

Virtuous circles experimentation report

Brief description of activities

This aspect of project activity has been developed and monitored through small group discussions and individual interviews during project meetings. In addition, each partner has written a chapter for the book which describes their experimentation.

Organisations involved

The report on experimentation was coordinated by University of Akureyri with information provided by all the pedagogic partners.

Aims and objectives

The aims in coordinating this activity were to:

- Learn from each other as we developed our skill in applying the methodology
- To set quality standards and monitor the quality of outputs
- Produce and validate documentation

Concrete outcomes

Refer to local experiences

Internal evaluation of the outcomes

All the partners have sustained the development of their virtuous circle(s) throughout the project. An important outcome is that partners have demonstrated that the methodology can successfully be adapted and applied to different geographical, organisational and cultural contexts.

The activities of the circles are well documented through:

- Minutes of meetings
- Case studies together with supporting materials, such as discussion reports and thematic analysis of practice and learning
- Presentations
- Conference reports
- Posters
- Local experience chapters in the PRAISE book

For some organisations the setting up of the circles was very hard work and time consuming, but for all the partners the actual facilitation of the circles was very rewarding. Participant feedback was consistently positive with both experienced workers and students finding the narrative method and case study production interesting and motivating.

The circles varied in size and composition, providing good evidence of the possibilities and findings on what works best. All the circles benefited from cross fertilisation of perspective and ideas either through multi-disciplinary, inter-agency or cross-cultural composition. This is important because it meant that the narratives were analysed from

different theoretical and practical perspectives thus strengthening the quality of the case study and supporting material for the formative module.

The main products of the circles are the case studies on the database. These are a rich resource of authentic, real world studies of practice invaluable for teachers of social welfare modules. In the experimental modules students engaged enthusiastically and critically with the case studies.

Sustainability

The degree of sustainability of the virtuous circle networks and activities varies from full integration to a commitment to develop the necessary institutional support to do so. The ability of partners to integrate the networks and activities into their work depends on the nature of the organisation, the congruence of the methodology with existing teaching approaches, and the level of institutional commitment to the project. Two partners have fully integrated the virtuous circle methodology into their training activities and have institutional commitment to continue. Other partners have been able to achieve a partial integration into at least one aspect of their teaching.

Changes from the approved work plan

None