

Black Country Take Part Pathfinder

Reflection on Accreditation of Take Part Learning

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Introduction

The following reflects the experience and learning of the Black Country Take Pathfinder in relation to accreditation in the delivery of our local programme. It offers a succinct summary of the numerous conversations about accreditation which have taken place within our Pathfinder over the course of the programme.

In simple terms accreditation is the process that individuals go through to validate their learning in an objective and measurable manner so that the extent and level of their learning can be easily recognisable within the broader context of national qualifications.

The Take Part Learning Programme

The Take Part Learning Programme is about individual self realisation within the context of collective development and action. The outcomes for individuals are very much to do with their own learning but that *individual* learning cannot be divorced for the *collective* experience. The collective dynamic of the course means that in order to demonstrate individual learning outcomes learners have to jump through some externally constructed hoops. To some extent this is true of any course but because Take Part is so much about collective learning the interrogation of an individual's achievement in isolation does not fit well.

Accrediting Learning

Accreditation is really useful for individuals in progressing through formal learning and within employment, it also provides objective feedback to the learner. Many people involved in courses like Take Part have not been involved in formal learning for some time and feel the need to have their learning recognised although the majority of those opting for accreditation in Wolverhampton have been people who already have qualifications.

There is a fundamental difference of opinion between those who feel that accreditation is almost a right that learners are entitled to and those that view accreditation as an unnecessary external interference that re-defines the learning experience in its own terms i.e. as a marketable commodity. This contradiction has dogged community learning throughout its history.

Courses such as Take Part which involve individuals learning about themselves through collective learning experience are central to this argument, accreditation may suit

individuals in quantifying their achievements but those achievements are part of collective effort. A solution might be to provide group accreditation but in an individualistic consumer economy collective validation of learning carries little weight.

Individual accreditation can present difficulties for community development and community educators, it emphasises individual experience as separate from collective action. It sets out external milestones to learning which can detract from community based aims and objectives resulting in learners having to 'prove themselves' in terms which are not necessarily related to community development.

Our experience and conclusion

Our experience has been that learners wanting accreditation have been those who have previous experience of accreditation and perhaps need it least, in terms of their own careers. The work of matching existing Open College network units to Take Part modules and ensuring the rigour of internal verification for areas of work that are in many ways peripheral to the main programme appears to outweigh the benefits felt by learners.