

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Lincoln
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 19 – Business and Management
<b>Title of case study:</b> Changing policy and practices in the organisation of community-based Active Citizenship Learning
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Through active engagement in policy processes, systems research at Lincoln produced a sustained change in governmental and third sector approaches to citizenship education and hence citizen participation. Translating and refining the initial concepts, a network of Third Sector organisations and universities (including the researchers) ran successful pilot projects to benefit more than 1,300 people. This led to the inclusion of the ‘Take Part’ concept in three government White Papers. Pathways to impact were two national learning frameworks, an £8.7 million programme (2009-2011), and a £0.77m capacity building cluster (2008-2013). The programme reached over 18,000 people nationally, who became more effectively involved in local democracy.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Social systems research has been used to explore and shape Active Citizenship education in communities. The project has a number of elements, where research and action are part of an iterative process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raul Espejo (Research Professor in Information Management at Lincoln 1995-2002) initiated research on the reciprocal relations between individuals and the organizational contexts, which articulated how understanding the processes used by individuals to construct their sense of reality within an organisation can improve <b>effective participation in organizations</b> via the formation of self-constructed action spaces [3.1, 3.2].</li> <li>2. <b>Critical study of citizenship education:</b> Raul Espejo [at Lincoln in 1995-2002) and Zoraida-Mendiweso-Bendek. This consisted of field studies enabling primary school children to construct their sense of community through actions and conversations about their community, with their community. The findings [3.3] elaborated the process of constructing the children’s ‘action spaces’, and the key researcher role of facilitating ‘constructed conversations’. The approach requires specific organising and structuring of citizenship learning. The research informed a <b>national consultation on citizenship learning</b>.</li> <li>3. It was followed by a <b>pilot project on citizenship in communities</b> (2003-2006), which was evaluated. Lincoln was one of seven national ‘hubs’ of Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) [3.4]. The ‘hub’ project in Lincolnshire tested approaches to organising and structuring citizenship learning using Freire’s participatory action research, which is a significant methodology for intervention, development and change within communities and groups. The research identified key aspects of power relations in active citizenship. The results enabled a more complete framework of relationships in organisational systems to be developed and linked to wider policy on active citizenship [3.5].</li> <li>4. The ESRC funded a <b>national research and capacity building programme, ‘Taking Part?’</b>, led by 3 HEIs (hosted by Lincoln), 2008-2013. Through this Lincoln used a knowledge co-production approach, working with community organisations, to test and refine the ways in which individual participants and groups could make operational the concepts of ‘self-construction’ and understanding power relationships. The co-production method used in this approach is to work with non-academic members of communities as research partners, helping them to identify socio-political structures and social needs in their own communities. This leads to development based on the communities’ knowledge of the socio-political spaces they occupy and the local systemic effects. The programme used university and community partnerships to test active citizenship learning tools in experiments with Third Sector organisations, community-based research and training for trainers. The results indicated that the approach enables communities to ‘map needs’, ‘explore the impact of public policy’, ‘strengthen self-organization’, ‘develop evaluation tools’, and ‘facilitate reflective practice’ [3.6].</li> </ol>

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#### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1. Espejo, R. (1996) 'Requirements for effective participation in self-constructed organizations', *European Management Journal*, 14, 4, pp 414-422. DOI: 10.1016/0263-2373(96)00029-1.
- 3.2. Espejo, R. (2002) 'Self-Construction and Restricted Conversations', *Systems Research and Behavioural Science*, Volume 19, 6, pp 517-529. DOI: 10.1002/sres.468.
- 3.3. Mendiwelo-Bendek, Z. (2002) 'Citizens of the Future: Beyond Normative Conditions through the Emergence of Desirable Collective Properties', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 39, 1-2, pp 189-195. DOI: 10.1023/A:1016364908959.
- 3.4. Mendiwelo-Bendek, Z. and Herron, R. (2010) 'Constructing conversations: the Lincolnshire active Learning approach', in J. Annette and M. Mayo (eds) *Taking Part? Active Learning for Active Citizenship and Beyond*, Leicester: NIACE.
- 3.5. Espejo, R. and Bendek, Z. M. (2011) 'An argument for active citizenship and organisational transparency', *Kybernetes*, 40, 3, pp 477-493. DOI: 10.1108/036849211111133692.
- 3.6. Mayo, M., Mendiwelo-Bendek, Z. and Packham, C. (2013) (eds) *Community Research as Community Development*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Related grants include:

