

## Curriculum Development for Sustainable Civic Engagement

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### Introduction

Capacity building – both for students and for community partners – is an explicit goal for one particular teaching and learning innovation in Irish higher education. In addition to offering the opportunity to apply discipline-specific knowledge and skills, community-engaged learning (or service learning) aims to develop students' capacity for autonomy, insight and active citizenship while meeting community needs and building community capacity. A central role of the academic should be to plan a curriculum for civic engagement – a process which includes attending to values, outcomes, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation – which captures the diverse goals of the pedagogy, while meeting the requirements of a credit-based framework and related quality assurance systems. Academics have demonstrated considerable ingenuity in their ability to do this, often with the benefit of collaboration with educational developers who have supported these initiatives.

This chapter focuses on the process by which academics design/redesign curricula to embed a civic dimension with the potential for capacity building for all partners to the process – and the inherent tensions in that endeavour. A range of strategies which have been deployed in practice will be outlined and a typology of approaches to curriculum design for the pedagogy described. The implications of different curricular designs for the sustainability of the pedagogy are also examined, especially within the challenging and demanding milieu of contemporary higher education. This chapter draws on selected findings from a doctoral study (Boland, 2008) and is informed by my experience as a practitioner (Boland, 2010) and by the ongoing process of engaging with aspiring practitioners of the pedagogy. The chapter offers a descriptive rather than normative model of curriculum design for civic engagement that reflects current practice in Ireland. Rather than attempt to showcase best practice, the chapter will explore the complexities of the process and point to ways to enhance the sustainability of this critical pedagogy in challenging times.

The chapter commences with an elaboration of key concepts and I explore how community-engaged learning can be positioned within the broad church of civic engagement. Models of curriculum development are revisited with particular attention to the significance of values and beliefs in that process. I provide a brief overview of the methodology for the multi-site case study which informs this paper. Some key findings pertinent to the curriculum design process are offered, with a typology of models and potential progression pathways through stages of embeddedness. The potential relationship between embeddedness and sustainability is critically examined.

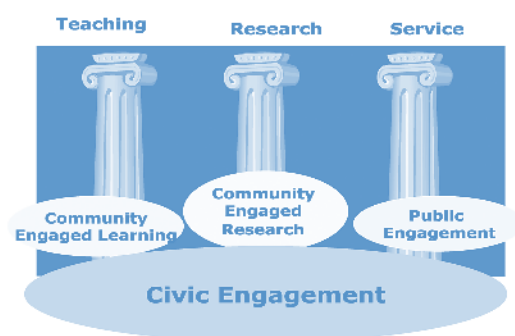
Conclusions highlight the significance of rationale and the need to recognise the central role of academics in the development of a civically engaged pedagogy. I point to the potential for enhanced partnership with community in designing and enacting a community engaged curriculum as part of a strategic approach to civic engagement.

## Engagement

### *Civic engagement*

Interest in the process of embedding civic engagement within the curriculum has intensified since engagement was confirmed as a key role of higher education in the national strategy for the sector (Higher Education Strategy Group, 2011). Community engaged learning (referred to variously as ‘community based learning’, ‘community engaged learning’, or ‘service learning’) is but one in a range of strategies which contribute to how higher education fulfils its social responsibilities, while preparing graduates in the skills of active and critical citizenship. The results of a national survey by Campus Engage – a network for the promotion of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education – suggest a growing appetite in Ireland for civic engagement, and a desire that it be formally adopted and recognised across the sector (Campus Engage, 2011). It is reported that considerable progress has been made in this direction, albeit with few resources and uneven manifestations of strategic vision. In this challenging context, issues of sustainability are of particular concern.

Civic engagement is a broad church that eludes absolute definition. It is inextricably concerned with the purpose of higher education and encompasses a wide range of activities. Campus Engage (2011), for example, defines it as a mutually beneficial knowledge-based collaboration between the higher education institution, its staff and students, with the wider community. Engagement, now identified as a core mission of Irish higher education, is described as ‘taking on civic responsibilities and cooperation with the needs of the community that sustains higher education, including business, the wider education system and the community and voluntary sectors’ (Higher Education Strategy Group, 2011:74). The inherent tensions, however, between the competing goals and purposes of civic/community engagement are universal (Winter et al., 2006) and different approaches can be discerned. Civic engagement as an ‘orientation’ is just one of three approaches to civic engagement identified by Wynne (2009), the others being as ‘mission’ or as ‘project’. If we conceive of civic engagement as an informing purpose, then community engaged learning (or research or public engagement) can be positioned as a way of doing higher education which is underpinned with the values of engagement, partnership, reciprocity and commitment to the achievement of the wider goals of higher education in society (Boland, 2011a).



**Figure 1: Community Engaged Learning as One Aspect of Civic Engagement**

### Community engaged learning

Terminology is a perennial issue and agreement on the meaning of service-learning also eludes. I have adopted, for the purpose of this discussion, the term *community-engaged learning* to capture the principles and practice of a pedagogy which is now established within a range of disciplines in higher education, including in Ireland. The defining features of the pedagogy are as follows:

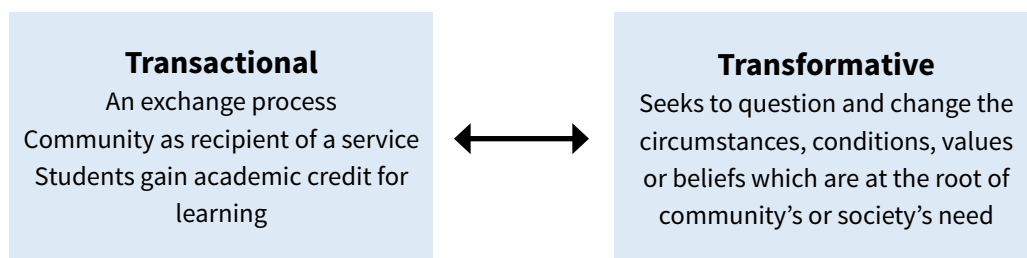
- It is a credit-bearing element of an academic module/programme;
- Students engage with the community, commonly providing a ‘service’ to the not-for-profit/voluntary/community sector, in response to a need identified by the community partner;
- Citizenship and engagement feature as core values and organising principles;
- It involves the application of discipline-specific knowledge and skills and the integration of theory and practice;
- The pedagogy is based on the principles of experiential learning where reflection features as a key element in the learning and assessment process;
- Reciprocity and partnership characterise the relationships between parties to the engagement.

