

# ITB Journal

**Issue Number 26, December 2014**



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## Editorial

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to introduce the papers in the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the ITB Journal, which is dedicated to Civic Engagement. There is both a diversity of contributions and contributors. Contributors from various Higher Education Institutions namely, IT Tralee with the University of Limerick, ITT Dublin, Letterkenny IT and IT Blanchardstown in addition to contributors from the Senior Sports Officer of Fingal County Council and the Chief Officer of the local Community Development Committee have submitted papers.

The various contributions illustrate the breath of Civic Engagement as a subject area. The papers included in this issue focus on themes regarding:

- The nature of CE and how it can be embedded in a higher education institution;
- Engaging the staff, students and resources of ITB to teach computer coding to young people;
- A review of Civic Engagement from a societal prospective – in particular the sense of active citizenship in which youth engage;
- How student flourishing can be enabled thorough community and civic engagement;
- A review of a work experience programme involving four ITB students collaborating with a Fingal County Council Sports Office programme;
- The civic role of the university and the importance of prioritising community needs in the context of a new technological university for Dublin;
- A service learning project update regarding the development of an electronic menu system in association the with James Connolly Memorial Hospital Catering Department;
- A project outline of an Outdoor Play initiative in the North West of Ireland;
- Developing and implementing civic engagement programmes in Dublin 15 – the perspective of a community partner;
- Reflections on the work of the International Fund for Ireland from 1986-2011 in developing community engagement across traditional community divides.

I would like to thank all the contributors for their willingness to contribute to this issue of the ITB Journal and for the effort they have invested in making this edition so diverse and thought provoking. Finally I would like to thank Dr. Brian Nolan, Editor of the ITB Journal for his interest in the topic of Civic Engagement and for making it possible to dedicate this edition of the ITB Journal to Civic Engagement.

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# **Civic Engagement: Strategic and Implementation perspectives within a Higher Education Institution**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper will give a brief overview of what Civic Engagement means in Higher Education in general with a particular focus on Knowledge Exchange, Service Learning, Community Based Research and Volunteering. Following this, emergent thinking on Civic Engagement in Ireland is presented. Given both the theoretical context and the strategic importance of ensuring Civic Engagement opportunities are offered in a Higher Education Institution some possible organisation arrangements regarding the structured development and implementation of Civic Engagement at strategic and implementation levels are proposed.*

## **1 National Strategy for Higher Education - Report of the Strategy Group (NSHE) to 2030**

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group<sup>1</sup> defines Engagement as:

At its simplest, engagement means taking on civic responsibilities and cooperating with the needs of the community that sustains higher education – including business, the wider education system, and the community and voluntary sector

The report<sup>2</sup> also states the following concerning engagement:

Engagement by higher education with wider society takes many forms. It includes engagement with business and industry, with the civic life of the community, with public policy and practice, with artistic, cultural and sporting life and with other educational providers in the community and region, and it includes an increasing emphasis on international engagement (see reference<sup>3</sup> in report). The multidimensional nature of many of the social, economic and civic challenges means that they require multidisciplinary approaches, and higher education institutions are uniquely well placed to lead, develop and apply these, in partnership with others.

Also the NSHE<sup>4</sup> states (Executive Summary)

Higher education institutions should have open engagement with their community and wider society and this should infuse every aspect of their mission. Outward-facing systems and structures should be embedded into institutional activity, so that there are inward and outward flows of knowledge, staff, students and ideas between each institution and its external community.

In the Summary of Recommendations Section the NSHE<sup>5</sup> states:

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<sup>1</sup>National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group, p74, Accessed 15/12/2014.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p74. [http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national\\_strategy\\_for\\_higher\\_education\\_2030.pdf](http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Weber, L.E., Duderstadt, J.J. (Eds), 2010, University Research for Innovation, Economica, Glion Colloquium Series No. 6, p. 350.

<sup>4</sup>National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group, p12, Accessed 15/12/2014. [http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national\\_strategy\\_for\\_higher\\_education\\_2030.pdf](http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p79



Engagement with the wider community must become more firmly embedded in the mission of higher education institutions. To achieve this, higher education institutions will need to take the following actions:

- Encourage greater inward and outward mobility of staff and students between higher education institutions, business, industry, the professions and wider community.
- Respond positively to the continuing professional development needs of the wider community to develop and deliver appropriate modules and programmes in a flexible and responsive way.
- Recognise civic engagement of their students through programme accreditation, where appropriate.
- Put in place structures and procedures that welcome and encourage the involvement of the wider community in a range of activities, including programme design and revision.

## 2 Civic Engagement (CE)<sup>6</sup> – Overview of Literature

Bringle et al. (2006, p258) cited in Bringle, R., Clayton, P.<sup>7</sup> (2012: p104) describe CE in the following way:

Civic engagement is a subset of community involvement and is defined by both location as well as process (it occurs not only in but also with the community). According to this definition, civic engagement develops partnerships that possess integrity and that emphasise participatory, collaborative, and democratic processes ( e.g. design, implementation, assessment ) that provide benefits to all constituencies.

Furco (2003 ) cited in Boland<sup>8</sup> (2008: pp20-21) present the following spectrum of activities associated with CE.

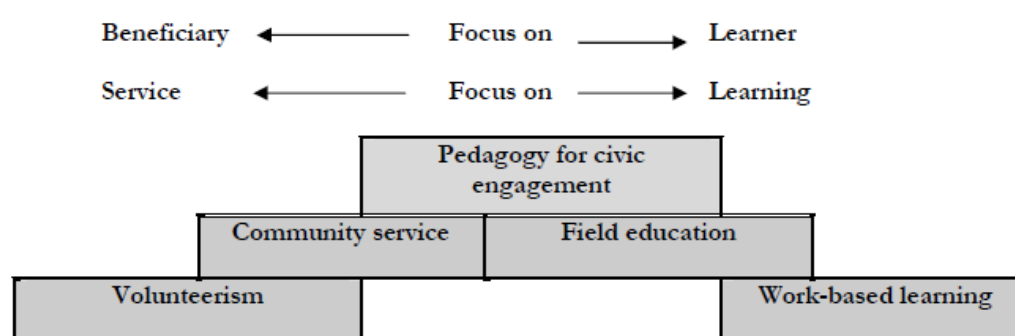


Figure 1

<sup>6</sup> CE is used as an abbreviation for Civic Engagement in this paper.

<sup>7</sup> Bringle, R., Clayton, P. 2012. Civic Education through Service Learning in McIlrath, L., Lyons A., Munck, R. *Higher Education and Civic Engagement: Comparative Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 101 – 124.

<sup>8</sup> Boland, J.A. 2008. [Embedding a civic engagement dimension within the higher education curriculum: a study of policy, process and practice in Ireland](https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/5804/1/Boland2008.pdf). Ed. D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh. p12, Accessed 15/12/2014. <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/5804/1/Boland2008.pdf>

Gonzalez-Perez et al. (2007) cited in Boland<sup>9</sup> (2008: p12) state by way of examples that Civic Engagement can include activities such as:

- Volunteering;
- Community based learning ( or service learning );
- Participative and collaborative research;
- Educational initiatives.

## 2.1 Service Learning

Bringle and Hatcher<sup>10</sup> (1996, p222) adapted in Bringle, R., Clayton, P<sup>11</sup>. (2012: p105) refer to the concept of service learning as part of civic engagement:

Service Learning as a component of civic engagement can be defined as a course or competency based credit bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in mutually identified service activities that benefit the community and that (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced set of personal values and civic responsibility.

Boland<sup>12</sup> (2008: p20) citing MacLabhrainn and McIlrath, refers to Service Learning as:

Service learning differs significantly from conventional work placements and internships and it is often defined in contradistinction to volunteering, with which it is sometimes conflated. Within the literature, repeated efforts are made to distinguish between them, such as...

Service learning is a specific pedagogical approach, it is not about voluntary contributions to the community for 'charitable purposes'; it is about benefiting from such an experience through reflection and academic critique and providing recognition through academic credit and ultimately helping also to build capacity within community organisations. (MacLabhrainn and McIlrath, 2007, p. xxiii)

## 2.2 Community Based Research (CBR)

Community Based Research relates to research that is undertaken in collaboration with the community. The work could be an analysis of existing community related data to assist in greater understanding of community challenges.

Campus Engage<sup>13</sup> defines CBR as:

.... a set of approaches to research and methodologies that are community centered, also known as participatory, action research, community-engaged scholarship, emancipatory research, to mention a few. Practices all focus on the effects of research on improving, understanding further, or investigating further social issues of concern. Sometimes these methodologies involve the full support and inclusion of the community in terms of research design, collecting and analysing data, and writing up and sharing of findings to help inform and change policy

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p12.

<sup>10</sup>Bringle, R., Hatcher, J. 1996. "Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education." *Journal of Higher Education* 67 (2): pp 221-239.

<sup>11</sup>Bringle, R., Clayton, P. 2012. *Civic Education through Service Learning in McIlrath, L., Lyons A., Munck, R. Higher Education and Civic Engagement: Comparative Perspectives.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 101 – 124.

<sup>12</sup>Boland, J.A. 2008. [Embedding a civic engagement dimension within the higher education curriculum: a study of policy, process and practice in Ireland.](#) Ed. D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh. p20, Accessed 15/12/2014..

<sup>13</sup>Campus Engage Ireland (<http://www.campusengage.ie/community-community-based-research>), Accessed 15/12/2014).

and practice, across various disciplines for better outcomes. Below is one of many existing illustrative examples of the process involved in community-based research. This is based on the original designed by Community Academic Research Links, UCC.

For example at undergraduate level, students can use census data sub-sets at electoral area level to analyse community issues as part of a research methods module.

**Service Learning and Community Based Research** projects are conducted under the supervision of an academic staff member and normally there is academic credit gained by the student for the work done on such projects.

### **2.3 Volunteering**

Volunteering can include individual members of staff and students volunteering to work with community groups and organisations. This can happen in a variety of ways, for example, assisting with the practical/ operational aspects of community organisations or accepting a position on the board of directors of a voluntary organisation. The extent to which students can receive academic credit for volunteering related community work will be referred to later.

### **2.4 Knowledge Exchange**

Knowledge Exchange can take place by means of events such as Learning Exchange activities which are designed to engage a broad range of networks including public, private and civic to exchange, ideas, learning and solutions which have the potential to impact on identified economic, social and community challenges such as growing the local social economy or using digital media platforms to more effectively engage citizens.

## **3 Campus Engage Ireland – Strategic Development and Capacity Building**

In 2012, Campus Engage Ireland recommenced activity to support Higher Education Institutions in developing their Civic Engagement role.

### **3.1 Charter for Civic Engagement and Associated Indicators<sup>14</sup>**

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014, a charter on CE was signed by/ on behalf of 22 Higher Education Institution (HEI) Presidents in Ireland. Subsequently, a working group of Campus Engage Ireland developed a set of CE indicators based on the Campus Engage Ireland Charter which can be used to plan and review HEI CE activities.

In particular, the Campus Engage Ireland Charter Indicators could be used by HEIs to contribute to the Engagement planning section of the HEA Mission Based Performance Compact<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup>The Campus Engage charter can be accessed at this link (<http://www.campusengage.ie/groups/campus-engage-charter-higher-education-civic-and-community-engagement>) . Accessed 15/12/2014.

<sup>15</sup>Mission Based Performance Compact documents can be seen on the HEA website <http://www.heai.ie/en/policy/national-strategy/higher-education-system-performance-2014-16>, Accessed 15/12/2014.



#### **4 Embedding Civic Engagement – A Systems Perspective of a HEI with an emphasis on the McKinsey 7S framework**

Given the knowledge that exists relating to CE and the resources available from Campus Engage Ireland, how can a HEI develop and implement CE policy and strategy.

As HEIs seek to determine approaches to embedding CE within the culture of the organisations, it may be helpful to see this goal with a systems perspective of HEI organisation change. The key intent of this change, if necessary, would be to enable a structured approach to developing a HEI strategy on CE which would include:

1. Exploring the CE work that is already being done and assessing its alignment with the HEI's mission;
2. Identifying any regional emphasis on CE;
3. Supporting faculty, administrators and students in the Service Learning, Volunteering, Community based Research and Knowledge Exchange;
4. How to make CE opportunities available to all the staff (faculty and administrators), students and external community of the HEI who want to participate.

One of the approaches which can help in adopting a systems approach to understanding organisations is the McKinsey 7S framework. The framework identifies seven elements (Staff, Shared Values, Style, Skills, Strategy, Structure, Systems) which need to be congruent to ensure stability and harmony within the organisation. There is a need for congruence between the 7S as each element is interdependent on the other 6.

In terms of embedding CE in the HEI, the framework might suggest the following questions (ref. Table 1) The 7 elements are:

**Table 1**

	Key aspects <sup>16</sup>	Examples of HEI implications for Civic Engagement
Staff	The means through which talent is recognised, recruited, grown and developed	Have staff who are interested in and motivated to participate in CE activities been identified? Are financial resources available? Has the time required been factored into the academic programme timetables to enable the CE work to be done? Are appropriate staff development opportunities available throughout the year to enable CE activities?
Shared Values	Is there clarity concerning what the organisation is trying to achieve? Is there clarity about what is important to and what characterizes the organisation? e.g. Highly employable graduates, Social Mission	Are all stakeholders on whom the changes impact aligned to the values of the organisation?
Style	This refers to the culture of the HEI which is often reflected in informal modes of conduct.	How do the informal norms impact on specificity and acceptance of goals, task implementation and measurement and accountability for results? Is there sufficient commitment to collaboration among all Civic Engagement stakeholders within the HEI region?
Skills	This refers to the institutional and individual skills sets needed	Have the skill sets necessary for CE been identified with staff? Are programme boards sufficiently populated with Civic Engagement champions? Is there sufficient competence to develop Ce policy, strategy and implementation?
Strategy	The approach adopted to gain competitive advantage	Is the curriculum of the HEI appropriate to its CE mission?
Structure	Are the authority relationships/ decision makers (individuals/ groups) clear?	Are there decision making individuals or groups (with relevant decision making norms) clearly identified with terms of reference?
Systems	Are the processes with the organisation fit for purpose?	Are scheduling systems aligned? Are appropriate processes in place to manage community partner databases? Are HR systems aligned with the CE strategy of the HEI? Does the process of the college/ school timetabling facilitate commitment to and participation with CE?

<sup>16</sup>Source (amended): [McKinsey&Company website reference](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/strategy/enduring_ideas_the_7-s_framework)  
[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/strategy/enduring\\_ideas\\_the\\_7-s\\_framework](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/strategy/enduring_ideas_the_7-s_framework), Accessed 15/12/2014.



## **5 Civic Engagement at a Policy and Strategic Level – helping to provide an environment in which Higher Education (HE) strategy can be implemented and some graduate attributes can be effectively developed**

Civic Engagement needs to be managed at both a strategic and implementation level. At a strategic level, a strategic Civic Engagement team would lead the development of appropriate relationships with key stakeholders to the formation of a consultation group. This would yield a pool of advisors capable of offering diverse perspectives on CE and assisting the HEI to consider and decide how to be most valuable in terms of its CE policy. The ongoing development of CE Policy and strategy may also require developing new relationships with external stakeholders to optimise CE activity and impact.

Figure 3<sup>17</sup> below identifies core elements of a HEI structure at a strategic level.. The Strategic CE Leadership team would be formed to develop CE policy and strategy and to assess on an ongoing basis the efficacy of the policy and strategy in line with emergent needs in the domains of Teaching & Learning, Commercial/ Industrial Engagement, Knowledge Exchange and Research. The leader of this team would report to a senior executive (e.g. Vice President Level) of the HEI while the team would be fully accountability on a functional basis to the schools/ colleges of the HEI through the Civic Engagement Implementation Partner<sup>18</sup> (CEIP). Key outputs from the CE Leadership team are illustrated in Figure 3. Furthermore to ensure full integration of CE within the curriculum, a member of the CE Strategic Leadership team would be an ex-officio member of Academic Council. Thus programme design and review and QA aspects impacting on CE could be championed.

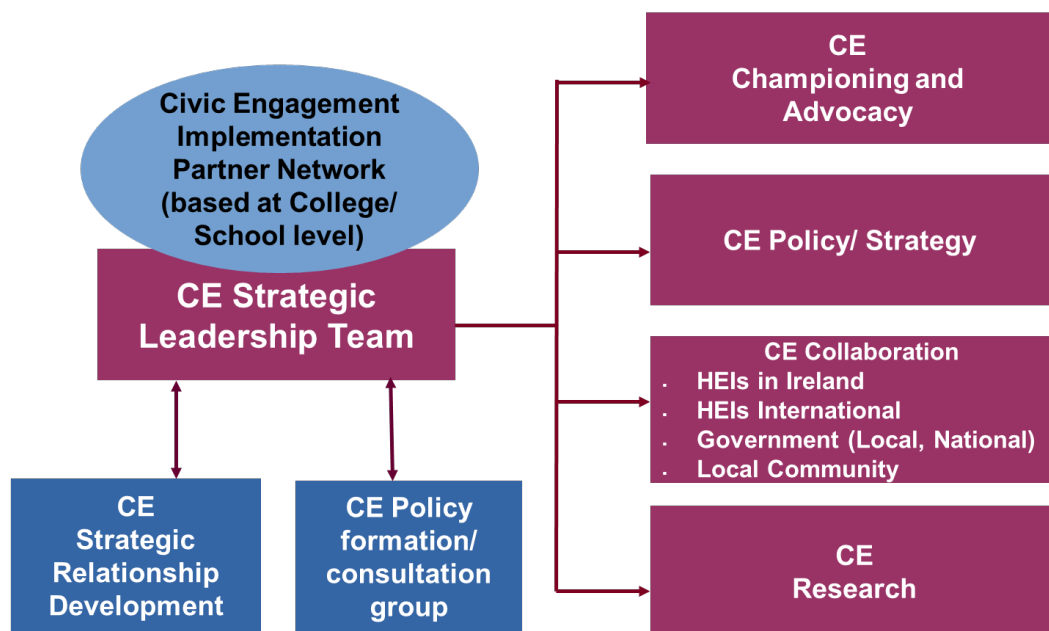
The CE Leadership Team would engage on a consultative basis with a a key group of stakeholders who would be motivated and have the relevant competencies and availability to assist in specifying and advise on appropriate aspects of CE. The Leadership would also be integrated with a team of Civic Engagement Implementation Partners who would be based at school/ college level of the HEI. The next section of this paper specifies the role of the CEIP. Core outputs from the policy strategy team are illustrated in Figure 3.

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<sup>17</sup>This model has been developed based on work done as part of the TU4 Dublin Organisation Design consultation process with colleagues from [DIT](#), [ITT Dublin](#) and [ITB](#).

<sup>18</sup>The role of the CEIP is outlined in the next section.

## CE Implementation within TU Strategic Civic Engagement within HEI



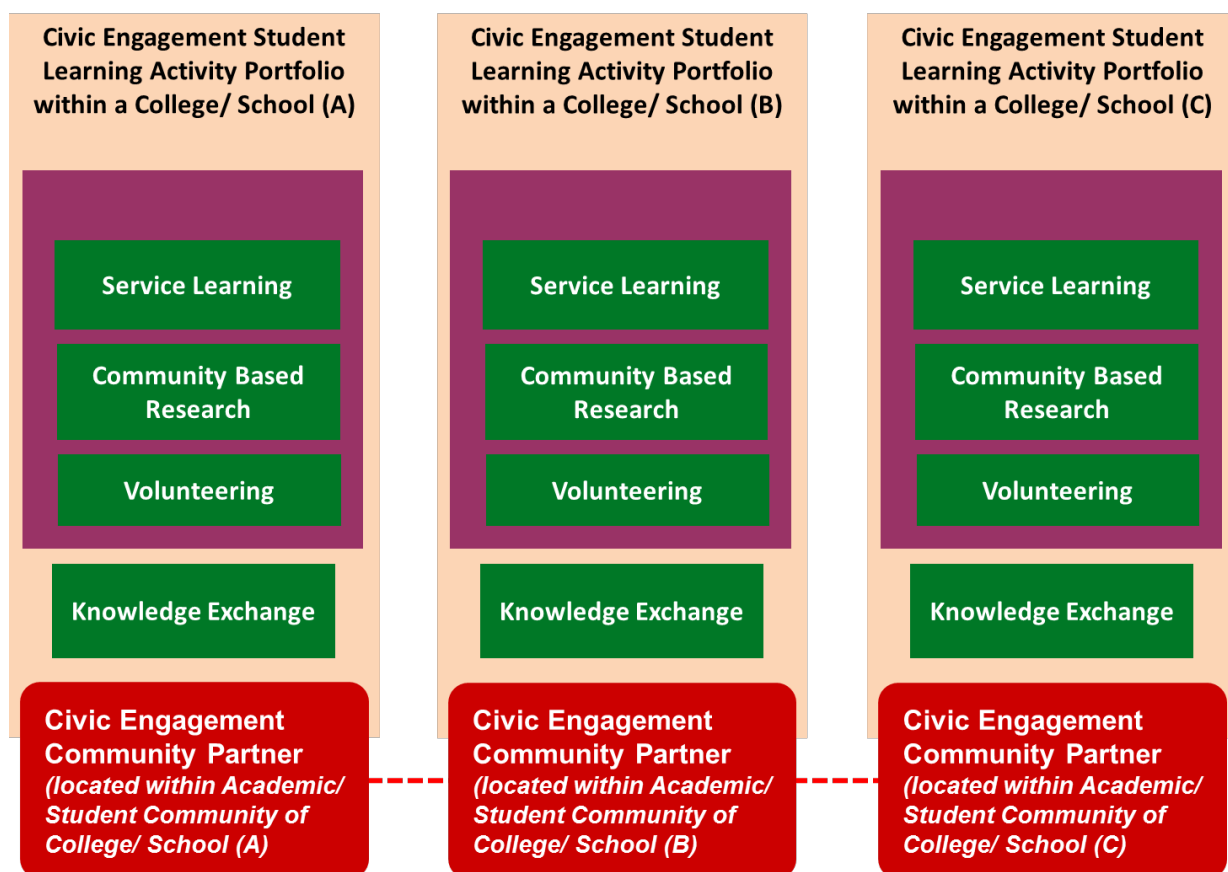
**Figure 3**

### 5.1 Implementing Civic Engagement Policy and Strategy within a college or cluster

The implementation of CE policy and strategy could effectively take place through a team of Civic Engagement Implementation Partners (CEIP). The exact role/ duties of a CEIP would be specified by the CE policy/ strategy team in consultation with colleges/ schools. The specific people<sup>19</sup> assigned to the role in each college would be appointed by the school/college.

<sup>19</sup> This role may be carried out by one or more people and probably best carried out by a member of faculty. However, it would be the responsibility of the college/ school to nominate one person from the CEIP function to participate on the network of CEIPs.





**Figure 4**

The key responsibilities of the CEIP role would be:

1. Full awareness of college programmes and constituent modules;
2. Capability to relate to academic colleagues and identify CE projects suitable for Community Based Research and Service Learning;
3. Introducing community partners to academic colleagues with a view to participating in Knowledge Exchange activities;
4. To support any elements of volunteering in the strategy by identifying relevant community and student groups/ societies;
5. To be an ex-officio member of Programme Boards;
6. To be an active participant in CEIP network (see dash line in Figure 4) proactively sharing CE opportunities and possible solutions;
7. To contribute as a member of the CEIP network to policy/ strategy development;
8. CE management and administration/ event management;
9. Community partner cohort engagement/ support and coaching

## **5.2 A Programme Level Possibility – integrating key stakeholders in programme design and implementation**

The model shown in Figure 5 illustrates how CE could be embedded at a programme level.

Firstly, in the design of the programme, the core inputs are specified ranging from graduate attributes, professional standards, community needs. Knowledge Exchange is not included here as it is primarily delivered by faculty. The curriculum in taking account of agreed inputs needs to reflect the commitment of the HEI to the National Strategy for Higher Education as

referred to earlier (perhaps articulated through the HEI's policy and strategy for CE). To assist/ support this, a specific CE element is proposed in the curriculum delivery process as outlined in the model shown in Figure 5.

What is essentially proposed is that the programme is monitor/ evaluated three distinct stages from design through on-going delivery.

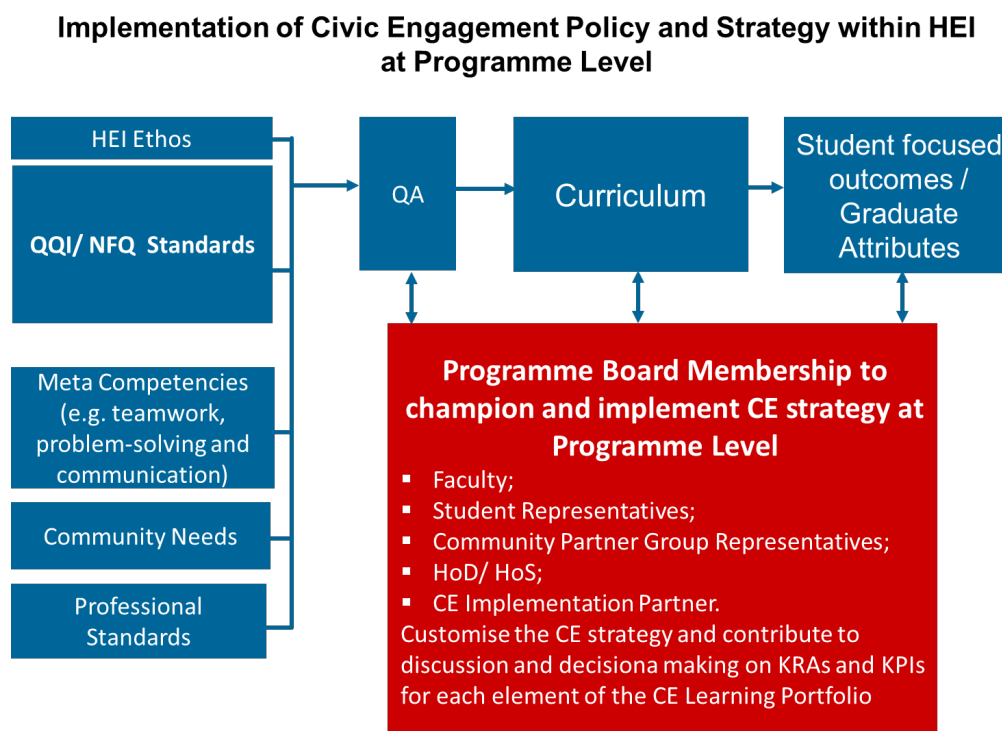
### 5.3 Quality Assurance (QA)/ Curriculum and Graduate Attributes

Guidelines regarding the participation in Service Learning and/ or Community Based Research could be developed in consultation with the Programme Board members as shown in Figure 5. For example an elective module could be made available in all programmes to encourage CE through volunteering and recognise and reward the effort thorough ECTS credits. Guidelines on volunteering would be agreed regarding the relevant level of commitment to the volunteer work, the assessment process, and amount of terminal award ECTS credits associated with the volunteer effort.

The board could decide the extent to which CE modules would be introduced to the programme as an elective carrying award relevant ETCS. An example of such a module is contained in Appendix 1.

At the Curriculum stage, the Programme Board would ensure that the strategic aspects of CE were being implemented within the HEI College/ School. In particular the board would decide and monitor the, amount of module projects which would include Service Learning, Community Based Research and Volunteering.

At an outcomes level of the programme, the board would ensure the defined set of graduate attributes were being achieved and that the efficacy of the methods employed through the curriculum demonstrated the appropriate emphasis on Service Learning, Community Based Research and Volunteering to optimise the student learning and development experience.



**Figure 5**

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has sought to present an overview of CE, emergent thinking in Ireland as articulated through Campus Engage against a back-drop of the HE Strategy for Higher Education in Ireland to 2030.

A systems approach to any change is emphasised and the McKinsey &S frame was offered as one means of achieving this.

Finally approaches were suggested regarding the need to and a means of implementing CE at a policy/ strategic level and at an implementation level in schools/ colleges.

## 7 Appendix 1

### 7.1 A CE module offered across Programmes (pan-Programme), Colleges/ Schools.

CE, when applied to Service learning and Community Based Research can help to develop competencies such as leadership, project management and communication skills. A HEI with a multi-programme distributed across Colleges/ Schools is well poised to leverage the benefit of developing such skills in a multi-disciplinary environment thereby emulating a real life working environment likely to be experienced after graduation. For example, a pan-programme elective module in which students from Engineering, IT, Social Care and Finance participate to analyse and solve a community problem may be more helpful in helping students understand different perspectives of a problem, enable greater understanding of client/ community partner needs and an accurate assessment of the solution's efficacy.

The approach adopted in the following pages to designing a CE module, is based on firstly identifying the meta-competencies associated with a number of programmes and mapping these in a matrix (See Table 2). If a commonality exists in the meta-competency outcomes of a number of modules then this would provide a suitable student cohort to which the module could be offered.

## Core ITB NFQ L8 Programmes Learning Outcomes as analysed in January 2014.

(This mapping is for indicative purposes only)

Table 1 maps 11 programmes offered to students at NFQ L8 with 6 meta-competencies listed in or derived from the learning outcomes of each programme:

Meta competency	<a href="#">BN101 Bachelor of Business (Honours) [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN103 Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Information Technology [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN114 Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting &amp; Finance [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN121 Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechatronics [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN104 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN112 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative Digital Media [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN113 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Horticulture [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN107 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN115 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN118 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Care and Education [240 ECTS credits]</a>	<a href="#">BN111 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Sports Management and Coaching [240 ECTS credits]</a>
Teamwork	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Working in partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		p
Strategic perspective	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Self-reflection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Communication/ interpersonal skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Problem formulation / solution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Table 2**

### Civic Engagement Module descriptor

The CE module seeks to give a structured opportunity for students to develop the competencies listed in Table 2 above through experiential learning in a Civic Engagement context.

### 7.2 Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module the student will be able to:

1. To develop meta competencies listed in Table 1 by assisting in the assessment of a challenge or problem which is of importance to a community and providing possible solution(s);

2. To develop knowledge of self, derived from structured reflection based on engagement with community/ civic challenges;
3. Reflect on societal challenges and identify how their chosen field of study can contribute to assisting with community challenges;
4. To provide an opportunity for students to develop an awareness of civic responsibility in line with the 2030 HEA education strategy.

### **7.3 Indicative Content**

1. Developing self-awareness and an understanding of team roles using theory and psychometric instruments;
2. Communication and influencing using instruments such as DiSC<sup>20</sup>;
3. A group of students will be assigned to a project. Having met to scope the project, students will assign roles to each other and hold each other mutually accountable for the tasks agreed. Students shall use industry relevant software to manage the project and submit reports based on the software to their appointed module supervisor. Maintain a reflective journal of self and team member interaction;
4. Developing consulting skills through identifying community challenges and taking a systems view of issues;
5. Engaging the community partner in solution(s) development;
6. Development of final solution;
7. Presentation and sign-off with community partner;
8. Assess feedback from community partner in relation to the student team engagement in the project.

Module Format and assessment (ECTS credits: 5)

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.internalchange.com/PPSMOPO-232.pdf> for description, Accessed 15/12/2014.

