

Diversity in widening participation: Can we really include every community group in a project?

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Presentation overview

- Lifelong learning context
- MTCBC Lifelong learning centre and project
- Constraints to widening participation of the non-formal learning area in this project
- Possibilities for alleviating these constraints

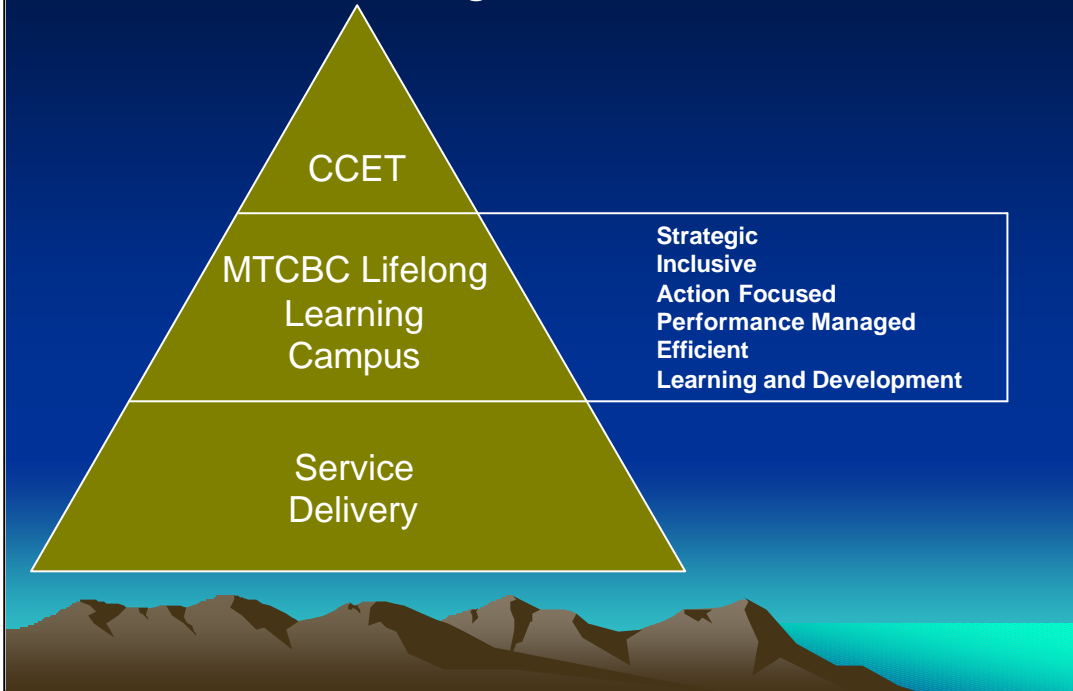


Lifelong learning

- Birth to death
- Reciprocal between and within generations
- Self-directed and/or facilitated by others
- Not necessarily progressive
- Predominantly community-based
- Non-formal, informal and formal learning



Strategic Overview



A Lifelong Learning Network



Main Project Outcomes

Sector Specific Reports

Business Incubation Centre
Valleys Information Technology Centre
Further/Higher Education
Learning through the Outdoors
Community Learning
Work Based Learning
Arts, Culture and Media
Alternative Curriculum

Full Curriculum Plan for the
Lifelong Learning Campus
Revenue & Cost Plan for each
element of the project
Detailed funding strategy
Site development options
Full design specification
Final Report



Problem areas specific to lifelong outdoor learning

1. Diversity of communities and community groups
2. Diversity of stakeholders – not necessarily community based
3. How does the “community” drive and maintain ownership of the process/project.



McTaggart (1991) noted research can often provide a forum for people to unwittingly establish ways of implementing policies that have been developed from knowledge emanating from research on them, rather than by them.



Weber (2000) who provided evidence of social networks that were co-opted into the dominant social system in relation to community-based environmental activism groups.

Within a few years, however, the populist instinct gave way to a consolidation of political power among a handful of nationally based advocacy groups ... these groups became proxy advocates for the general public and were rapidly absorbed into the established system of interest intermediation among organised economic groups ... Given that participation by most group members tended to be passive organised advocates defined environmentalism and the substance of policy initiatives (p. 247).



Rowland and Volet (1996) acknowledged, however, that community-based learning conducted through means other than Western formal education systems was generally devalued and dismissed as unimportant or secondary, particularly as it had a lack of formally assessed processes. Furthermore, Clover (1996) noted that this devaluing of non-formal or informal community-based learning in Western society was generated from the fact that it did not take place in a classroom with an 'expert' teacher.

(Polistina, 2004)



Problem areas specific to lifelong outdoor learning

1. Diversity of communities and community groups
2. Diversity of stakeholders – not necessarily community based
3. How does the “community” drive and maintain ownership of the process/project.
4. Devaluing of non-formal community-based learning
 - Problem then is how to acknowledge value and benefits of existing intergenerational and family learning in local communities

Wearing (1995) noted that the current dominant culture devalued the aged and excluded them from the productive sphere including the learning and education domain. This devaluing of older aged individuals and the disconnection with family and extended in the education system has been extended to the outdoor learning sector (Polistina, 2005, p. 159).



Alleviating problem areas

- Long consultation periods
- Flexibility to extend or back track if necessary
- Flexibility and time to change methodology if required
- Diversity of opportunities rather than singular projects
- Common denominator with diverse strands of interest
- Recurring funding moving to processes for self-determination and self-efficacy



If agents stop interacting or if interactions lose their complexity and degenerate into easily predictable repetitive patterns, the web dissipates, its self-organising ability sinks, and emergence [of creative and diverse thinking] ceases to occur!

(Dimitrov, 2000, p. 73).