Some Examples of Community Engaged Learning:
<b>Optometry undergraduates</b> carry out vision screening, under supervision, for primary school pupils who would ordinarily have to wait up to 18 months for a hospital appointment. The goals include developing their professional skills and raising students’ awareness of the inequities in the Irish healthcare system.
<b>Teacher education</b> students tutor in settings (other than schools) which are characterised by diversity and/or disadvantage. The goals are to enhance their pedagogy skills, meet needs of a community partner and to prompt them to reflect critically on their own practice and broader issues of diversity and disadvantage.
<b>Psychology</b> students volunteer in community organisations to engage more critically with the concept of altruism. They apply their understanding of classic and emerging social psychological theories and research to a deeper understanding of real world context while gaining interpersonal and intrapersonal benefits.
<b>Engineering</b> students engage and liaise with a community partner to design and build a prototype system for use and evaluation by clients. The goals are to enhance students engineering and technical skills and to increase their awareness of inclusiveness when designing systems and to develop a commitment to making a contribution to their community.
Campus Engage <a href="http://www.campusengage.ie/case_studies/case_study/28/">http://www.campusengage.ie/case_studies/case_study/28/</a>

**Figure 2: Examples of Community Engaged Learning**

Community engaged learning is distinguishable from volunteering by the emphasis on academic credit for demonstrated learning. It is distinguishable from workplace learning by the commitment to civic values. In practice, instances of the pedagogy vary in the extent to which they exhibit these key features and in the extent to which are distinguishable

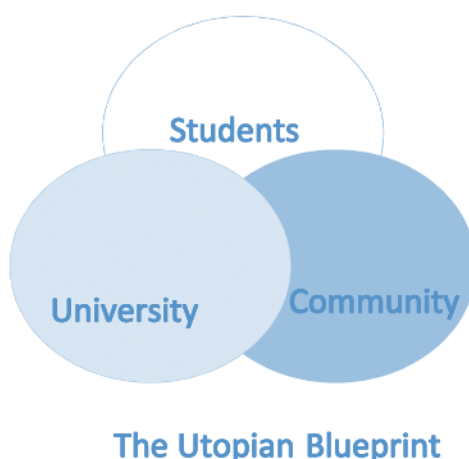
from other forms of experiential learning. Most significantly, perhaps, initiatives can be positioned on a continuum in terms of their fundamental purpose (transactional or transformative), the features of which are depicted in Fig 3 below.



**Figure 3: Models of Community Engaged (or Service) Learning, adapted from Welch (2006)**

A further factor which distinguishes initiatives is the level of reciprocity in the relationship with community partners. Optimally, this process is enacted as a partnership between academics/the university, community partners and community, each with a contribution to make to the design of the curriculum.

### Partners within the Learning Triad



**Figure 4: The Utopian Blueprint for a Learning Triad within PfCE (Boland and Mc Ilrath, 2005)**

## Curriculum

### *Curriculum development processes*

Curriculum is yet another key term in education which defies definition. Stenhouse (1975) claims it is fundamentally an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of translation into practice. Harden's more concrete conception of curriculum may appeal to many:

The curriculum is a sophisticated blend of educational strategies, course content, learning outcomes, educational experiences, assessment, the educational

environment and the individual student's learning styles, personal timetable and programme of work.

(Harden, 2001:123)

It seems that as conceptions of curriculum become more student-centred, less attention is paid to the role, agency and values of academics in this process. The significance of beliefs and values, however, is brought into sharp focus wherever academics attempt to introduce a curriculum innovation such as a community engaged learning.

The processes of curriculum design, innovation and change are central to higher education; this is also true when embedding civic engagement within the curriculum. Theoretical models of curriculum design are typically normative in nature, describing how the curriculum *should* be designed, often paying little attention to *how* it is actually designed and *why* so designed. The oft-cited model of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2007), for example, does not attend to the source of learning outcomes or the values that underpin them. In presenting a theoretically and empirically informed argument for an engaged curriculum, Barnett and Coate (2006) do not claim to address the practicalities involved in developing one.

Two models attempt to capture the dynamic and iterative processes of curriculum development (Walker, 1971; Jackson and Shaw, 2002). Based on empirical analysis and his professional experience (in school-based curriculum development), Walker (1971) concludes that a deliberative, naturalistic process of curriculum planning does not commence with a values neutral 'blank slate', but with a set of conceptions and beliefs. He illustrates the process as bottom-up from (i) a platform of conceptions and beliefs, to (ii) deliberation, to finally (iii) design, while acknowledging that these steps are more likely to be random and chaotic. Jackson and Straw's (2002) model derives from their experience facilitating the curriculum development process in higher education and shares with Walker's a focus on the centrality of conceptions, philosophy and rationale.

In practice, curriculum revision is often a more practical option for innovators. This is especially true in the case where lengthy (and often cumbersome) accreditation processes prevail. O'Neill's (2010) work offers insight into the curriculum development practices of academics as well as educational developers, in this context. In this study most participants reported that curriculum revision was rarely a solitary activity, that a team approach was vital and that the head of department was a key player in successful change. Educational developers drew on an eclectic range of theories, resources and strategies to support the process, leading O'Neill to conclude that the approach used cannot be rigidly planned and that successful implementation of a programme requires ongoing monitoring and review.