Record keeping		Description	Indicative assessment %	Takes place during weeks	Student hours	
					In class/ computer laboratory	Self-directed learning
Reflective journal submitted			25	3-12		
	Preparatory Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Civic Engagement – identifying stakeholders – managing stakeholder relationships – building and maintaining mutual respect and credibility;</li> <li>• Applied teamwork;</li> <li>• Applied project management;</li> <li>• Communicating with stakeholders;</li> <li>• Introduction to systems theory and application;</li> <li>• Introduction to ethics, corporate governance and organisation structure.</li> </ul>	15	1 2 3 4	8	4
	Action Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students form into teams;</li> <li>• Team roles self-assessment conducted by students using a selected team roles instrument;</li> <li>• Initial project management process outlined using relevant industry software;</li> <li>• Students meet community partners;</li> <li>• Student team assign roles to each other based on a teamwork instrument;</li> <li>• Community challenge/ problem assessed and initial report issued to community partner for confirmation (c. 1500 words) in designated format.</li> </ul>	20	5 6 7	4	18
	Action Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student team researches community challenge/ problem;</li> <li>• Student team generates solutions and requests Community Partner to select one option;</li> <li>• Option as selected by Community Partner implemented.</li> </ul>	20	8 9 10 11	6	18
	Reporting/ reflection Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students reflect on their experience (tsk and process aspects) and each student completes a 2000 word report on the project using a designated reporting template.</li> </ul>	20	12 13 14	2	18

# Setting Up and Mentoring in CoderDojo Dublin 15

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## Abstract

*Initially beginning in Ireland, CoderDojo is a non-profit organisation that has grown rapidly into a global network of community based programming clubs. Mentors teach coding skills to young people aged between 7 and 17. All classes are free of charge and clubs operate entirely on a volunteer basis. The first Dublin 15 based CoderDojo began just over two years ago and continues to thrive during weekend sessions held at The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB), which offers the use of its premises and resources for the sessions. This paper will chronicle the involvement of ITB staff and students with the CoderDojo, Dublin 15 branch from its inception. How the various contributions of all parties lead to a highly successful collaboration that ultimately led to classes becoming self-sustainable as a local facility for Dublin 15 children. Furthermore, this collaboration not only yielded benefits for the young people encountering coding for the first time, but spotlighted the previously untapped skillset of computing students and staff to engage in civic outreach in the wider community.*

## 1 Introduction

While reports arise of a skills shortage in the Irish ICT Industry, it can sometimes be overlooked that there is no standardised means of teaching such skills in school at secondary level, and even fewer at national level. The recent mandate to include coding as part of the Junior Cert curriculum is a positive step to address this. Typically, formal training in coding is encountered for the first time when students enter college or university. This approach does have a certain amount of merit. An appropriate level of abstract and critical thinking is indeed required before one can attempt to code with confidence. However, there is little reason to suggest why such abstract thinking cannot be developed at a much earlier age. The first CoderDojo was founded in Cork by the then eighteen year old James Whelton and businessman Bill Liao. It was initially set up to address the multiple requests Whelton was receiving from classmates to teach them the same coding skills he had self-taught himself. It has since become a global movement. On any given month, between 10,000 and 20,000 young people are mentored worldwide by volunteers in more than 399 dojos in 43 countries. Various 'belts' are awarded to children, similar to those of a martial arts dojo, on successful creation of computer programs at cumulative levels of difficulty. Classes have been held at ITB for over two years now with no sign of declining popularity. In fact the fully booked sessions each weekend have led to further sponsorship and scaling up of resources. Due to the popularity of these weekend classes, a second dojo has also been formed elsewhere in Dublin 15 to facilitate weekday classes.

## 2 Why Coding?

Apart from providing an opportunity for children to learn how to code at an early age, perhaps one of the primary factors in CoderDojo's success lies in the fact that it tends to embrace a dynamic method of learning required for ICT. Classes tend to be collaborative in

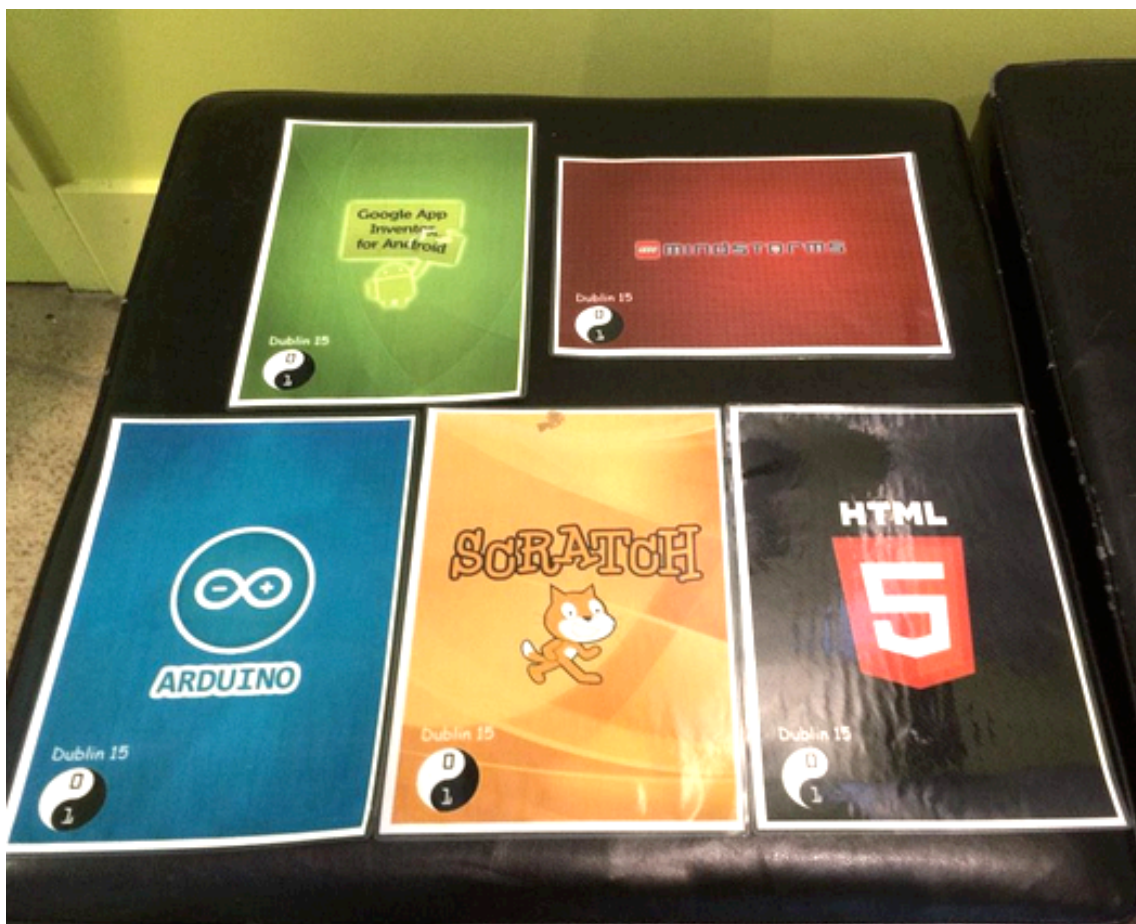


nature, with small groups of students working together alongside mentors, rather than a single facilitator. Even the content tends to be variable depending on the current skillset of the children and particular software that may be in use.

For example, CoderDojo, Dublin 15 at ITB has now expanded to the extent that its weekly range of classes includes:

- *Scratch Programming*
- *Arduino Development*
- *Robotics with Lego Mindstorms*
- *Mobile Applications using Android*
- *Web Development using HTML5 and JavaScript.*

Each of the above platforms provide an appropriate environment to learn the technical and creative skills necessary to build useful computer applications. Young students aged 8 and 9 years old are literally learning similar techniques and technologies that may be used in industry, albeit in more suitable and age appropriate packaging.



**Figure 1:** Which class are you joining today? A recent Twitter Post by @CoderDojoD15 outlining the classes currently on offer.

It should also be noted that unlike foreign language learning, knowing how to code in a variety of computer programming languages is very common. This is quite feasible once the fundamentals of general coding have been mastered to allow transfer between languages. For



example, a child who might have enjoyed Scratch coding initially, will have already gained enough experience to attempt another programming language with relative ease.



**Figure 2:** An ITB USB storage wristband to represent the Dojo ‘Belt’ system of awards. One white wristband was given to each of the first CoderDojo, Dublin 15 Participants

### 3 Setting up at ITB

In early April 2012, two experienced IT Professionals, Ivo Brett and Colm Ahern approached ITB with their concept of creating the first CoderDojo in Dublin 15. They had assessed a few locations such as community centres and local libraries, but determined that ITB would make the greatest sense to establish a branch. The initial plan would be simple but scalable. They met with ITB management and computing staff outlining their plan to setup a Dublin 15 branch which they would run and manage. ITB would provide the premises and help the initial setup by leveraging via marketing, insurance and child protection policies. ITB computing staff and students would add to the corps of mentors and act as liaisons with the branch on a number of levels.



**Figure 3:** Local children and mentors participating in one of the many fully booked sessions.

Several meeting ensued between the Dublin 15 organisers and ITB staff where course content was agreed upon, classrooms to be used selected as well as classroom design and format. The first classes were broken into two adjoining rooms. One of which would host a basic webpage development class using *HTML*, and the other, a more advanced class teaching internet coding skills through *JavaScript*. From the very beginning, all classes were (and continue to be) fully booked.

Tickets would be free of charge in keeping with the volunteer ethos and could be booked online each week via the online ticketing service, *Eventbrite*. Parents were asked to remain on campus during the classes although many would eventually contribute to both logistics and mentoring.

#### **4 Mentoring**

A crucial key to any programming club's success is having a wide network of skilled mentors available who are trained and experienced in the complexities of programming and ICT applications. As module leader on the Data Structures and Algorithms course at ITB at that time, I suggested that students might try to participate through mentoring. Several of those initial students have since remained with the sessions for a number of years, and reported that the experience gained through mentoring gave them key skills and opportunities upon graduation. In particular they noted that at interviews, participation at CoderDojo was noted as a positive endeavour. An indication of increased awareness of the movement. Some of the ITB students would even progress to the point where they could independently lead full classroom sessions themselves. Ian Flood - 2013 BSc graduate now working for *Ericsson* in Athlone - was one of the first ITB student mentors to lead a full class, including managing a small group of other mentors. Children seemed to be responding very well to the interactions with college students.

#### **5 Sponsorship**

Two years on in April 2014, the current head organiser for the Dublin 15 Branch, Larry O'Brien announced that in addition to ITB, both *Bentley Systems* and the *Hello World* foundation would be contributing significant sponsorship. This would allow for the acquisition of further equipment, in particular *Lego Mindstorm* and *Arduino* units. According to O'Brien in an ITB press release in April 2014:

*"CoderDojo has experienced an enormous success in Dublin 15 so far. We have had fully booked classes every Saturday since we started, and it has been great to see the enthusiasm of the kids as they learn new skills. Our biggest challenge is that we don't have enough places to hold classes, and we are heavily oversubscribed. We would love to see CoderDojo extended to other areas in Dublin 15 so that we can accommodate more kids. In order for this to happen, we need more mentors, and we would welcome any mentors contacting us"*

Simon Horsley, Bentley Vice President, EMEA Regional Sales, added,

*"CoderDojo provides a wonderful opportunity to help young students explore the world of software coding and its multiple applications. Our colleagues at Bentley Systems recognize the importance of encouraging young people to engage in STEM-based studies to help ensure a steady supply of engineering talent entering the workforce to help address the world's many challenges, including advancing infrastructure for improved*

*quality of life. Therefore, it is our pleasure to support CoderDojo's extremely worthwhile endeavours."*

Each of the initial founders; Ivo Brett, Colm Ahern and Larry O'Brien have noted the fact that without ITB support in the form of resources, staff and students, such scalability would never have been possible. According to Brett:

*"ITB was instrumental in providing an excellent location and also in providing a cohort of excellent mentors in the form of students from the computing/technology classes. We also had huge support from many of the lecturers. This support from the ITB provided some level of certainty so that we could advertise the first term of classes knowing that we would have enough mentors."*

## **6 A Mentor's Perspective**

The Data Structures and Algorithms course in third year was perhaps the most logical source of mentors given that those computing students would have attained enough expertise at that point in order to teach children. During the first year of classes, over a dozen ITB students from the Data Structures module mentored, and many more from the BSc, MSc and Higher Diploma in computing courses have since volunteered. Many have also continued on as weekly mentors since that time. One such graduate is Neha Theti (MSc 2013) who is now currently completing a PhD in the *Information Security and Digital Forensics research* group at ITB. She outlines her experience below:

*"I initially went to one of the Javascript classes to observe and get an overall idea of how the sessions were conducted. It was great to see experienced professionals and graduates as mentors sparing time to share their knowledge with young kids. Observing the mentors for several sessions helped me hone my teaching skills, especially teaching in a way that is enjoyable and interesting to the kids."*

*It is incredible to see these kids who have immense curiosity and desire to learn coding. They get great satisfaction from developing or building something on their own. Their parents are very supportive as well and some of them sit through the whole session. Coderdojo is an excellent initiative that not only helps kids discover their coding potential and logic building capability, but also enables IT professionals and graduates to gain teaching experience and contribute to the society. With tremendous support of institutions like ITB, Coderdojo continues to be a huge success!"*

## **7 Coding the Future**

While each club inevitably has its own unique culture and choice of software options, it is worth noting the sheer speed at which success has come since that first class in April 2012. A clear indicator if ever there was one of the realistic need for training in coding techniques for younger children. At the time of writing, there are now two additional clubs in the Dublin 15 area. One of which is headed by Ivo Brett and runs weekday classes in a separate location in Castleknock, while the ITB club runs at weekends. Inspired by the rapid success of CoderDojo in Dublin 15, a group of second year students studying Creative Digital Media at ITB in 2013, decided to create a documentary about the movement in general. They worked closely with the Dublin 15 branch at ITB and several scenes were filmed on campus. The documentary is now a featured video on the main CoderDojo YouTube channel, with 91,000+ views and counting. See Figure 4 below:



**Figure 4:** ITB CDM students, *Niall O'Sullivan, Jonathan Doyle, Martyn Mills & Guita Egbon* made a film in 2013, featuring several scenes from the Dublin 15 club.  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/coderdojo/featured>

It seems that once word had circulated and a regular cohort of children were attending weekly classes, the club was more than capable of sustaining itself. It has now expanded towards its initial vision. With the help of ITB, around 100 to 120 kids every week are now learning to code in Dublin 15.

## Links

**CoderDojo - Dublin 15** (Institute of Technology Blanchardstown - *Weekends*)

**Website:** <https://zen.coderdojo.com/dojo/44>

**Twitter ID:** @CoderDojoD15

<https://twitter.com/CoderDojoD15>

**CoderDojo - Castleknock** (Castleknock Community College – *Weekdays*)

**Website:** <http://www.coderdojocastleknock.com/>

**Twitter ID:** @CoderDojoD15

<https://twitter.com/coderdojocastle>

**Documentary – “Coding the Future”**

**Website:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/coderdojo/featured>

# **Apathetic or Engaged?**

## **Exploring Two Paradigms of Youth Civic Engagement in the 21st Century**

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### **Abstract**

*The majority of academics studying the field of civic engagement would concurrently agree that there is a decline in conventional forms of civic engagement, such as voting, keeping informed with current affairs, or membership in civic organisation, especially among young people. However, disagreements begin when advocates for traditional forms of engagement discount evidence of new, evolving patterns in youth civic engagement. Reviewing literature on civic engagement, this paper offers an examination of the congested debate on the 'two paradigms' of youth civic engagement, the disengaged paradigm and the engaged paradigm.*

### **1. Introduction**

The term 'civic engagement' was born from a movement that decried the decline of democracy and sought to investigate, promote and invest in the revival of democratic participation (Berger 2011, p.1). However, concern over civic engagement is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back as far as the 1800s, from Tocqueville's study of America (The Illinois Civic Engagement Project 2001, p.1). In an address to the French Academy in Paris in 1970, Nicolas de Condorcet, a French philosopher and mathematician, highlighted that every generation has a propensity to accuse itself of being less civically engaged than their predecessors (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149). Four decades have passed since this address and the notion of a 'crisis' of civic engagement has gained precedence across varying academic disciplines, policies and institutions once again (Brady et al 2012, p.2), (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149), (Bellah 1985), (Putnam 1993, 2000).

The term has gained fresh precedence after Robert Putnam (1993, 2000), in his famous books, *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone* (2000), decried that civic engagement and social capital levels were at record lows in most western democracies. In *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam (1993) 'married aspects of Coleman's social capital theory to propositions about voluntary associations taken from Alexis de Tocqueville' (cited in Skocpol and Fiorina 2004, p.5). While in *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam (2000) specifically focuses on how younger generations, socialised during a time of vast economic growth from the 1960s onward, are considerably less likely to become civically or politically engaged when compared to previous generations (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149). Following this, a large amount of literature on civic engagement has been published, each attempting to define, investigate, explain, or oppose its 'decline' and propose how these trends can be prevented (Banjai 2008, p.543). In fact, what has occurred between academics and across various disciplines is, as Stolle and Hooghe (2004, p.150) aptly analogise, akin to 'a kind of trench warfare, with fiercely opposing sides bogged down in the mud of an antagonistic duel about the validity of democratic political culture in Western Societies'.

The majority of these incongruities among academics can be reduced to disagreements over the concept of citizenship and whether citizenship is or indeed has, undergone change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Bennett 2008). This paper will begin by exploring the various definitions of civic engagement; from the very specific to more inclusive definitions. Disagreements over the alleged 'crisis' of civic engagement often stem from the disputes over defining civic engagement. The various definitions of civic engagement have led to opposing results in research, as academics are using different definitions and different measurements (Banjai

2008), (Bennett 2008). There is an apparent divide among academics on whether there is a decline in civic engagement, or whether there is evidence of new forms of engagement developing that conform to the values of a post-materialist society (Inglehart 2008), (Forbig 2007, p.7), (Harris 2005, p.35-37), (Sherrod et al, 265), (Power 2012, p.2-4), (Turner-Lee 2010, p.20-24), (Walker 2002, p.183-187). The paradigm divide, according to Bennett and Wells (2009, p.1) highlights ‘fundamental epistemological conflicts over what counts as civic and what counts as engagement in various settings, from games to encounters with news’. The second section of this paper focuses specifically on the youth civic engagement debate, examining the two paradigms, the decline paradigm and the new engagement paradigm.

## **2. What is ‘Civic Engagement’?**

The word ‘civic’ derives directly from the Latin terms for both ‘city’ and ‘citizenship’, and is defined in dictionaries as ‘that which pertains to political communities, citizens, or citizenship’ (Gehring 2005, p.1). Furthermore the term also implies a notion of morality, embodying a sense of the ‘public good’ (Banjai 2008, p.552). Citizens are ‘civic minded’ when they care about their community and are prepared to act benevolently for the common good, even when it might come at a personal cost (Gehring 2005, p.2). Nonetheless, when it comes to defining what constitutes as ‘civic engagement’ definitions can vary from very specific parameters of civic behaviour to very vague, all inclusive definitions (Stolle and Hooghe 2004), (Berger 2011). An internet search for the term civic engagement brings up over 400,000 citations and voluminous literature relating to the topic. A review of literature on the concept quickly highlights the wide range of definitions of civic engagement, with various methods for measuring civic behaviour, thus showing a complete lack of consensus on the topic (Alder and Goggin 2005, p.237), (Norris 2002), (Gibson 2000 cited in Alder and Goggin 2005, p.237), (Berger 2011), (Ekman and Amna 2012), (Levine 2008).

As mentioned, there are some rather explicit definitions of civic engagement, which limits the meaning of the term to very specific forms of engagement (Adler and Goggin 2005, p.239). For example, the majority of political scientists tend to focus explicitly on forms of political participation and attention to and knowledge of political processes, as ‘civic engagement’ (Berger 2011, p.4), (Pritzker 2008, p.3). For Diller (2001 cited in Adler and Goggin, 2005, p.238) civic engagement is based on the concept of citizenship and is ‘an individual’s duty to embrace the responsibilities of citizenship with the obligation to actively participate, alone or in concert with others, in volunteer service activities that strengthen the local community’. Some definitions of civic engagement specify a necessity for collective action, discounting individual action, towards improving societal ills (Van Benschoten 2001 cited in Adler and Goggin 2005, p.238), (Ekman and Amna 2012, p.285). While other definitions also specify the need for collective activities but, collective activities that are specifically political in nature (Diller 2001 cited in Adler and Goggin 2005, p.238), (Ronan 2004 cited in Adler and Goggin 2005, p.238).

Nevertheless, supporters of a more inclusive definition of civic engagement generally oppose reductive definitions of civic engagement that are simply based on the constraints of citizenship. As Levine (2011, p.3) points out, if you interpret the civic in civic engagement to signify the requirements of citizenship, then the term would only apply to the political sphere, and volunteering, while it might manifest into civic engagement, would not be considered civic behaviour. Citizenship is a social construction and is not static (Bennett 2008). What constitutes the ‘good citizen’ is in a constant state of flux, changing with the political, social and communications structures of each era (Bennett, Wells and Rank 2008, p.6). While some might view the citizen who volunteers as a ‘good’ citizen, for others, it must also include active participation in the political processes (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, p.1). According



to Bennett, Wells and Rank (2008, p.6) nations are constantly imposing definitions of citizenship that are generally out of touch with modern society. 'The commonly endorsed dimensions of citizenship (rights and responsibilities, identity and a community/polity) are in late modernity no longer static and clearly defined but constantly fluctuating between a series of oppositions through which citizenship is constantly being re-invented and re-positioned with regard to traditional institutions and practices' (Furlong and Guidikova 2001, p.7).

What leads others to broaden their definition of civic engagement is the hypothesis that engagement in the public sphere, whether political or not, can promote social solidarity, and can be considered valuable in itself as a form of pre-political behaviour that has the potential to manifest into political participation (Levine 2011, p.3). For example, Zurkin et al (2006, p.7) define civic engagement as 'organised voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others. It includes a wide range of work undertaken alone or in concert with others to effect change'. For Zurkin et al (2006, p.50), civic engagement can be expressed in a myriad of behaviours, from donating to a charity, protesting, and raising community concerns to local politicians, volunteering or electoral participation. The Innovations in Civic Participation (2010, p.8), in a report of youth civic engagement based on 101 countries defined civic engagement as 'individual or collective actions in which young people provide opportunities for reflection'. Fiorina (2002 cited in Jenkins et al 2003, p.1) maintains that most civic activity can range from being very politically motivated to being non-political. However, the majority of what occurs in the civic domain always end up crossing paths with the political domain, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001 cited in Jenkins et al 2003, p.1). Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995 cited in Jenkins et al 2003, p.2) highlight that civic activity manifests into political activity when citizens develop relevant skills and experiences from being active in the civic domain where most activity crosses paths with the political domain.

Berger (2011, p.4) and Sartori (2012, p.64) argue that the concept of 'civic engagement' has undergone a 'conceptual stretching' or a 'conceptual straining', leading to an ill-defined, amorphous concept of civic engagement. As Ekman and Amna (2012, p.284) point out 'if civic engagement is used by scholars to mean completely different things, it is basically a useless concept - it confuses more than it illuminates'. Berger (2011, p.4-5) calls for the one size fits all buzzword 'civic engagement' to be abolished and instead to focus on the distinct political (engagement with the political processes, such as voting), social (engagement at a social level, such as joining groups, attending meetings) and moral forms (attention of and adherence to a specific moral code and principles) of engagement that promote and foster a democratic society. Zurkin et al (2006, p.9) also believe that while trying to decipher what constitutes as civic engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, research should also focus on what forms of engagement are 'best' for both individuals and the state. If declining levels of civic engagement are indeed a threat to the effective functioning and survival of democracy, then it is surely imperative to clarify what actually is declining or, what it is that is so urgently needed in order to reverse the situation (Ekman and Amna 2012, p.284). This lack of consensus on defining civic engagement, from some using very specific parameters of civic engagement to others advocating the inclusion of more latent civic engagement, has led to a divide among academics (Rheingold 2008), (Bennett 2008), (Putnam 1998, 2000), (Andolina et al 2002). This debate becomes even more congested when trying to understanding youth civic engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Banaji 2008).

### **3. Youth Civic Engagement**

When the topic of declining civic engagement is brought up, it isn't long before the focus shifts towards the alleged failure of younger citizens to engage in conventional politics and

government in comparison to past generations (Dayrell, Leao and Gomes 2009, p.32), (Edwards 2007 cited in Banaji 2008, p.544). ‘The idea that young people are disengaged from politics and civil society, indeed from the entire public sphere – through no fault of their own or systemic constraints, or because of something that typifies that particular age group – has become something of a mantra now in this field’ (Banaji 2008, p.543). According to Brady et al (2012 p.14) in order for a democratic society to survive, its citizens must be active participants and the participation of young people is paramount to ensure its continuation. Throughout history, young people have represented both the hope for the future survival of democracy, as well as a threat to its stability and existence. The future of democracy depends on the next generation taking on the role of their elders (Utter, 2011, p.2).

Disengagement of youth can lead to alienation from their communities and wider society, where they are rarely given the opportunity to be involved in decisions which, directly or indirectly, affect their lives (Carnegie UK Trust 2008, p.5). If young people become disengaged from civil society, their valuable contributions become missing, losing out on their innovative ideas, creativity, energy and social networks (Flanagan et al 2009, p.10). ‘If today’s disengaged citizens have legitimate interests that do not wholly coincide with the interests of the participators, those interests cannot shape public decisions unless they are forcefully articulated. ‘The withdrawal of a cohort of citizens from public affairs disturbs the balance of public deliberation, to the detriment of those who withdraw’ (Galston and Lopez, 2006 p.2). Citizen participation is considered the lifeblood of democracies and unequal participation will ultimately lead to gaps in representation and negative political consequences for these specific groups of the population, such (Norris 2002, p.9), (Levine 2007, p49-50.), (Zukin et al 2006), (Galston and Lopez 2006, p.2), (Flanagan et al 2009, p.10).

However, as Barber (2007, p.21) highlights, ‘a nation’s youth are usually the vanguard of social change and the shifting trends in society, this makes them particularly susceptible to criticism’. Today’s young generation are heavily criticised for their lack of participation in conventional forms of civic engagement and are often labelled as apathetic (Putnam 2000), (Bellah 1985). Nevertheless, others have challenged this view of apathetic youth by providing evidence of youth involvement and participation in more personal politics, such as political consumerism or online activism (Stolle and Hooghe 2004), (Zurkin et al 2006), (Norris 2000), (Bennett 2008). Disagreements between academics begin, when advocates for traditional forms of engagement discount evidence of new, evolving forms of youth participation as not desirable based on concepts and measurements that were popular forty years ago (Friendland cited in MacArthur 2006, p.2), (Carpini cited in MacArthur 2006, p.4), (Bennett and Wells 2009, p.1). This gives rise to the dual paradigm debate on youth civic engagement, the disengaged paradigm and the engaged paradigm (Bennett 2008), (Dalton 2008).

#### **4. The Decline Paradigm**

Putnam argues that the generations born from the 1960s onwards, the replacement generations, are to blame for the steady decline of civic and political engagement in modern society (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149). According to Putnam (2000 cited in Skocpol and Fiorina 2004, p.5) and his supporters, citizens are increasingly ‘going it alone, rather than cohering in groups such as bowling leagues, or churches, or unions, or civic associations’. Changing postmodern values in advanced industrial societies are moving ‘away from acceptance of both traditional authority and state authority...for the past several years, political leaders throughout the industrialized world have been experiencing some of the lowest levels of trust’ (Norris 1998, p.243). Concern over the disengagement of youth is



reasonable, as youth dissatisfaction with conventional political processes and political parties is occurring in both the United States and Europe concurrently (Bennett 2008, p.1). It is statistically apparent that young people have the lowest level of political engagement, especially in electoral voting, and disengaging from traditional forms of political participation (Pritzker 2008, p.3), (Bennett 2008, p.1), (Zurkin et al 2006, p.4), (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149). For example, the voting turn out for 18- 25 years older is usually 20% lower than the average (Fieldhouse, Tranmer and Russel 2007, p.797). The majority of the crisis of decline is focused specifically on the political arena, its declining electoral participation, political apathy among young people along with relatively low levels trust and political knowledge (Galston 2001 and Milner 2002 cited in Tourney-Purta 2002, p.264), (Pritzker 2008, p.3).

Focusing on Ireland in particular, the government, NGOs and most political parties have all expressed concerns over the declining levels of youth electoral participation and at their alleged growing apathy towards politics (O'Leary 2001, p.8). Past research conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland on young people aged 18 to 25 found that 'slightly more than one-third (35%) of that sample group said that they had voted' (NYCI 2009, p.15). Of those that didn't vote, almost half (49%) stated that they were unable to vote due to work, college or exam commitments. According to Leahy and Burgess (2011, p.6) 'the government of the time resisted calls from student groups and the opposition to conduct the poll on an alternative date that would not clash with college exams'. In Australia, where participation in voting is compulsory, non-participation resulting in a fine, young people are still less likely to register to vote than adults. In the UK, there has been a sharp increase in people who have claimed not to have voted in general elections since 1992, the highest cohort being the youngest generations (Furlong and Cartmel 2007, p.128).

'Loss of community ties, little interest in and knowledge of political process, low levels of trust in politicians and growing cynicism of democratic institutions are often seen as indicators of the younger generations' weakened sense of citizenship and political engagement' (EACEA 2013, p.2). It is argued that these traditional indicators and measurements of civic engagement show signs of a significant decrease in civic engagement among younger generations (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149), (Flanagan et al 2009, p.8). Pessimistic authors conclude that young people are abstaining from engaging with democratic political processes and are therefore showing signs of disinterest with politics (Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007, p.250). The only area of civic participation that has increased since the 1970s is volunteering, which highlights the importance of developing future policies to incorporate civic engagement education and interventions for young people (Brady et al 2012, p.11), (Bennett 2008, p.2). It is uncertain, however, whether these changing patterns in civic engagement are actually a cause for concern (Stolle and Hooghe 2004). Schudson (1999, p.3) would argue that the decline thesis is based on the postulation of a single utopian definition of 'civic engagement' and 'citizenship' that is ignorant to the cultural changes that have taken place in post-industrial societies. Those who reject this reductionary definition of civic engagement challenge the decline paradigm and call for a more inclusive definition of civic engagement suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Schudson 1998), (Howland and Bethell 2000), (Zlotkowski 2010), (Dalton 2008).

## **5. The Engaged Paradigm?**

Traditionalists posit that youth engagement, specifically, is rapidly declining and suggest that preventative measures to increase traditional forms of engagement are needed to prevent current trends of decline (Banaji, 2008 p.544). McDonald and Popkin (2001 p.963) directly challenge the methodology of those purporting a decline in voting, they argue that the use of

the 'voting-age population as a denominator of the turnout rate' has created this illusion of decline. They argue that the VAP (voting age population) includes people who are ineligible to vote, from those who have not gained citizenship and cannot vote, to convicted criminals. When measuring voting participation with the VEP (voting-eligible population) from the VAP since 1972, they claim that the ineligible voting population is increasing at a faster rate than the eligible population, and this creates the illusion of a decline in participation (McDonald and Popkin, 2001 p.963).

Schmitt and Holmberg (1995 cited Norris 1998, p. 5) maintain that the only trend that complies with the decline thesis was a 'general cross-national weakening in attachment to political parties'. Edwards (2007 cited in Banji 2008, p.544) and Howland and Bethell (2000, p.15) also highlight that the phenomenon of declining voter turnout cuts across all age groups, meaning being 'young' cannot be the only explanation. Schudson (1999, p.16) offers a different perspective on Putnam's evaluations of civic engagement levels between 1945 and 1960. Schudson (1999) agrees with Putnam that this period in time saw higher levels of participation in civic life. However, he critiques Putnam for ignoring the context surrounding this era. Schudson highlights the valuable point that 'Putnam is not otherwise curious about this group or whether they, rather than their successors, might be the outlier, but clearly, four years of mobilization for war, followed by prosperity and among other things by 1955 the highest level of union membership in American history, all of this surely strengthened this 'long civic generation'' (Schudson 1999, p.17).

At the Wingspread Conference Centre in Wisconsin in 2001, a group of thirty three student leaders stated that 'for the most part, we are frustrated with conventional politics, viewing it as inaccessible...however...we are deeply involved in civic issues through non-traditional forms of engagement. We are neither apathetic nor disengaged' (cited in Zlotkowski 2010, p.204) in an article in *The New Student Politics*. Other analysts of youth civic engagement accept that there is a decline in traditional forms of engagement but maintain that there is growing evidence of youth activity in alternative and innovative democratic forms of engagement (Banjai 2008, p.544), (Bennett 2008, p.2), (Norris 2002, p.4), (Dalton 2008), (Zlotkowski 2010), (Rheingold 2008), (Howland and Bethell 2000, p.15-16), (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.159). A recent study by the EACEA (2013, p.6) found that 'a clear majority of young people ask for more – not less – opportunity to have a say in the way their political systems are governed. However, young people tend to choose new forms of political participation'. Challenging the supposition of a vicious cycle of political apathy this alternative perspective highlights new, unconventional forms of political engagement that are surfacing in post-industrial societies (Demetriou 2012, p.3).

