

VALUE Network – Employability Sub-group

Meeting in Amstelveen, NL
29 April 2010 9.30-16.30

Present: Alison Hughes (University Liverpool, UK), Ruud Duvekot (InHolland University, NL), Matthew Hill (IVR, UK)

Update re Employability web page and resources on there

- The Group discussed a number of proposed additions to the Bibliography on the subgroup webpage e.g. CEV Assembly Proceedings, Paris, March 2007, which focused on ‘volunteering as a route back to employment.’ In-depth discussion of the content of this document was reflected in the work on the Glossary and re the findings of AJH (see below for further details).
- RD agreed to contact Benedicte Halba to see if there were any additional materials from FR that she would suggest as appropriate, and also if she is willing to be a VALUE expert. RD also to see if there are any materials from DE appropriate to the theme.
- It was agreed that the list of resources was growing on the subgroup webpage and that it might be a good idea to manage this list e.g. by grouping in a subset e.g. main topic (employability) and secondly ‘context’. It was agreed that we would discuss and finalise this at the next meeting during the VALUE Project meeting in autumn 2010
- The group considered the question of how the main VALUE website resources will be updated after the end of the project. AJH stated that the contractor will maintain the website on its server indefinitely after the project ends. The group agreed to recommend to the Management Group that partners are invited to continue to send in resources after the end of the project and that the contractor would agree to add these materials, as appropriate.
- A suggestion was also made regarding provision of a web-based facility for partners to be able to continue to share and debate after 2011 – maybe a mail list/ Facebook type access. Again to recommend to Management Group for consideration.

Proposed Glossary

Following extensive discussion, the Group agreed that three terms should be referenced specifically on the subgroup webpage (competence; employability; learning triangle) in addition to the terms in the main VALUE Glossary. A discussion document was produced during the meeting with a definition of these terms and further discussion that interprets and amplifies the term with specific reference to the importance of employability to volunteers and ULLL.

We noted that there are different social phenomena / different motivations influencing this issue. We also noted (*ref CEV General Assembly Paris, France, March 2007, Final report – ‘Volunteering as a route (back) to employment’*) that volunteering must remain a free choice and must not be seen as a social measure to help the unemployed or to be a requirement for an individual to obtain state unemployment benefit. We discussed whether volunteering planned by an individual as a route back to employment is in fact true ‘volunteering’. We concluded that ULLL can help a volunteer ‘value the opportunity’ where there is an overlap with a route to employability but this should not always be its primary aim or role.

Volunteering is a 'learning event' and should be valued for this in itself. ULLL is not a tool of the state to reinforce the 'need to get qualifications' but can help a learner/volunteer, who may not have previously engaged in much formal learning, take first steps to access these learning opportunities.

Thus ULLL can help to build the bridge between social and economic activity. But it needs to be presented to volunteers as an opportunity not a necessity/requirement. ULLL should not be viewed as 'professionalizing' the role of the volunteer.

To download a copy of the Glossary and discussion document, please [click here](#).

Update on work to date by subgroup members

Ruud Duvekot:

RD has been working on:

- A spin-off from VALUE - RD is developing a project with the NL voluntary organisation partner NOC*NSF. Resources produced will be in Dutch and it is being funded by the NOC*NSF. Using 4 sport unions (including boxing, athletics, volleyball) it will review generic APL and the relation between EQF and the NL NQF and look at building a bridge from Level 4 to the associate degree (Level 5 - 2 year cycle – similar to UK Foundation Degree) and eventually to teacher training. It will explore the individual learning pathways that this could involve for the volunteers in these unions and also eventually the possibility of progressing to a bachelor degree (4 year). Although the main project content will be generic it will be made specific in terminology / language for volunteers in these unions (NOC*NSF – Jan Minkhorst will do this work).
- The outcome will be a generic matrix with function-related competences and professional competences (e.g. diplomas)
- Volunteers in these unions who do coaching/ refereeing will work with the generic profiles to produce more contextualised and individualised profiles. The aim of their involvement will be 'how to personalise the matrix'.
- The outcome of the project will be finalised before the VALUE TR conference and we agreed to recommend to the Management Group that RD and JM provide a workshop in Ankara regarding the work and outcomes of this project. We may also recommend that one of the volunteers is paid for by VALUE to attend to take part in the workshop.