The affective domain is of particular relevance in the context of curriculum planning for civic engagement. Lamenting what he refers to as 'the atrophy of the affect' in higher education, Cowan (2005: 160) states that the affective domain refers to those 'learning activities, objectives and outcomes which centre upon feelings, emotions, desires or, as an amplification of the last of these, 'values'. Notwithstanding the existence of Kaplan's (1978) taxonomy of the affective domain, Beard et al. (2007) claim that this domain is under-researched and under-theorised in higher education. Barnett and Coate's (2006) theoretical model of the engaged curriculum addresses this lacuna to some extent. This affective domain features explicitly (or implicitly) in the goals of community engaged learning. The experience offers students opportunities to explore and interrogate their own values and preconceived ideas about the nature of the social world. The affective domain and the 'insight' dimension within the National Qualifications Framework share some attributes. The competence of insight has been described by the NQAI, as:

... the ability to engage in increasingly complex understanding and consciousness, both internally and externally, through the process of reflection on experience. Insight involves the integration of the other strands of knowledge, skill and competence with the learner's attitudes, motivation, values, beliefs, cognitive style and personality. This integration is made clear in the learner's mode of interaction with social and cultural structures of his/her community and society, while also being an individual cognitive phenomenon. (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2003)

Descriptors of this dimension are provided for programme developers, by the NQAI, for all ten levels of the framework. The inclusion of this dimension in the framework could be construed as an attempt to make provision for 'being' (Barnett and Coate, 2005), or for the concept of 'capability' (Stephenson, 1998) or to address the development of the affective domain (Krathwohl et al., 1964; Kaplan, 1978; Cowan, 2005). As with concepts such as 'being', 'capability', or 'affect', however, it is often difficult to find evidence of how 'insight' is consciously and explicitly planned for in curriculum design processes, even in the case of pedagogy with an explicit civic engagement focus (Boland, 2008).

### *The role of beliefs and values in the curriculum design process*

The construction of curriculum as a 'value-neutral' text is a well-established convention – or fiction – in higher education. The inherently political nature of the education project is re-asserted by Simon (1994). The role of values and beliefs in the curriculum process is one of the most neglected aspects of curriculum enquiry. In the context of higher education, Toohey (1999) was one of the first to attend to the significance of beliefs, values and ideologies in course design. Values surface in the language used to describe educational goals and in the choices made about what is to be taught and assessed, and how. Toohey identifies a range of philosophical approaches to curriculum including (i) Traditional/discipline specific (ii) Performance/systems-based (iii) Cognitive (iv) Experiential and (v) Socially critical. Each approach carries implicit assumptions about how learning occurs, with implications for how the learning process is organised, how the goals of learning are expressed, how content is organised, the purpose of assessment and the respective roles of teachers and students. In the context of community engaged learning, this potentially extends to include a role for the community partner.

The experiential and socially critical models are of potential relevance in this context. An experiential curriculum is organised around life situations, and is characterised by authentic assessment and a belief in the importance of personal relevance and learning from experience. Socially critical models seek to develop a critical consciousness so that students become more aware of social ills in society and are motivated to alleviate them. Content is drawn from significant social problems of the day and the curriculum is characterised by collaborative group projects; thus manifesting many of the features of Welch's (1996) concept of a transformative model of community engaged learning. The sustainability of innovative – and potentially transformative – curricula in higher education is under researched.

### **Methodology**

Research questions for my doctoral study centred on the rationale for civic engagement in higher education, how a civic engagement dimension was conceived of, interpreted and operationalised within the higher education curriculum and the factors influencing

academics' willingness and capacity to embed the pedagogy in a sustainable way. I have already reported on findings in relation to conceptions of civic engagement (Boland, 2011b) and the significance of academics' orientation to civic engagement for sustainability of the pedagogy (Boland, 2012). This chapter is concerned primarily with the process of curriculum development – how a civic engagement dimension is operationalised within the curriculum, with attention to embeddedness and sustainability.

A multi-site case study was conducted in the spirit of naturalistic enquiry and within the interpretative paradigm (Boland, 2008). Using an approach which combined purposeful sampling and theoretical replication, projects were selected in four different institutions which provided a basis for comparison and contrast in terms of potentially relevant features. Participants (31) were selected on the basis of their relationship to the community-engaged learning (CEL) module within the institution (i.e. embedders, co-operating-colleagues, facilitators, enablers, link persons and strategists) and external actors from the national or international policy context. The central actor in each case was the embedder i.e. the member of academic staff responsible for the curriculum process. Unstructured interviews (41) and documents served as the main sources of primary data. The process of data analysis, using Nvivo7, led to the development of a thematic framework focused on three themes (i) underpinning rationale (ii) the process of embedding a civic dimension within the curriculum and (iii) factors influencing academics' willingness and capacity to embed a civic dimension within the curriculum. The query tools of Nvivo7 facilitated the generation of further analytical categories and the testing of a series of emerging propositional statements, including the relationship between curriculum design, embeddedness and sustainability.

### **The process of curriculum development for community engaged learning**

The origins of community engaged learning (CEL) initiatives within Irish higher education are wide ranging and diverse. In the main they developed organically, from the bottom-up, on the initiative of an individual academic. The metaphor of 'journey' characterises the discourse of those associated with implementing CEL and the image of birthing was invoked more than once – most strikingly in the case of a collaborative multidisciplinary project. As a practice, CEL was generally associated with a pioneering individual who had a keen sense of being an innovator or even a 'naive enthusiast'. Each of the case studies was in the early stages from a marginal, sometimes invisible, position outside the mainstream academic processes towards a position of enhanced recognition and legitimacy within the institution.

### ***Planning for civic engagement – models***

Curriculum planning for community engaged learning is characterised by an organic, incremental and bottom-up approach where academics ('embedders') generally take the initiative, sometimes with the help of colleagues with a defined role in facilitating and/or managing civic engagement in the institution. These 'facilitators' usually work from within teaching and learning centres, student services or a dedicated civic engagement unit. At this nascent stage in the development of civic engagement in Ireland, initiation of projects by community partners is less common – this is changing with advances in the provision of resources (human, fiscal and physical) devoted to community engagement. How best to 'fit' a community engaged learning experience within an overloaded curriculum is one of the many practical issues which exercise aspiring and experienced embedders of civic engagement:

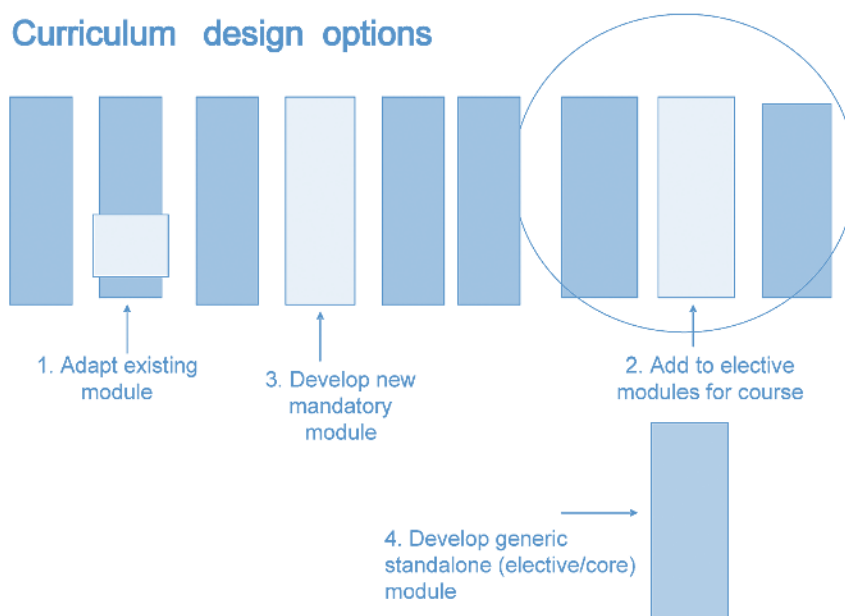


If something goes in, something goes out... [but] nobody wants to give in. Everybody wants to keep loading up the curriculum, but nobody wants to take anything out (Academic leader).

In the high-stakes trading game of programme review, ceding territory to the unproven is rare. One attractive starting point is to adapt an existing module (Option 1 in Fig 5 below). In doing so, academics circumvent the need to submit for validation:

We were changing the content of one module to include something else. So it wasn't a big change. It was done so, I just typed up something and I sent it to the faculty and that's it. And nobody really noticed...except the students, right? But when it was done, everybody noticed (Embedder).

Adaptation strategies include amending the site of learning (to a community setting), the mode of assessment (the project brief) or changing the assessment criteria (to ensure that outcomes related to civic learning are rewarded). Such changes can often be accommodated within an existing module – especially where light-touch quality assurance processes are in place. In some cases, such initiatives remain ‘below the radar’ for some time with the tacit cooperation of enablers such as programme directors. They may not even be explicitly identified as ‘community-engaged’ or as ‘service learning’, especially if the discourse and practice of civic engagement is not well established in the institution. This is what embedders describe as a ‘suck it and see’ approach – a low risk option.



**Figure 5. Curriculum Design Options: 1. Standalone, 2. Elective, 3. Mandatory, 4. Generic**

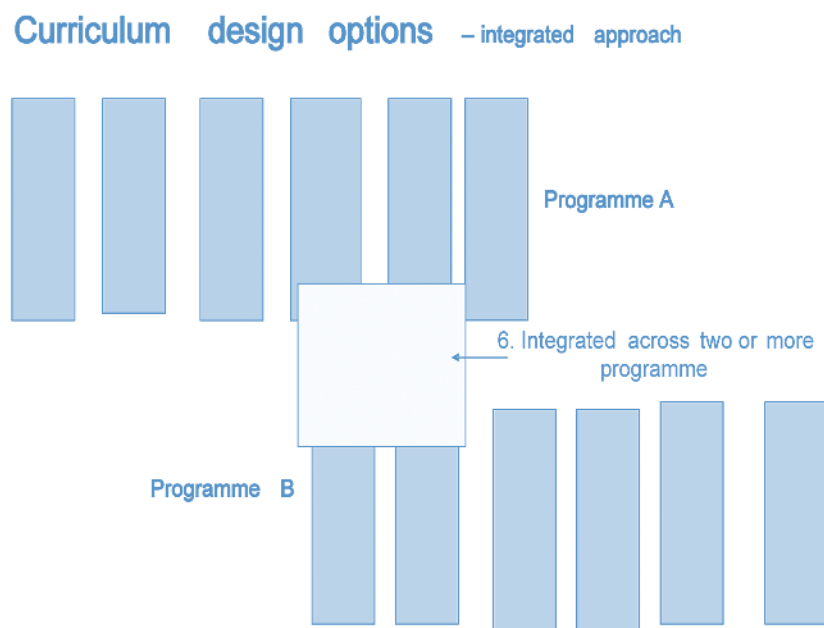
The development of explicitly identified community engaged modules – as either elective or mandatory – has become a more common feature of Irish higher education in recent years. Whether participation in community engaged learning is optional or mandatory for students is a key decision. Philosophical arguments and logistical considerations are both critical in making such a determination. The decision about student choice also speaks to the issue of rationale and the individual academic's personal conviction regarding the importance of civic, professional and personal outcomes.



The paradox of mandatory participation in a community engaged learning module (which involves activities which are often associated, in the minds of students, with volunteering) was recognised by academics who adopted it. There was a risk of being potentially counter-productive in terms of student responses in community settings. Issues also arose where participation was elective. CEL can prove to be a far more demanding mode of learning with some students gaining lower marks for work completed in more challenging circumstances than their peers assessed by more conventional projects on traditional modules.

The development of a standalone generic module, available to students across the institution is another design option (4), where it can feature as a credit bearing component on a range of different programmes. Standalone generic modules are often closely associated with fostering students' personal and professional development and promoting generic skills such as leadership, planning and communication skills associated with employability as well as citizenship. The generic nature of the module can present some challenges in promoting discipline-specific learning, which can be key to ensuring its legitimacy (in the eyes of students, and academics and managers) and its sustainability within the institution.

With a growing emphasis on multi-disciplinary learning and calls for courses that encourage co-operative learning, CEL offers unparalleled opportunities. CEL opportunities are designed, in partnership with community, to combine the knowledge and skills of students (and staff) from more than one discipline with local community knowledge. While inevitably more challenging to organise, the rewards can be substantial for all concerned.