Inglehart (cited in CarnegieUK Trust 2007) maintains that there has been a revolution in cultural values in post-industrial societies, especially among the younger generations, which has impacted on political participation. Citizens in affluent western societies are becoming more concerned about 'postmaterialist' values, such as, that that impacts on their personal development and quality of life, from environmental issues to human rights. A lot of research has highlighted this paradigm shift in value patterns in postindustrial democracies, whereby citizens, especially younger citizens, are more motivated to become engaged in political issues that directly relate to their individual lifestyles rather than ideological programs and political parties (Bennett 2008, p.21), (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.149). Parallel to these developments, are declining civic engagement in public spaces and an increase in engagement in online spaces, where any form of political engagement online is often connected to personal or lifestyle concerns, generally outside of governments' domain (Bennett 2002, p.2). Dalton (2004 cited in Loader 2007, p.2) argues that traditional forms of

political socialisation and engagement no longer capture or motivate young people in contemporary society.

Many young people argue that youth civic engagement is not declining but that their patterns of engagement do not 'fit stereotypical political behaviour – they are focused on local projects instead of national causes, their activity is more informal, their means of acquiring information are more web based' (Andolina et al 2002, p.189). Many observers properly note that there are impressive signs of youth civic engagement in these nongovernmental areas, including increases in community volunteer work, high levels of consumer activism, and impressive involvement in social causes from the environment to economic injustice in local and global arenas' (Bennett 2008, p.2). Young people are showing signs of increased awareness and participation in uncontroversial and individualised daily political actions such as recycling, signing petitions, raising or donating money to charities (Dalton 2008), (Harris et al 2010 cited in Manning and Edwards 2013). In modern society young people are increasingly engaging and mastering the use of media applications in order to explore their identities, express themselves and communicate with their peers (Rheingold, 2008, p.97). Gibson et al (2005 cited in Brodie et al 2009, p.23) conducted research to analyse the patterns of online political participation and found that young people, aged 15-24, were the most likely to politically engage online. Gibson et al (2005 cited in Brodie et al 2009, p.23) also found that young people's civic engagement online is far greater than their offline engagement, with 10% politically engaged offline compared to 30% who were engaged politically online. There is growing evidence that young people are also expressing themselves politically and morally in the market, by boycotting specific companies based on their ethically policies, or consciously buying products that are, for example, fairtrade (Norris 2002), (Stoole, Hooghe and Micheletti 2005, p.246). Manning (2013) also highlights how young people are incorporating their political and moral views into their daily routines, such as practicing vegetarianism or environmental conservation.

Zurkin et al (2006, p.89-95) maintain that there is a renaissance in political engagement, concluding that today's youth are no less civically engaged than their elders, they are just engaging in alternate form of participation (Zlotkowski 2010, p.204). According to Jochum et al (2005, p.31), consumerism has altered the ways in which people in modern society engage. They posit that engagement is now more episodic and forms of engagement that require long term commitment are, such as joining organisations, are less attractive. A combination of consumerism and individualism has led to patterns of selective engagement, with higher participation in forms of engagement that are both rewarding and self-expressive for the person getting involved. 'Increasingly, various socio-political causes and movements have harnessed the market as a tool for political activism, taking advantage of a permeable public/private divide and melding consumer/citizen identities' (Edwards and Manning, 2013). Many theorists, for example Harris (2004), Coleman (2005), Livingstone (2005) and Selwyn (2007), who have conducted studies on specific areas of youth civic engagement, all conclude that young people need to be represented in a positive light, with accurate and fair evaluations of this participation, whether it is online or offline (cited in Banaji 2008, p.546). According to Demetriou (2012, p.3) conventional indicators of political participation, such as voting, unionism or membership of political parties, need to be expanded to include the realm of "informal politics". The fundamental critique of the decline thesis is that its promoters only capture a relatively small section of civic engagement, the decline of traditional forms of engagement, detected from what is a far more complex social trend (Stolle, Hooghe, Micheletti 2005, p.249-250). As Norris (1998, p.258) highlights, by the end of the century citizens interest in joining organisations, striking and protesting may be declining, but, in

much the same way that they are no longer interested in 'hula-hooping or watching sputnik or going to discos'.

## 6. Conclusion

The Carnegie UK Trust views the rising culture of individualism as the primary influence that is shaping civil society in the United Kingdom and Ireland in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (CarnegieUK Trust 2007, p.17). Arguments generally arise when 'modernists' decry that this decline is a cause for concern, while the postmodernists are more optimistic about the future of engagement. 'The 'modernists' are accused of remaining hooked on the traditional forms of sociability and political behaviour characteristic of the 1950s and 1960s, while the 'postmodernists' are more sanguine about the opportunities and possibilities being created by the current trends in political behaviour' (Stolle and Hooghe (2004, p.150). Nevertheless, as Schudson (1999, p.16) and Skocpol and Fiorina (2004) highlight, here we are in a society that is now rights-conscious mourning the civic engagement of the 1950s through a nostalgic lens. Questions should be raised when we are in an age of increasing inclusion and equality for minorities and women, and we are mourning the loss of a world organized by exclusion, by sexism. Should young people be expected to do the same as generations before and have a sense of duty towards traditional forms of participation, even when they are developing in environments that no longer seem to reinforce these traditional dispositions (Bennett 2008, p.9). Zurkin et al (2006, p.9) argues that certain types of civic engagement should not be viewed as superior to other forms, such as voting classed as more valuable than volunteering, and instead should be viewed as a life cycle of participation behaviours of citizens that are circumstantially suitable at different stages in their lives.

This paper highlights the lack of consensus on the current status of civic engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It remains unclear and unexamined whether these changing patterns in engagement has to be cause for concern (Schudson 1999), (Inglehart 2008). However, there are elements of truth and points worth noting in each argument for and against the decline thesis. What is apparent is the decline in youth participation in traditional forms of civic engagement and a growing distrust and cynicism towards government, institutions and authority in general (Norris 1998). However, traditional forms of engagement remain important channels of democracy and a lack of influence from a specific age cohort could have political impacts for their future (Galston and Lopez 2006, p.2), (Flanagan et al 2009, p.10). Furthermore, it is important to note that 'the nature of political participation actions has changed significantly; they have become more individualised, ad-hoc, issue-specific and less linked to traditional societal cleavages' (EACEA 2013, P.2). The change in culture it is proposed, from collectivism to individualism, has not as such affected the rates of traditional participation as it has altered the ways in which citizens approach their participation in civil society (Rochester 2006 cited in Brodie et al 2011, p.9). However, while these new forms of engaged are often innovative, creative, can challenge wider society and create change, they are also mostly done alone, more than likely at a computer (Stolle and Hooghe 2004, p.162).

Although there is an evident divide and lack of consensus on the current status of civic engagement, there is agreement from all sides of the debate on the need to nurture civic engagement and higher education institutes are expected to take the leading role (Ostrander 2004, p.77-78). The interactions between new generations of developing young people and the key institutions for socialisation, the family, educational system, media and friends, have undergone many important changes in modern society (Gimpel et al 2003, p.7). Do higher education institutes and their structures produce a suitable environment that can nurture civic engagement of youth, from traditional to unconventional (Manning and Edwards 2009, p.33)? 'Proponents of civic engagement argue that higher education has historically had a role in

fostering democracy and citizen participation and providing social value through both its educative function and its production of knowledge. They argue that this role has been lost in recent decades' (Sax 2000 cited in Ostrander 2004, p.77). Ostrander (2004, p.77-78) fears that tertiary education institutes have become more inclined to adopt an educational model that simply caters for the goals of the market. Levine (2008, p.125), Gehring (2005, p.1) and Stoneman (2002, p.224) all concurrently agree that youth civic engagement does not occur by itself and yet the majority of institutions are structured in a way that suppress youth involvement at most levels. As Keeter et al (2002, p.5) state 'engaged citizens do not create themselves. We should no more expect spontaneous engagement than we do spontaneous combustion. The norms of the culture are against the former, just as the laws of physics are against the latter'. Instead of highlighting the apparent lack of youth engagement in specific areas, we also need to question whether there are the conditions and environments available to influence a movement towards all forms of civic engagement among young people, both socially and politically (Dayrell et al 2009, p.32-33).

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## **Community Civic Engagement as an Enabler of Student Flourishing**

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*“Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire” W. B. Yeats.*

Civic Engagement is a process where people join together to conduct public work, it may be for political activism, advocating for social justice, consciousness raising, challenging and changing societal systems. It usually incorporates levels of social connectedness, coherence, shared philosophies, comradeship, social responsibility, compassion, courage and transcendence. Familiar civic engagement terms across Higher Education include, volunteering, service learning, community based learning/research, community engaged research and capacity building. For the purpose of this article, civic engagement as mentioned will include all of the aforementioned elements.

Human flourishing can be described as optimum positive well-being, physically, mentally and socially, in the absence of ill being. Keyes (2005) describes flourishing as a state of positive psychological and social well-being. Positive functioning consists of six dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Keyes and Ryff, 1999). While psychological well-being represents more private and personal criteria for evaluation of one's functioning, social well-being epitomizes the more public and social criteria whereby people evaluate their functioning in life. Keyes' (2002) social dimensions consist of social coherence, actualization, integration, acceptance and contribution. Individuals are functioning well when they see society as meaningful and understandable, when they see society as possessing potential for growth, when they feel they belong to and are accepted by their communities, when they accept most parts of society, and when they see themselves contributing to society.

A comprehensive analysis of incidents of human flourishing led to Gaffney (2011) concluding that the four essential elements of flourishing include: 1) Challenge – a call or demand to engage with a task, overcome an obstacle, to enable something to happen; 2) Connectivity – being personally tuned in to what is happening to oneself and surrounding world; 3) Autonomy – feeling free to pursue the challenge; 4) Using valued competencies – using talents and strengths to the full.

Students with complete mental health are flourishing in life, with high levels of well-being. To be flourishing, then, is to be filled with positive emotion and to be functioning well psychologically and socially. Students with incomplete mental health may be languishing in life with low well-being. Thus, languishing may be conceived of as emptiness and stagnation, constituting a life of quiet despair, academic disengagement, with maladaptive responses

such as social withdrawal and substance misuse. To flourish or to languish that is the question?

Third level student well-being is becoming increasingly problematic, as young people are faced with large cultural forces which compel them to be 'always on' , (tv, internet, phone), there is career pressure given the rise in unemployment and scarcity of secure career pathways, and increased family economic distress abounds following the Celtic tiger fall out.

In *College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What to Do About It*, Kadison and DiGeronimo (2004) claim that for today's US college student:

*"The chances are almost one in two that he or she will become depressed to the point of being unable to function; one in two that he or she will have regular episodes of binge drinking (with the resulting significant risk of dangerous consequences such as sexual assault and car accidents); and one in ten that he or she will seriously consider suicide. In fact, since 1988, the likelihood of a college student suffering depression has doubled, suicidal ideation has tripled, and sexual assaults have quadrupled. The information on student mental health... is shocking – yet it is the elephant in the room that no one is talking about".*

The My World Survey (MWS) of Irish adolescents established that mental health difficulties peaked in the late teens and early 20s. This peak in mental health difficulties, in general, was coupled with a decrease in protective factors such as self-esteem, optimism and positive coping strategies. The three most significant stressors/problems in adolescent life were: COLLEGE, followed by money, work and family (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012).

A high percentage (41%) of the sample (8,221) were categorised into the problem drinking range, 10% into the harmful and hazardous drinking range, while 10% were classified as having a potential alcohol dependence. Approximately 43% reported that they had thought that their life was not worth living at some point. These are all strong indicators to suggest that our colleges are not flourishing environments, where our students may be languishing, and experiencing serious health detriment.

Do Higher Education Institutions carry on regardless? Or are they morally and ethically obliged to consider the development of the whole student in their midst? What is the role of Higher Education Institutions in this? Unfortunately campus culture more and more affirms the values and virtues of a consumer driven marketplace, where students and staff are identified by number; delivery through modularisation and semesterisation often causing modules to be disconnected from the 'whole' professional pathway; sandwiched courses evolving to enable quicker student throughput; and increased emphasis on end outcomes rather than qualitative learning episodes, a growing feature of Higher Education.

What we often forget in necessary conversations about outcomes, retention, and graduation is that learning can fulfil us—providing a sense of purpose, connecting us with others, and helping us gain perspective. Simply put, learning particularly when applied helps us to flourish.

Liberal educationists propose that the purpose of third level education is more than just preparing for a job, it is about acquiring the knowledge, skills, competencies, values and capacities for life's many roles in a world of inevitable change. It is grounded in personal as well as intellectual growth, with individuals developing as social beings, through intellectual inquiry.

“Contemporary research on learning in college calls for a multi-centric cognitive, experiential, developmental and transformative process that occurs throughout and across the educational experience, integrating academic learning with student development” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Involving students in Community Civic Engagement activities gives students the opportunity to step out from behind the desk, bring their knowledge, skills and competencies to the coal face, and learn from real world experiences, through societal engagement.

There is a large body of research evidence, particularly in the US which indicates that student civic engagement leads to an increase in academic success, career direction and self-esteem, it provides a positive connection with others and serves as an important factor in social identity development (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee 2000; Galura, Pasque, Schoem & Howard 2004; Markus, Howard & King, 1993). Furthermore, attributes that are positively influenced by participation in service learning projects may include academic performance, critical thinking skills, and leadership skills (Astin & Sax, 1998). Many researchers recognize service-learning as a unique opportunity to foster civic responsibility and personal growth (Colby et al, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Washburn et al, 2004). Students construct their understanding of what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society as these skills and other personal benefits accrue.

Volunteers are more likely than non-volunteers to exhibit positive emotions and social skills including openness, agreeableness and extraversion, (Matsuba, Hart and Atkins, 2007), while anxiety and distress are lower among youth engaged in helping and volunteering (Rietschlin 1998; Schwartz et al, 2003).

Looking closer at the mechanisms linking civic engagement to psychosocial well-being, helping others may be rewarding in itself, knowing that one is contributing time, money and effort to the public good of others (Post, 2005). Such rewards may arise from feelings of benevolence, social benefits from attachments and identification derived from connecting with others in the community and networks formed. As part of a longitudinal study at Tufts University it was found that... Students who recently engaged in civic activities, most notably activities perceived to be focused on social change, had significantly better scores on indicators of psychosocial well-being (e.g., connection with others, intrinsic motivation toward learning, strategies for managing stress) (Boyd, et al. 2012).

The long term benefits of college civic engagement are also worth noting. Bowman et al. (2010) in their research conducted during college and 13 years after, found that both college volunteering and service-learning have positive, indirect effects on several forms of well-being during adulthood, including personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and life satisfaction. Such experiences are linked to subsequent adult volunteering, evidence of a more pro-social orientation, which are in turn positively associated with well-being.

Community Civic Engagement is not a panacea or a solution to specific student pathologies, such as alcohol abuse and depression, BUT it does provide real opportunity for

Transformational Learning & Student Flourishing. The following student comments were collated from qualitative reflective journals completed when undertaking the Community Leadership Initiative (CLI) module at the Institute of Technology Tralee.

*"I feel that the whole experience involved active learning, looking at the why and how rather than looking at current information or the status quo and accepting it, I got the opportunity to put my ideas forward and was encouraged to be creative in finding solutions to challenges."*

*"The feeling of self-worth and value to my community was something very worthwhile to experience during my community engaged learning opportunity."*

*"I enjoy learning when my experiences pertain to real life."*

*"I discovered quite a lot about myself and my capacities when working with a diverse group of people, in a challenging environment, where I was often well outside my comfort zone. I was glad of the opportunity to practise my leadership and mediation skills."*

*"I now feel more of a responsibility to serve my community."*

*"This experience was extremely beneficial for my personal growth, my self-esteem and confidence grew a lot, in particular after having to step up to a leadership position and take responsibility."*

The Diploma programme Community Wellness, Empowerment, Leadership and Lifeskills (CWELL), developed by the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences in the University of Limerick, in conjunction with St. Mary's Community in Limerick, evolved to enable both the community and UL staff and students to work collaboratively and build capacity in well-being and lifestyle education within the local community. The programme is based on a 'Community of Practice' model (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and very much appreciates that learning is not just something that takes place in formal educational settings and institutions; it comes from our engagement with the world around us. Learning is situated; it is a social process shaped by the context and the culture in which it takes place (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As such, learning is not simply a process of 'knowledge transfer', where lecturers, who know things, transmit information to students, who know nothing (Brown et al., 1989). Learning is understood as an active process; we learn by engaging in activity and from reflecting on this process (Kolb, 1984). What students learn is not stable and fixed, instead, outcomes are difficult to predict and what has been learnt may be difficult to define and to understand (Engestrom, 2001). However by embracing reflective assessment opportunities throughout course delivery, one is able to reap rich, qualitative feedback, which can serve to guide educators and encourage learners to observe and process what is occurring. Community participants undertaking the course have been very positive about their experiences. There have been reports from many students of an increase in self-confidence, self-esteem and the positive impacts the course has had on them as individuals and their families. They have increased their self-worth in relation to their potential to achieve something in relation to education.

*"I feel more confident and more assured of myself and I feel happier in myself ... I will use my new skills to benefit my family and the community to "help them to help themselves" on a personal level it has given me huge confidence"*

There has been a reduction in isolation for some students as the course has provided an opportunity for socializing.

*“CWELL. It’s a course that people should take on. It’s for the wellbeing of themselves as much as it is for the community. Everyone will benefit. Anyone that will do this course will benefit and they will benefit their community by contributing back into their community so that...it’s a win-win situation....This course has given me a purpose and changed my life”.*

In relation to module content, students have admitted becoming more confident in discussing the topic of mental health and the issues relating to it, admitting that their awareness regarding the stigma attached to mental health and the importance of mental health across the life span has increased.

*“I think more, positive thinking about life and health and the knowledge is a good and positive thing. It has made me more aware of my mental health and that of my children and my family. It has also boosted my confidence in a lot of ways”.*

Through coursework, they have also improved public speaking, PowerPoint presentation, academic essay writing, computer, reflection, time management and communication skills.

*“I have grown personally and academically since I started the CWELL programme ... it has had a positive effect on me and my family. I have learned to work as part of a team and to respect other people's opinion if they are different to mine”.*

The Community Leadership Initiative (CLI) module delivered in the Institute of Technology Tralee aims to develop student community leadership skills and competencies, which are practised and enhanced through meaningful engagement with community based groups. The CWELL programme in contrast aims to build leadership capacity within the community, taking the classroom to the participants, (following a needs assessment); whilst UL students who mentor these community based learners both enhance their understanding of community and develop their own personal skills and competencies also. Both courses serve to foster resilience and leadership development, at an individual and community level, with the ultimate aim being to lead towards improved quality of life (flourishing), and healthier and sustainable communities.

In many academic settings, there is increasing pressure on administrators to standardise, rather than expand, the role of curriculum design (Heard, 2014), however, curriculum planners should also consider incorporating an emphasis on student characteristics that affect student learning and development. According to King (2014), in addition to mastering disciplinary knowledge and developing competence, a problem-oriented approach, utilising authentic contexts (active and often collaborative), knowledge construction opportunities are key elements of higher education. The emphasis of this approach is on the value of the experience itself in developing personal characteristics and civic responsibility, focusing on using individual level attributes to shape and guide educational practice (King, 2014). In this model, neither knowledge acquisition, student experiences nor personal characteristics alone are the key factors; instead, the combination of all of these interrelated components (personal characteristics, experiences, lessons learned from experiences, and meaning making) provide a more holistic approach to prepare students for a work force and to engage as civically responsible citizens . High-quality learning experiences can be adapted in ways that take students’ characteristics into account (King, 2014). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) highlight

that engaging designs require students to function well with knowledge and skill, in a context of real world issues, needs, constraints, and opportunities. This requires a shift away from methods that simply flood students with information or rehearse familiar skills. Learning experiences need to take cognisance of students' perceptions of their relevant personal characteristics and skills and how these affect their learning needs greater consideration.

Traditional didactic classroom or clinical settings have been criticized for failing to prepare graduates for 21st century practice (Hoppes & Hellman 2007; Cole & Carlin 2009). The challenge for educators is to create learning experiences within the curriculum for students to actively reconfigure what they are learning in ways that facilitate further inquiry and questioning (Heard, 2014). Students should not be viewed as passive consumers of third level education, but instead, should be considered by educators as co-creators of knowledge and drivers of social change. Self-authorship is central to a twenty-first-century education (Baxter Magolda, 2004). We live more than a vocational life, thus we need more than a vocational education, we live a larger civic life and need to be educated for it (Mathews, 1995).

Whilst student intellectual, personal and social development are crucial in Higher Education today, but of equal importance are the approaches that seek to measure student success, learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. These should not only be in terms of knowledge acquisition, skill demonstration and critical thinking, but should also embrace the development of a resilient sense of self, emotional competence and the capacity for rendering meaning and purposeful engagement with others in the wider social environment. Learning needs to embrace the 'whole' student, enhancing wellbeing, and instilling a sense of civic, moral and social purpose, in essence it should be transformational.

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# **Students and Work Experience Programmes**

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## **Abstract**

*Students are often reluctant to become involved in work experience programmes, preferring instead to devote their time to further study or, to work in (often) non- related paid employment. Many students may think that having a degree is a tremendous asset and, is the only requirement needed to successfully secure employment in their chosen field. This article will discuss the advantages of work experience and provide a concrete example of one programme attended by third year students as part of the Special Populations module of Sports Management and Coaching Course. ITB, in a unique partnership with Fingal County Council Sports Office, has developed a practical work experience programme that can provide students with an insight into particular working environments and help build relevant useful skills that cannot be taught in the classroom. This initiative allows students to gain experience working with people with disabilities. Working under the direction of Fingal County Council's Sports Conditioning Officer the students were involved in a ten week programme, learning how to plan and deliver a range of activities aimed to assist the participants to develop fine and gross motor skills.*

## **1. The term “work experience”**

There are a number of definitions for the term “work experience”. Crebert et al. (2004) sums it up as “any experience that a person gains while working in a specific field or occupation”, but the expression is widely used to mean a type of volunteer work that is commonly intended for young people, often students, to get a feel for professional working environments” .

Many students participate in third level education with a view to graduating with a degree which can fill their Curriculum Vitae. However, practical work experience as part of a student's studies may have a positive effect on their employability. Dahlgren et al. (2006), states that the transition from the world of higher education into the world of work is complex contending that there are few studies, which examine the requirements of employers and the value of work experience. However, a recent poll, taken by studentgems.com in 2010 of 1,561 managing directors, across the UK, states that 61 per cent of employers are more likely to recruit an applicant who has some type of relevant work experience.

## **2. The benefits to be gained from work experience**

There is no doubt that there are many benefits to be gained from work experience, for the student, the employer and perhaps for the educational Institution. In a study by Crebert et al. (2004) a selected group of third level graduates from the fields of Microelectronic Engineering; Criminology & Criminal Justice and Leisure Studies were asked about their views and experience of the impact work placement made to the development of their generic skills. The graduates' response showed that they greatly benefited from their work experience. They gained many skills which they transferred to their subsequent employment.

For the student, it can provide the opportunity to sample different types of employment and to learn first-hand what happens in a typical day on the job. This may assist the student to make more informed choices. Relevant work experience can also assist the student to make the transition from education to work and to learn the skills required by prospective employers. It

can help to enhance the participating student's self-confidence, maturity and their interpersonal skills. Practical working experience may help build useful skills that cannot be taught in the classroom as well as, making contacts and perhaps building relationships that the student would not otherwise encounter. In addition the knowledge gained from this could enhance a CV or job application and particularly during the interview process, help the student to display a sound understanding of the role they are applying for.

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council carried out a study in 2009, which found that many graduates were technically proficient but not work ready (ACSF, 2009). It reported that a large number (approx.70%) of the graduates interviewed wished they had taken up more work experience opportunities.

There is also anecdotal evidence that employers often look more favourably on candidates who have gained a basic understanding of their business sector and know what it's like to be in a work environment. This is certainly the case in Fingal Sports Office, relevant work experience and volunteering in a sporting environment will make the candidate stand out more favourably than those holding similar qualifications but having no working experience noted on the CV.

The employer by offering and accepting students on work experience programmes may benefit by increasing the profile of career opportunities within their organisation(s) and, perhaps, in some cases, changing unwarranted stereotyped views, of either the job or the company, within the student population. Employers may also use student work experience as a means of raising their organisation's profile in the community. In addition it can provide a valuable means of creating a positive image of the company amongst the students and perhaps, teachers, parents and existing employees.

The Institution encouraging work experience programmes may gain from the linkages with various organisations, as is the case with Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) and Fingal County Council, where a strong partnership between the two organisations is developing. In addition there may be other positive factors including improved student reviews and feedback, as graduates manage to secure suitable employment.

### **3. ITB and Fingal County Council**

In November 2013 ITB and Fingal County Council worked in partnership to provide a ten week work experience programme, which would add value to the students studying the Special Populations Module of Sports Management and Coaching Course. Fingal Sports Office is based within the Community Culture and Sports Division of Fingal County Council. Using sport as a means of community development, it coordinates and delivers a number of varied programmes aimed at reaching out to the entire community. The Sports Office Vision for Sport in Fingal is: "Fingal – the most active, innovative, dynamic sporting community in Ireland". The Mission is to support sport in Fingal by: "Increasing opportunities to participate in sport; delivering excellent innovative programmes; providing training, leading and raising the profile of sport in the County".

### **4. The aims of the programme**

To further this vision Fingal County Council employed a Sports Conditioning Officer, the only Local Authority in Ireland to do so. The programme was designed by Harm Jager, who holds a Degree in Sports Science and a Diploma in Sports Conditioning, in addition to being

an international coach. The Sports Conditioning programme was initially developed to cater for children and young people be they able bodied or disabled, sporty or not sporty.

The main aims of the programme are:

- a) To train children to become proficient in the movement skills necessary to participate in sports and physical activity *for life*.
- b) To build self-esteem and confidence in young people to encourage them to participate in positive pastimes.
- c) To provide leaders, carers and teachers with the skills and confidence to deliver a Sport Conditioning programme.

## **5. Specialised training module - Sports Conditioning**

Sports Conditioning is a specialised training module, designed to give participants of all abilities the fundamental movement skills and confidence to enable them to actively participate in sports and physical activity. The Sports Conditioning Programme is proving that sport really is for all regardless of ability. Gateman (2005) contends that it is important to introduce the concept of fundamental movement skills in order to provide the participant with the skills for lifelong sport and physical activity.

As Moody et al (2013) explains, fundamental movement skills can be categorised into three groups, Loco-motor skills (walking, running, hopping) Manipulative skills (these involve controlling objects with the hand, foot or implement e.g. throw and catch) Stability skills (body balancing statically or dynamically). Such skill acquisition makes it easier for the participant to engage in sports and physical activities thus helping to increase confidence and self esteem to even the weakest, “non sporty” participants. Therefore this is an ideal programme for the ITB students to implement.

This ten week programme involving four students was delivered in Daughters of Charity St.Vincent’s Centre, Navan Road, Dublin 7. The primary objective of this programme is to help the participants with varying degrees of disability to develop and maintain basic fine and gross motor skills. The students, after initial training in the basics of Sports Conditioning were responsible for planning and implementing coaching sessions for twenty Service Users with different degrees of physical and intellectual disabilities aged between 13 – 60 years old to develop and improve motor skills. The students were also tasked with liaising with ten Service Workers to provide them with a number of suggestions of activities suitable for the participants. Students were supervised by Fingal County Council, Sports Conditioning Officer, Owen McGrath. Feedback and evaluations was carried out at different stages during the programme.

Working with twenty Service Users certainly created many challenges for the four students who elected to work on this programme. The students had little or no experience of working with this special population group. The students had to work collectively as they were tasked with planning and implementing each of the ten sessions for the twenty participants. This work included researching a particular range of exercises each week to ensure that the participants would be capable of successfully participating. They had to ensure that the sessions were interesting and varied by providing a range of different exercises and games in order to capture the imagination of the Service Users. They had to break down each component of the activity into small achievable goals and teach / demonstrate to the participants.

They had to produce a detailed session plan for discussion with the Sports Conditioning Officer in advance of programme delivery each week. “The session plans had to be very detailed and specific as each of the twenty Service Users had very different intellectual and physical needs”, explained Owen McGrath who stated that he was very impressed by the standard of the plans produced by the students.

## **6. Engaging with the Service Users**

Engaging with the Service Users has helped the students build self-confidence, particularly when working with this special population. They did see the fruit of their labours during the sessions as the participants’ ability and confidence increased substantially as a result of their work. In addition, the students were starting to build relationships with the participants; this resulted in Siobhán, one of the Service Workers commenting: “we are grateful to students, who worked hard at ensuring that the Service Users were allowed to develop at their own level. The programme help improved their motor skills but more importantly they looked forward to the students coming in every Friday”.

The students gained many skills during this short work experience programme. They experienced first-hand what it would be like to work with people with varying degrees of disability. They also learned how to research and develop a progressive session plan. Standing up in front of twenty participants and a number of Service Workers to talk them through the plan, teach and demonstrate the exercises and activities was quite a daunting task for them at first, but by the end of the sessions it could be noted how much their confidence in delivery and speaking to the group had increased immeasurably. “The students grew significantly into their role and by the 4<sup>th</sup> week they were planning, organising and implementing the entire session based on the individual needs of each Service User” stated Owen McGrath.

Another distinctive element of the programme involved the students liaising with the Service Workers. This involved the students having to research and present to the ten key Service Workers a range of exercises, games and activities that would be suited to the Service Users progressive skill development in a fun-learning environment. The students were also involved in open discussion with question and answer sessions with the Service Workers. This gave the service workers the confidence and skills they needed to further develop the participants (and future Service Users) in fundamental movement skills on a daily basis. This creates an excellent legacy to the programme.

This programme has provided many benefits, to the students, who gained practical knowledge of a genuine work situation. Crebert et al. (2004) states that graduates believe their workplace learning helps them build their skill base, learn from their own mistakes, and, perhaps, most importantly develop relationships and learn how to interact efficiently with colleagues. They conclude that work placement plays a vital role in the preparation of graduates for employment.

## **7. Feedback from the ITB students**

The feedback from the ITB students has been very positive, with one student, Kevin, who had very little experience of working with disability groups commenting “to be given this unique opportunity to work with (this) special population and their Service Workers was quite a challenge” he felt he had grown into the role, it “became a very enjoyable and worthwhile

experience”. Another student Stephen commented that the work experience programme provided an “enjoyable challenge because every week is different and it is definitely something I would consider as a career opportunity in a sporting capacity”.

The Daughters of Charity St.Vincent’s Centre, Service Users and Workers gained from the programme delivery and training. This programme has also resulted in community gain, initially by assisting the Service Users to develop their fundamental movement skills. The Service Worker training element has resulted in the programme being sustainable and the legacy going on far beyond the programme. In addition the Service Workers can use these newfound skills by introducing the exercises and fun games in the home and community environment (with family, children and grandchildren). This may help children to become more active. One Service Worker, Keith, explained that he worked with a local sports club and would be introducing some of the Sports Conditioning activities in that setting as well.

## 8. Conclusion

This programme aimed at giving students an opportunity to gain relevant work experience has numerous benefits. Fingal County Council is delighted to work in partnership with ITB. We look forward to developing a range of programmes and collaborations that will ultimately lead to positive community development for the citizens of Fingal.

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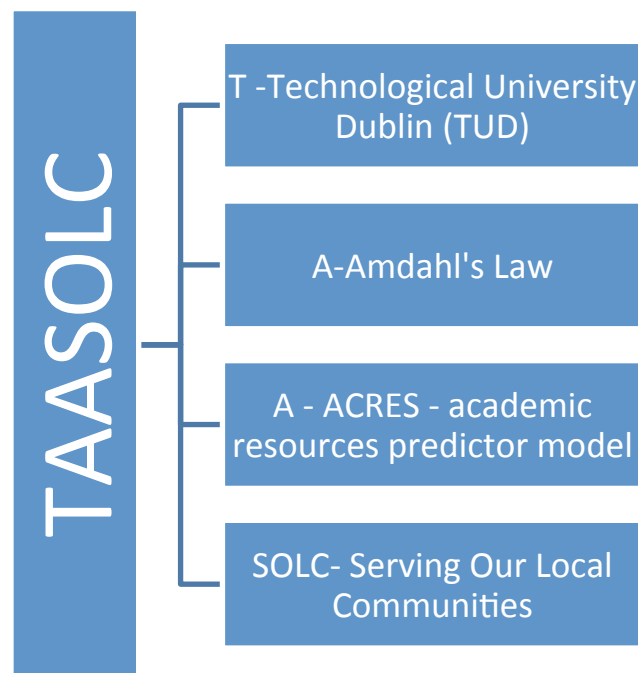
# **A Model for Improving Student Completion Rates in the TUD based on Competency Based Learning modules that improve ACRES and TAASOLC**

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Institute of Technology Tallaght

## **1. Introduction**

Acronyms can be useful sometimes. Let's mint a new one, TAASOLC, see Fig 1. Next describe what TAASOLC means and tell a thread of a story. Continue by describe a solution with a list of quantifiable action items, based on community engagement models, for solving an education problem and a community development problem. The problem is increasing the number of students successfully completing a third level institute and (this conjunction is essential) at the same time gradually improving standards. The best way of getting the community engaged with a college, and a new 21<sup>st</sup> century Irish university, is to increase the number of success stories of all graduates, especially local ones, and to provide a pathway to lifelong employment and well as lifelong learning while doing what it can to eliminate poverty in the communities around the constituent campuses of the TUD.



