighbour to a hospital appointment might soon be an investment rather than just a good turn' it said. 'A scheme to 'pay' volunteers who take part in charitable work is to be launched next spring. Instead of cash, they will be paid in time. If they spend an hour taking a grandmother to hospital, they will be entitled to an hour of another volunteer's time. The 'service credit' programme originated in America and is a key element in a presidential effort to rebuild fragmented communities in inner cities. There are more than 200 schemes in the US and one in Japan.'

The system is spreading. Edgar Calm, the inventor of service credit, gave a talk to 20 Local Government Chief Executive Officers in Britain to explain how the system works. It is said to be an important plank in the Government's plans to rescue some of the worst areas in Britain. When the social exclusion unit starts work next month, one of its major tasks will be to motivate people to 'turn around' problem estates and localities, starting with a 'Fair Shares' project in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. It will work in conjunction with the Barnwood Trust, a voluntary charity.

In the USA, participants earn one 'time dollar' for each hour spent helping someone else. A simple computer programme records every dollar earned and spent and volunteers receive regular statements. The Clinton administration has ruled that time dollars are tax-free. This is important for volunteers who use them to 'pay' for health care. Several companies have agreed that time dollars can be exchanged for goods. Credit accounts can also be used as a form of old-age insurance. People do voluntary work now to qualify for help when they become infirm. Time dollars can also be traded for such services as meals-on-wheels, house cleaning, nursing care, neighbourhood security patrols and computer training work. In Chicago, teenagers who agree to mentor' younger pupils can 'cash in' their dollars on computer software.

Young people in Washington DC are paid in time dollars for participating in youth courts. Young delinquents are tried by their peers and, if convicted, face community service punishments. The offenders are then paid in time dollars for their community service. In Brooklyn, time dollars fuel an alternative economy for the aged. They can be spent on telephone bin, bereavement counselling and in reducing health insurance costs.

While ideas such as these may not be universally possible, or even desirable in some places, the concept of an alternative 'community currency' is well worth exploring in learning terms. Already learning card credit systems exist in several parts of the UK and Europe. It would not be too difficult to create a 'learning credits account' in the 'learning bank', earned through a variety of voluntary activities.