**Figure 6: Curriculum Design Options: Multidisciplinary across Programmes**

Practical issues, such as the lack of synchronicity between potential modules, sometimes makes it difficult to achieve the goal of interdisciplinarity. Differences in module credits can create other difficulties, when attempting to ensure appropriate credit for the level of demand of the community project work. The challenges associated with collaboration across disciplines and with a number of community organisations, however, are perhaps the most critical.

### Organisational arrangements

A key decision in the curriculum planning process relates to how a learning experience is to be organised and managed. It was possible to identify some key dimensions upon which the approach to organising CEL differed amongst the case study sites:

- (i) The level of internal collaboration
  - Solo: devised and implemented by one academic
  - Collaborative: designed and implemented by two or more academics as a team e.g. on an interdisciplinary theme
- (ii) The nature of the external link with community
  - Unilateral: where student projects/placements were sourced primarily by students, singly or in small groups
  - Bi-lateral: where student projects/placements were sourced and organised in partnership with community agencies.

Where the learning experience was organised by academic staff, in collaboration with community partners, there was much a greater chance (or even an expectation) that links would be maintained from year to year; continuity was much less likely where students selected sites of learning. It was then possible to devise a composite measure of ‘complexity’ of projects by combining the values for internal and external organisation. Collaborative/bi-lateral projects were at the upper end and solo/unilateral at the lower end of a complexity continuum.

External organisation	Internal organisation	
	Solo One academic	Collaborative Team
Unilateral Students source own project	Least complex	
Bilateral Partnership with community agencies		Most complex

**Organisation (Internal and External)**

**Figure 7: Complexity as a Function of Internal and External Organisation**

### Partnering with community

Within the literature, community engaged learning is regarded primarily as a pedagogy and this view is reinforced by most academics engaged in the practice. The imbalance in terms of benefits accruing to students and to community partner/s is widely acknowledged as are potential ethical issues involved in the nature of the ‘partnership’. Metaphors used included ‘parachuting into the community’ (Strategist), and ‘using the community like paint’ (Embedder). Some taken-for-granted assumptions and practices in the conduct of research were exposed, including unforeseen issues in relation to intellectual property, for example. Difficulties arose primarily as a result of lack of clarity of expectations between students, the institution and community partners.

### ***Assessment of reflection***

Assessment is an essential element of the curriculum planning process. The identification of assessment criteria for discipline-specific outcomes proved relatively unproblematic. Assessment of ‘capacity to reflect’ however, – a defining feature of the pedagogy – proved to be the most challenging aspect of the assessment process.

I personally struggled a bit with judging or marking reflection (Key agent).

If it’s not assessed it’s not valued. And if we continue to assess reflection, it might be nice to have a tighter framework (Embedder).

I gave students a rubric that I had gotten from Jenny Moon. Now I’m waiting to see what happens (Embedder).

These difficulties often result in the gradual marginalisation or elimination of this aspect from the formal assessment process. The primacy of discipline-specific outcomes was, at times, reinforced by revisions to the assessment methodology in successive iterations of the project. The experience of the sustainable projects in this study lends support to claims that the redesign of the pedagogy – with an emphasis on measurable, cognitive outcomes – has diminished its ability to pursue legitimately the less traditional outcomes which are associated with civic engagement (Lounsbury and Pollack, 2001; Eyler and Giles, 1999).

### **Embeddedness and sustainability**

The term ‘embed’ implies a degree of permanency and resilience. One conception of embeddedness for a civically engaged pedagogy is that it would be invisible, by virtue of being ‘woven into the fabric’ of the institution. For others, sustainability meant the practice should be able to survive independently of individual academics. Embeddedness can be apparent at both curriculum and institutional level. Proxies for the level of ‘embeddedness’ on two dimensions could be identified as follows:

- (i) Embeddedness within the curriculum: This measure is based on indicators such as the extent to which community engaged learning is established as a defined element of an academic programme and/or how established it has become as an integral/core/mandatory element of an individual module.
- (ii) Embeddedness within the institution: This measure is based on indicators such as the existence of an explicit policy on civic engagement, the provision, position and location of a dedicated unit to support and promote CEL throughout the institution and the prevalence of other examples of CEL within the institution.

For each of the cases studied it was possible to rate the level of curricular and institutional ‘embeddedness’. By combining the level of curricular and institutional embeddedness, it was possible to rank the projects in terms of composite embeddedness, in notional terms, from low to high. Not surprisingly, the more embedded CEL was, the more likely it was to be sustainable. A number of other factors, however, proved important, not least of which was the academic’s orientation to civic engagement (Boland, 2012). The impact of concerns about ‘time and workload’, combined with low levels of ‘recognition’, is at its most acute where academics feel the pressure of a wide range of responsibilities,

including research. The combined impact of these factors tends to be greatest for more complex and challenging projects and in more research-intensive institutions. Exceptions to this generalisation may be explained by reference to orientation of an individual's motivation and/or the centrality of civic values to the discipline of the parent programme.

Of particular interest was the finding that issues related to teaching, learning and assessments were low on the list of identified challenges. Significantly, such issues did not feature in the decision to continue or discontinue. A strong disciplinary focus – which served both as a rationale and as a strategy – was a good indicator for sustainability. Embeddedness within the curriculum, in such cases, was often achieved at the expense of some civic engagement goals.

The fact that it is possible to infuse a pre-existing module with a community engaged learning element is testament to the adaptability (or calculated lack of specificity) of existing curricula and to the capacity of academic staff to work creatively around limitations. A certain reticence was detectable, amongst both embedders and academic managers, about committing to community engaged learning as a methodology in a curriculum document which had a defined lifetime, or for a course which may need to be transferable to other staff, if circumstances warranted. The challenge of articulating intended outcomes for an experiential and experimental curriculum is not to be underestimated. Collectively, these factors engendered tentativeness in the design of the curriculum, primarily in the interest of flexibility. This strategy contributed to the uncertainty and invisibility of community engaged learning in some cases, with consequences for its embeddedness within the curriculum and, by extension, within the institution. This situation is changing as more and more institutions commit to the engagement agenda, devote resources to support embedding it within the curriculum and provide assistance to academics seeking to develop community engaged curricula.