**Figure 1: TAASOLC**

## **2. T is for TUD in TAASOLC**

The term TUD, Technological University for Dublin, refers to the merger of the three institutes Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Blanchardstown and IT Tallaght. Currently this is being driven by the General Scheme Technological Universities Bill (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (Department of Education and Skills), 2014).

At the time of writing this bill removes the name Blanchardstown and Tallaght from the legal Oireachtas documents defining the higher educational landscape. The removal of the names



Blanchardstown and Tallaght for the Oireachtas legal name is hopefully an oversight that will be rectified, as it is not a good start the further building of engagement with these communities. The interim name, for TUD, from sometime around May 2015 is DIT (this is what the bill states) and the name we should all be working for is TUD (or equivalent), the new university. The working overall interim name can be called DIT, but the bill must be modified to state that the new DIT shall consist of the DIT Tallaght Campus, the DIT Blanchardstown Campus and the DIT Grangegorman campus. The overall final name can be called TUD (or some equivalent), but the Bill must be modified to explicitly state the following “The Technological University of Dublin consists of the colleges TUD Blanchardstown Campus (formerly IT Blanchardstown), TUD Grangegorman and the any another former DIT sites (name them), and TUD Tallaght Campus (formerly called IT Tallaght). The TUD shall be considered a merger of equals serving in particular the communities of Tallaght and South Dublin County, Grangegorman and Central Dublin and Blanchardstown and Fingal County, as well as welcoming students from all parts of Ireland and the world, serving the greater Dublin region and the while of Ireland.”

The other driver for the merger is the website [www.tu4dublin.ie](http://www.tu4dublin.ie). The website contains many positive ideas, the invitation to be disruptive in a constructive way, to use of the term entrepreneurial university as outlined by Burton Clarke, (Clarke, 1998), a reimagined curriculum, the merged postgraduate school, and the improved international profile. However, as yet, it omits a detailed plan for how to tackle the poverty trap that exists in areas around all the three constituent campuses of TUD. Also there is no cogent explanation, yet, as to why the names of Tallaght and Blanchardstown are being dropped in the new legislation. Furthermore there is no interaction, as of yet, with the local communities in Tallaght to explain what benefits will accrue. There is also little evidence of a significant dialogue between the academic union, a key stakeholder representing most of the academic staff, and management which can be a very positive if nettles are grasped by both sides.

Burton Clarke’s *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities* studied the transformation of the universities at Warwick (England), Twente (the Netherlands), Strathclyde (Scotland), Chalmers (Gothenburg, Sweden) and Joensuu (Northern Karelia, Finland). Clarke does not use the word ‘entrepreneurial’ in a narrow purely individualistic and socially devise ultra-capitalist sense, and

*”instead of using the word “entrepreneurial” over “innovative” as the organising conception this book because it points more powerfully to deliberate **local effort**, to actions that lead to change in organisational posture.”*

He goes on to say

*“Universities are too bottom- heavy, too resistant from the bottom up, for tycoons to dominate very long. Rather, transformation occurs when a number of individuals come together in university basic units and across a university over a number of years to change, by means of organized initiative, how the institution is structured and oriented. Collective entrepreneurial action at these levels is at the heart of the transformation phenomenon. Acting from on high, national and state systems of higher education are blunt instruments of significant change; acting from below, individual faculty members or administrators are limited in what they can do.*

Reflecting on “acting from on high”, how can the perception that the TUD project gathered legs in the middle of a recession and is not merely part of a government cost cutting process, with an associated organisational merry-go- round, be countered? I believe that creative synergies should take place at any time, and recessionary time is a great time for careful long term planning for an upside. However in the post Celtic tiger era where many hard decisions were necessary and unavoidable, is it wise to accelerate a merger until all doubts that this is not the case are held by a clear majority of stakeholders, not just those whose job it is to seek valid financial optimisations? Aside from any consideration of areas where costs can validly be cut, scaling up can be good provided local identity and service is jealously guarded. We need to continue to service our local communities AND create a new entrepreneurial synergy. The TUD team have convinced many, but many more remain, in my opinion, underwhelmed. An ethical sales job is in order, and you cannot do that with trade unions and

local community groups being held, for now and for whatever reason, at relative arm's-length. Clarke further reflects

*"But groups, large and small - central and departmental - of faculty and administrators (and sometimes students!) can fashion new structures, processes, and orientations whereby a university becomes biased toward adaptive change" .*

I think what he is saying is that good systems emerge if people are left to do their job with minimal managerialism and a sometime damaging Irish centralist mentality, provided clear overall goals and boundaries are set.

Does an Irish landscape allow such a transformation? Yes, provided all stakeholder, and this includes trade unions and local communities, get a decent look in before any final decisions are set in stone by government or anyone else. Properly implemented the TUD can change things for the better for the many. If it lacks the conviction to dream big dreams and the determination to solve a specific big problem that is tractable, it will be disappointing. The big problem is, like many other countries, too many students arrive on campus with a small probability of success, they are not all from a disadvantaged background but many are, and not enough students arrive from certain catchment schools. Not focusing on this problem misses a great opportunity for a dynamic TUD to fix it. The new TUD will not attract a high cohort of above 400 points students. Yes some courses will attract high points, but most applicants will have to be in the 100 – 300 points region. The average of non-portfolio points for all courses in all three institutes in 2014 was between 200 and 300 points. A reason for a new University is to make education more universal. In Ireland we have got knotted up in a point's race with many colleges and universities playing silly games with place allocation to boost points in order to give the totally false impression that high points are the only definitive positive thing that can be said about a course. On August 17<sup>th</sup> 2014, the *Irish Times* reported

*"More than one-third of courses being offered by universities and institutes of technology have 15 or fewer places, and some 24 courses have only one place, in a pattern linked to the **"artificial inflation"** of college entry points."*

(Humphreys, Colleges criticised over points 'inflation' ahead of CAO offers, 2014) )

I am proud to work in an Institute that tries to reach out to all people in the community, those on high and low points and mature applicants, and has taken up, with great success, the challenge of transforming many lower point students into excellent graduates. It must be stated that, in spite of very many success stories, for many the low LC points often remains a challenge, and later on a newer solution is proposed to improve things even more. The wide spread of entry points must not allow anyone to ever drop standards anywhere. Until the effects of positive interventions are felt, some of which are in place, some failure rates in the more difficult course where entry points are low, will remain high and if they suddenly improve questions need to be asked.

A new 21<sup>st</sup> century Irish university should make education more universal to its local communities, educate for jobs in Ireland, and educate for the sake of knowledge and social capital in itself. Doing this will require structural change in the way points are awarded in the leaving certificate for robustly assessed preparatory work done alongside and outside the standard curriculum. The TUD must be a transformative merger of equals that represents their local communities and synergises into something that leads many in Dublin and all over the country out of poverty. Poverty exists in Ireland, despite an improving economic outlook. Time to aim high and deliver. I am confident that the staff of the three institutes and their communities basically wants this. TUD being a mere cost cutting exercise is anathema, I think it will be more than that but people have to stand up, be counted, and ensure a positive outcome. It is time to articulate how the positive outcomes are possible; this is the aim of this paper.

### **3. A is for Amdahl's Law in TAASOLC**

Gene Amdahl is the computer architect behind the IBM360 that was announced in 1964. Amdahl specified a quantitative rule called Amdahl's law. This eponymous law finds the maximum expected

improvement to an overall system, (many systems not just a computer, even an educational system), when only a fraction (a certain part) of the system is focused on for improvement. Hennessy and Patterson (Hennessy & Patterson, 2012) apply the Law to speeding up the execution time of a computer and describe it as follows:

$$Speedup_{overall} = \frac{1}{(1 - Fraction_{enhanced}) + \frac{Fraction_{enhanced}}{Speedup_{enhanced}}}$$

We will now use different names of these things,

$$G = \frac{1}{(1 - f) + \frac{f}{S}}$$

where  $G$  is the global improvement in the system due to an improved specific solution  $S$  applied for a fraction of the process  $f$ . The speedup factor  $S$  can also be regarded as positive intervention.

**Worked Example:** A computer spends 20% of its time executing instructions accessing memory and the remaining 40% of the time accessing peripherals. A new processor that has a speed improvement of ten times is used, what is the overall speedup?

$$G = \frac{1}{(1 - f) + \frac{f}{S}} = \frac{1}{(1 - 0.2) + \frac{0.2}{10}} = \frac{1}{0.8 + 0.1} = \frac{1}{0.81} = 1.558$$

So we have a 56% percent improvement from something which could have improved things by a factor of 10, if it were applicable to all the time of the process. Hennessey and Patterson note

*‘Amdahl’s Law expresses the law of diminishing returns ... Amdahl’s Law can serve as a guide to how much an enhancement can improve performance and how to distribute resources to improve cost-performance.’*

A computer package called Desmos can be used to create a slider interface, where you can see what effect all this has on the value of CE. Desmos is an HTML 5 web application and the model can be tinkered with. You can experiment with the dynamics of Amdahl’s Law by using the Desmos program Amdahl’s Law (Stockil, Amdahl's Law DESMOS demonstration., 2014) , see Figure 2.

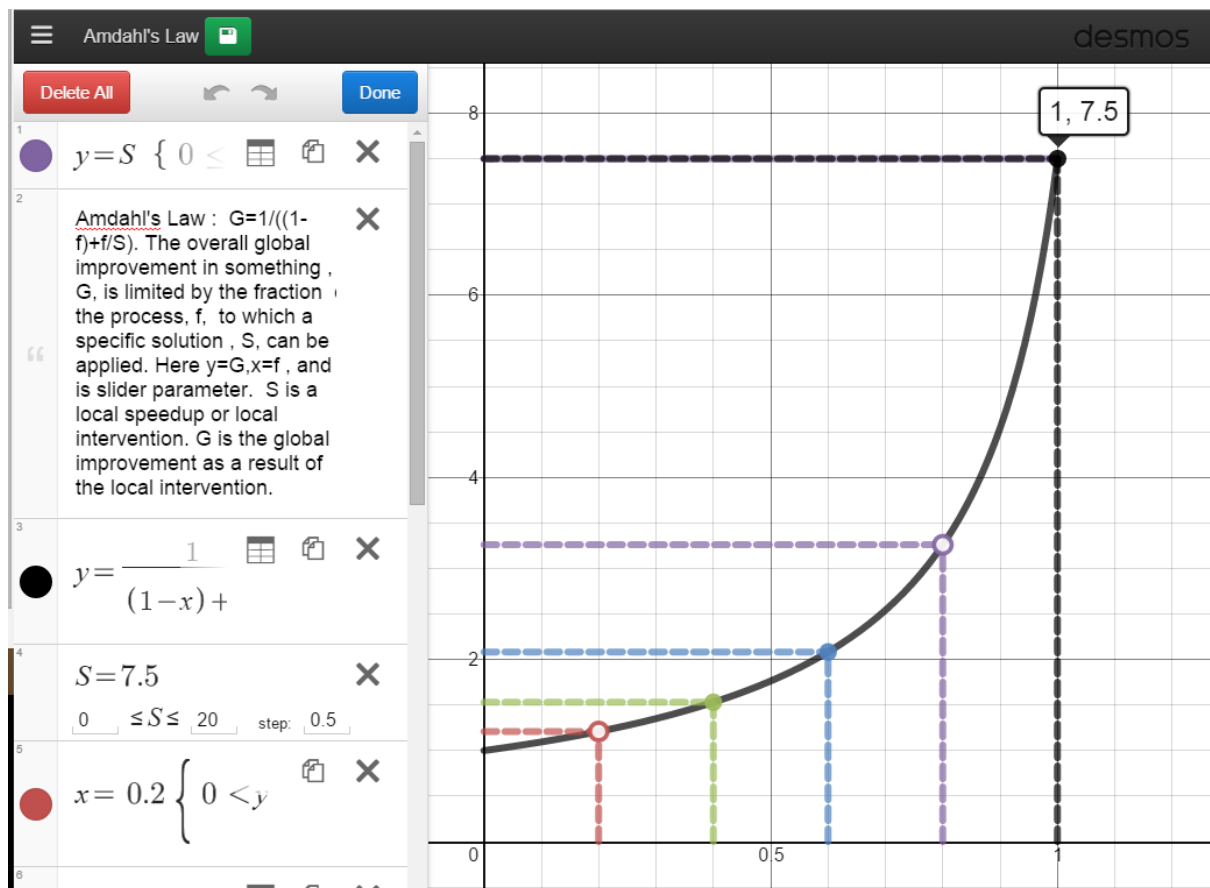


Figure 2: Amdahl's Law. [Click here](#)

#### 4. A is for ACRES – academic resources – in TAASOLC

Clifford Adelman, (Adelman P. , 2006) a senior researcher at the U.S. Department of Education reflects on the National Educational Longitudinal Study 1988 which tracked the progress of over 12,000 of students from 1988 when they were aged around 14 (in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade) to 2000 when they were aged around 26. Combine the numbers 88 and 2000 with the acronym NELS and you get the name of the study NELS: 88-2000. One of his conclusions is

*“The core question is not about basic “access” to higher education. It is not about persistence to the second term or the second year following postsecondary entry. It is about completion of academic credentials—the culmination of opportunity, guidance, choice, effort, and commitment.”*

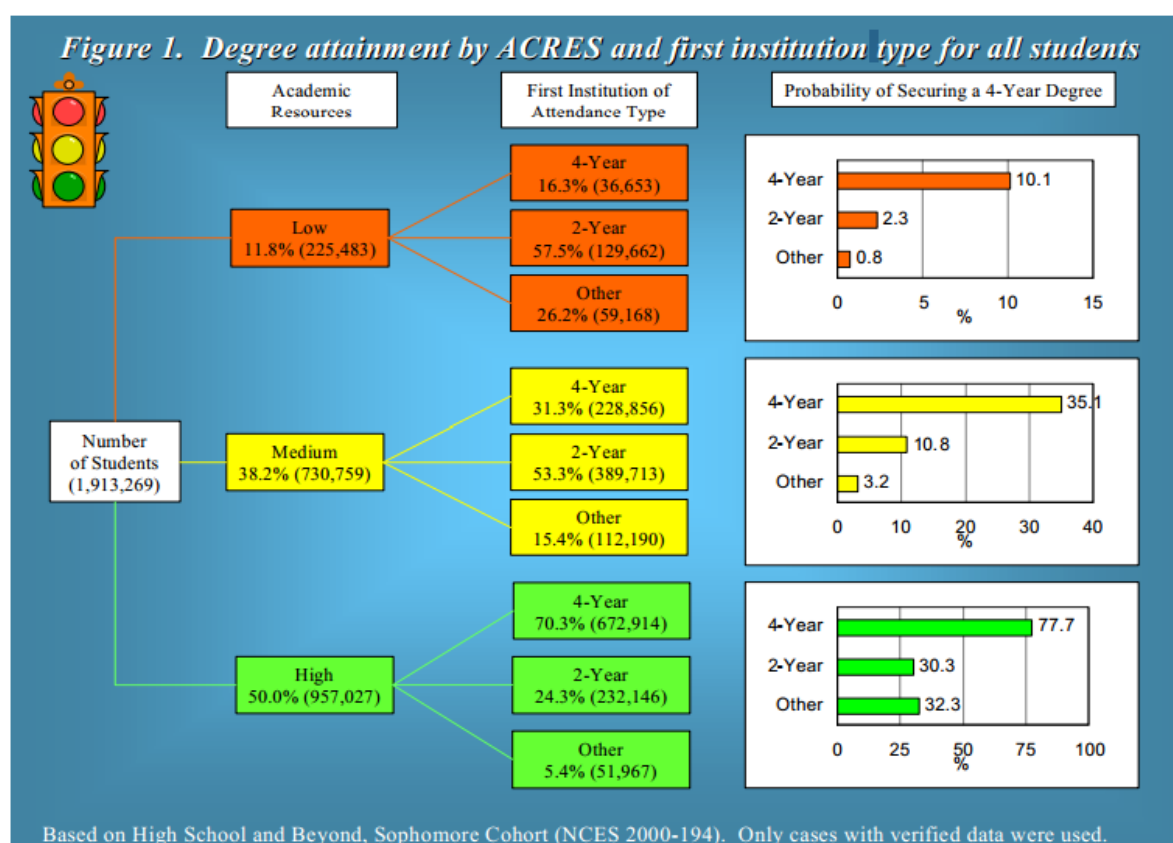
The study details the numbers who did not enter third level education and those who did. Of those who did some completed course and some did not. What is impressive about the study beside its scale, is that one of its predictive parameters called ACRES, academic resources, acts as a predictor of success. The general finding was 66% completed a course, but there were wide differentials by socioeconomic status and by race/ethnicity. ACRES stands for ACademic RESources. It is a quintile index (it maps a student to one of five 20% ranges). It is based on a composite average of class rank, GPA (Grade Point Average) Score, and final senior year tests. ACRES in an Irish context is roughly the amount of points in the leaving certificate acted as the prime predictor of success. It was the major predictor of successful completion of a college course. Adelman discusses this and a later longitudinal study which gave similar results. In the summary he states,

*“Two national longitudinal studies, a decade apart, have told similar stories. When the second story reinforces the first—and sheds even more light—something has to be right, and it behoves us to pay attention. Both of them provide support for current efforts to improve the*

*quality of high school curricula and the participation in those curricula of ever larger proportions of students. Both of them provide guidance for college and community college processes likely to lead students to degree completion.”*

In their study of what determine degree completion rates among socioeconomically disadvantaged students Cabrera and Burkum summarise many key finding in Fig 4, (Cabrera & Burkum, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of transfer & degree completion among socioeconomically disadvantaged students, 2005). A web version of the study is also available (Cabrera & Burkum, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of transfer & degree completion among socioeconomically disadvantaged students., 2005). It shows that level of preparation at secondary schools is the primary indicator of success at third level.

In colleges in Ireland we state that the first year experience is important, it is, and we place support structures there. However apart from suggesting to students that they apply to a particular local third level college, which is worthwhile in itself and happens via open days and school visits, IOTs (and universities) play no significant role in improving the academic quality, ACRES, of student arriving at their doorstep. They should try to do so. If they do not then nothing significant will change. This is discussed in the following model, later some solutions are proposed which would allow this to happen.



**Figure 3: Academic Progression rates by students of different Academic Resource (ACRES), low (red), medium (yellow) and high (green). (Cabrera & Burkum, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of transfer & degree completion among socioeconomically disadvantaged students, 2005)**

## 5. The College Effectiveness Metric

A college is measured by how many students complete a course subject to verifiable quality standards. Yes other things are measured as well but this is the primary measure. We will call this measure CE, **college effectiveness**, which is this simplified model, is a function of three things only:

1. a metric of what the student experience is before year 1, called BY1 (before year 1, call the variable B, where **B** stands for **before** year 1),
2. what the student experience is in year 1 (YR1, called the Y variable, **Y** stands for **year 1**)
3. what the student experience is after year 1 (AY1, call the variable A, where **A** stands for **after** year 1).

$$CE = f(BY1, YR1, AY1) = f(B, Y, A)$$

If the college effectiveness is determined by these three things, these three things all add to unity,

$$B + Y + A = 1$$

The measure of college effectiveness  $C_E$

$$C_E = a \times B + b \times Y + c \times A$$
$$C_E = aB + bY + cA \text{ where } B + Y + A = 1$$

where  $C_E$  is the college effectiveness. The aim is to maximise this  $C_E$  number, the bigger this number the more students complete a course of study to a measurable quality standard. The parameters a, b, and c are specific speedup factors for the fractions B, Y and A. These speedup factors could also be described as intervention factors. The national longitudinal study in the U.S.A (NELS: 88-2000.) shows that the best predictor of success in college in the academic resources. Dropout rate is a problem mainly in year 1, so give what happens in year 1 a weighting of 0.4, this gives a weighting of 0.2 for what happens after year 1. The high weighting factor of 0.4 to what happens before year 1 is justified by the NELS:88-2000. Relating it to Amdahl's law it is the portion of the process that is not really optimised, yet it limits the throughput substantially. The Desmos College Effectiveness calculator (Stockil, College Effectiveness Calculator (Desmos), 2014) can be viewed by clicking [here](#). This allows you to see the effects of different parameters in  $C_e$ , the college effectiveness.

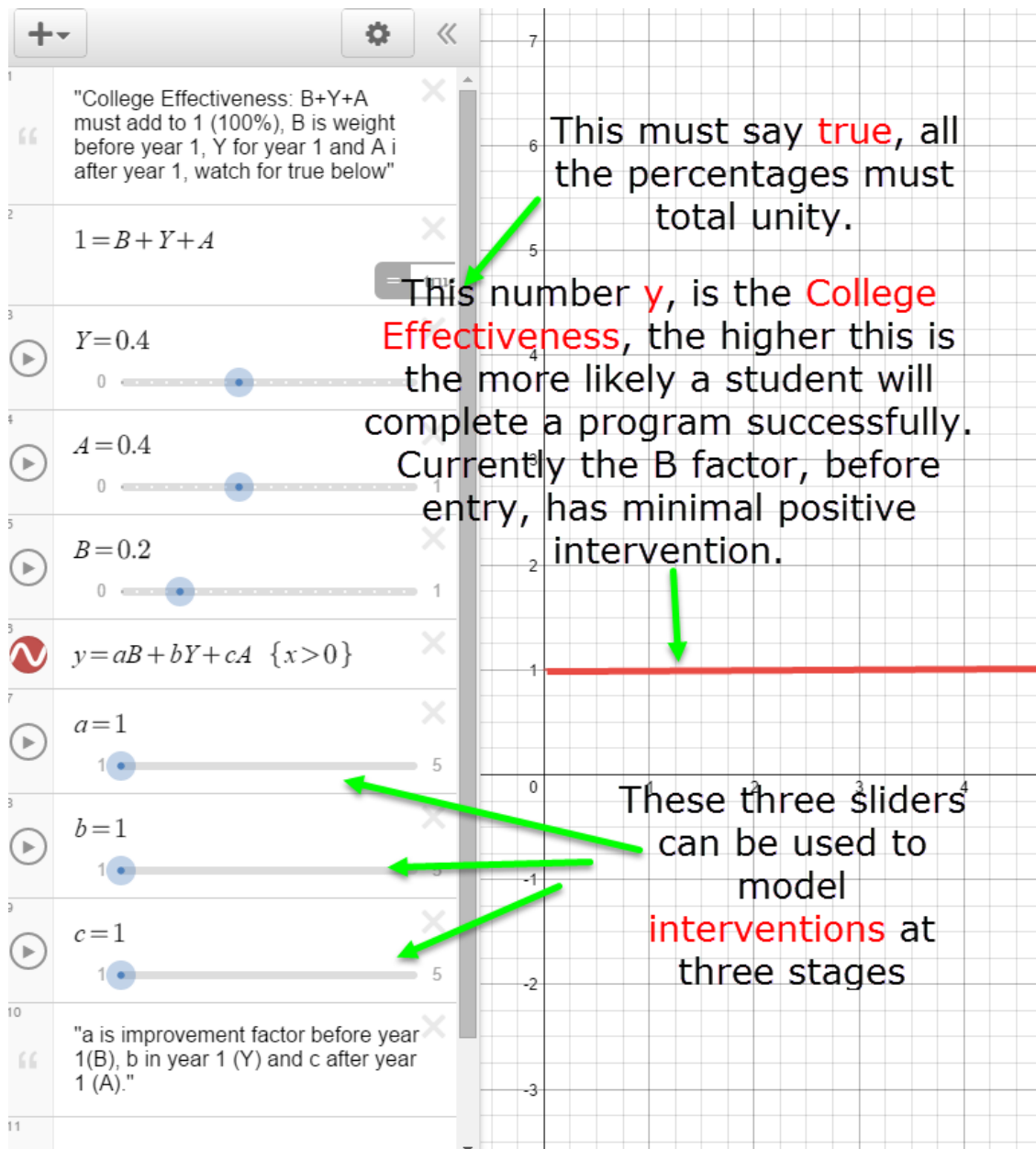


Figure 4: College Effectiveness Calculator, click [here](#).



Figure 5 shows the results of different values of a, b and c which the fractions of Y, A and B are kept constant at 0.4, 0.4 and 0.2 respectively.

$$C_E = aB + bY + cA \quad \text{where } B + Y + A = 1$$

B = 0.4, Y = 0.4 and A = 0.2

CE is college effectiveness, maximise this.

Scenario	a	b	c	CE	Commentary, for leaving cert points think ACRES to obtain better predictor.
1	1	1	1	1	A college with very low points and no first year intervention.
2	1	3	1	1.8	A college with very low points and very good first year intervention
3	2.4	1	1	1.56	A college with medium points and no first year intervention.
4	2.4	3	1	2.36	A college with medium points and a very good first year intervention
5	4	1	1	2.2	A college with high points and no first year intervention.
6	4	3	1	3	A college with high points and very good first year intervention
7	1.6	3	1	2.04	A college with alternative preparation streams before year 1 and an very good first year intervention scheme

## COLLEGE EFFECTIVENESS SCENARIOS

**Figure 5: Results CE (College Effectiveness) Model**

In these seven scenarios before first year has a weighting of 0.4, first year has a weighting of 0.4 and after first year has a weighting of 0.2. Scenarios 1 and 2 show low points entrants going to a college with no intervention scheme is year one and very good one. The weighting of 3 for the b factor assumes that the college has finely tuned its first year program. The weighting of 1 means that the college still does a professional job. A three to one improvement in anything is difficult to achieve. Scenarios two and three are similar to scenario 1 and 2 except the points are medium, and scenario 5 and 6 are also similar to 1 and 2 except the students are high achievers. Now consider scenario seven, and reimagine things a little. A college has implemented an augmented entry system, adding 60 assessed points to the documented learning experience of a secondary school student who on average get 100 points in the conventional leaving certificate system, this gives an a weight of 1.6 (effective point divided by one hundred). The college which did this offered on lines course so that everyone could join in but sent out SWAT teams made up of local secondary teachers and interested staff in the college to coach the students in schools with very poor college transfer rates. This was done patiently, with many setbacks, some serious, which were patiently addressed, over a ten year period and the college management did not flinch when setback occurred but continued their support. The Department of Education, which just before the established of TUD in 2016 overhauled the points system to improve access and completion, took a long-term view and supported in through thick and thin. The management knew it would work eventually because Amdahl's Law told them so. The funding for this was found form a combination of EU sources, industry sponsorship and the department of education. It transformed the life experiences of the students involved and released many from the poverty trap. As a result of improve academic profiles in areas where participation rates used to be lower, many companies invested in these areas and poverty was reduced dramatically.

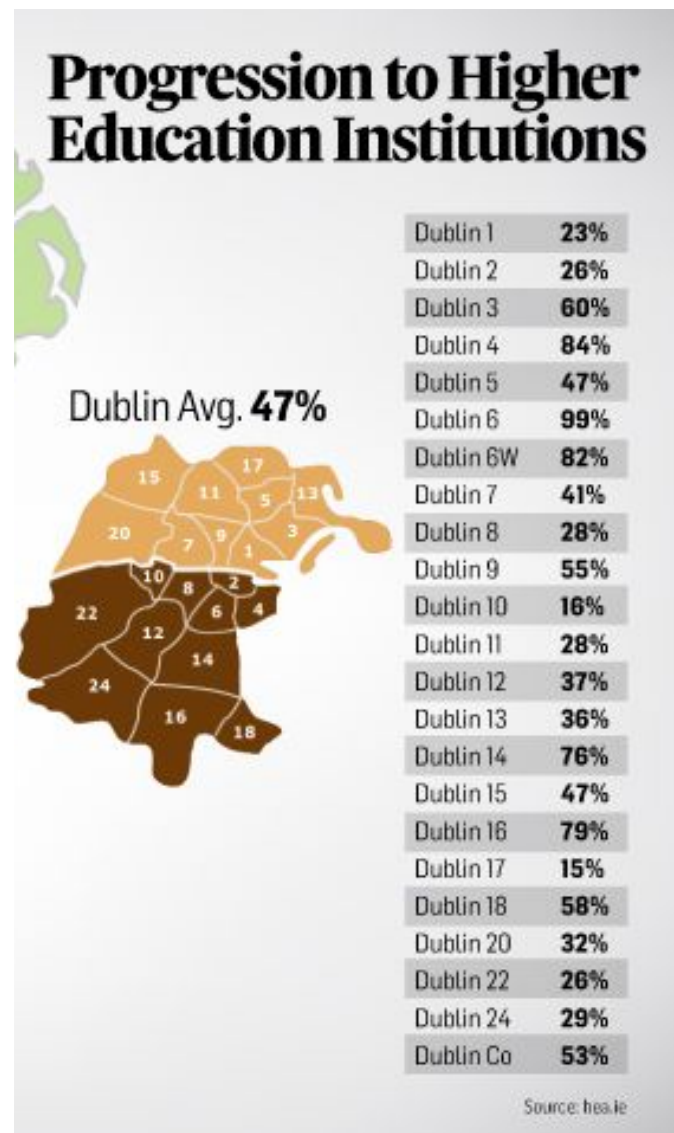
## 6. SOLC is serving our local communities in TAASOLC

The Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 states

5. *The principal function of a college shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be to provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological,*

*scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college,*

I think that the colleges have generally fulfilled this role. I can think have numerous examples from my college, IT Tallaght, that have fulfilled the above and other colleges can point to many similar achievements. Without IT Tallaght even less citizens from the South Dublin region and this includes many disadvantaged citizens would go to college. However the big picture still worries me. Consider Figure 6, which shows the inequality of access in D24 and other regions (Humphreys, Some 99% of Dublin 6 students go on to third-level, 2014). Yes, we have made progress in some area but still have a deeply unequal Dublin (and Ireland) with pockets of extreme poverty around the campuses of the future DTU.



**Figure 6: Inequality of Access, Source: Irish Times.**

Why is there still such inequality of access? The merger should be seen as a merger of communities, communities that have to be served, SOLC – serving our local communities. If TUD can do that better great, but the focus has to be on constituent campuses serving their local communities as the primary aim, and the superposition and synergy of these three campus giving a bigger advantage to the greater Dublin region and the country. The poverty traps in certain parts of Dublin correlate highly to the figures for third level access - look at Figure 6. Now consider Figure 7, which shows the

number of students and staff at the constituent campuses of the DTU as well as the populations of three local authorities in which the constituent campuses find themselves.

	Students			Staff			Region		
<b>Blanchardstown</b>	<b>3023</b>	<b>13%</b>		<b>210</b>	<b>9%</b>		<b>Fingal</b>	<b>273991</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>DIT</b>	<b>16208</b>	<b>69%</b>		<b>1888</b>	<b>78%</b>		<b>DCC</b>	<b>527612</b>	<b>49%</b>
<b>Tallaght</b>	<b>4401</b>	<b>19%</b>		<b>335</b>	<b>14%</b>		<b>SDCC</b>	<b>265205</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23632</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>2433</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>3 Regions</b>	<b>1066808</b>	<b>100%</b>
UCD	23499						DLRathdown	202261	
Trinity	16541								
DCU	11164								

**Figure 7: The Merger in Numbers: Buildings, Power Structures or Communities?**

## 7. How to Do It - Competency Based Learning Modules that augment the Leaving Certificate

The following is an outline plan:

- Identify the schools that do not contribute enough students.
- Offer on-line courses for students in year one to six at all secondary schools in the following subject areas (or similar),
  1. Grammar and written English.
  2. Robotics and 3D Printing.
  3. Maths using Desmos
  4. Introduction to Local History and Heritage
  5. Philosophy
  6. Irish
  7. The Science and Art of Good Health
  8. Science Applications.
  9. Computer Programming
  10. Creative Writing
- Fund a SWAT team consisting of many dedicated secondary schools teachers and staff and students from TUD to support the most disadvantaged schools.
- Work with local and worldwide content creators and leverage Creative Commons work to design these, and similar, modules
- These modules are on line and studied after schools hours, link the study to sports and recreation events as well and build up social capital by involving parents.
- The exam must be of a high standard, it must “hurt” to complete it but in an enjoyable way. If you pass the exam with different grades you get up to 40 leaving cert points per module. Take six modules and you could get an additional 240 points. Many students will never take six but even if one is done, and done well it can have a very positive effect.
- If the response of the TUD is to embrace such a system it will do what it is supposed to do, serve local communities and eradicate poverty as much as possible?

