The Higher Education Academy

Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP)

Age and gender discrimination

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What are the links between teaching and research?
This initiative develops learner's appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline by bringing data/findings from staff research/consultancy into a community training environment.

Context
Informing, Empowering and Enabling Women is a training programme for women in local communities. The day workshop is designed for a wide range of mixed abilities (the design of the resources to match a wide range of learning styles was a key feature in the design of the accompanying training materials).

Background
Tutors received funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) to explore gender discrimination and ageist perceptions. Information was gathered from men and women over 50, and 178 employer representatives from private and public voluntary organisations on issues concerning age and gendered stereotypes. The study found that negative and discriminatory experiences of both women and men had resulted in lower levels of self efficacy and life satisfaction.
Traditional methods of research dissemination including academic peer reviewed journals and research reports. Conference presentations were also used to disseminate the project's findings. However it was felt that in order to be of practical use the research findings should be targeted and disseminated to the women affected by these issues. To this end the tutors applied for and were awarded further funding from the ESF to develop a set of training resources.

Development of workshops

The research findings from the original project and the expertise gained were used to create a series of workshops designed to inform and assist women in recognising how gender and age disadvantage occurs. These workshops were also designed to help participants develop ways to overcome some of the barriers faced, with a view to widening access to employment and education.

Initial desk top research revealed that there were few good quality affordable teaching or training packs on the issues of gender and age discrimination. To address this resource gap the tutors created a resource pack of 10 sessions. To ensure that these sessions were inclusive they designed a range of activities to match a range of learning styles (as identified in Honey, P. and Mumford, A. (1992) *The Manual of Learning Styles.* Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications).

Session structure

A session on age discrimination, for example, would typically start with a short explanation of stereotyping; prejudice and discrimination. Workshop leaders then introduce the specific form of discrimination being explored. A related activity might be inviting participants to amend or highlight (depending on level) job adverts to make then more age friendly. This activity could then be supported by video clips of women interviewed about the topic as part of the ESF funded project. Participants would then be invited to discuss the changes they have made to their job adverts and to feed back to the group.

A key outcome of a session like the one described above is that participants become aware of regulations outlawing ageism and become attuned to recognising the potential for ageism in recruitment and application processes.

Further developments

Following on from the success of the training workshops the key idea of both researching and working with the community research is also referred to in a number of undergraduate modules. Students at Liverpool John Moore's University undertaking the Applied Community and Social Science degree programme are encouraged to think about the links between research and the community at all three levels of their degree. Two students have been able to undertake work based placements with the gender discrimination project and one ex student is now employed by the project.

Hot tips

'Developing a quality DVD takes longer than you think. Ascertaining copyright positions and permissions is time consuming. Build in time to ensure that all materials meet accessibility and disability requirements'.

'Work with the organisations you are going into to ascertain levels of learners and the nature of the space you will be working in'.

Feedback

The end of the first ESF funded project on Gender discrimination and ageist perceptions was marked by a conference. Tutors invited all the groups they had worked with to the conference and disseminated the findings. The evaluation form asked delegates whether they would be interested in training days and the response indicated a strong demand for training in the area of gender and age discrimination.

Feedback from participants at the training days indicated that the deployment of a variety of learning styles had been successful with over 90% of women reporting that they found the workshop training either excellent or very good.

Comments included:

> *'Variety made it really interactive'*

> *'*resource pack and DVD really useful … I can see that I can use them in my current employment'.

Feedback from trainers in the voluntary sector included:

'the materials were useful to us in moving forward … as a small charity we don't have the resources to produce quality materials that you were able to provide'.

Problems/issues

The logistics of delivering workshops in other organisations is a challenge – do not assume that rooms will be set up for learning.

Additional information

The accompanying resource pack is designed to be used by participants to train colleagues in their own organisations. It provides participant notes and notes for training and is accompanied by a DVD which includes a range of resources on the subject of age and gender.

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