Awarded to	Title	Dates	Sponsor	Value
Z. Mendiwelo-Bendek, University of Lincoln	Lincolnshire Active Learning for Active Citizenship	2003-2006	Home Office Civil Renewal Unit	£200,000
Z. Mendiwelo-Bendek, University of Lincoln	Take Part Pathfinder Programme	2009-2011	Department for Communities and Local Government	£250,000
Z. Mendiwelo-Bendek, University of Lincoln	Regional Take Part Champions Programme	2009-2011	Department for Communities and Local Government	£200,000
D. Rae, University of Lincoln, M. Mayo, Goldsmiths' University College, London, and C. Packham, Manchester Metropolitan University	Taking Part? : Capacity Building Cluster for research with the Third Sector ESRC-RES-595-24-0010	2008-2011	ESRC, in partnership with The Office for the Third Sector and the Barrow Cadbury Trust,	£770,000

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

This research set out a particular approach to citizenship education involving 'active' citizenship and the facilitation of research, reflection and learning. Lincoln's research demonstrated effective use of active learning (following Paulo Freire), and contributed new knowledge to organise the context and the forms of relationship in the learning process. It has helped make significant changes to policy and practice on public participation in democratic processes, enabling people to influence decisions in their locality, with the research team creating sustained impact through engagement in follow-on activities in association with other academics and a wide range of stakeholders.

The highly positive results of the evaluation of the pilot project on citizenship in communities [5.1] were recognised in the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006, Section 2.60), and included in the action plan, *Building on Success* (2007, p9). Mendiwelo-Bendek became Chair of the Take Part Network and an adviser to DCLG. This combination of policy and personal advice provided a pathway for the creation of impact.

The main impact has come in 2008-2013, with policies being implemented and knowledge disseminated through networks, programmes, user training and materials. A Principal Social Researcher at DCLG reflects that Mendiwelo-Bendek's work (with other colleagues), 'made a direct contribution to the evidence base underpinning three government White Papers, [...] and the

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*implementation of the Take Part, Local Pathfinder Programme. The Take Part, learning for active citizens' approach played a key role in forming elements of the Government's strategy for empowering communities' [5.2].*

The 2008 White Paper [5.3] committed funding to promote citizenship learning. The Take Part programme (the follow-on from ALAC) received £8.7 million of public funding from 2008-2011, involving two main pathways: a Pathfinder programme (to apply the learning from Take Part more widely); and the 'National Support' programme (to engage organisations beyond the Pathfinders to run Take Part activities) [5.4]. Nineteen Pathfinders were established nationally with local strategic partnerships. An evaluation of Take Part by the Community Development Foundation [5.5] found that, *'The programme had an extensive reach... 6,569 people benefited from the pathfinders' work in 2009/10, 11,616 people benefited from the pathfinders' work in 2010/11, 967 learning opportunities were created by 'Train the Take Part trainers' activities across the duration of the programme... Beneficiaries increased their civic and civil activity and became more effective in their involvement'* (p30). An evaluation of the Train the Trainers programme by the Worker Educational Association (WEA) [5.6] identified that 1,083 people, a significant number coming from 'disadvantaged postcode areas', participated in 63 courses. The results included improved knowledge and awareness of political processes and greater confidence to lead in communities and partnership working (p3-4).

Researchers at Lincoln also created local impact by leading a Pathfinder programme, in partnership with local authorities and a range of communities and voluntary organisations, and extended their local reach through a Regional Champions programme, 'Take Part in the East Midlands', in partnership with WEA and supporting 5 district councils [5.7], and a Lincoln Citizenship Network of some 50 organizations (churches, colleges, local authorities, voluntary sector groups), working with a range of beneficiaries, including refugees, asylum seekers and faith communities. The project with Sports Volunteers was recognised with an Inspire Award as part of the Olympics' Legacy, and there have been a wide range of follow-on activities. Peter Bradley, Director of Speaker's Corner Trust, has said that Lincoln's Take Part [was] *'very important to the development and subsequent success of a permanent Lincoln Speaker's Corner'*.