If the response is it is not really our job, that is the domain of secondary school and the department of education alone, then it will have missed a golden opportunity and twenty years from now similar levels of disadvantage and poverty will still exist in many areas surrounding the three communities that are to be served (see Figure 7), and the TUD will have been a cost cutting exercise that maybe get a few more less important things right but has not really done its job. There is a large literature that

describes these courses and initiatives. Space limits a detailed discussion. One website that discussed competency based learning at secondary and third level is from the US Department of Education. (Estrada, 2014). Competency based learning is stressed in Post Secondary section of the Gates Foundation, see <http://postsecondary.gatesfoundation.org/>. Their banner theme is

*“Too few U.S. students are ready for college when they arrive, more than 40% drop out before finishing”.*

Let’s be honest, despite some excellent results, in too many courses all over Ireland the same can be said. Finally, Golston describes a model for postsecondary success using predictive data analytics, next generation courseware and evidence based approaches to improve student success. (Golston, 2014)

## 8. Summary

The TAASOLC (Technical University of Dublin, Amdahl’s law and ACRES, serving our local communities) acronym was minted. Some of the issues of TUD have been discussed, the many positive things have been acknowledged and questions have been raised about things that can be fixed. A model of college success, called college effectiveness, CE, based on Amdahl’s Law and the largest ever survey of why certain groups go to college has been presented. The importance of the new TUD serving our local communities and paying attention to the deep inequality in access that still exists in our system is stressed.

A model for improving access based on supplemental modules offered in the secondary school cycle is presented, such a development would leverage from work in competency based learning and learning data analytics, and if tried and patiently optimised will succeed because of Amdahl’s Law. It may be an exciting time to be involved in education, if the TUD grasps the nettle and attacks the problem of disadvantage using solutions similar to the ones proposed in this paper; or any other solutions that work. It can use its size to force this issue against those who think things are just fine as they are, and that it acceptable to allow poverty traps and serious access disparities to continue to flourish in twenty first century Ireland. It can do this if it really wants to, if it really wants to be a new university, and I remain confident that it will. Time will tell.

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# **The James Connolly Memorial Hospital Electronic Menu Card system**

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## **1. Background**

The James Connolly Memorial Hospital (JCM) require an Electronic Menu Card system so that their patients can choose their meals in a more informed and efficient manner. This entails presenting menus to the patients electronically and with an interface that will allow them to choose their meal. The electronic nature of such a system means more options can be incorporated in terms of language and presentation. In addition the system can be accessed anytime so the information will be available in a more timely fashion which will have positive knock on effects in terms of food ordering systems, food wastage etc.

The main benefits are:

- Better menu planning taking into account food tastes and requirements of minority ethnic patients
- Patients know what is available to them from a menu in a language they understand
- More accurate information forwarded to the kitchen in a short timeframe
- Reduction of the paper mountain used at present
- A reduction in the amount of food wasted.
- Chefs can cook food stuff which the patient will eat as they will have the necessary information on time.
- All patients will be able to make a choice for all meals

## **2. Process used to clarify community partner requirements**

A number of meetings were held with community partner where the details of the project were developed. In addition the existing “manual approach” to meal ordering was observed so the integration of an electronic system could be as straightforward as possible. The existing documentation (e.g. menus, rotas etc.) were also obtained and studied to gain an understanding of existing procedures.

## **3. Agreed specification of project deliverables**

It was agreed that the electronic menu card system would be developed as a mobile device application as part of a computing student group project. The deliverables agreed with the partner were as follows:

### **Mandatory Requirements**

- A mobile application that will allow patients in the JCM to logon and see the Meal Menu for the week and make their selections. This information will be collated and dispatched to the kitchen or relevant department.
- Menu Creation/Editing Interface: An interface for the catering department to construct the electronic menu(s)
- The Electronic menu will be universal through language translation options and by making use of universal themes such as pictures.

### **Optional Requirements**

- Link to hospital ordering systems and databases to update stock levels, request food orders, estimate staffing levels etc.

#### **4. Progress to date**

Currently the students have developed a thorough understanding of the project by having a number of meetings with the catering department at the JCM. They have also decided on their technical course that will maximise the offering to as many patients as possible. The prototype is currently in development and version 1.0 is expected in January 2015.

#### **5. Reflections on the project in terms of potential benefits to stakeholders.**

The project will ultimately be of benefit to the hospital and the students. The hospital have identified areas for improvement in their catering process that this project aims to address. This should result in a meal ordering system that makes life easier for the hospital catering department and patients and eases some of the stress on what can already be a highly stressful environment.

The students involved will gain hugely from this project as they are involved in a real world software development project with a real client and application. This is not usually the norm in student projects so they will learn hugely from that experience as well as learning the technologies and technical skills that the project demands.



**‘Getting Children Outdoors again’**  
**- Outdoor Play for children in a rural North West of Ireland setting:**  
**A civic engagement Project**

Michelle McGonagle  
Institute of Technology Letterkenny

## **1. Background**

Children’s’ Outdoor play nowadays is the preferred approach to playing indoors which has become a constant focus of influences and powers of technology. Children spend hours on social media sites, isolated playing video games and lost in technologically powered screens (Larson et al, 2011). As a results of this disengagement with outdoors activities, children fall victims to many problems including obesity, social exclusion, and in some cases behavioural issues Fresh air and exercise are probably the two most common benefits associated with outdoor play by parents. However, many other advantages and beneficial of outdoor play including child’s social, cognitive and emotional development (Sluss, 2014).

## **2. The Project**

Outdoor play has always been a keen interest and recently come to light that there is a lack of it occurring in Inishowen region, Co. Donegal. Anecdotal evidence would suggest this is due to parents not fully understanding its importance and benefits to the child. This project proposes the development of an Outdoor Play Manual (OPM) designed and targeted at parents within Inishowen region on the importance of outdoor play and overall child development. This OPM will be delivered and explained to the parents through a number of workshops via established crèches, nurseries and childcare facilities in the region. It is envisaged through parent’s awareness and education via information sessions, they will take cognisance of this as a child health and wellbeing matter and encourage children to get outdoors.

## **3. Possible Outcomes**

It is envisaged that implementation of this project, parents will be more aware of the huge advantages for children which are currently missed opportunities. It is anticipated that today’s generation of children can become a compromise of profile of past generation children that was filled with enthusiasm, fun and interest in exploring the outdoor activities. Upon reflection, the author recalls such days spent outside, not wanting to go back inside because I knew it would be time for bed. Outdoor play is one of the most defining characteristics of many happy childhood memories. It is timely to put an end to the newfound ‘techno child’ and get them outside playing, socialising, being creative, using their imagination and most of all having fun!

## **References**

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- Sluss, D. (2014) *Supporting Play in Early Childhood: Environment, Curriculum, Assessment*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edt. Cengage Learning: USA.

# **Developing and Implementing Civic Engagement Programmes in Dublin 15**

Breffi O'Rourke

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*I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand*

**- Confucius, 551 B. C.**

## **1. Applied Portfolio – Background**

Moss (1994) compares Applied Portfolios to job applications where the candidate has to convince a committee of the strengths on offer; In the Applied Portfolio the student has to convince the teacher of what has been learned and how effectively. The period February and March of 2013 were not unlike a job interview, the basic structure was known (for the Applied Portfolio) and there was a sense that anything could happen next. Similar to a job interview the Portfolio process requires you demonstrate examples of your learning in an applied setting, a key difference being you get to propose an assessment criteria.

Biggs and Tang (1998) assert common approaches to assessment stem from an objectivist theory of knowledge. The objectivist concept accords a dominant role to the measurement model of assessment (Taylor, 1994). Student assessment by applied portfolio according to Biggs and Tang (1998) enables students to apply and benefit from a constructive learning approach. Bay (2011) states learners using the constructive approach move away from memorization-based learning assessment to a more proactive approach where the emphasis is placed more on the learners' assessment than the teachers.

### **1.1 Terms of Reference**

Part 1 required Identifying an issue for the portfolio and developing a project plan with milestones and timelines. The development of a proposed assessment criterion was not unlike project planning where setting down key performance indicators (KPIs) would be considered good practice. Part 2 the Literature review is divided into a number of sections that relate to the key deliverables in the project. The scoping exercise for the Literature review helped inform and influence the eventual format and focus of the Applied Portfolio, which moved from a study on the process of collaboration to become more solely focused on strengthening Civic Engagement in Dublin 15. Part 3 required selecting the most appropriate evidence of learning that would demonstrate the required learning had taken place. This process has been described as a 'decision as to what treasures to put on show as crucial' (Biggs & Tan, 1998, p. 6). Biggs and Tan identify the requirements from the student to be, 'sufficiently metacognitive to recognize the nature and quality of their own learning' (ibid, 1998, p.6). Part 4 will draw together moments of self-actualization, reflections and give an assessment of outcomes. The ability to be able to identify and recognize, through different pathways the knowledge and learning which has taken place will be the most critical to communicate.

### **1.2 Summary Statement**

The primary Social Enterprise is Fingal County Council and Civic engagement the issue identified. Learning from the development and application of strategies designed to strengthen civic engagement in the Dublin 15, will be documented, examined and critically reflected upon.

### **1.3 The issue and its evolution**

The initial issue and focus of the Portfolio was on the process of collaboration, specifically what Himmelman (2002)<sup>21</sup> describes as “exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose”. My statement of March 2013 reflects this:

**March 2013**            The Applied Portfolio will be a study of the process of collaboration. It will research, develop and examine how, through civic engagement, specifically knowledge exchange and knowledge co-generation, collaboration between the ITB, RAPID programme, third sector and public service organisations and citizens located in the RAPID area evolves.

Considerable scope for strengthening Civic Engagement was identified at an early stage in the collaborative process between the project manager of Fingal County Council and the office of Civic Engagement in the Institute Technology Blanchardstown (ITB). This potential is captured in the issue statement below.

**May 2013:**    Develop and Implement civic engagement programmes in Dublin 15.

### **1.4 The Challenge**

Between the periods 2002 – 2009, 12.8million of capital and revenue investments were made by central government in the RAPID<sup>22</sup> area in Dublin 15, Blanchardstown.

Government designated 45 spatial geographies RAPID status in 2002. Relatively high levels of investments in areas of high levels of socio-economic disadvantage followed, designed to help, ‘Improve the quality of life and opportunity available to residents of the most disadvantaged communities in Irish towns and cities’. (Pobal website, 2011)<sup>23</sup>

Between 2010– 2013 additional resources from government to RAPID areas had reduced to a trickle. Reductions in the Public exchequer provided an impetus to investigate innovations that may not require large financial investments but have the potential, over a period, to make an impact on social and economic challenges in RAPID areas.

### **1.5 Client Organisations - Fingal County Council (FCC) & Institute Technology Blanchard town (ITB)**

Fingal County Council employs a coordinator (the Student) part of whose responsibility is the coordination of activities designed to strengthen service delivery and improve quality of life measures in the government designated RAPID area in Dublin 15, Blanchardstown<sup>24</sup>.

The co-coordinator reports to a steering group, chaired by the Department of Social Protection, with representatives from other statutory, non-statutory bodies and volunteer community residents who provide an oversight on the prioritization. In May 2012 the ITB created the new position of Head of Civic Engagement. Part of ITBs campus is located in the

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<sup>21</sup> [http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/4achange.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/4achange.pdf) accessed 10/11/13

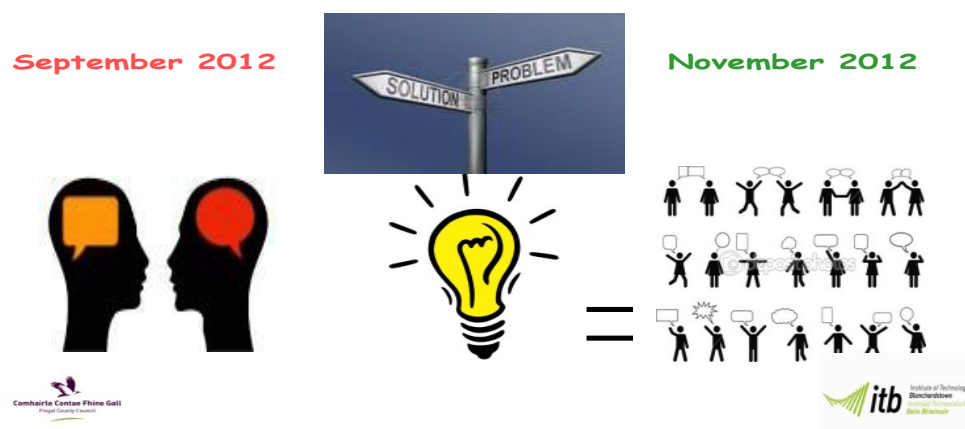
<sup>22</sup> Revitalising Areas through Planning Investment and Development

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.pobal.ie/FAQ/Pages/RAPID.aspx> accessed 3/5/13

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.fingalcoco.ie/media/RAPID\\_Area\\_Map.pdf](http://www.fingalcoco.ie/media/RAPID_Area_Map.pdf) accessed 3/5/13

designated RAPID area in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. The appointment was a response to the ITBs 2012 – 2015 Strategic Plan<sup>25</sup>, specifically a commitment to:

Expand and deepen our links with public sector bodies, community representative organisations, voluntary organisations and other education providers. (ITB, 2012 – 2015, Strategic Plan, p.14)



**Figure 1: Origin of Civic Engagement work in Dublin 15**

<b>September 2012</b>	RAPID co-coordinator, Fingal County Council meets Head of Civic Engagement Institute Technology Blanchardstown.
<b>November 2012</b>	Academics from ITB meet with public service and community representative organizations (26 in total) to explore developing more collaborative partnerships.
<b>December 2012</b>	As part of Business and Society, Next Generation Module, I attend the Martin McEvoy Annual Seminar Series 2012 at DCU, entitled: <i>The Engaged University – The role of the university in the development of its region</i> , my learning at this event influences my choice of the issue for the Applied Portfolio.
<b>March 2013</b>	A short report with recommendations arising out of the November meeting is discussed at the March RAPID board. The recommendations (including civic engagement measures) are endorsed and the board nominates Miriam Ryan, Manager Blanchardstown Youth Services to work with RAPID coordinator and Head of Civic Engagement on implementing its recommendations.
<b>March 2013</b>	Issues of collaboration and civic engagement in the RAPID areas identified and submitted to Lecturer as the Applied Portfolio project.
<b>March 2013</b>	Applied Portfolio; Project work commences.

## 1.6 Civic Engagement – Key Project Deliverables

### a. Knowledge Exchange Learning Domain

Develop and implement a knowledge exchange initiative that generates ideas, promotes collaborative opportunities, to impact on local economic and social challenges. A minimum of 2 knowledge exchange events will take place during the project period.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.itb.ie/AboutITB/ITBStrategicPlan2012-2015.pdf> accessed 3/5/13

## **b. Community Based Research Learning Domain**

This relates to research that is undertaken in collaboration with the community. A mechanism will be developed and implemented that matches community challenges with student & academic knowledge/learning. A minimum of 5 community based research assignments will be instigated during the period of the portfolio.

### **1.7 Project Plan - Assessment Criteria**

Bigg & Tang (1998) assert:

The beauty about AP (Applied Portfolio) is that it puts the onus on the Student: it is what *they* decide to include as an AP Item that determines what *they* need to do about it. (Bigg & Tang, 1998, p.14)

Table 1 identifies 6 categories of criteria for assessment. In each category examples of the type of learning to be evidenced is listed, examples column lists what part of the Applied Portfolio these can be found.

**Table 1: Learning Assessment Criteria**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evidence it has been met</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>a. Project plan is fulfilled.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to construct project plan methodology</li> <li>• Project objectives met in part / whole.</li> <li>• Project deliverables / benefits demonstrated.</li> <li>• Project milestones met in part / whole.</li> <li>• Quality of products / deliverables.</li> <li>• Number of collaborators involved (inc. class mates / lecturers)</li> </ul>	<p>Part 1. Project Plan.</p> <p>Part 3. Learning Activities and Evidence.</p> <p>Portfolio / Items / artefacts selected.</p>
<b>b. Understanding of research.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Information literacy:</b> demonstrate able to use information gathered effectively.</li> <li>• <b>Data evaluation:</b> determining which literature makes a significant contribution to understanding of the project.</li> <li>• <b>Analysis and interpretation:</b> discuss the findings and conclusions of literature.</li> </ul>	<p>Part 2. Literature review.</p>
<b>c. Application of learning and knowledge.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning from Masters applied and enhanced</li> <li>• Social Enterprise themes adopted.</li> <li>• Use of theoretical frameworks.</li> <li>• Technologies ...</li> </ul>	<p>Part 1 – 4. + Portfolio /Items / artefacts selected.</p>
<b>d. Collaboration with class colleague and / or lecturers.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to demonstrate tapped into peer learning with colleagues / lecturers involving and collaborating with them in some way which contributes to deliverables.</li> </ul>	<p>Part 3. Learning Activities and Evidence.</p> <p>Part 4. Learning assessment of outcomes / reflection.</p> <p>Portfolio /Artefacts selected</p>
<b>e. Reflective learning throughout project.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical pathways to learning identified.</li> <li>• Journal documenting key moments in development</li> <li>• Evaluation of learning</li> </ul>	<p>Part 4. Learning assessment of outcomes / reflection</p> <p>Portfolio / Artefacts selected</p>
<b>f. Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence portfolio deliverable/s has embedded itself in client organisations (Fingal County Council &amp; Institute Technology Blanchardstown)</li> </ul>	<p>Part 4. Learning assessment of outcomes / reflection</p> <p>----Websites ---</p> <p>Portfolio /Artefacts selected</p>

**Table 2: Learning Assessment Criteria - Communication**

<b>Communication Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Journal / Notes	121 meeting between projects leads	Monthly	In Person	Personal	Notes	Project Architect
Notes /Minutes Research Hub Meeting	Meeting to review action register and status	6 weekly / Bi Monthly	In Person	Research - Members	Minutes	Project Architect
Knowledge Exchange Reports	Present metrics and status to team and sponsor	Monthly	Group activity	All attendees	Report	Project Architect
RAPID Board Reports	Progress report deliverables	Minimum 1	In Person	RAPID Board	PowerPoint	Project Architect (x2)

## **1.8 Project Plan**

Thinking through where it is you want to get to, what it looks like when you have got there, and what steps you may have to negotiate saves time and stops mission drift. The business and project goals for the Applied Portfolio have been set out clearly in the table (3) below: Including parameters or scope of the project, assumptions made and likely constraints.

**Table 3: Project Plan Summary**

<b>Issue/Project:</b> Develop and Implement civic engagement programmes in Dublin 15.	
<p>The <b>business goals</b> for the project are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop <b>Knowledge Exchange</b> Projects in Dublin 15.</li> <li>2. Develop <b>Community Based Research</b> Projects in Dublin15.</li> </ol>	<p>The <b>project goals</b> and objectives include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accomplish business goals in a timely manner.</li> <li>2. Civic engagement programmes developed are sustained.</li> <li>3. Apply learning and utilise peer network developed from participation in Msc Management: Social Enterprise in Innovation.</li> </ol>
<p>The <b>Scope of project</b> will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure both the business goals and project goals are achieved.</li> <li>• To restrict the Applied Portfolio to 2 of the civic engagement domains: Knowledge Exchange and Community Based Research.</li> <li>• Demonstrate a learning pathway and select appropriate evidence in my Portfolio which demonstrates meeting its stated objectives.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Assumptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My role as RAPID Coordinator for Fingal County Council will not change for the duration.</li> <li>• Des Moore Head of Civic Engagement ITB will remain at his post for the duration.</li> <li>• Sponsors are fully supportive of the project.</li> <li>• An appetite exists for knowledge exchange between the HEI, Public and civic sector.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Constraints</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited timeframe to develop robust mechanisms for community based research.</li> <li>• Time constraints of project manager balancing existing workload.</li> <li>• Willingness of peers from course and lecturers to become involved.</li> <li>• Can civic engagement become a 'core business' of the contemporary university, or is it an attractive 'add-on' that is not affordable in the current economic climate?</li> </ul>

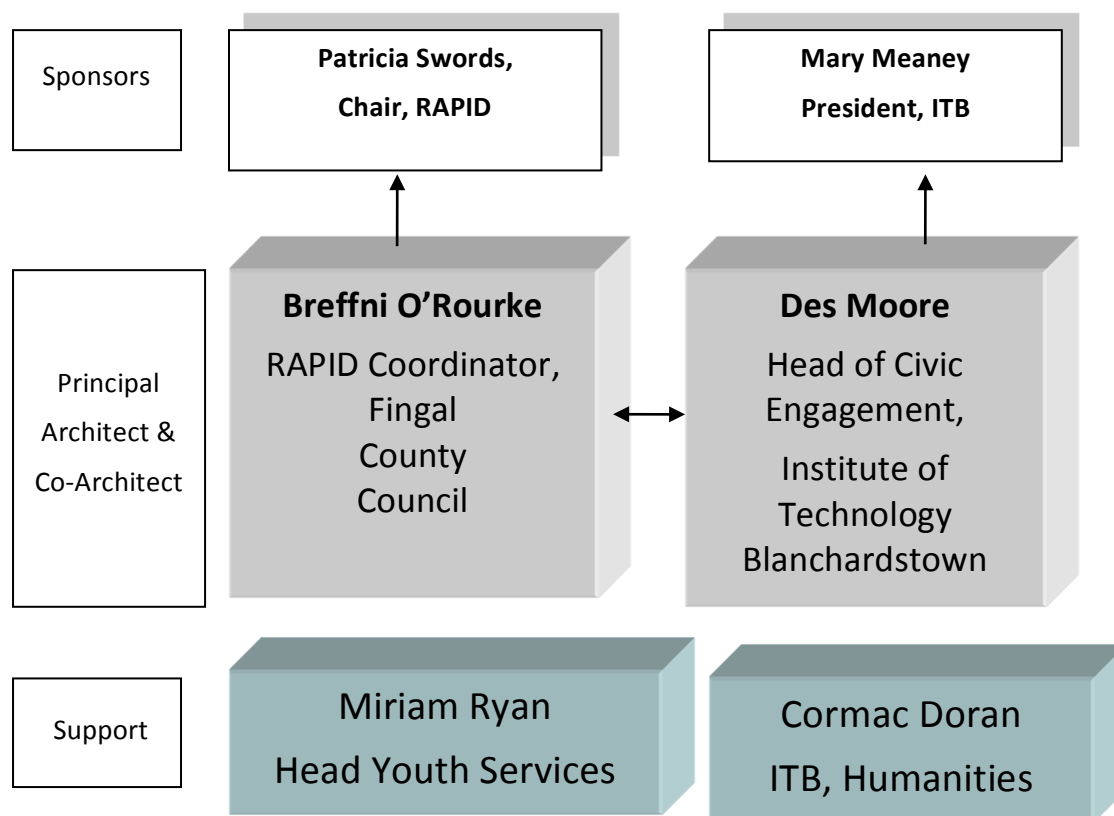
## 1.9 Project Plan – Management & Role Requirements

There are three identifiable roles in the organizational Chart illustrated in Figure 2:

- a. Sponsors: These have a line management role with the principal architects their strategic Support and encouragement will be important in helping the project secure its deliverables.
- b. Principal architects: Project leads a co-dependent relationship exists between the two, they are the principal decision makers and budget holders.
- c. Supporting role: These could be many more; the chart identifies two, their role is as project champions community / student / lecturer outreach.

Figure 3 identifies six major milestones and breaks them down into tasks and duration.





*Figure 2: Project Management - Organisational Chart*

Outline	Task Type	Task Name	Start Date	Duration	End Date
1	Milestone	Start Portfolio	01/03/2013	6	14/04/2103
1.1	Task	Agree objectives and scope		1	
1.2	Task	Draft project plan		1	
1.3	Task	Report and recommendation endorsed by sponsors		1	30 <sup>th</sup> March
2	Milestone	Develop and implement Knowledge Exchange Event (I)	01/04/2013	12	31/05/2013
2.1	Task	Develop Learning Exchange concept and market	1 <sup>st</sup> April	6	16 <sup>th</sup> May
2.2	Task	Confirm and brief speakers & facilitators (including MSSE peer group)	1at April	5	12 <sup>th</sup> May
2.3	Task	Co- facilitate Learning Exchange Event	16 <sup>th</sup> May	0	16 <sup>th</sup> May
2.4	Task	Document learning and distribute	1 <sup>st</sup> July	8	1 <sup>st</sup> September
3	Milestone	Develop and implement an approach to Community Based Research in D15	01/04/2013	13	31/12/2013
3.1	Task	Develop and convene Research Hub	1 <sup>st</sup> April	5	9 <sup>th</sup> May
3.2	Task	Develop and circulate Community Based Research template to capture proposals	1 <sup>st</sup> May	8	1 <sup>st</sup> July
3.3	Task	Complete meeting with community partners	1 <sup>st</sup> May	8	1 <sup>st</sup> July
4	Milestone	Develop and implement Knowledge Exchange Event (II)	01/08/2013	20	30/09/2013
4.1	Task	Develop Learning Exchange concept and market	1 <sup>st</sup> August	7	26 <sup>th</sup> September
4.2	Task	Confirm and brief speakers & facilitators (including MSSE peer group)	1 <sup>st</sup> August	6	12 <sup>th</sup> September
4.3	Task	Co- facilitate Learning Exchange Event	26 <sup>th</sup> September	0	26 <sup>th</sup> September
4.4	Task	Document learning and distribute	1 <sup>st</sup> October	12	31 <sup>st</sup> December
5	Milestone	Match Student / Lecturers with Community Based Research	01/09/13	16	31/12/2014
5.1	Task	Distribute community based research proposals	1 <sup>st</sup> August	12	31 <sup>st</sup> October
5.2	Task	Match community research proposals with ITB student / academic	20 <sup>th</sup> September	13	31 <sup>st</sup> December
6	Milestone	Report to Board	9/12/13	N/A	9/12/2014
6.1	Task	Civic Engagement Presentation to the board	9 <sup>th</sup> December	0	9 <sup>th</sup> December
6.2	Task	End of period to capture for Applied Portfolio	31 <sup>st</sup> December	0	31 <sup>st</sup> December

**Figure 3: Milestone Chart**

## 2.0 Introduction

The first task of the review will be to identify the term Civic Engagement, before locating it in the literature, specifically where it is applied to partnerships between Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) with public organisations and community. The main body of the literature review will locate the key deliverables (a) Community Based Research, and (b) Knowledge Exchange within the framework of civic engagement before examining knowledge sharing and its relationship with social capital. Relevant literature will be extracted on sustainability, as it relates to embedding civic engagement, before touching briefly on measures of impact and success. Literature will be extracted reviewed and evaluated before emergent themes are identified and findings synthesised in the summary.

## 2.1 Civic Engagement

'Engagement' implies mutual listening, reciprocity and dialogue; It comprehends both a promise of action and the outcome of action, it entails a willingness to change, a capacity to accommodate the other and a preparedness to be transformed in the process (Bjarnason and Coldstream, 2003). Barnett (2003, p. 253) defines engagement as: "a coming together, a merging, a fusing...not just a coming together but an interaction". He states that in the process of this interaction, one party, at least, becomes somewhat transformed. Boyer's (1994) vision of an engaged university mooted a new model for higher education that revitalized the notion of community engagement as a central mission for 21st-century colleges and universities. Boyer (1996) promoted a new model for higher education in which: "the academy must become a more vigorous partner in searching for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and it must affirm its historic commitment to society" (Boyer 1996, p.19-20).

The terms "community involvement" and "civic engagement" are differentiated in the NSHE report in the following way: community involvement is defined primarily by location and includes faculty work that occurs in communities and in clinical settings either on or off campus. Civic engagement is a subset of community involvement and is defined by both location as well as process (it occurs not only in but also *with* the community). This distinction between community involvement and civic engagement is consistent with Boyer's call for fundamental changes in the structure and behaviour of the academy. (Bringle, R. G., Hatcher, J. A., & Clayton, P. H. 2006, p.3). Civic responsibility contains the idea that a university which has expertise in social work or education or governance, or many other areas, might have a duty to support a struggling local government, education or health service, or contribute in other ways to civic life (Burns & Squire, 2011, p.10). Civic engagement is said to develop partnerships that possess integrity and that emphasize participatory, collaborative, and democratic processes (e.g., design, implementation, assessment) that provide benefits to all constituencies, and thus, encompass service to the community (Bringle et al, 2006, p.3). The contemporary university agenda, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 'has moved on from a desire to simply increase the general education of the population and the output of scientific research, there is now a greater concern to harness University education and research to specific economic and social objectives' (OECD, 2005 p2).

The (Irish) National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 defines Engagement as: At its simplest, engagement means taking on civic responsibilities and cooperating with the needs of the community that sustains higher education – including business, the wider education system, and the community and voluntary sector' (NSHE, 2011, p.74).

## 2.2 Civic Engagement – Irish Context

A growing body of literature exists exploring civic engagement and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and their social, economic and civic engagement potential in the regions they are anchored. Within Ireland, the [National Strategy for Higher Education](#) (NSHE, 2011) prioritises engagement and comments on the need to educate students for their role as "citizens who will add to the richness of society". The strategy goes on to state: "Engagement with the wider community must become more firmly embedded in the mission of higher education institutions. Higher education institutions need to become more firmly embedded in the social and economic contexts of the communities they live and serve" (NSHE, 2011, p.77).

A survey carried out on activities in Higher Education in Ireland<sup>26</sup> (Lyons & McIlrath, 2011) and commissioned by Campus Ireland defined civic engagement as, 'A mutually beneficial knowledge-based collaboration between the higher education institution, its staff and students, with the wider community, through community-campus partnerships' (Lyons, & McIlrath, 2011, p.5). Expectations on universities are higher than ever. Industry, government and the community expect higher education institutions to demonstrate their value, and contribution and benefit to society and the economy. The NSHE (2011) report asserts, 'institutions should have open engagement with their community and wider society and this should infuse every aspect of their mission' (NSHE, 2011, p.11).

## 2.3 Community Based Research

Community Based Research is one of two domains within Civic Engagement (the second knowledge exchange) identified in the scope of this portfolio. Community university partnerships in research, learning and knowledge are evident in the literature as being a growing trend in countries around the world as nations and regions seek solutions to inter-related social economic and environmental issues and challenges to their sustainability. The literature identifies 'science shops' as important actors in the narrative of community based research (CBR) (Turney 1982 & Mulder 2001). Originating in the Netherlands, Science shops benefited from the financial autonomy of Dutch universities in the 1970s, and from a clause in the Higher Education Act which directs universities to pay attention to the advancement of a sense of social responsibility (Turney 1982).

Science shops in Europe were said to be initiated by critical university staff and students in the Netherlands in the 1970s. In practice, 'contact is established between a civil society organisation and a science shop or CBR centre on a problem in which the civil society organisation is seeking research support. In this collective search for a solution new knowledge is generated'. (Mulder et al, 2001, p.15).

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.tcd.ie/Community/assets/pdf/National%20Civic%20Engagement%20Survey.pdf> accessed 9/3/13

Target group (social partner)	Mechanism or modality (within university)
Individuals - students, graduates, seniors - pupils - general public	Formal and non-formal courses (including life-long learning) Public courses; lectures; science week; Open House; high-school desk; popular magazines PR department
Community Groups NGOs Non-profit sector Local authorities (SMEs - non-profit questions)	Science shop
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Regional authorities	Technology Transfer Bureau; Business Service Centre
National authorities Industry	National Science Foundations Contracts Paid chairs

Source: Mulder et al, p.16, 2001

**Figure 4: Mapping the university society relationship**

What of the relationship between the community partners and the university? (or in the case of the ITB a Higher Education Institute - HEI). For a science shop it is crucial to have a supply-base of knowledge and research capacity to answer to questions from civil groups (Mulder et al, 2001, p.67). What do communities have to say about engaging with universities? What is on the communities' minds? Embedded in the values of community based research are collaboration and empowerment. Despite these community focused principles, the discourse on community service learning has been criticized for its focus on its value to students rather than its value to communities (Stoecker 2003). Bortolin (2011) asserts that the dearth of research related to community service learning and research poses the question "Who is served?" (Bortolin 2011, p.55). Bortolin analyzed examples of the word "community" from 25 of the most recent articles in the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning. Four themes emerged:

- a. community as a means by which the university enhances its academic work;
- b. community as a recipient of influence by the university;
- c. community as a place which the university makes better;
- d. community as a factor in the financial interest of the university.