The prominence which Walker (1971) and Jackson and Shaw (2002) afford to beliefs and values in the curriculum process was confirmed by the influence of embedders' beliefs about education on their conception of civic engagement. These beliefs were more tacit than explicit, in both their discourse and their practice, and were rarely reflected in curriculum documents. This phenomenon is not unique. In two of the four cases, the actual mode of teaching and learning (as community engaged) was not stated within the curriculum document. More significantly, however, the civic-oriented goals and learning outcomes were rarely made explicit. Problems arose where assessment methods and/or marking criteria were ill-suited to ensuring appropriate recognition of students' achievement of deeper (and at times unexpected) outcomes arising from their engagement.

## Conclusion

Curriculum development, when embedding civic engagement, is generally organic, incremental, bottom-up and often characterised by a certain tentativeness. It is a highly localised and individualised, with the beliefs and values – orientations – of curriculum developers impacting on choices made. A range of more 'practical' organisational considerations impact significantly; all of these have implications for the sustainability of the practice. Community engaged learning – in terms of its goals and principles – represents an exception to the atrophy of the affect in higher education and the promotion of students' 'capability' remains the overt focus. The experience of practitioners confirms the challenge which the affective domain poses in the process of curriculum development and implementation, with the attendant risk of marginalisation of assessment of civic as

well as personal learning. Many of these issues of curriculum design are inextricably tied to fundamental, unresolved issues of rationale and speak to the need to develop more robust tools for assessing such outcomes.

Community engaged learning has proven to be a valuable learning experience for students and an effective vehicle for providing beneficial ‘service’ to community partners, which meets identified need. The ‘service’ and the ‘learning’ aspects are generally both well provided for. As a pedagogy, it also offers opportunities to question the circumstances, conditions, values or beliefs at the root of community’s or society’s needs. The extent to which this happens will be largely reliant on the curriculum intentionality of the relevant academics in collaboration with community partners. In such cases, the experience has the potential to prove transformative for students; the impact of our efforts is realised long after our students have moved on in the world.



**Figure 8: A Strategic Approach to Sustainable Civic Engagement**

In Ireland, the pedagogy can be found in an ever expanding range of higher education institutions, under the specific label of ‘community engaged’ or ‘service’ learning. One of the persistent issues however, is the extent to which community engaged learning is often perceived as something students do, without sufficient recognition of the important role academics play as agents of civic engagement, as manifest in curriculum development practice. The role of community partners remains underdeveloped. Moreover, the potential for a transformative effect for community is, perhaps, doubtful. I make the case that, on its own, the pedagogy has limited scope for enhancing the capacity of a community to change the circumstances, conditions and values which are at the roots of their needs. The chances of so doing are, however, greatly enhanced by engaging with community partners in a strategic way across all the domains of higher education, over a sustained period of time, with all the resources of the institution – not just students. Moreover, capacity is greatly enhanced by an approach to partnership which is founded on reciprocity and equality, including but not exclusively, in the development of curricula for civic engagement.

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## **Response 1 to**

### **Curriculum Development for Sustainable Civic Engagement**

by Robert G. Bringle, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.

#### **A Guide for Curricular Development**

Although experiential education and community-based education (e.g., internships, clinical training) are not new types of pedagogies in higher education, there are some new developments in these arenas that present unfamiliar challenges that warrant attention, examination, explanation, support, guidance, and development. Community-engaged learning is one of them. This has been borne out in the experience of American higher education during the past twenty years with many institutional, state, regional, and national initiatives that continue to provide assistance to individual faculty members, departments, disciplines, and institutions to develop community-engaged learning ('service learning' in America) initiatives in particular, and civic engagement more generally. There are other examples of infrastructure to support civic engagement around the world. The Tailloires Network is an international organization of colleges and universities devoted to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of its members. In Asia, the United Board for Christian Higher Education, Service-Learning Asia Network, and the Asian Network of Engaged Campuses offer conferences and forums. The Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement supports universities in the Arab world. Australia (Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance), South America (Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario), Canada (Canadian Alliance for Service-Learning) and South Africa (South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum) are examples of parallel developments.

Campus Engage has established leadership for Ireland and more broadly. It offers workshops and conferences that convene practitioners and researchers, produces resources and scholarship to advance the field as well as develop capacity, and envisions change within higher education. Boland has been integral to these activities in Ireland and she has contributed internationally as well. This chapter provides an additional significant contribution to the corpus of intellectual and scholarly work by focusing on curricular development, the core of civic engagement. Consistent with other approaches to the topic (e.g., Bringle & Clayton, 2012; MacLabhrainn & McIlrath, 2007), she begins with the troublesome topic of nomenclature, differentiates the unique qualities of community-engaged learning (i.e. civic values) from other forms of community-based instruction, adeptly outlines pedagogical design options, and then uses case studies and inductive methods to offer recommendations and guidelines for developing and implementing community-engaged learning modules. This analysis allows her to deal with some of the details of course design and implementation (e.g. structure and revision of an existing course, reflection, community placements and partnerships) as well as broader issues that this pedagogical approach implicates (e.g. social values embedded in reciprocal relationships with the community, civic values, institutional embeddedness and sustainability of the work, interdisciplinarity). Correctly, Boland also acknowledges the degree to which colleagues in the community need to play an enhanced role as co-designers, co-educators, and co-assessors in community-engaged learning, much more so than has been the case to date or than typically may occur with other forms of community-based learning.

As community-engaged learning and community-engaged research become more prevalent in Ireland, Boland's research provides an example for the type of versatile research and scholarship that can contribute to an enhanced understanding of what is occurring across institutions. As instances of community-engaged learning expand, they will provide the opportunity for other scholars and researchers to broaden the sampling base and conduct additional research studies in the future. Much will be gained through a better understanding of this new pedagogical approach when research begins to also test and refine theory-based research questions that contribute to a broad knowledge base that attends to issues associated with students, faculty, community partners, institutions, and partnerships associated with community-engaged learning (Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2012a; Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher 2012b).

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## Response 2 to

### Curriculum Development for Sustainable Civic Engagement

by Juliet Millican, Deputy Director (Academic) The Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP), University of Brighton.