In addition, an *ESRC Capacity Building Cluster* (Section 3) led to the formation of University and Community Partnerships, undertaking new research, which has already influenced the refinement of Take Part programmes, in particular developing 'research mindedness' in the Third Sector, to strengthen the independent role of civil society through reflective active learning and development. A revised version of the ALAC learning framework was published in 2011 [5.8] and outputs from the action research have been published (e.g. [3.6]).

The 'active' approach to community development is becoming embedded, for instance, being recognised nationally by the Community Development Foundation ([www.cdf.org.uk/content/research/previous-research/take-part](http://www.cdf.org.uk/content/research/previous-research/take-part)), the Workers Educational Association, and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) [5.10], whose evidential letter points out that the *'Take Part programme and the 'Taking Part?' research cluster offered a chance to NIACE to continue to improve and refine its approaches to community learning for active citizenship'*.

Mendiwelo-Bendek has disseminated the University and Community Partnerships approach through the Andrés Bello Convention in South America. She has supported a programme engaging with community-based research in the University of Concepcion (Chile) and the University of Ibagué (Colombia) where she provided a course to academics at Ibagué International Summer School 2013 [5.9].

The substantial impact of this research on the organisation and practice of citizenship learning lies in its *'conceptual robustness and its direct applicability to local efforts'* [5.2], and Lincoln's strategy of maintaining a link with the programme from research to practice. As one client has said, the *'...work is a good example of the direct benefits realised by linking academic research and expertise specifically to a policy as it moves from design, through to implementation'* [5.2].

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**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Mayo, M. and Rooke, A. (2006) *ALAC evaluation report*, [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152717.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152717.pdf) (research cited on pages 8, 52, impact pathways cited on pages 22, 23, 26, 29, 32, 35, 37, 63, 67, 70).
- 5.2 Letter from Principal Social Researcher, Decentralisation and Big Society Directorate, Department for Communities and Local Government (dated 4 Oct 2013, concerning period 2006-2013).
- 5.3 Department of Communities and Local Government (2008) *Real People Real Power* (see p3, para14; p39, para2.22; p133), [www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm74/7427/7427.pdf](http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm74/7427/7427.pdf).
- 5.4 Take Part website, with links to programmes, networks and research cluster, [www.takepart.org](http://www.takepart.org).
- 5.5 Miller, S. and Hatamian, A. (2011) *Take Part evaluation final report* (see, e.g. p5, 30, 35), [www.cdf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Take-Part-Final-Report1.pdf](http://www.cdf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Take-Part-Final-Report1.pdf).
- 5.6 Land, T. (2011) *WEA evaluation of Take Part Train the Trainers* (pp3-4) [issuu.com/weasheffieldwea/docs/ttt\\_eval.\\_for\\_print](http://issuu.com/weasheffieldwea/docs/ttt_eval._for_print).
- 5.7 Take Part in the East Midlands (11 filmed case studies) [vimeo.com/channels/151193](http://vimeo.com/channels/151193).
- 5.8 National Learning Framework and Guide to Practice: Take Part Learning Framework (2011), [www.takepartresearchcluster.org/files/2013/07/13946\\_Take-part-learning-framework-final-2011.pdf](http://www.takepartresearchcluster.org/files/2013/07/13946_Take-part-learning-framework-final-2011.pdf).
- 5.9 Ibague International Summer School 2013, [www.unibague.edu.co/sitios/escuelaverano/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=165:universidad-comunidad-y-los-procesos-de-transformacion-democratica-solo-para-docentes&catid=38:cursos&Itemid=54](http://www.unibague.edu.co/sitios/escuelaverano/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=165:universidad-comunidad-y-los-procesos-de-transformacion-democratica-solo-para-docentes&catid=38:cursos&Itemid=54).
- 5.10 Evidential letter from the Director of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).