The literature serves to demonstrate tensions which may emerge in the relationship between community and institute. Bortolin (2011) contends that by identifying these troubling themes, its hoped 'scholars reflect critically on how their discourses shape an evolving understanding of community engaged practice' (Bortolin, 2011, p.53).

### 2.3 Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge Exchange is the second learning domain identified in the scope of this portfolio. Burns & Squire (2011) identify four categories in the spectrum of public and civic engagement in HEI's: (i) academic knowledge production; (ii) knowledge transfer; (iii) knowledge exchange; (iv) knowledge co-generation.

The approach to engagement advocated by the Association of Commonwealth Universities relies on a mutual exchange of ideas between the university and its multiple communities, involving: "the exchange of thinking across the boundary between academy and the rest of society, between thinkers and practitioners, researchers and innovators-on-the-ground [and] is essentially synergistic — it yields more than the sum of the thinking of both undertaken separately" (Wedgwood, 2003, p. 126). Civic responsibility contains the idea that a university

which has expertise in social work or education or governance, or many other areas, might have a duty to support struggling local government, education or health service, or contribute in other ways to civic life (Burns & Squire, 2011, p.7).

**Spectrum of public engagement in HEI's**

<b>Academic knowledge production</b>	<b>Knowledge Transfer</b>	<b>Knowledge Exchange</b>	<b>Knowledge Co-generation</b>
Knowledge is both produced and consumed by academics. Wider stakeholders have little access to academic knowledge. Many parts of society have limited access to education and teaching which is based on knowledge generated by the academy.	Universities make their research more accessible. Degree courses are made available to a wider number of people.	Universities recognise that others also have valuable knowledge and work in partnership. Teachers acknowledge that their students and the places where they live and work are also a source of knowledge and wisdom.	Universities and publics co generate knowledge, including the setting of research questions, research design, data collection, analysis and the ensuing practise implications. Curriculum is developed in collaboration with multiple stakeholders (businesses, community groups, marginal groups etc).

Source: Burns & Squire (2011)

**Figure 5: Spectrum of public engagement in Higher Education Institutes**

How do we effectively and respectfully facilitate exchange of knowledge between community and university? Advocates of campus-community engagement suggest a need for knowledge to be co-created with, rather than for the community (d'Arlach, Sanchez and Feuer 2009). Knowledge exchange is also important for the public and third sectors, although as yet this is poorly understood NESTA (2007). Cherwitz (2005) calls for academic engagement to result in a substantial shift in how we understand our purpose and how we conduct our work toward public purposes, public problem solving, and public participation in knowledge generation. What is so appealing about community service learning, and what often inspires converts to the field from both the university and the community is this idea that universities and communities can be equal partners in this enterprise (Bortolin, 2011, p.53). Service learning scholars have been advocating for university- community partnerships that view the community as possessing knowledge and assets, such that the university and community can work together to co-create solutions to social problems (d'Arlach, L., Sanchez, B., & Feuer, R. (2009, p13). d'Arlach, Sanchez and Feuer (2009) in their research look at the example of students of a university assisting teaching English to Spanish immigrant speakers. Results favour a service-learning class format where community recipients can have expert roles (i.e., teach Spanish, too, rather than only being tutored), knowledge is assumed to be co-created and multi-directional, and ample time is devoted to dialogue about current social issues. This last point could be important in helping ensure a respectful relationship between community and institute can flourish, based on skills and merits being recognised by both partners.

## **2.5 Knowledge and Social Capital**

Bringing together a cross section of actors with different experiences, skills and backgrounds for knowledge exchange is one of the portfolios key deliverables. The purpose of developing a platform a – Learning Exchange – to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, specifically

around social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, is based on the premise that new knowledge can be created when people are brought together with a unified purpose that can help impact economic and social challenges in the Dublin 15 area.

The notion of a shared vision is an emergent theme in the literature, Chiu et al. (2006) in their empirical study found that shared vision was positively related to the quality of knowledge shared on the network. Further it is argued that a shared vision amongst the network members, leads to sharing of resources (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). Trust is an enabler for social exchange and cooperation and it opens up people for knowledge sharing. It facilitates cooperation, which, in turn, begets trust (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Trust, vision and sharing are terms associated with social capital a concept that has been applied to a wide range of settings from the personal, family and community and most relevant to the portfolio geographical areas (Putman 1995). Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998, p.245) define social capital as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit”. According to Mu, et al. (2008) knowledge creation and sharing are processes that cannot be induced through coercion; rather they are social processes facilitated by social capital.

External networking allows individuals to gain knowledge which is otherwise not available. Similarly external networks allow the individuals in the organizations to gain knowledge (information, expertise and ideas) beyond the bounds of the hierarchies and local rules Faraj, and Wasko (2005). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) argue that social capital affects the conditions requisite for the knowledge creation and sharing favourably. Norm of cooperation in a social network also facilitates knowledge sharing. A deal of the literature deals with the mechanisms and processes necessary for the creation of social capital. Since knowledge can be a source of competitive advantage creating communities that share knowledge is a social challenge (Widén-Wulff and Ginman, 2004). Credibility and trust of participants in the key drivers developing the knowledge exchange platform, Fingal County Council and the Institute Technology Blanchardstown, in this case are revealed as important ingredients to facilitating the sharing of knowledge.

The time spent by members of a knowledge sharing network together and the nature of their relationship to each other can be significant factors in how successful sharing knowledge . A good deal of the research of Chiu et al.(2006) concerns virtual networks and the conditions in which knowledge is shared, some of its principle findings regards social interaction ties as consisting of the relationship, time spent, social interaction ties are related to the knowledge sharing and may be equally applied in this context. Shared goals, interests and a vision facilitate a community to understand more fully the meaning of knowledge sharing (Chiu, et al., 2006). Hence common goals and norms are a binding force that creates trust (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). The latter point flags the importance and necessity to state clearly and unambiguously the learning objectives you are seeking to achieve in bringing together partners together and for what purpose you are seeking the exchange of knowledge.

## **2.6 Sustainability**

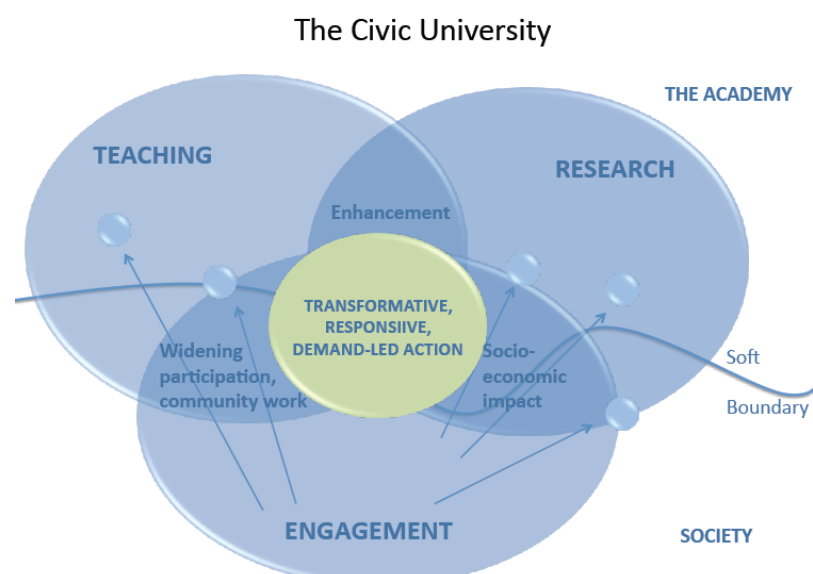
One of the project objectives identified in Part Two, Table 3 is that Civic engagement programmes which are developed are sustained. Munck (2010) poses the question, can civic engagement become a ‘core business’ of the contemporary university, or is it an attractive ‘add-on’ that is not affordable in the current economic climate? (Munck, 2010, p.1). Boland found in his research that there is “a degree of ambivalence regarding academics role in realising the civically engaged campus” and the need for “clarity regarding the respective

roles of students, the higher education institution and community partners in this venture” (Boland, 2012, p.18). The NSHE (2011) found that engagement must become more firmly embedded in the mission of the higher education institutes it suggested a number of actions need to be taken including:

- Recognise civic engagement of their students through programme accreditation, where appropriate.
- Put in place structures and procedures that welcome and encourage the involvement of the wider community in a range of activities, including programme design and revision (NSHE, 2011, p.46).

When scoping out the rationale for this applied portfolio, diminishing public resource and the resultant strain in funding for community and voluntary services were identified as a key catalyst for the potential added benefit and resource civic engagement with a HEI may bring. Plater (2004) notes, regardless of the degree of prominence attached to civic engagement, in an era of diminishing resources and an increasing commitment to serve the public good, the aspirations for civic engagement and the support for faculty roles, rewards, and recognitions must be aligned with and proportionate to the institution’s declared mission.

In order to sustain the practice then of civic engagement it needs to be reflected clearly in the institutions mission. Munck (2010) asserts the contemporary university should not conceive of community engagement as something of a ‘feel good’ luxury or as a sideline, ‘Rather, we need to understand citizenship as a vital third leg of what a university is about, alongside (and equal to) research and teaching’ (Munck, 2010, p.32).



Source: NESTA (2009) Reinventing the Civic University.

***Figure 6: The Civic University***

From the literature on community-based learning/research, it is possible to identify a continuum of approaches, as follows:

- (i) Transactional models which are characterised by an exchange process with the community as recipient of a service, while students gain academic credit for experiential learning (leaving conditions unchanged at best).
- (ii) Transformative models (for the student) which lead to deeper understanding, and to a capacity for empathy or even action on the part of student.



- (iii) Transformative models (at community/ societal level) which seek to question and change the circumstances, conditions, values or beliefs which are at the root of community/society needs (Boland, 2012, p.18).

## **2.7 Measuring Impact & Success**

The ability to measure with some objectivity the impact a community based research or knowledge exchange initiative may have as part of a Civic Engagement strategy may be difficult. Firstly a number of perspectives exist, to take a few, you have the individual learner/student, academic, institution and community partner.

Bortolin (2011) contends If community-based engagement is intended to serve us (the institution), then let us make it clear to ourselves, and our partner communities that we are engaging in this pedagogy because of what it does for us and for our students. Bortolin, goes onto make the further point that ‘if that is not our position, then we will have to adjust our lines of inquiry and our discourse to be sure we are engaging with communities with every effort to partner mutually with, and to the equal benefit of, our communities (Bortolin 2011, p.56). Whatever the perspectives and interests served barriers to more effective implementation can be many, for instance some institutional structure may restrict faculty members from collaborating outside of their department (Whitimer et al. 2010).

Tools to assist individual, group’s institutions to measure the cumulative value and impact of interventions designed to make a social impact have developed. Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework based on social generally accepted accounting principles (SGAAP) that can be used to help manage and understand the social, economic and environmental outcomes created by your activity or organisation<sup>27</sup>. Mulgan (2011, p.1) asserts “Better metrics do not themselves deliver better outcomes. You can’t fatten a pig by weighing it. But if you don’t have some means of weighing it you may find yourself unable to persuade others it’s as fat as you believe.” This statement highlights the challenge of measuring your impact as much to try and quantify impact but also to serve as an evidence base to continue to invest in an activity where some social and economic benefits can be proven. Success may be seen as taken place where a productive interaction between the university occurs which may lead for instance to ‘enhanced human and social capital development, improved professional infrastructure and capacity building as well as, more broadly, to benefits for the socio-economic, environmental and cultural dimensions of the wider community’ (Munck, 2010, p.32). The literature has demonstrated, the enhancement of social capital is a complex intertwined but nonetheless important concept where it comes to civic engagement processes. Once more it is also critical that when one seeks to measure they define the point of view from which they are starting in clear unambiguous terms.

## **2.8 Evaluation & Summary**

The literature demonstrates that universities and HEI’s are increasingly perceived as having a wider role and obligations to society than solely as providers of education. Research and teaching the foundations on which institutes of learning were founded are being reassessed the question of civic engagement needs to be seen in the context of what are our universities and HEIs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for? In Community Based Research the relation between the community and institution is not straightforward. The expectations of each and how you serve their needs can be complex. The literature finds subtly, to have successful partnerships, one side—the university— may need to carefully consider with whom they choose to work (Bortolin 2011).

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.thesroinetwork.org/> accessed 10/2/13

Since knowledge is a source of competitive advantage, it can be argued that a high level of motivation may be required for an individual to share his or her knowledge. It requires a platform, culture and certain amount of trust between individuals for them to share their knowledge in a meaningful manner. What's true of both is that perhaps they both take their starting point from the assumption that community has a deficit that the expertise of a HEI can help meet. Civic Engagement seems reasonably well embedded in some universities and HEIs, and has its own network, Campus Engage, producing in depth quality research. A framework document exists the NSHE 2030 which is far reaching in its expectations for the future:

‘The multidimensional nature of many of the social, economic and civic challenges means that they require multidisciplinary approaches, and higher education institutions are uniquely well placed to lead, develop and apply these, in partnership with others.’ states (NSHE, 2011, p.74 )

The (Irish) National Framework Qualifications (NFQ)<sup>28</sup> includes ‘insight’ as one of eight dimensions of all awards. Boland (2012) argues its inclusion gives civic engagement and community based learning much to contribute by students demonstrating how ‘insight’ may be promoted recognised and rewarded, arising from their experience of embedding civic values within the higher education curriculum. The Civic engagement concept is still relatively young in Ireland a challenge exists for it to become more than ‘embedded’, for it to become sustainable (Munck, 2010) argues it must be an integral part of what university administrators call ‘core business’. In some jurisdictions legislation (Danish university Act 2003) requires universities to exchange knowledge and competencies with society and encourage (their) employees to take part in public debate. This type of approach whilst it may have its merits having engagement become a separate obligation could give it a more peripheral ‘add on’ status. Cherwitz and Hartelius (2007), contend engagement will always remain supplementary competing for time and energy. They go onto argue ‘Professors will inevitably perceive it as non-academic, less rigorous, and less valued by peers and academic decision-makers who grant tenure and promotion and other university rewards’, (Cherwitz and Hartelius, 2007, P.269).

Finally in seeking to measure impact and success, where it comes to community based research at least, it is the recipients of the ‘service’ the community who may be best placed to give an honest assessment. If the gap between academic ivory towers, and transforming and impacting on social and economic challenges in neighbourhoods makes an impact the community members would take notice. Several questions emerge from the literature review that requires more in depth critical evaluation such as: What type of new knowledge can be created through these partnerships? What are ethical and operational issues underlying community based research and knowledge exchange and how can we overcome them? What metrics can be used to measure impact, success or failure? How might these differ for community and university partners?. What emerges strongly however is that a university strongly anchored in the community can put their considerable intellectual resources to imaginative uses, in the pursuit of knowledge and benefit of the community.

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<sup>28</sup> [www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie) accessed 1/5/14

## Ivory Tower Syndrome?



*"Daddy works in a magical, faraway land called Academia."*

**Figure 7: Ivory Tower Syndrome?**

### 3. Knowledge Exchange - Products developed & implemented.

In section 1.2 it was identified a minimum of 2 knowledge exchange events would be developed and implemented. This target was exceeded, 3 Knowledge Exchange activities-titled – Learning Exchanges - took place during this period.

**Learning Exchange (I):** Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship,  
Learning & Innovation Centre, ITB, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

**Evidence:** Learning Exchange Report  
(Cover, Contents Page & web address to full report)  
Section 6 (Selection of feedback)  
Agenda / Learning Schedule  
Attendance list

**Learning Exchange (II):** Social Enterprise & Social Impact,  
Learning & Innovation Centre, ITB, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

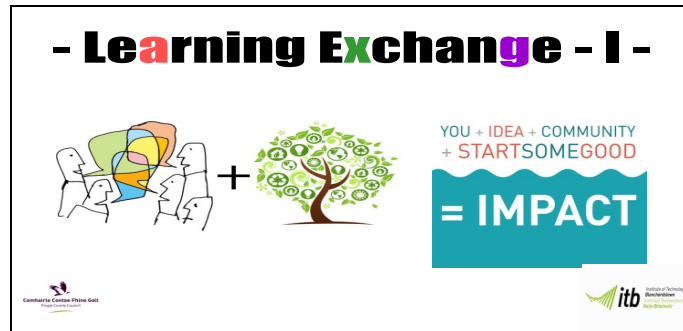
**Evidence:** Learning Exchange Report  
(Cover, Contents, web address to full report)  
Learning Schedule / Promotion

**Learning Exchange (III):** Civic Engagement –  
Social Enterprise & Entrepreneurship,  
Black & Minority Ethnic Communities,  
Learning & innovation Centre, ITB, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013

**Evidence:** Learning Schedule / Promotion  
Attendance List / Photos of event

#### 3.1 Knowledge Exchange – Learning Exchange Fingal

The Learning Exchange is based on the premise that by providing a platform for a cross section of groups and individuals to listen, discuss and exchange ideas and knowledge on a focused issue you can start some good and make impact.



*Figure 8: Learning Exchange Model*

Figures 9 and 10 were developed by 2<sup>nd</sup> year ITB students in Creative Digital Media for the Learning Exchange. Both seek to capture elements of what the Learning Exchange platform in its development and implementation set out to achieve. Figure 9 incorporates the colours schemes of Fingal County Council and ITB the principal architects of the learning exchange. The series of different shapes and colours represent the different actors and different shades of opinion which exist. The shapes fitting together signify those same divergent interest groups and backgrounds coming together around a specific challenge.



*Figure 9: Learning Exchange – Logo (1)*



*Figure 10: Learning Exchange – Logo (2)*

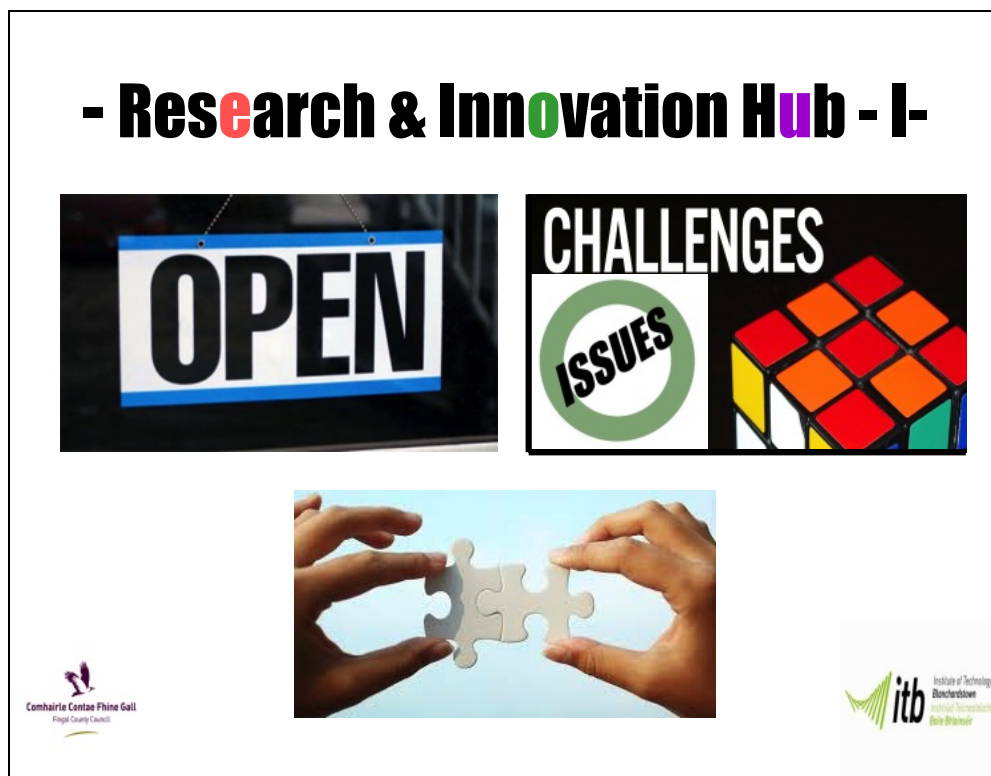
Figure 10 is an earlier prototype which seeks to demonstrate that there are different shades of black and white and opinion. The raven is taken from the Fingal County Council corporate logo and represents ideas ‘taking off’.

### 3.2 Community Based Research Developed and Implemented

Section 1.2 Identified a minimum of 5 community based research assignments\_would be instigated during the project period. This target was met, 5 community based research projects have been instigated by students and/or lecturers and ITB as a direct result of this project during the learning period of 01/03/2013 – 30/12/2013.

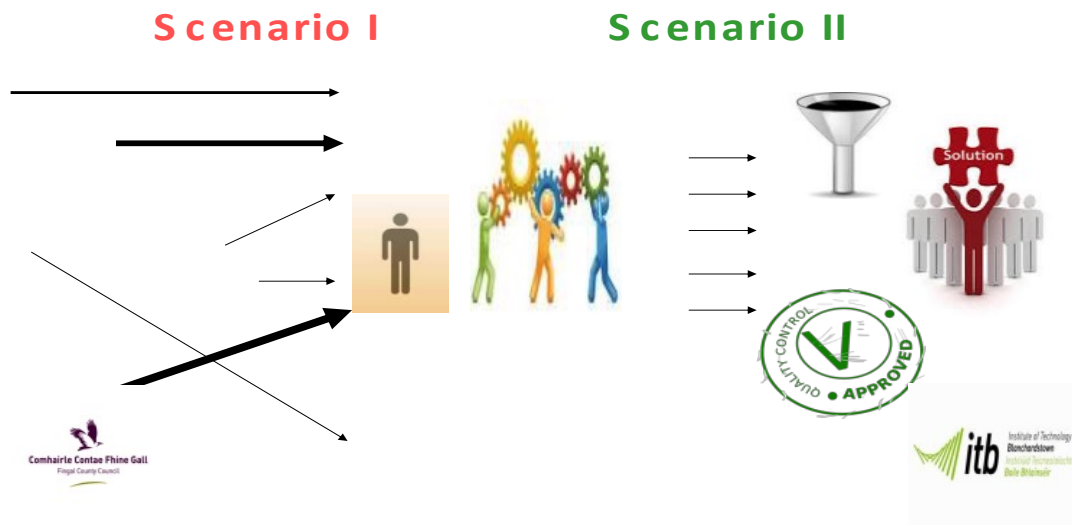
### 3.3 Community Based Research

The research hub is the developmental vehicle where partners met to formulate and implement strategy regards community based research and knowledge exchange events. Figure 11 illustrates the research hub model in simple terms, starting with issuing a call for community and civic groups in Dublin 15 to identify issues and challenges that might benefit from the research capacity available within ITB.



*Figure 11: Research Hub Model*

## - Research & Innovation Hub - II -



*Figure 12: Community Based Research (before and after)*

ITB had previously, through individual lecturers, either identified or been approached in a very sporadic and non-uniform way regards potential collaborations and research projects in the past. The methodology developed for the Portfolio sought to funnel requests through a small number of people, the 'Research Hub', could assess, negotiate between the community partner and student the parameters, thus ensuring some form of quality control and a means to capture value. The process and its essence is captured in Figure 12.

### 3.4 Incorporating learning from MSc Network

As part of the Business and Society module for Next Generation Module, (NGM) I attended the Martin McEvoy Annual Seminar Series 2012 at DCU, entitled: *The Engaged University – The role of the university in the development of its region*. My attendance at this seminar directly influenced the choice of my Applied Portfolio.

**Learning Exchange & MSSE Mgt and Social Enterprise:** The learning outcomes of the three Learning Exchange events developed and implemented were very much around local economic development, social enterprise and entrepreneurship and social impact. These learning objectives were as much about social and economic challenges which existed in Dublin 15 (unemployment 14.8% - more local sustainable employment) as they were about learning I had gathered from course content in the Social Enterprise module.

**Learning Exchange & MSSE Peer Networks:** In seeking to develop the first event Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship event in Dublin 15 an invitation was issued to:

Ger Doyle -	DCU Social Enterprise Lecturer - TSA Consultancy
Tanya Lawlor -	DCU Social Enterprise Lecturer - TSA Consultancy
Paul Murgatroyd -	DCU MSSE Mgt Social Enterprise (Student) – Base Enterprise
Niall Comber -	DCU MSSE Mgt Social Enterprise (Student) – Base Enterprise



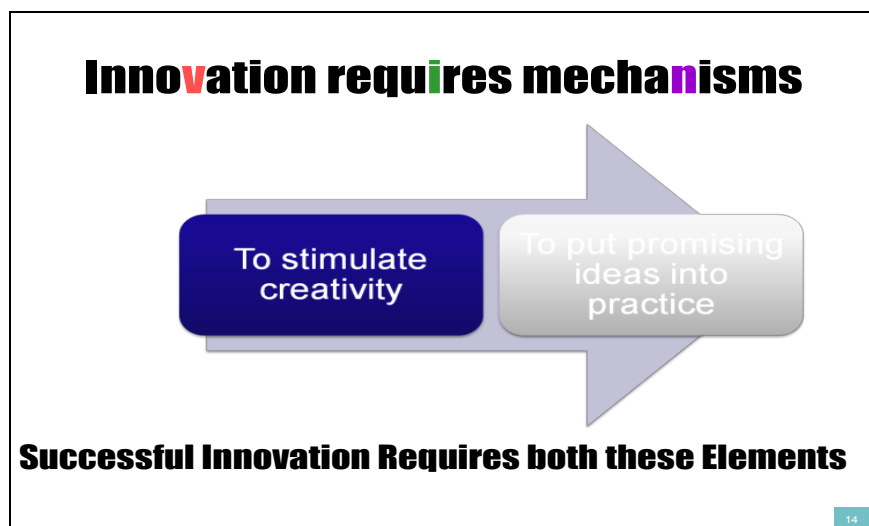
Ger and Tanya opened up the session and Paul and Niall facilitated and feedback from workshops. In seeking to develop the second Learning Exchange Event titled Social Enterprise and Social Impact utilising the skills of another fellow student was negotiated and a key input organised and delivered to participants:

Seamus Carlin - DCU MSSE Mgt Social Enterprise (Student)  
– Cruinnan Associates

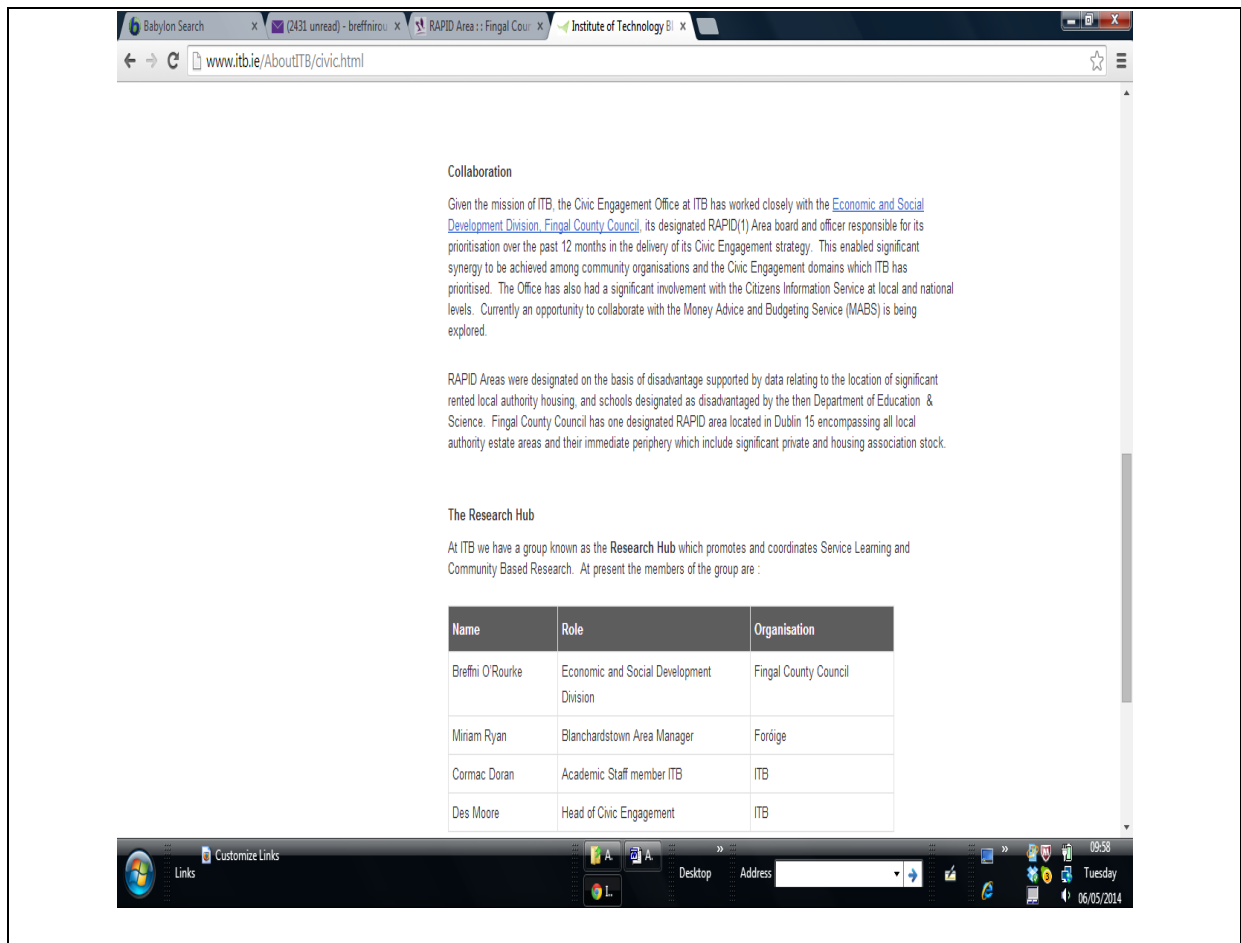
As each opportunity presented I sought to utilise and collaborate with networks in the development and implementation of the Learning Exchange aspect of the portfolio.

### 3.5 Evidence of products adopted & mainstreamed

The contraction of public finances means increasingly innovative methods of responding to local economic and social development challenges are required. The applied portfolio required the author to develop a collaborative relationship with the civic engagement office of the local Higher Education Institute in Dublin 15, the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB). Two platforms were developed to act as the vehicle for the delivery of the knowledge exchange and community based research domains, these were a Learning Exchange and a Research Hub.



