

INTERM REPORT: HISTORY IN PRACTICE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this interim report is to provide an update on HISTORY IN PRACTICE PROJECT (HIPP) is an IATL-funded experimental project on student-community engagement in curriculum design. Though described as an 'interim' report, this report covers the period November 2017 to May 2018, encompassing the bulk of the project. The aim of the project was to work with selected representatives from community heritage organizations and current undergraduate History students to co-develop an undergraduate module for the Department of History on Public History. Although we encountered some minor issues with timing, things have so far gone to plan. This report will document what we have achieved, these minor issues, and plans for the remainder of the project.

Progress Summary

HIPP has run smoothly so far, with very little deviation from the original timeline and plan. There have been two 2.5 hour workshops, but instead of a third workshop, the project lead, Meleisa Ono-George, met with each community organization individually between in March 2018. The first workshop was held on 1 November 2017 and the second workshop on 24 January 2018, both at the Modern Records Centre. Five second and final year undergraduate history students participated in both workshops; however, only four out of five representatives from the heritage organizations participated. One organization dropped out without clear explanation; however, this has had little impact on the way the project has gone. In addition to the lead academic, Meleisa Ono-George, the workshops also included another academic from the Department of History, Mark Knights; as well as a community development manager, Mark Hinton, and the project administrator, Elsa Thaiparambil Oommen.

In the first workshop, Meleisa gave an overview of the Department, the module proposal process at Warwick, and other things that were important to provide context for a new module. Meleisa also presented on the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for HE) subject benchmark and other criteria required by the university for new modules, for instance, the number of hours and academic terms. Participants spent quite a bit of time thinking through the aims of an ideal module and challenges working with university and community may present. Students and community representatives also spent some time working out the learning outcomes for the module

In the second workshop, participants looked at the learning outcomes again, but this time in relation to possible assessments. They also looked at the syllabus, and possibilities for internships. Up until this workshop, the group had been discussing designing a final year undergraduate module. However, the assessment criteria for final year modules in the Department of History is fixed and rather restrictive. Thus, following some discussion, the group decided that instead of designing a final year module, which was the original plan, a second-year module would allow for a more diverse assessment and a much more interesting module. Students input also revealed that a second-year module that involved an internship would be more suited to the student lifecycle in the second opposed to the final year of study.

Following the second workshop, Meleisa used the notes from the first and second workshop to draft a MA1 form to propose a new module. The strikes in March and April 2018 prevented a third workshop and instead, Meleisa, went out to the different organizations and had a discussion with them about the draft module and internships. Once all interviews were completed, the MA1 form was submitted to the Department of History and approved. All participants were asked to submit feedback on the consultation process.

The original plan was for the module to commence in October 2018; however, the lead module convener will be on leave unexpectedly and therefore will not be able to teach the module until October 2019. The module has retained the focus on public history and includes a significant component of student-community collaboration in the production of public history via 48-72-hour internship beginning in the second term.

Now that the consultation is complete and one of the major outcomes of the project achieved, the project can now focus on dissemination, and longer term legacies. The HIPP project was presented at the Education Conference on 15 May 2018 at the University of Warwick. The feedback was very positive. The discussion in the session raised questions about how student-community engagement in curriculum design can be shared as a practice to other teaching staff at the university, something to consider going forward.

Further opportunities to discuss and receive feedback on this project, as well as build relationships with community partners, is planned. This plan involves one final event that involves community organizations, students and academics. The event will be held at the end of June in Coventry and will be a consultation with a wider group of community representatives on the possibility of offering internships as part of the new History in Practice module. All collaborators from HIPP will be invited. The aim of this event is also to consult with community partners on the possibility of Warwick University establishing a Centre for Public and Community-Engaged History. In the case of the latter objective, by consulting with community partners, this event aims to draw upon best practice by involving community stakeholders from the onset in designing a hub that is hoped will become a collaborative and innovative community-university space.

Conclusion

HIPP has been a successful project so far. Student engagement in HIPP helped in shaping a module that attends to the needs of the learner, while the involvement of community-facing organizations that produce public history in this project was integral to ensuring a module that it is hoped will work well for these and similar organizations. Through student-community partnership, HIPP produced a module that is academically engaging, contributes to student personal development beyond the classroom, and supports the production of local history and heritage. It has met all the aims set out in the original proposal and except for some minor delays, such as one of the organizations dropping out and the university strikes, the project has otherwise gone as planned.