

Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts*

Workshop Practice: A Long Short Walk

1. Description:

A Short Walk requires the tutor or facilitator to select a walk, or a number of walks, of around 15 minutes in any environment they choose. A detailed route must be prepared and a precise map given to participants. Participants are split into groups of 3 or 4 and allocated a walk (or the same walk). The key to this activity is that participants are required to undertake a walk that would normally take 15 minutes in 45, and take notes as they go. It is vital to stress that progress must be slow. At the end of the walk, participants return to a central point and are encouraged to create a narrative from their experience. Participants then show their work to the other groups and the session finishes with a plenary. The activity is amenable to the presentation of results in a number of different forms: the activity can be extended by requiring participants to distil their findings into a *still-image* that represents their experience, or a performance might be created, or participants might want to film and edit their experience, or a written narrative might be chosen. "Open space" is, again, both literal and figurative as the groups' conclusions are entirely open, as is the environment in which they walk.

2. Learning possibilities:

This activity is an embodied version of "close reading" in which participants are forced to slow down their responses in order to accommodate the detail and subtleties of their experience. Deepens understanding of the subject matter and promotes active reflection. Acts as a foundation for a more detailed study later.

3. Examples:

An introductory session, for example, on an interdisciplinary module on the city in which the institution is located. In Coventry, for example, the walk could encompass the environs of the cathedrals, or the medieval/modern city centre.

Permission might be obtained for engineering students to walk through a local factory and record their observations.

An induction activity for students newly arrived at an institution might feature this activity in the form of a walk around the campus.

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