

The practicalities of successful collaboration: a third space and blended professional?

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Abstract

This paper discusses a key point of learning from a National Network for Collaborative Outreach regarding the practicalities of collaboration and governance structure. An in-depth evaluation of the Cumbria and Lancashire Network for Collaborative Outreach (CLNCO) pointed to the centrality and pivotal role of the blended professional working in a third space. Promoting collaboration appeared easier when it took place in an impartial or neutral environment (i.e. a context not immediately associated with one or other of the institutions) and was conducted by a professional who had both the practical experience of organising events and activities as well as the knowledge and authority to underpin their role. When these two elements (space and role) came together then the perceived success of an activity was enhanced for the parties concerned. The enabling and process dimensions (resources, impartial positioning, plus execution by experienced employees preferably with knowledge of previous widening participation work and policy) which appear to lead to successful outcomes are identified. The paper draws out the practical implications of the findings from the evaluation of various activities; it highlights the significance of the physical location of inventions, employee positioning and the knowledge brought to the initiatives as well as considering the alignment in approaches taken by individuals and institutions. The focus then turns to explore the implications of these practicalities for the broader governance structure; in other words, how does the management and operation of a network support and facilitate impartiality and effective practice in collaborative activities. The paper concludes by discussing these issues in the context of the recently launched National Collaborative Outreach Programme.

Reference

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Project:

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For further information including project report [CLNCO Project Page](http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/reap/regional-evaluation/clnco/)
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