*Figure 13: Learning Exchange – A mechanism for innovation*



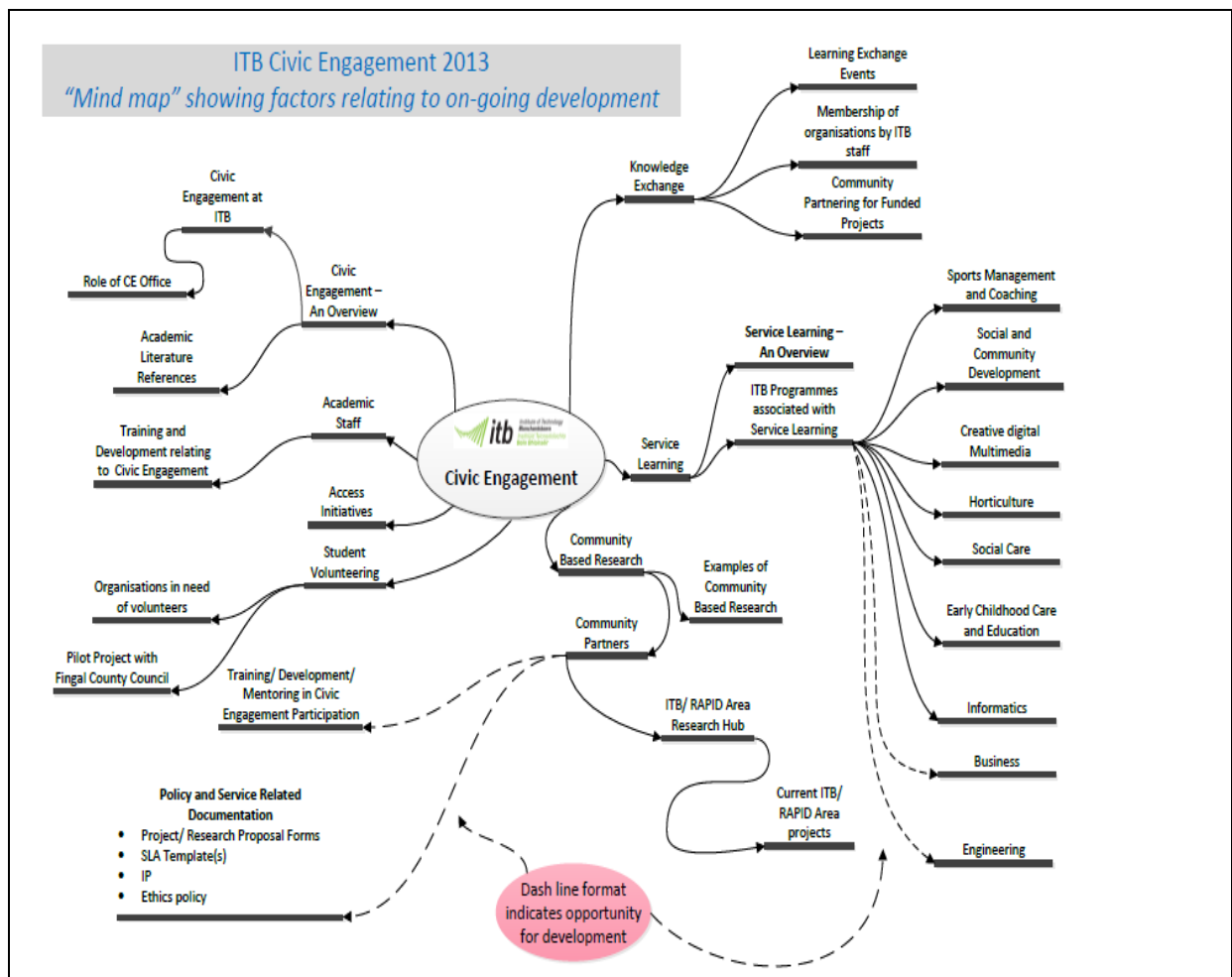
**Figure 14: ITB Civic Engagement Homepage**

The Learning Exchange was designed to reach out to a broad cross section of stakeholders in Dublin 15 to generate ideas and collaborate for impact on local challenges. The Research Hub was designed to reach out to civic forums and community groups to identify issues and/or challenges for community based research and match these with available ITB resources.

Both mechanisms were designed to align with the operational and strategic priorities of the key partners Fingal County Council and the Institute Technology Blanchardstown. Avoid duplication, maximize resources and become sustainable strategies for Civic Engagement in Dublin 15. The Learning Exchange and the Research Hub are identified within Fingal County Council and the ITB as central to there civic engagement strategies. The Research Hub its membership and the Learning Exchange are documented extensively on the ITB Website<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.itb.ie/AboutITB/civic.html> Accessed 7/04/13



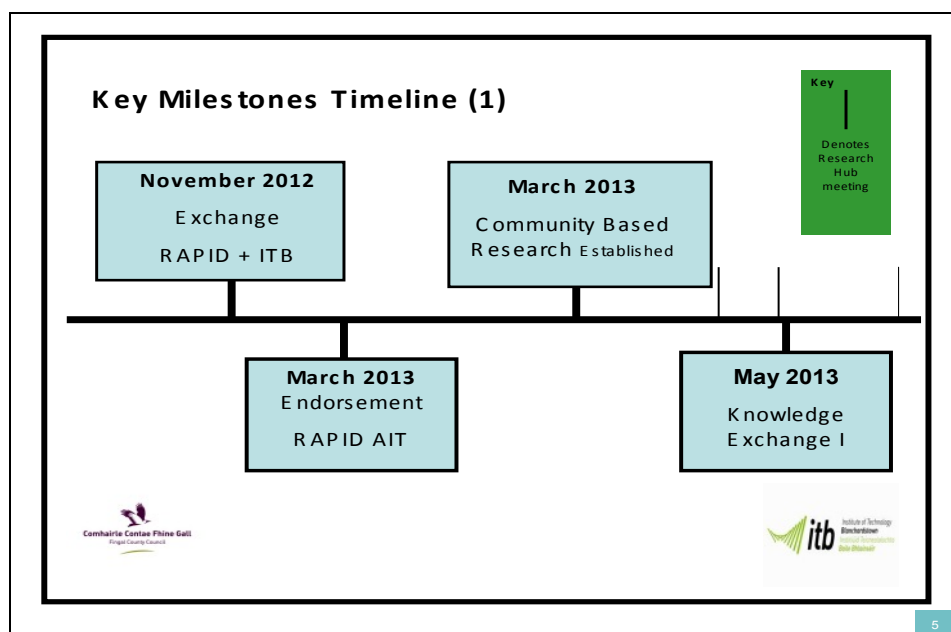


**Figure 15: Mind map - locating project deliverables**

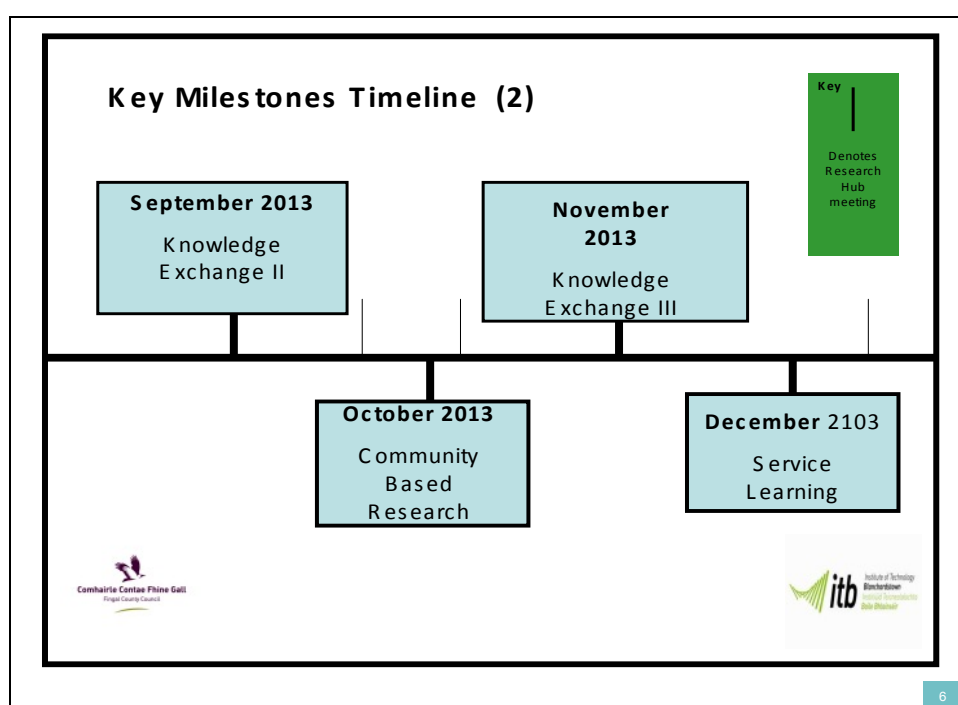
The Learning Exchange events are listed as an element of the Knowledge Exchange learning domain. The ITB/ RAPID Research Hub is listed as an element of the Community Based Research Domain.

### 3.6 Evidence of Milestones reached

Figure 16 starts from the period prior to Applied Portfolio (Nov 12) where a meeting took place between community partners and the ITB to see how relationships between the two could be further strengthened. Recommendations arising from that meeting were endorsed at the RAPID board meeting of March 2013. The Learning Exchange in May '13 marks the first of the deliverables for the Portfolio. The short lines along the timeline represent meetings of the Research Hub, examples of agenda and a snapshot of minutes have been scanned and are reproduced in the appendix from the May and June 2013 meetings, 6 meetings took place between the period of the Portfolios study, May to December 2013.



*Figure 16: Milestone Implementation – May 2013*



*Figure 17: Milestone Implementation – December 2013*

### 3.7 Evidence of response to product

From the beginning of the portfolio and throughout the development and implementation stages of the Research Hubs work (Community Based Research) and the Learning Exchange events a wide range of agencies and individuals collaborated in a positive and enthusiastic manner. Of the 15 issues and challenges identified by community partners 5 had been matched between the community partner and the ITB, between the periods Sept and Dec 13'. In all likelihood a further 4 will be negotiated with the community partner before the end of this academic year 2013/14. Of the 3 Learning Exchange events which took place at the ITB in the Learning and Innovation Centre (LINC) approximately 135 participants took part in

sharing ideas, knowledge and participating in discussions on Social Enterprise, Social Impact and Civic Engagement Issues. A number of positive feedback comments were received a small selection of which has been selected as evidence. The outputs and outcomes of the exercise were presented to the members of the RAPID board at the beginning of December 2013, of which the presenters Des Moore, Head of Civic Engagement ITB and Breffni O'Rourke, Fingal County Council received a deal of positive feedback. Both organisations have stated their intention to continue to support the development of the Community Based Research and knowledge exchange elements of the initiative. This support is based on its potential for generating impacts in the medium to long term on social and economic challenges in the Dublin 15 and greater Fingal- Dublin administrative area.

## **4.0 Reflection and Analysis - Introduction**

The 5Rs framework modified from a body of work undertaken in Queensland by Bain et al. (2002) provides a systematic method for thinking through an experience, re-evaluating, bringing some critical thought to the process and considering the relationship between a series of events. The 5Rs are Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning and Reconstructing. By reflecting on my experiences I hope to identify new key learning outcomes, gaps in my practice, imagine alternative scenarios and inform a set of conclusions and recommendations, which may strengthen continued work in this area in the future.

### **4.1 Reporting & Responding**

The issue of civic engagement was put forward for the portfolio based on a number of observation and motivations which existed at the time of its inception in March 2003, these were:

1. An environment of constrained resources and desire on the part of the (RAPID) board, and more chiefly my project sponsor, to find new ways within existing resources, of working effectively to make impact.
2. Viewing the RAPID area through a lens of what potential community assets were available (community assets based approach). In a mapping exercise carried out in 2012 the fact that part of the ITBs campus was in the designated RAPID area was noted. I had worked in community development in the Dublin 15 area for nearly 10 years; it was my experience and that of others that the ITB had not engaged in any meaningful Civic Engagement activities during this period.
3. The relatively new position of Head of Civic Engagement (May 2012) was created, an introduction later on that year presented an opportunity which was seized in an effort to create something new.

By adopting a problem-based approach to my learning, I was able, with the assistance of community collaborators, to set about identifying social and economic challenges in the Dublin 15 area. This scanning period proved to be the start of my learning process one which, I believe in hindsight, was triggered by my learning at DCU. The Applied portfolio required a problem based solving approach to my subject different from the methodology most common hitherto, which involved application of knowledge, learned (Biggs & Tang 1998). Key to achieving my project objectives was establishing meaningful relationships with ITB. Without ITBs full co-operation, particularly its Head of Civic Engagement, implementation would have faltered and the experiences and evidence available for my portfolio would have been very different. I was involved in every element of the development and implementation of the Research Hub which coordinated the Community Based Research and the Learning Exchanges activities. This involved convening meetings, co-producing agenda and

distributing notes. I was able to utilize existing networks to develop the core audiences for the Learning Exchanges; these were helped by tapping into the networks of my fellow principal architect Des Moore for the student and academic component and fellow classmates Niall Comber and Paul Murgatroyd for small business and budding entrepreneurs.

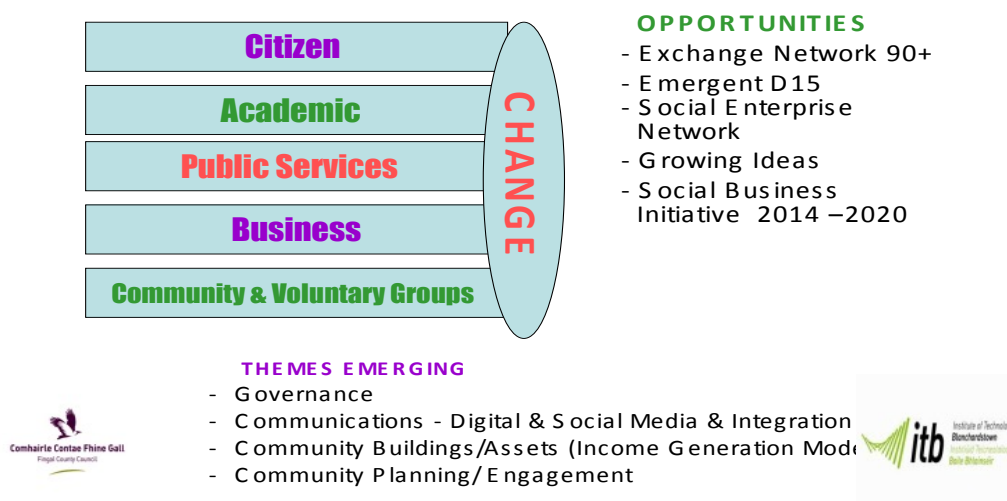
The response from the outset for these initiatives was positive from all quarters, so much so that project deliverables were exceeded (3 instead of 2 knowledge exchange events). Based on comments received from participants the Learning Exchange was really well received. This was down to a number of factors including: (i) environment created by the hosts and the venue space the LINC – Learning & Innovation Centre, brought with it a dynamic but welcoming environment in which participants seemed to thrive. (ii) Quality of inputs from invited contributors, which included contacts from my network. I was keen to incorporate the element of engaging participants who I had met as part of my DCU masters in my task. The experience of contacting and securing the input and assistance of classmates and lecturers was very satisfying; peers within the class became “effective collaborators” (Knowles, 1990). Of those things which worked less well the number of proposals generated from the community numbered 15, this number could have been doubled with ease only it became apparent early on that the capacity did not exist in ITB to take on any greater a number. Ensuring a project proposal is pitched at the right level for the student experience and forms part of their learning at a specific time is a challenge. It meant although 5 projects were matched, 3 of which were either completed (Mulhuddart Priority Task Group which ended up involving a whole year class as part of their research methodologies module) or in the process of being completed, 2 had not been started by the end of the Portfolio time. My attendance at a seminar as part of NGM brought the full potential of civic engagement to my attention. Spending a deal of time at campus on the ITB putting theory into practice was at once professionally and personally satisfying. I felt during the 10 month period an enormous amount was achieved of value in raising awareness and knowledge of social enterprise and its potential for local economic development, developing collaborative relationships between public bodies private business, community and civic groups which had not existed prior to this in Dublin 15.

#### **4.2 Relating and Reasoning**

Part of the reason I was drawn to the MSSE in Mgt Social Enterprise and Innovation was a need to challenge my own self as a period of professional complacency had set in. The nature of my role at that time required a strong level of self-direction something that I have always had in the work roles I have performed. I felt this particular experience set me up in good stead for the practice of the Applied Portfolio. Self-management refers to the exercise of autonomy in learning (Loyens, et al 2008). This trait I felt is something that served me well in completing the Portfolio. Self Directed Learning in problem-based learning is defined as the ‘preparedness of a student to engage in learning activities defined by him or herself rather than the teacher’ (Schmidt, 2000). The latter is an essential part of the experience of the portfolio the essence of which is typified by the exercise in Part 1 in the construction of a proposed assessment criterion. Being present at ITBs campus for periods as part of the Portfolio compensated, I felt, from the distance learning aspects of the DCU learning experience. Actively engaging in discussions with lecturers as an equal partner provided a real boost to my confidence, which although not lacking normally professionally, academically it was nearly two decades since I had last done any concentrated study and felt I was on a steep learning curve. My role in the development an implementation of the two project deliverables put me front and centre as a facilitator in a classroom type environment. From this vantage point the full extent of the inertia that can set in after a period working and

moving in the same circles became all too apparent. Figure 18 represents some of the cross section of interests participating at Learning Exchange events, some of the opportunities these created and emergent themes.

## - Learning Exchange - III -



*Figure 18: Learning Exchange - Partners and opportunities*

On reflection the development of a involved Civic Engagement partnership with the ITB was almost a inevitability. A sustained period where similar people came together in government formed partnerships to try impact complex social and economic challenges was leading to limited creativity, fatigue and questionable outcomes and impact. The involvement of students, lecturers, budding entrepreneurs small and large and other individuals in approaching the same issues as complex as it was but brought an entirely different and refreshing approach to similar issues. Trust I felt was being developed in the brand (Learning Exchange) during its three events, which in time could help foster what had been referred to be Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998, p.245) as social capital “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within...”.

### 4.3 Reconstructing

The learning generated in developing and implementing the deliverables as specified in the project plan, in a relatively short timeframe, was quite intense. The momentum became self sustaining, where for instance a third un planned learning exchange (specifically targeting Black & Ethnic Minority Communities) was an immediate response to a request specifically from a participant at a the May event. A good deal of time was spent going out meeting and matching for the community based research and organising for the knowledge exchange. More time could and perhaps should have been spent negotiating the terms of reference and expectations from each of the parties. The civic engagement work we were involved according to Bringle et al. (2006) should be evidence (a) that it has been conducted in a manner that is reciprocal and mutually beneficial to the community partners, and (b) that the results of the service activities have been shared in multiple ways with diverse stakeholders (Bringle et al p.17, 2006).

## - Challenges -

- Alignment of operational & strategic priorities
- Quality Control
- Capturing and measuring impact
- Limited time & resources



*Figure 19: Civic Engagement challenges*

If the Portfolio task was implemented in a more controlled learning environment I would have sought perhaps to take stock of events a little more, for instance being more meticulous with my journal. This latter element could have proved more valuable for detecting shifts in my relationships and expectations at different junctures of the project. The experience taught me that for a Higher Education Institute to be truly engaged it meant working with government, businesses, and community and civic groups to respond to community needs. It requires members of staff who are not content with going through the motions or being protected by the ivory tower, and that the nature of engagement is a two way street. The complexities, which can be involved in the Community Based Research element of the task, demonstrated to me that collaborations demand mutual respect and understanding of each other's needs, this in turn can lead to real innovations and unintended outcomes. As the learner, approaching problem-based learning, I had the freedom to choose this deepened my learning experience (Loyens et al., 2008). My willingness to facilitate discussions from the front and collate reports based on these discussions is a result of a new confidence and sharpening of existing skill sets that I feel will be put to good use in the future. This experience has taught me the value of implementation, of building a good product, gathering good people around and trusting the process to offer up a myriad of possibilities. Collaboration, which seeks to include, not exclude all shades of opinions and backgrounds is one of the most important elements of my learning. In the community development profession I am involved there is much talk of inclusion however we can and do construct false barriers serving to sometimes shut out different opinions and approaches perhaps from the academic side or from private industries. For me the experience will help to further my practice in the future by opening up the potential for more involved, sustainable relationships with a broader cross section of partners.

#### 4.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

This portfolio is as much a statement about my values and what informs my experiences, as it is a document of the process of developing and implementing Civic Engagement in Dublin 15. Burns & Squire (2011) argue that the real challenge for universities is how:

“the work of universities can become more visible and accessible, and how we might encourage people outside universities to feel that universities are for people like them” Burns & Squire, (2011, p.3).

My whole professional career has been spent working in urban areas marked by poverty and disadvantage where equality of opportunity can prove a barrier to services and privilege. Having barely made it to university and then struggled whilst there to complete my first degree, the first in my family to do so, I feel strongly about the opportunities and experiences third level education can create for individuals and the communities in which they are anchored.



## - Future Plans -

- **Capture learning , adapt, exploit opportunities as they arise.**
- **Enrich student learning; Develop volunteering into student credits**
- **Expand hub opportunities** (early childhood, business, English language)
- **Support Learning Exchange** (Digital, community planning, governance)
- **Funding consortiums (Local, National & European funding)**
- **Consolidate and build collaborations (RAPID area priority)**



4<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 - Learning Exchange - EU Funding, Supports, Opportunities,

1.b.c June, 2014 - Learning Exchange – Ideas / Showcase Festival

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*Figure 20: Civic Engagement - Future plans*

ITB's strategic Plan 2012 – 2015<sup>30</sup>, Chapter 9: states the ITB will seek to 'Deepen our impact in the wider community within the broader alliance of TU Dublin', it goes on to state the phrase 'Civic engagement' is a key component of the broader university mission of 'engagement' which includes enterprise and public engagement'. Like any big organisation translating mission statements into meaningful action can be a tricky business. It is my contention the deliverables for the Portfolio were achieved. That is not to say bigger questions have not arisen during the process. Greater deliberation and discussion going forward is needed if the partnership between Fingal County Council the ITB and its many other partners are serious about making a more sustainable transformative relations with the community in Dublin 15 on its doorstep. On a practical level numerous community spaces exist a stones throw from the campus a discussion might take place on how the university might use some of these to build relationships and perhaps bring income streams from the HEI into the area where it was located and much needed. Likewise how could citizens and groups use the HEI space in different ways they don't do now? On a more fundamental note, emerging from the literature and my own experience a more pressing question arises. What is the core proposition of what society needs from HEIs? Rather than academics in conjunction with other public organisations doing a set of activities in the community perhaps university heads need to be asking: What does our local (or other) community need? How can we identify those needs? How might your teaching and research contribute to this? The work

<sup>30</sup> [www.itb.ie](http://www.itb.ie)

developed and implemented in this portfolio will be sustained in Dublin 15 with plans to expand its reach Fingal wide with plans to include a greater number of academic disciplines.

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# Community Engagement in a Conflict Environment: Reflections on the work of the International Fund for Ireland 1986-2011

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The International Fund for Ireland, which was set up by the British and Irish Governments in 1986 under the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, was funded by the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The International Fund enjoys the support of 31 countries, which is truly remarkable. It is one of the most successful examples of the Irish Diaspora at work in a very tangible way; a point ably captured in the Fund's 2002 Annual Report where Hon Russell Marshall from New Zealand notes "As a member of the Irish Diaspora, New Zealand was delighted to be invited to join the Fund, and to lend its weight to the search for a permanent peace between the communities of the North, which had given so much to New Zealand's early history". The Fund had come into existence as part of an Agreement which did not have whole-hearted support in either part of the island at that time. It also came in the wake of many false dawns. While this had the effect of making life difficult for the fledgling organisation it would, in my view, come to be one of the drivers of its success as it became clear that the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) was part of a much larger story and the beginning of something really significant for this island.



The International Fund for Ireland was set up with two main objectives in order to maximise community engagement and encourage participative democratic action. Firstly, its intention was to promote economic and social advance, and secondly, to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between Unionists and Nationalists throughout the island of Ireland. The Fund's mandate was to concentrate its efforts mainly in Northern Ireland and the border counties within the Republic of Ireland. The success of the Fund has been to a great extent due to the organic way in which it has grown and its

adoption of an emerging strategic approach to achieving its objectives. Through this process of organic growth, strategic positioning and relationship building, the International Fund has developed into a very unique conduit capable of reaching into those communities still in need of the type of support which it has become so effective at delivering. Contrary to the aphorism "**a rising tide lifts all boats**", it is increasingly evident that the rising tide does not lift all boats, and the IFI had an important role to play.

## Context and Structure

It is very important to remember that the environment in which the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) came into existence was very different to that which exists today. On the international front, the Fund encountered some challenging times in early 1988. For example, not all of Irish-America was in favour of the Fund and a vigorous debate grew in the U.S. Congress when it made its first contribution. This debate was not helped by a growing

national deficit in the U.S. and by reports that the Fund was funding inappropriate projects. There was also strong anti-Fund lobbying in Washington coming from the extremist sections of both communities in Northern Ireland. On the domestic front there was also some very strident opposition. There was strong hostility and criticism from the Unionist community who saw the Fund as either a “slush fund” for the nationalist SDLP<sup>i</sup> or as a vehicle for American “blood money”. It was seen as an attempt to bribe the community to accept an agreement. Similarly, the Republican community saw the Fund both as part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which they considered to be a “sell-out”, and at the same time, a threat to its fund-raising in the United States. Meanwhile, the violence and political instability continued to polarise communities.

There is evidence from the Annual Reports of the late 1980’s that there was a lack of clarity surrounding the work of the Fund in its early days. It was not exactly clear what it was trying to achieve beyond the broad expression of its objectives. Nor was it clear whether it had any long-term perspective. My own recollection of the early years is that the Fund was attempting to provide economic interventions to stimulate job creation while, at the same time, establishing itself as the first cross-border body since the setting up of the Foyle Fisheries Commission in 1952.

Throughout the “Troubles”, violence and unrest had always been underpinned by economic and social disadvantage and so, from the outset, the IFI used economics as the basic tool for promoting reconciliation between the divided communities. There are four reasons why this was the correct approach at that time. Firstly, one of the most acutely felt indicators of social injustice was – and remains - unemployment and so investment in job creation would be easily measured by everyone. The Fund very sensibly changed from the term “creating jobs” to “assisting in the creation of jobs”. Secondly, economic activity could be carried out on essentially neutral, non-contentious ground. Thirdly, it was thought that economic regeneration would provide tangible evidence to people in divided communities that working together brings mutual benefits. Fourthly, in order to convince international donors that the Fund was achieving its objectives, economic projects could provide very visible and quantifiable results.

This approach was essential during the early stages of intervention. It addressed the source of a very strongly felt injustice while at the same time enabling all the stakeholders to track how the work of the Fund was progressing. In a similar way that Robert Schuman’s European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1950 after World War II, prepared the ground for the future European Union<sup>ii</sup>, the IFI used economics at local level in the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland and in the border counties of the Republic to bring Protestants and Catholics, and people from North and South, into relationships which, it was hoped, would lead to job creation and economic regeneration.

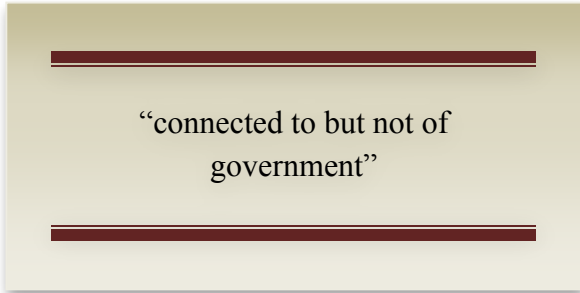
It is important to remember that there was no blue-print for this approach. This was before INTERREG or PEACE came into operation, and so the IFI was engaged in work that was essentially leading-edge and innovative in the field of community engagement. In his book, *Leading Change*, John Kotter points to the need to have a “guiding coalition” of expertise and influence at the heart of any change process. This was valuable in the engagement of “communities” at all levels. From the very outset, the Fund established a network of expertise and influence which stretched from U.S. Presidents, Prime Ministers, Taoisigh, Government Ministers, leading figures in business to senior public and civil servants. When one considers that the IFI has had the support of U.S. Presidents from Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan

through to Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, British Prime Ministers such as Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and David Cameron and Irish Taoisigh from Charles Haughey to Enda Kenny, as well as people like John Hume and Tip O'Neill, one gets a sense of the importance of its role in the peace process. Yet, at the outset, the Fund delivered its support directly through government channels which essentially meant very little change to the status quo. Since these initial attempts to address social and economic disadvantage were not meeting expectations, it became clear that alternative approaches from outside the current operating system were required. Critically, the Board was independent and worked outside the current operating systems.

Because of the Fund's independent Board, under the chairmanship of John B. McGuckian, it was able to establish its Disadvantaged Areas Initiative and Flagship Programmes and start to directly influence the way the funding was being used. It adopted a hands-on approach by working directly with and responding directly to communities. It also put a very high value on the creation of what former Chairman, Willie McCarter, referred to as "a way of working together". This concept pervaded all aspects of the Fund, and was indicative of the style of leadership which Willie McCarter nurtured. This style positioned the Fund as being "connected to but not of government", and this became its hallmark.

The Board of the Fund is made up of individuals who have expertise in business and community development. This group of individuals has been drawn from both the Protestant and Catholic communities – three from Northern Ireland, and three from the Republic of Ireland – with an independent Chairperson. Except in very exceptional circumstances, neither

the British nor Irish Government has the power to interfere with the decisions of the Board.



"connected to but not of  
government"

In carrying out its work, the Fund used public and civil servants, on a part time-basis, to work on the various Programme Teams and on the Advisor Board. These Teams were drawn on a North-South basis from experienced personnel who had the

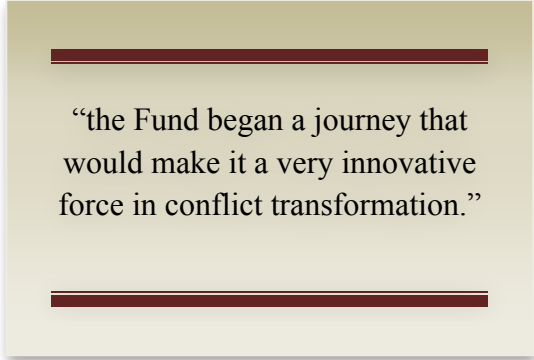
necessary expertise. The benefit of this was two-fold; not only had the Fund the use of some very expert people, but these public and civil servants themselves had the experience of meeting their opposite numbers, as well as people from the other community dealing with matters independent of their respective Governments. This developed along-side a government policy aimed at encouraging more engagement between government and the grass-roots. This was a new departure for both governments on both parts of the island. This is the essence of "being connected to but not of government".

In the beginning, the Fund was a top-down rather than bottom-up initiative, and its own lack of consultation prior to setting up resulted in very little involvement by either the communities or, by extension, the governments. However, the Board of the Fund commissioned a strategic review in the late '80s which resulted in the introduction of the aforementioned Disadvantaged Areas Initiative. A central element of this Initiative was the appointment of a team of locally-based Development Consultants who would liaise with the local community and assist in identifying and developing suitable projects. The Development Consultants went into places where government would not or could not go and they gained access to, and engaged with communities as well as with both governments at every level.

The structure of the Fund with its guiding coalition – an independent board with a mixture of credibility, expertise and influence – was to play a significant role in the processes of change advocated.

### The IFI's Vision

The vision for the IFI evolved from the early commentary by the first chairman of the Fund, Sir Charles Brett, where he attributed the creation of the Fund to a “muddled, but benevolent,



“the Fund began a journey that would make it a very innovative force in conflict transformation.”

desire to believe that money could buy peace, even in Ireland” to John B. McGuckian’s view of the Fund as providing “real scope for peaceful, constructive change through working together” and eventually to Willie McCarter’s view that the Fund’s vision was to create “a way of working together”. In George Bernard Shaw’s play, *Back to Methuselah*, there is a line which catches the prevailing value of the Fund. “You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'”.

From the outset, the work of the Fund was seen as being part of something greater; a larger story about new ways of addressing the political complexities of this island, North-South and East-West. This is captured in the 1994 KPMG Management Consultants Report where it describes the work of the Fund as “providing a unique experience of working together for a common purpose across traditional community divides in Northern Ireland and across the border”. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 was part of an on-going attempt to change the approach to these complexities, and the IFI has, in turn, been part of this process. In a sense the Fund gave practical effect to the Agreement, and while it is acknowledged that there is a place for the grand gesture and the “state of the nation” speech in this process, the success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Good Friday Agreement is in fact the result of the aggregate of marginal gains.

It is due to all of those individual and community initiatives where everyone could get involved, at whatever level, in a positive and practical way and the Fund played its part in this process. This point is echoed by Sir George Quigley in Alf McCreary’s book, *Fund of Goodwill*, where he describes the Fund as “something that was strictly focused on real objectives that were helping real people in real ways”.

As previously noted, in the early years the Fund saw its mission as providing financial assistance to redress the social and economic disadvantage experienced in Northern Ireland and the border counties. There was a vicious circle in that the disadvantage was caused by the political instability and the political instability exacerbated the disadvantage. The Fund, at this time, had a short-term perspective and was, in essence, a reactive funding organisation which responded to a very broad range of projects. However, within a relatively short time, it began to see itself as a development organisation with a longer term perspective and became much more proactive. It realised that, to fulfil its real agenda of peace-building, it would have to become involved in encouraging long-term relationships within and across all the communities and governments. It began to focus on economics with a purpose, not economics purely for job creation. From then on, it provided economic opportunities which

encouraged positive interdependence between communities and thus, by removing some of the local economic grievances, the Fund began a journey that would make it a very innovative force in conflict transformation.