Boland's article 'Curriculum Development for Sustainable Civic Engagement' provides a valuable analysis of the processes through which curricula can be designed or adapted to incorporate critical pedagogies and reflection. She gives a comprehensive introduction to the range of service/community engaged learning programmes that exist in Ireland and elsewhere, the terminology used to describe them and their importance in the development of students' values. While publications concerning engaged and community based learning are frequent within the US, material from other parts of the world is patchy and this article has relevance outside of the context in which it was written. Boland contributes to the wider debate by taking the reader systematically through the curriculum design process and using models to illustrate 'how best to fit engaged learning into an already overloaded curriculum'. As such it is of interest both nationally to Irish institutions who are actively working to share their own experiences of engagement, and institutions internationally who may be just beginning to consider how to approach this.

Of particular interest is Boland's acknowledgement of the demise of affective learning within higher education – 'the atrophy of the affect' (Cowan 2006 p 160) – and how this remains under-theorised. She comments on how 'an emphasis on measurable, cognitive outcomes, (in Higher Education currently) – has diminished its ability to pursue legitimately the less traditional outcomes which are associated with civic engagement (Lounsbury and Pollack, 2001; Eyler and Giles, 1999), and this is broadly true. Many academics shy away from dealing with the more personal or emotional aspects of learning, despite emotional intelligence becoming an increasingly important area in professional development. Bourner's 'Bridges and Towers, Action Learning and Personal Development in HE' (Bourner, 1998) makes a useful distinction between the 'domains' of higher education (knowledge about the world and skills of how to exist in the world; knowledge about self and skills in how to manage self) and is a rare voice in defending the legitimacy of affective and personal learning within the higher education curriculum. Boland's useful illustrations of how engaged curricula might be introduced within already overloaded university programmes, tied to discipline specific and measurable learning outcomes, would be of interest to academics in many parts of the world.

Boland also touches on the importance of reciprocity and the impact of community engaged learning on the community itself. She mentions the value of community involvement in curriculum design and this is an area that could have been explored more fully. Stoeker's work (Stoeker and Tyron, 2009; Stoeker, 2003) identifies a typology of approaches to working with communities and outlines the dangers of a charity or service delivery model where students become involved in welfare provision without being encouraged to question issues of social justice. Boland's article could have benefitted from a more rigorous analysis of the potential and actual role of community organisations in the development and delivery of engaged curricula, and perhaps this could be an interesting area for further research.

Like many articles on community engaged learning she also makes many claims regarding its contribution to active and critical citizenship and student employability and

yet there are few studies to document this. A key area for further research would be some kind of comparative investigation looking at longer term outcomes for students who have and have not benefitted from engaged learning programmes. A small research project by Bournier and Millican (2011) made some steps in this direction but their findings were inconclusive. A larger scale study that sought to compare and document how students reacted after graduating, their involvement in their communities, their choices for work and their attitudes towards inequality may go some way to evidencing to what extent some of these claims might actually be true.

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## Reader's Response

### ***Emerging Issues in Higher Education III: From capacity building to sustainability.***

### **A Reflective Response: What have we learned and what must we now do?**

Saranne Magennis, National University of Ireland Maynooth.

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The period between the publication of the first volume of *Emerging Issues* in 2005 and the current volume in 2013 has been characterized by a rapidly changing landscape, requiring flexibility, adaptability and creativity in higher education. This experience in the past ten years has not been unique to Ireland, nor indeed is the experience of change limited to the recent past. It is well documented in the literature. Barnett, for example, has explored, and continues to investigate, our changing understandings of the university, and of higher education more broadly, from a critical and social philosophy standpoint (Barnett, 2010, 2012; Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008), and Reed et al. offer interesting perspectives on the management of higher education (Reed, Hillyard and Deem, 2007). Fostering positive change, change that is transformative, is a challenge that requires us to reflect on what we are seeking to achieve, as well as on the strategies that can lead to the accomplishment of these goals. Reflection on successes and the steps that were taken to facilitate individuals, teams and groups of colleagues to transform their practice is a crucial stage in the process of developing higher education. In this volume, *Emerging Issues in Higher Education III: From capacity building to sustainability*, we have a wealth of such reflection.

The purpose of this closing chapter is to offer a reflective response to the work encompassed in the book from the perspective of a reader and a learner. The chapter is structured around two questions, coming essentially from an education policy viewpoint, rather than the perspective of a practitioner in the area of teaching and learning development within higher education. These questions are best thought of as dialogue rather than interrogation, while they are permeated by the author's perspective, that perspective is not seen as central or dominant and the questions are asked as though in conversation with the texts: what have I learned from this book and what directions does it signpost for the future in higher education?

A core difficulty with being an excellent teacher or in facilitating change in a department or an institution lies in the fact that we cannot see clearly what is to come. We spend our lives reversing into the future, judging and choosing on the basis of the present experience and the past as we have lived or observed it. This is often coupled with a tendency to deal with issues that are important at present – urgent tasks like marking, setting exams, teaching, and reacting to changes that seem to come out of nowhere. This is not to suggest

that we are running blindly into the future; Renfro and Morrison (1983) remark:

Although changes may seem to come upon us without warning, experience shows this is rarely the case. Unfortunately we often disregard or misinterpret the signals of change. We tend to spend our time on issues we perceive to be most important right now; we fail to scan our surroundings for changes that are in the early stages of development. The flood of problems that forces us into crisis management makes concern for emerging issues to appear to be a luxury. It is not. It is a necessity. (p.1)

The current book, like its predecessors, is a broadly based and insightful engagement with the 'emerging issues' as they develop today. It reflects the range of collaborative and co-operative projects and programmes that have been a feature of the teaching and learning community in EDIN and in its precursors. It does not situate these in a vacuum, rather, understanding the need to know the past and present in order to lead into the future, the book explores the history and development of EDIN and the circumstances that led to its establishment. This connectedness with the past and present as a foundation for change, and the necessary leadership to implement change, is noted by Watson in the his conclusion to his Epilogue to Kubler and Sayers *Higher Education Futures: Key Themes And Implications For Leadership And Management* published in 2010 by the Leadership Foundation (Kubler and Sayers, 2010). Speaking about the leadership roles of the senior management teams in universities he says that 'managing the future' involves:

- Understanding the present and the past condition of your institution.
- Getting the resources right, so that there is a zone of freedom of action in which to operate.
- Understanding the terms of trade of the business, especially its peculiar competitively cooperative nature.
- Helping to identify a positive direction of travel for the institution.
- Engaging progressively with that direction of travel (through what Peter Singer describes as an 'ethical journey'. (p.248)
- Optimistically trusting the instincts of the academic community (of students as well as staff) operating at its best. (p.47)

Working with others, rather than alone, offers significant benefits in addressing the limitations visited upon us by our inability to see directly into the future. Collaborative working gives a broader, more multifaceted view of past and present and supports a more surefooted navigation into the unknown future. The gathering of different perspectives supports the identification, interpretation and discussion of the inklings of what may be to come. *Emerging Issues in Higher Education III: From capacity building to sustainability* is shot through with this focus on collaborative effort as a core means of engaging with the point where the present meets the future and the potential for creative action at its greatest.

This leads me to another striking feature of the volume; many of the chapters are collaboratively written and they include international responses. The collaborative nature of the approach seems to me to embody what Lee Harvey has also called for (Harvey, 2005: 274), namely, 'an integrated process of trust that prioritises improvement of learning.' This process of trust is visible in the manner in which the papers are collaboratively written, in the adoption of international responses as a enriching form of dialogue and in the referencing by the authors to other papers in the volume which demonstrates the team

based approach to the writing that has been chosen by EDIN.

One of the most marked changes in teaching and learning in the past decade or so must surely be the manner in which the digital world and the educational space have become intermeshed. For readers of a certain age, who predate the photocopier, remember cassette recorders as an innovation and think of clouds as a meteorological phenomenon (white puffy things in the sky), the brave new world of acronyms like VLE, MOODLE, OER, MOOC and NDLR speaks of a dramatic change. The chapters that examine the pervasiveness of technology in the world of higher education teaching and learning are particularly useful. They map the territory of a significant shift in teaching and learning, but they also promote a reflection on the impact and value of the digital world for both teaching and learning. Whether an in-house VLE or a national and shared repository, these technologies must be seen as tools and enablers for creative engagement if they are to move beyond the earlier understanding of their role as an effective way of sharing content.

A further benefit of this volume is that it presents a number of studies that are based on significant data sets, in many cases with potential for ongoing longitudinal work. In an area such as teaching and learning development, that is often characterized as 'soft', it is good to see a challenge to that characterization. Without any loss in terms of the innovative qualitative work that has been associated with teaching and learning developers, a growing emphasis on the quantitative tools that are available and that can add to our understanding of the area is a clear indication of capacity building. Whether this is applied to measuring student engagement, to the impact of technologically mediated learning or the staff views on a range of issues relevant to them, it adds powerfully to our means of understanding the landscape of higher education and, where needed, changing that landscape.

Higher education, though perhaps less so than other elements of the public service world, has been the subject of negative attention that has emphasized the cost, rather than the contribution that it has made to society, and more narrowly, to the economy. The criticism sometimes seems to imply that higher education policy operates on the basis of autopilot, pretty much continuing on a preset course with little or no human intervention for much of the time. It is worthwhile in these circumstances to set out the evidence of considerable development in response to changing times and circumstances. *Emerging Issues in Higher Education III: From capacity building to sustainability* demonstrates the significant changes that have been accomplished in the area of teaching and learning development, in growing the individual and collaborative capacities of practitioners in the sector and in embracing new pedagogies, new technologies and new ways of listening to the voices of students and colleagues through quantitative and qualitative research.

The answer to the second of my questions – what directions does the publication signpost for the future of higher education – is difficult to summarize. The clichés of constant change are clichés precisely because they reflect our experience. They are not new – from the great image of the river in Heraclitus to the wisdom of Schulz's Charlie Brown who sums it up in the weary observation that 'That's the secret of life ... replace one worry with another' (Schulz, 1981). The core lessons would seem to be that all those engaged in the work of teaching and learning development are on a difficult journey, and that journeying is best undertaken together. The investigations and initiatives described and evaluated here will be of great value to colleagues who continue to grapple with change, especially in this persistent period of austerity. The achievements, successes and insights will, I think, bring a renewed sense of hope and energy to the development of teaching and learning in higher education as an endeavour and to the reader as an individual practitioner.



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**Mary Fitzpatrick** is the Regional Teaching and Learning Advocate in the Centre for Teaching and Learning in UL. Her key area of expertise is supporting the professional development of teaching and learning among academics. Her main areas of responsibility include supporting faculty through key initiatives which help academic development such as, teaching portfolios, peer observation and teaching awards. She is course director for the Specialist Diploma in Teaching, Learning and Assessment, and teaches modules on peer observation of teaching and learning, and reflective practice. She is currently leading the Regional Teaching Award project for the Shannon Consortium and has worked in industry as a management consultant bringing this expertise to her teaching at the Kemmy Business School. She completed her PhD in the area of learning and inter-organisational networks and her research interests are broad and include professional development, academic identity and classroom innovations.

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**About EDIN:** The Education Developers in Ireland Network (EDIN) is the network of educational developers or teaching and learning professionals in Irish universities, institutes of technology and other higher education institutions. The network supports and enables members to share experience and expertise. EDIN's mission is to support, enhance and influence the field of academic development and practice. EDIN achieves this by informing policy and practice in teaching and learning in Higher Education, and by collaborating in research and the development and dissemination of resources. This is the third publication in the Emerging Issues series.

**About this publication:** *Emerging Issues III in Higher Education: from capacity building to sustainability* is a collection of 16 chapters from 32 authors, representing 12 Irish Higher Education Institutions; it also contains 15 international commentaries. The book is evidence of the valuable work currently being undertaken in teaching and learning in Irish Higher Education and a celebration of these achievements. This publication reflects the situated reality of teaching and learning in higher education in Ireland today, encompasses the hopes and ambitions for the area in the future and captures the mood or zeitgeist which both supports and constrains it.

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