Matthew Hill:

MH has been working on a number of very relevant documents, which will be copied to the rest of the group and put on the employability webpage once finalised:

- Production of an IVR research bulletin exploring the link between volunteering and employability. The bulletin discussed strong evidence for the role of volunteering in skills development but points to a lack of evidence in hard job outcomes.
- IVR scoping study in to the potential for longitudinal research into the impact of youth volunteering (age 16-25) – the scoping study will be explicitly exploring the life long learning and employability impacts of volunteering and will involve consultations with employers from the private and public sector.
- IVR survey of skills and volunteer management in the 3rd sector in the UK. The survey included some specific questions re ULLL in order to provide synergy with VALUE's work. This includes volunteer manager interviews – with many stating they want some professional recognition and learning opportunities. But the experienced managers have emphasised that they do not mean by this short (e.g. half day) courses, but rather an opportunity to undertake more in-depth LLL. It was noted that volunteer managers have different LLL needs e.g. depending on whether they are paid/unpaid; in the public or private sector; the level of their experience. Some of the

interviews may make very good case studies for VALUE and MH will provide some once the data is written up.

Alison Hughes:

AJH has been reviewing the UK ULLL provision for volunteers and volunteer managers. A survey (for the MOVE project) was carried out by her university in 2007 and she has now updated this survey. Main findings are as follows:

- There is a growing recognition of the demonstrated need for not just generic management style competences but very specific applicability of ULLL for those managing volunteers (see the CEV Paris Conference proceedings). So whereas in 2007 most of the management modules on offer to those in the voluntary sector in the UK were very generic type 'business school' style, now some universities appear to be developing modules tailored with more specific applicability to the voluntary sector e.g. Lampeter, Roehampton, Winchester, Durham
- Having said this, still the ULLL UK offer is weighted to managers of volunteers rather than volunteers themselves, except where there are specialist centres e.g. Birkbeck, Lampeter
- HE can encourage reflexive competences for volunteers – allow them to value learning, and there seem to be more opportunities for this now than in 2007.
- Community learning and the different contexts for volunteering are increasingly appreciated – Dundee
- Does a 'volunteer' always recognize that they are in fact volunteering – do they just see it as a continuum of life experience, especially when they are not 'formally' volunteering i.e. not doing it within an organisational context. In those very informal volunteering cases (eg helping in the neighbourhood) it is likely that those undertaking the voluntary role do not reflect at all on their personal learning. How can ULLL help them to do this? So universities need to provide ULLL support for informal volunteering – i.e. reflective small steps (e.g. possibly non-accredited or accredited short courses and counselling) – see UEL and Open University for examples of this.
- More Foundation degrees or UK first year undergraduate Level now on offer for the sector – so there is growing acknowledgement that not all volunteers and/or their managers are ready for study at Masters level.
- The complexity of managing volunteers needs to be recognised in ULLL as volunteering isn't one-dimensional. For example a volunteer may also be a user or sponsor of the service as well as a volunteer – managers need to be aware of this in order to manage them effectively.

AJH will forward the survey data to MH for him to review in light of the IVR survey of the volunteer managers and for us to review whether what is on offer matches what the managers say they require.

Development of Questionnaire for External Stakeholders

This had been suggested by RD at the 11.2009 meeting of the subgroup and was discussed in further detail now. It was agreed that a small pilot questionnaire to review the perspectives of external stakeholders (i.e. employers; trade unions; voluntary agencies) would be useful. The aim would be to find out whether:

1. they are aware that volunteers have learned specific competences that can be used in employment
2. and that volunteers can use these experiences to build up HE-level knowledge/ skills through ULLL

- RD will design the questions, and MH and AJH will review and agree them. It will be piloted in UK and NL initially (each send out about 20) and at the December partner meeting we will ask if 4 or 5 other partners (max) would like to send out 20 each.
- RD will carry out the brief analysis
- RD to explore how he could collect the data online from people completing the form
- It will be max. 10 questions as we are aware that for some completing the form they will not have thought about these issues previously.

The outcome will be exploring stakeholders’:

- Awareness of the 2 above questions, and if they are not aware we can consider how to make them aware
- Attitude to supporting this

Year ahead for the subgroup

Case Studies for main VALUE webpages

These only need be short (i.e. c. 2 paragraphs) and not necessarily very high-level university courses i.e. can refer to non-accredited ULLL. We will highlight 1 or 2 key phrases and state in the CS where any interested person can find more information.

- MH to write up from a few of the volunteer manager interviews, having obtained their permission
- AJH to write up re experiences of working with National Trust volunteers
- RD can provide a couple of examples in Dutch and English based on his presentation in Jonkoping regarding volunteers in Trade Unions and their attempts to engage with ULLL. These will include reflection by the people themselves plus identification of opportunities still available to them.

Next subgroup meeting – December 2010

- to review draft final report, written by AJH
- to review results of questionnaire survey from NL and UK responses and ask other VALUE partners to assist if they wish to do so
- to review managing of resources on the subgroup webpage
- discuss and agree likely format/content of the employability workshop at the VALUE Conference in TR

ajh 5.2010