I use the term “conflict transformation” because this is the only term that does justice to the major impact and the sustainable legacy left by the IFI. I make the distinction between this and other terms that are often used in describing this work such as “conflict management” which is essential to the immediate stability but, nonetheless, a containment tool and “conflict resolution” which is focused on getting a solution to the immediate problem once it has been stabilised. Conflict transformation, however, is a holistic approach which covers both of the other forms, but then goes on to alter the overall structure and context in which the conflict exists as it begins to

address the underlying causes.

While the Fund is seen mostly as operating in the area of reconciliation and conflict resolution both of which deal with the more immediate causes, what is not so clear is its involvement in conflict transformation and in dealing with the root causes of the conflict. In this regard, it has been a pioneering force in transforming the architecture of the structures of government and changing how they interact with civil society – both vertically and horizontally. The foundations for the suite of cross-community and cross-border bodies that exist today and the level of cooperation which the island now enjoys was, in my view, firmly established by the architecture of the International Fund. The World War One Peace Tower at Messine, Belgium is a moving example of this work.



### Interventions and Building Bridges

There is an old Irish proverb which states that “The longest road out is the shortest road home”. As discussed earlier, when the Fund was initially set up, there was no long-term perspective. The prevailing view centred on short-term solutions to the problems that were being addressed by the Fund. In addition, in the early years the Fund avoided holding open meetings or inviting consultation. This was understandable because the Fund’s resources were always limited. The Fund was also anxious to avoid creating unrealistic expectations



and so it developed a range of key programmes which targeted activities that would deliver the objectives of the Fund. Initially it had a very strong economic focus in the Investment Companies, Business Enterprise, Tourism, Urban Development, Agriculture and Fisheries and Science and Technology programmes with the Disadvantaged Areas Initiative bringing a focus to disadvantaged communities. These were complimented by the Flagship, Community Relations and Wider Horizons programmes – all of which provided the Fund with a clear opportunity to get its message across in the towns and villages where it operated, and make a visual impact. Many of these towns and villages had suffered urban decay due to the lack of investment from 1970 onwards and frequently, in Northern Ireland, through bomb damage. The Fund tried to address this problem through, for example, its *Community Regeneration Improvement Special Programme* (CRISP) and Border Towns and Villages Programmes<sup>iii</sup>. These programmes were about the commercial regeneration of the centre of towns. They were very visible projects; such visual and tangible results being crucial to embedding any change.

These programmes, however, had a strong focus on working together to achieve economic results and, as such, didn't go far enough in the creation of neutral spaces where both communities could shop and interact together. It is possible that there was a lack of relevant research which would have supported the use of public space for reconciliation work during the 1990s; albeit this type of research did emerge later in the 2000s. The research initiative "Place making in a Pluralist World: Using Public Spaces to Encourage and Celebrate Social Diversity" by Courtney Knapp is an example of this and the mission of the Fund would have been better served had it finished the work it had started, and pump-primed this type of work in key areas under its *Sharing this Space* strategy<sup>iv</sup>. There are so many innovative projects around the world which have used public spaces to improve the interaction of people within their environment and there is a strong sense that the Fund's work could have been enhanced through the development of this aspect of its work.

The Wider Horizons Programme, which takes young people on vocational training programmes in overseas locations, has been very successful in broadening opportunities and counteracting the notion of 'my' space / 'your' space. Many of the young people who have engaged with the scheme have remained friends long after their time on the Programme has finished. In retrospect, it could be argued that the Programme should have a regular follow-up element attached in order to sustain the very valuable work. Returning to their original environment having completed such a programme as Wider Horizons presents difficulties for participants, and a follow-up programme may have been advisable in order to galvanise the positive effect of the experience<sup>v</sup>. Furthermore, the programme to a large extent fails to address social mobility. This could have been achieved by engaging with young people from a more diverse social mix. Young people involved in the programme could still see the glass ceiling and while many of them did indeed become better equipped in dealing with their own environment not many of them acquired the confidence to challenge this ceiling. Yet, this would have been the real game changer. While the horizontal breaking down of the barriers has been achieved to some extent, the vertical barriers remain.

In later years, the Fund shifted its focus to a more people-based approach in the Building Foundations, Building Bridges, Building Integration and Leaving a Legacy programmes. It has been suggested that the Fund should have been concentrating on its current suite of Programmes at a much earlier stage. Rather, I would contend that the Fund has responded to its environment in a very timely manner, and should continue to pursue this new agenda especially, now that it has become directly involved in the education sector through its very

successful Knowledge through Enterprise for Youth (KEY) and Learning and Educating Together (LET) initiatives and, latterly, in the Sharing in Education Programme.

### Short-Term Accountability vs Long-Term Development

The Fund was always willing to go the extra mile to support innovative approaches and to work with people who had fresh approaches to progressing the work of the Fund. This became evident with the introduction of the Disadvantaged Areas Initiative when John B. McGuckian is quoted as saying “We intend to build on the success of that Initiative and to supplement it with other innovative and imaginative schemes”. It is important to remember, however, that the Fund was established under the Anglo-Irish Agreement and, while it addressed the social and economic consequences of the political and social injustices of the time, its mission has had to be in line with the mission of its sponsoring body, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which had at its core the creation of a politically stable democracy.

Because of the Fund’s focus on economic regeneration as a tool for peace-building, it had to put in place business models of best practice such as SMART (Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound).<sup>vi</sup>

“While the horizontal breaking down of the barriers has been achieved the vertical barriers remain”

These types of measurement and outcomes were, almost by definition, short-term whilst the main aims of the Fund could not be achieved in the short term. The IFI had, for example, a policy of not revisiting projects; while at the same time, it also resisted considering second projects proposed by an organisation that had already benefited from funding. As time went on, people increasingly came to the view that there were no quick-fix solutions and, as such, concluded that this was

a long-term process. In fact, the Fund had started something that it could not walk away from, and it set about building long-term developmental relationships and partnerships. Somewhat accidentally, because of the way it was structured – operating on a project to project basis – and the fact that it received funding on a bi-annual as opposed to a multi-annual basis, this meant that the Fund had a short-term mentality which brought the benefit of a sense of urgency to get things done. This, in turn, brought with it a level of flexibility and responsiveness.

Once the Fund began to accept that it was, in fact, operating economic regeneration “with a purpose” and that it was getting into long-term

“I have worked with some remarkable community leaders and without them no real change would have been possible.”

relationship-building where SMART objectives were not entirely fit-for-purpose, the Fund was presented with a further dilemma: Should it stay with the business model that had very clear measurable outcomes even though these outcomes were not entirely compatible with long-term relationship-building which remained the ultimate objective of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Development organisations often find themselves with this dilemma and must constantly ask the question – “what is our core purpose, what are we here to do?” They must always go back to first principles for the answer to ensure that



their long-term objectives are not compromised in favour of short-term business model objectives. And for the Fund, this was exactly the challenge it faced – balancing the need for short-term win-wins with a longer-term perspective. To its benefit, the Fund was not solely dependent on EU Structural Funds for support and so it was much better placed than the Peace and INTERREG programmes to address the long-term requirements of peace-building. This freedom enabled the IFI to nurture projects and thus help sustain them over the long-term. This was extremely valuable to communities that had no background or experience of developing and managing a project. The Fund could nurture the community and guide them through difficult times. Eventually the Fund employed a very effective combination of urgency with a long-term view and a flexible operating approach which enabled it to avoid the typical funders' dilemma of giving priority to projects which can spend quickly rather than projects that could really make a difference. It managed to marry the urgency of delivering projects while keeping a close eye on the prize of relationship building.

### **Building Community Leadership**

While making a presentation to Apple employees in 2000, Steve Jobs said “People with Passion can change the world for the better”. Throughout my time with the Fund I came across many people who were driven by a passion to better their communities. However, the lack of support for leadership at community level in the early years of the Fund meant that these people struggled to get a voice in the midst of political instability, oppressive security presence and terrorist campaigns. Nonetheless, throughout those years, many people took a significant amount of personal risk and experienced a lot of unwelcome attention from within their communities through their involvement in work with the Fund. In my experience, people with a passion for their community will always be the spark that ignites community spirit and they form a very precious part of economic and social regeneration. It is vitally important that these very valuable people are supported.

In the Southern Border Counties, local politicians played an important role because people were involved with them. This meant that the community here engaged with their government in their efforts in community development. However, in Northern Ireland, for many years, people at the grassroots level had no relationship with their political representatives. For a long time the paramilitary organisations were the real holders of power within the communities. This lack of engagement with political representatives left people bereft of any empowerment. The Fund recognised the need to develop effective community leaders in marginalised areas. Leadership is a very illusive thing and it is easier to recognise it in retrospect than it is to predict it. However, it is also possible to recognise it in action and to nurture its development.

I have worked with some remarkable community leaders and without them no real change would have been possible. The Fund has been instrumental in addressing the dependency relationship between the people and the political system which existed for so long, by moving it towards a relationship of collaborative partnership. Creating collaborative partnerships or community leadership, rather than supporting individual activists, will result in a more sustainable leadership. This approach echoes the 6<sup>th</sup> century Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu's view of leadership and the Fund's Community Leadership Programme which was launched in 1996 adopted this approach with some notable successes. Embedding leadership within the community also helps to address the inevitable burn-out that arises at various stages of the community's life.

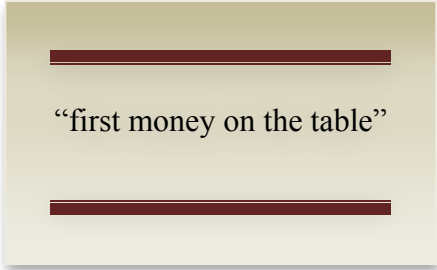
## Traffic Lights to Roundabouts

**There is line in the poem *Paradise Lost*, “Who overcomes by force, hath overcome but half his foe”,** which captures the unsustainability of the persistent use of force, political or otherwise, in addressing social disadvantage. Force can be seductive because it can create an illusion of progress. The illusion is very difficult to unravel because what appear to be successful outcomes are both immediate and very visible but their negative consequences last for generations. The concept of changing from the use of a traffic-light system to a roundabout system is a very effective way of tracking progress along a continuum measuring participation in civil society and this must be the ultimate prize in any democracy. This charts the progression from a situation where government does things *to* people, to where government does things *with* people. At traffic lights, the decision-making rests with the traffic light. It tells the driver when to stop, when to get prepared and when to go. However, in the case of a roundabout, an environment exists in which the driver must take responsibility for the decision-making.

At the centre of the “Cycle of Disadvantage” (a term often used in the Fund’s literature) is the alienation and lack of engagement felt by people in marginalised communities. In the very early days of the Fund’s work, government very much did things “to” people and not “with” people. Consultation or bottom-up working was a relatively new concept. While there are historical reasons for this, it is exasperated by the very low level of trust that existed between all sections of society. The environment was highly political and the terrorist activity made the situation extremely difficult. Also, the culture, both in the South and in the North, was centralised to a very large extent and so the process of consultation was an alien concept. Furthermore, while representative politics did exist in the South, the political culture was very much one of clientelism. Consequently, the independent nature of the Fund was not always welcome, as local politicians found it difficult to accept that they did not have a say in how funding was allocated. However, because local politicians do have an important role to play in representative democracy, it was essential to ensure that they became active stakeholders in the process and the Fund managed this very well without compromising its very valuable independence. This was achieved by ensuring that the support which politicians lent to the Fund was acknowledged at every possible opportunity and that political representatives were kept informed of the work of the Fund without being part of the decision-making process. Essentially, it was a contract to consult but not to be influenced.

When, in time, consultation was introduced, there was confusion as to who it should involve and what exactly it meant. The person conducting the consultation often saw this process as a contract to listen but not to be influenced by anything said by the person who was being consulted. The person consulted, on the other hand, always has the expectation that he or she was influencing the decision process. Indeed, the Fund itself engaged in very little consultation prior to its establishment and in the beginning, its activities were not well-tailored to the situation it was facing. Like the traffic light, it sought to direct solutions rather than, like the roundabout, facilitating a relationship-building process.

There is a widely held view that everyone has a right to be consulted. However, in the same way as the roundabout requires that the road user has the required driving skills, consultation requires that those who wish to be consulted must take responsibility for their part in the process. If this does not happen, consultation will amount to a very inefficient, time wasting process. It must be said, however, that there are exceptionable circumstances when



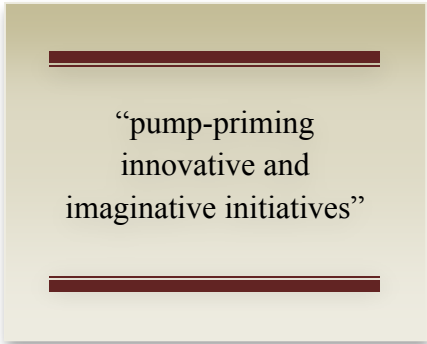
“first money on the table”

consultation is not the only useful strategy in affecting change and sometimes the only solution is to simply “Go for it”!

The concept of traffic lights and roundabouts is important here because it enables us to chart the movement along the continuum. Compared to traffic lights, a roundabout represents a much more sophisticated mechanism. It must be well designed and

fit for purpose in order to guide the road-user. In turn, the road user must display not only technical skill, but effective decision making and sound judgement. Authority and responsibility rest firmly with the driver and, most notably, respect for fellow road-users is key to the whole process.

The Fund worked very hard in establishing its credentials in this regard. As stated earlier, in



“pump-priming  
innovative and  
imaginative initiatives”

the initial years the Fund worked directly through government channels which resulted in very little change in the status quo. In the early 1990s success stories began to circulate, mainly through the Disadvantaged Areas Initiative. The signs of the financial investment became evident and there was a more realistic public appreciation of the constraints within which the Fund was required to operate. With every success story it became clear that a huge amount of inter- and intra-community activity had taken place and this would survive way beyond the initiative and

would become part of that engagement in participative democracy that sets the scene for a return into representative democracy.

In designing the structure of the Fund, the independent Board, the Advisory Committee and the Programme Teams, the architects of the Fund began to lay the foundations for the fit-for-purpose roundabout which is still constantly evolving. It is possible that in the early stages of the Fund, technical skills were to the fore as these were the skills deemed necessary for economic regeneration at that time. The traffic light was used and we have already considered why this was the right thing to do at the time. However, economic regeneration itself or job creation cannot address deeply held convictions and suspicions and so the drivers on this road to peace needed to develop more complex skills especially that of respecting fellow road-users.

The Fund had come to see the importance of giving people the power to change their own situation and to this end it took the position of “pump-priming innovative and imaginative initiatives” and adopted a policy that became known as a “first money on the table”. This was a major empowering tool. It recognised that too many development organisations made the provision of money to communities and organisations dependant on other monies being available from other sources. By putting its money “first on the table”, the Fund enabled communities to negotiate with other potential funding sources. While this required a great degree of risk management, it was nevertheless a powerful leverage instrument and was exactly what was required to achieve the development objectives of the Fund. The use of “first money on the table” was very carefully managed and was only possible in the light of

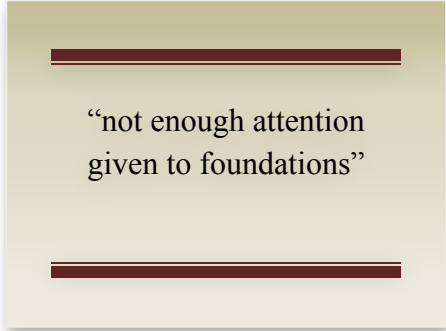
the concept “connected to but not of government”. The Fund worked very closely with other funding bodies, including government, to get as complete a picture as possible about their views of the Fund’s work and where possible to accommodate their concerns. This required a considerable investment in building up trust. The relationship became symbiotic as projects supported by the Fund often resulted in tangible regeneration which in turn, helped advance the development remit of the other bodies while at the same time fulfilling the remit of the Fund. This enabled the Fund, at least to some extent, to influence the approach of the other funding bodies and achieve policy advancements in the direction of the peace-building process.

These changes instilled confidence in communities by providing funding that they otherwise would have been unable to access and at the same time brought them back onto the government’s agenda. Through the support of the 31 donor countries, the Fund has brought international recognition and support to communities in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland.

### **The Importance of Short-Term Gains**

While the Fund was developing a long-term perspective, it always had to be mindful that while the donor countries were very appreciative of the long-term dimension of the work, there was always pressure for short-term successes. The donor countries understood the timescale involved as they had considerable experience in reconstruction and regeneration of societies that had been affected by conflict but they also needed evidence of progress.

Short-term gains or confidence building measures are essential to the creation of the momentum needed to fuel any change process. It is very important that achievements are celebrated in an on-going, tangible, visible and very inclusive manner. Apart from creating momentum these milestones recognise the sacrifice people have made and, in many cases, the risks they have taken to better their community. They also communicate to other people that things can change and working together can deliver more sustainable results than working alone. As the old Irish proverb goes “Ni neart go chur le cheile.”



“not enough attention  
given to foundations”

The Fund certainly understood the value of short-term gains and celebrating milestones through public events. While these events can appear to be frivolous, when people commit themselves on a voluntary basis into a political volatile and sometimes threatening environment, it is critical that this is fully recognised at the appropriate time. The Fund, especially in the early years, used announcements, launches and openings to

recognise and celebrate community achievement and to publicise good news stories in a very effective matter. I think it is safe to say that the role of the Chairman of the Fund as the public face of the organisation gave it a personal and accessible feel with a single recognisable figure. This was most evident in the term of Willie McCarter.

From the perspective of the stakeholders, short-term gains are essential when creating the momentum for any change process. However, in some ways they can force the pace and create “illusions of progress”. On the island of Ireland, both cross-community and cross-border work was particularly vulnerable to this pressure. The expectations about achieving

success in this arena were very high and, at times, the political pressure was quite strong. In the early years, there were cases of declaring success too soon. If we take the analogy of bridge building in relation to achieving peace and reconciliation in marginalised communities, the situation often occurred where, when constructing the bridge, too much attention was paid to the “connecting part” of the bridge and not enough attention given to the foundations and pillars so necessary when building a sound structure. This inevitably results in weak infrastructure and a bridge with no sustainability. In the same way, if the social infrastructure of the parties embarking on cross-border or cross-community work is not sufficiently developed, then the process will suffer the same fate as the bridge and is doomed to failure or a very short life.

In the end, the Fund became very effective at bridge building in nurturing its structures. The civil and public servants from both Northern Ireland and the Republic who served on its various programmes have got to know each other because of their work for the Fund. This person-to-person contact on both sides of the border has been very helpful in the whole North-South part of the Peace Process.



“It implies a state of readiness”

There is always the risk with short-term wins that victory can be declared too soon. When the Fund launched its Sharing this Space 5 year strategy in 2006 it also announced that the Fund was entering its “sunset” phase. I felt at the time that this gave the message that once the strategy was implemented the work of the Fund would be complete and it would wind-up. This created a

self-fulfilling prophesy and to adopt the Irish Independent’s headline of the 1 May, 2008 for a later event “Ireland is at Peace” - victory was being celebrated too soon on many fronts.

### **Communicating the Right Message**

In the book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, David Kahnemann talks about how we draw conclusions and make judgements based on the usually limited available information for which he coined the phrase: What You See Is All That There Is (WYSIATI). In order to get your message across it must be communicated to your target audience constantly and in as many forms as possible. In the case of IFI, its constant communication strategy meant that its core message of “peaceful, constructive change through working together” became an acceptable thing to be doing. The Fund had a very complex and fragmented target audience. However, it was very effective in gaining the right publicity for its work. This was important to the donor countries as it provided evidence that their donations are being put to good use<sup>vii</sup>.

In the early years, because it had had a baptism of fire, it was important that the IFI kept its core message of peace-building, and its role as part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, well below the radar. Once it gained the confidence of the community it could give a stronger voice to its core message. However, the message of what Willie McCarter referred to as “its broad international support” was always to the fore as this was a huge confidence building measure.

### **Teachable Moment**

In his book, *Human Development and Education*, Robert Havighurst asserts that, the ability to change behaviour will be more likely when the time is right. He calls this the ‘teachable

moment'. When circumstances combine to make people more receptive to new ideas or learning the teachable moment can be said to have taken place. This implies a state of readiness. In the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie points out that you must deal with people from where they are and not from where you would like them to be. While there are certainly times when it is appropriate to set the pace for communities involved in development work, it will only have sustainability when the major issues are dealt with at a teachable moment – and there is a convergence in development objectives among the community and the development organisation.

There are certain contexts where the teachable moment flourishes especially in arenas of common interest. In my own personal experience growing up on the border, like many of my friends I had friends across all sorts of community divides. Almost invariably these friendships came about through sport. It is in this context that I felt that a proactive approach to designing mutual understanding programmes through sport would be a very worthwhile initiative. Initially, the Fund was not very encouraging; however, after a long period of persistence, the Board of the Fund agreed to support a Football4Peace Ireland project in 2007. There is also a strong role for the performing arts in developing mutual understanding. This became apparent through Brian Friel's play, *The Home Place*. Once again, projects like Shared Past-Shared Future, co-delivered by the Ally Theatre in Strabane, Co. Tyrone and the Balor Theatre in Ballybofey, Co. Donegal, managed to address sensitive issues around sectarianism in a teachable moment context.

Throughout my time in the Fund, it was always necessary to draw up the Work Plan for the incoming year which involved target projects, budgets and timeframes. It became clear if the Plan rigorously adhered to the focus it was possible to claim significant progress when the achievements were measured against the outcomes of the Plan at the end of the period. However the danger here was that it risked not addressing the real prize which was sustainable progress towards peace. This can only be properly achieved if the development body has a hands-on relationship with the community. The ability to recognise a teachable moment is critical to fostering truly effective and sustainable development. It is a very skilled craft which requires a high degree of preparedness, an acute awareness of the prevailing circumstances which impacts the local situation, a supportive network and a canny sense of timing. The Fund's use of Development Consultants, the Board's trust in their judgment and their own credibility both within the community sector and within government, was critical in this process.

The teachable moment can easily fall victim to the need for short-term gains unless those managing the projects have the ability to keep many balls in the air at once and are able to judge which projects are coming to the fore for the right reasons. It is also my opinion that the Fund's structure with its independent board, programme teams and its "way of working together" played a significant role in creating the teachable moment in the establishment of the six Cross Border Implementation Bodies.

While the role of formal education has been central to the debate on sectarianism, it has nevertheless remained a very delicate issue. While the 1948 Butler Education Act began to address social injustice across the UK, religious segregation remained in Northern Ireland. With the benefit of 20:20 vision, the Fund should have involved itself in the education sector much earlier than it did. The theme of "Learn, Work and Live Together" in its 2009 and 2010 Annual Reports sets a very welcome tone, and the Interim Evaluation of the Sharing in Education Programme is very encouraging. It is possible, however, that the teachable

moment for the Fund's involvement in Education may have come too late in its life. Education is the design shop for every society and in Northern Ireland it is one of, if not the most significant, barrier to cross-community integration. Again, the Fund has started a very important journey which it could continue to develop in its own unique way.

## Bright Spots

It was relatively straight-forward to identify models of best practice in successful economic regeneration and to replicate them in areas of disadvantage. The Fund did this very successfully for over two decades. However, when the Fund changed its economic strategy to *Sharing this Space*, such examples of best practice were not readily available and the organisation did struggle as it switched from its economic focus to a strong reconciliation focus. For example, even the term "sustainability" takes on a whole new meaning and it is much easier to measure in economic terms than in reconciliation terms.

Often, we look to broadly researched and evidence-based strategies to inform us about what to do and how to design programmes that seek to address problems. However, sometimes there are what are referred to as "bright spots"; as in the book *Switch* by Chip and Dan Heath. Amidst all of the chaos, sometimes oases of normality can be found where life continues relatively normally. It is always worthwhile to try and identify these bright spots and to find out why they exist, even in very alienated communities. There are examples of this in a number of everyday things which appeared, on the face of things, to have very little to do with conventional peace and reconciliation work. In the midst of the turmoil there were people who managed to lead remarkably normal lives and some who managed to flourish even in an environment where the odds seemed to be stacked against them. Sometimes it was friendship which had developed as a result of working in a local charity, playing on a sports team or performing a musical or drama event. It is incumbent on us to identify the elements which cause these bright spots so that we can use the lessons learnt to light up the dark spots. I conducted my own survey by going to locations which I knew well and which had been badly affected by the Troubles and I tried to identify what was the single most obvious thing about people who appeared to be coping in the middle of all this turmoil. In my experience, the incidences of bright spots seem to congregate around the family environment. Things like loyalty to family values, role models, involvement in civil society through sport, music and the arts, importance placed on education are all factors which have played a significant role in nurturing bright spots. It is worth pointing out that factors such as these do not require the implementation of a grand, broadly researched and evidence-based strategy. It is very often the case that the answers are to be found within the communities. It is a question of capturing the imagination and passion of the people in the communities. The performing arts, team sports and intergenerational work have all been especially effective in this regard.





It is possible that the Fund may have missed out on the opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas when changing its strategic focus as this may have identified bright spots. The very effective programme approach of the Fund meant that it operated within the boundaries set by the eligibility criteria of each programme and possibly suffered the fate of the “silo effect”. Some of the most effective innovation comes from the sharing of information and experience across sectors of society and from adding alternative perspectives. It is possible that the Fund could have enriched its suite of interventions through the cross-fertilisation of experiences. However, a project like Family Matters, managed by the North-West Alcohol Forum, is an excellent example of this in practice and I am sure this is now a further string to the Fund’s bow.

## **Conclusions: The Elephant and the Flea**

In his book, *“The Elephant and the Flea”*, the management guru, Charles Handy considered large organisations as elephants, animals which are powerful and influential in their environment but who are slow to change or address niches. The fleas, on the other hand, are flexible and adaptive, with the ability to access niches – but they require the support of the elephant to flourish. Like many symbiotic relationships this works very well. The elephant has a major influence in the jungle but needs the flea to get into all those little niches on its body that need to be attended to! The result is a happy elephant and a safe and well-nourished flea!

The International Fund for Ireland emerged as a highly distinctive organisation in this regard as it “was connected to government but not of government”. It was able to target disadvantage and social exclusion by creating investment in disadvantaged communities and by addressing divisions across communities and across the border. The Fund has become a formidable development agency. It has developed a unique ability to penetrate communities that were once impenetrable and to deliver effective supports which allow them to emerge from their isolation and disadvantage. The Fund’s Annual Reports are testimony to its innovative approach to the social and economic regeneration of divided communities. It has fine-tuned many of its interventions and knows what works and what does not work.

A particular feature of the IFI was its unique ability to build long-term relationships with organisations at local level in disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland. This ability came from the flexibility of the Fund’s independent Board, and the fact that its Development Consultants cut out excessive bureaucracy when working on projects. This enabled the Fund to be flexible in developing and supporting innovative projects while, at the same time, remaining highly accountable with what Willie McCarter referred to as “lean administrative structures that effectively deliver cross-community and cross-border programmes”.

It is again worth drawing attention to the key role of the Development Consultants in the work of the Fund. These were people located in local areas who had very good knowledge of the problems facing people at grassroots level. As a result, the Development Consultants were able to proactively join people to projects which addressed key problems in those areas. This enabled the Fund to take a bottom up approach in its development activities. The Development Consultants have been central to the success of a wide range of the Fund’s social and economic-based programmes.



The Fund has been a very efficient flea to the government's elephant as it was able to access areas where the government was unable to operate effectively. The Fund was able to work with community leaders and, through the Development Consultants, gained credibility and earned trust. It was on the basis of this trust that the government through its civil and public servants eventually gained access to communities which had for a long time been closed to them.

The way in which the Fund has facilitated the building up of important personal contacts between senior officials and politicians has made a significant contribution to the overall development of the peace process, and to better relations within Ireland and beyond. Senior civil and public servants who have worked together have established good working relationships over an extended period and, in a similar way, the observers from the donor countries (the USA, the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) have interacted with their peers at Board meetings. All this activity has led to the development of informal working relationships and friendships which have been fundamental to the success of the Peace Process. Furthermore, the Fund's projects also developed space for politicians from both communities, North and South, to become involved in a low-key way with Fund officials, civil servants and in doing so, with each other. Again, these processes helped to build bridges between the two communities and have been a most important part of the Fund's operations<sup>viii</sup>.

The Fund has pioneered the empowerment of the people of Northern Ireland and the Border Counties by giving them a stake in their own community and providing them with the skills to create shared spaces in their own local areas; thus making their community a better place. Finding the balance between top-down and bottom-up is key here and when we consider that the Fund came into existence in a very politically difficult environment and without any blueprint in either formal or informal consultations, it has succeeded in developing a remarkably robust engagement process which will prove to be one of its sustainable legacies.

To date, the Fund has invested €753m/£628m in over 5,800 projects, and in 2000, KPMG estimated that for each £1/€1 the Fund contributed, this in turn would leverage a further £2/€2<sup>ix</sup>. In the process, it has brought thousands of Protestants and Catholics into working relationships within the divided communities of Northern Ireland, and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

In conclusion, the role of the International Fund for Ireland has been recognised as having made a significant contribution to the peace process in Ireland but I believe that its full impact has not yet emerged. The Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 provided the context for devolution and power-sharing in Northern Ireland and 1999 saw the establishment of the six North/South Implementation bodies. The IFI deserves a lot of credit for adopting the previously discussed round-about approach which supported the building of relationships between the civil and public servants who had worked in the Fund over many years, and by developing their capacity to work together. This is a significant legacy of the Fund and not yet well understood by many people. And finally, while a rising tide does not necessarily lift all boats, the very special skills-set the IFI has developed, will continue to play an important role in peace and conflict transformation.

**Note:**

The views expressed in this article are entirely my own, and should be treated as a reflection of my experiences of the Fund over a 23 year period. I have tried to present some of the lessons which I have learned in this article, and I hope these lessons may be of use to those involved in this type of work in the future. For me, it was a

personal journey of discovery – as I am sure it was for everyone involved the development work of the Fund. It is something I feel very honoured to have been part of and I know that I have learned more along the journey than I ever imparted.

*Paddy Harte lectures in leadership, change management and business development at Letterkenny Institute of Technology. He was Chairman of the very successful Donegal Gathering Steering Group in 2103. Prior to this, he gained a wide range of experience in his role as a socio-economic development advisor to the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) for over 23 years. During this time, he was involved in a wide range of cross-border and cross-community projects directed at community engagement in a conflict environment. He has served as a board member of the Donegal County Development Board, Donegal Local Development Company (LEADER), Inishowen Rural Development Company (LEADER) and Tyrone Donegal Partnership where he advised and evaluated development initiatives. He was a member of the Donegal Employment Task Force and also served as a board member of Concern International. He is currently a member of the Board of the Tip O'Neill Diaspora Award Committee and of the Donegal Clinical and Research Academy. He is a recipient of The Donegal People of the Year Award and has been nominated for the Donegal Person of The Year for the past three years.*

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<sup>1</sup> SDLP stands for Social Democratic and Labour Party

<sup>1</sup> The awarding of the 2012 Nobel Prize for Peace to the EU is a further reminder of the role of the EU in securing and maintaining peace in Europe.

<sup>1</sup> These were part of the Disadvantaged Areas Initiative.

<sup>1</sup> Published in 2006, this is the current strategy to which the Fund operates. There is a sense though that it was not as fit-for-purpose in the southern border counties in the Republic as it was in Northern Ireland. On reflection, it may have been more in keeping for the Fund to have continued to place the emphasis on economic disadvantage in the southern border counties as that was the main legacy of the Troubles while on the other hand, emphasising the mutual understanding and reconciliation focus in Northern Ireland. A more engaged process around the formation of the strategy may have thrown more light on this and made it a more fit-for-purpose mechanism across the Irish border.

<sup>1</sup> A prominent community worker made the point that, while vocational training is a valuable part of addressing social disadvantage, it can have the effect of creating a well-trained paramilitary recruit if the person has on-going support in embracing diversity.

<sup>1</sup> The Fund was accountable for considerable sums of money; it had to have very stringent accounting and auditing procedures.

<sup>1</sup> The Fund's message had to be communicated not only on the island of Ireland but across not only the donor countries. Reputational risk both at home and abroad has always, therefore, been a major consideration for the Fund; a risk it has managed well.

<sup>1</sup> An outstanding example of this was the Island of Ireland Peace Park in Messines, Belgium.

<sup>1</sup> KPMG calculated that this leveraging would result in an investment of €1,626m/£1,356m from public, private and community sources over the Fund's 25 years.

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