

GLODE 307 Development Practice (10 ECTs)

Overall evaluation of module April 2017

GLODE 307 Development Practice

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

The student has in-depth knowledge of:

- Development practice as the facilitation of collaboration across social sectors and across vested interests/values, at various social levels from community to society;
- The natures of 'community' Different perspectives on development practice, including human rights perspectives , gender perspectives, risk and resources perspectives and integral ecology approaches(equal attention to, and respect for, environmental, economic and social ecology)

Cultural aspects of development practice

Skills:

The student has the ability to

- Conduct community needs and assets mapping
- Negotiate: align, optimise and orchestrate diverging perspectives on community needs, priorities and resources (citizens', local officials', regional, national and global authorities')
- Communicate to colleagues and to community groups and representatives about methods and approaches to development practice
- Facilitate communities in developing, implementing and evaluating development strategies;
- Facilitate community-based participatory action research
- Locate particular development projects within local, national and global frameworks

Teaching methods

Teaching methods comprise lectures, group work and group presentations.

Compulsory assignments

Students are required to participate in group work doing action research with an organisation. The output of the group work is a report submitted to the organisation.

Assessment

Group presentation of findings and recommendations

Nineteen students were signed up for the course but one was not able to attend due to being refused permission to return to Norway from Ghana; he eventually withdrew from the course. It was compulsory to participate in group work and lectures were partially used for group work so the students could directly apply the techniques being taught to their group project (with partner organisations). In general attendance was good, but two or three students missed a number of lectures/group work sessions.

Contact time with students: Nine two-hour lectures; one two-hour tutored group work session; Presentation day (five hours) with five group presentations of group work in collaboration with a partner organisation

Staff feedback on draft group reports (verbal and written).

Marguerite arranged the collaboration with organisations and taught most of the topics, but Gloria and Maurice taught two lectures each. Presentation day was attended by Haldis, Gloria and Marguerite; the contact person for each organisation attended the relevant presentation.

All students passed the course.

Student evaluation

Course content: In general the students enjoyed the course content, found it interesting, comprehensive, useful and well-structured. One student commented: “Especially liked the emphasis on local empowerment and understanding before implementing a project”. However another student commented: “The content was more about practice ‘out there’ in the real world rather than for small projects like we were doing”.

Teaching methods: The lectures were generally enjoyed with comments about the interesting topics and engaging teaching. Maurice Mittelmark was singled out as excellent by two students. However one student thought the course was top-down and would have liked more student participation. The group work was also generally enjoyed with several students seeing it as an opportunity to practice skills. Three students commented on the usefulness of the interaction between the lectures and the group work.

Most students mentioned the strongest feature of the course as being the work with real organisations and real people: understanding things we have learned, putting them into practice, hands-on experience. One student said this: “I really enjoyed the lectures and was introduced to several things I can imagine myself using both as a researcher and practitioner. I feel more prepared for actually working in the development sector!”

Working with an organisation: In some cases the students found it hard to make the initial contact with the organisation and were uncomfortable sending several emails. Regarding contact with organisations or ethical questions, the students felt they had help and support from GLODE staff. Many students struggled with perceived lack of support from the organisation. There was a lot of waiting, and with a project with a limited time frame, many felt stressed when the organisations took their time to reply. Misunderstandings also led to delays. Over all this was a good first step in terms of working “for real”. Facing the challenges regarding communication was a real life learning experience. Many students also mentioned that it was nice to practice research methods, like participant observation and interviewing. When working with real organisations, the students felt like it mattered more, which made us work harder, and in the end be even more proud of the outcome. The students are in general very positive to GLODE 307 as a course, but it may be an idea to inform the organisations more beforehand in terms of time schedule and what is expected of them, as well as the students.

Suggestions for improvements were very fragmented, but included issues about timing – e.g. we should do this course *AFTER* the methodology course so that we have the knowledge to do the task; the report writing session should come much earlier on, the week without lectures should come later on, etc. Other suggestions included to have more examples of actual development practice, to find more appropriate organisations, to make this a bigger course with more time and credits, etc.

Time allocation: The class was divided on the appropriateness of the time allocation. Some felt there was enough time for the group work and they received the information they needed when they needed it. But others felt they were under pressure with insufficient time to meet the stakeholders or build relationships with them; also there was knowledge they needed and received too late (like evaluation techniques).

Staff evaluation

(by Gloria and Marguerite)

What went well?

The **group project**, the practical application of much of what was taught, was the best feature of the course. The lectures could relate directly to the group work. Setting up the projects with the organisations took a lot of time and personal visits in some cases. There were also unavoidable changes along the way (reflected in the students' comments that the organisations could be better informed!). The effort was worthwhile and the projects were all based on genuine issues which really engaged the students.

Having a **real live practitioner** (Gloria!!) was a major asset and greatly enhanced the authenticity of the course.

It is worthwhile taking time to **set up the groups** and projects, but in future we recommend that no project deals with youth under the age of 18 (for ethical reasons it was hard to recruit them as stakeholders). The groups were balanced according to these criteria: men and Norwegian speakers spread between the groups; stronger and weaker students balanced. Students were given the option of switching – but they would have to find a 'like' person to switch with, e.g. same sex and ability in Norwegian. As there are a number of foreign students, some of them lacked confidence to advise Norwegian organisations – we stressed that *everyone* is a resource in terms of experience and knowledge

Presentation day with the attendance of the contact person at each organisation was a great success. The students excelled – the content and presentations demonstrated just how much the students have matured since they started the course eight months ago. Their PBL experience showed in the way they tackled and solved the problems – and the final presentations.

What could have gone better?

1. We agree with some of the things the students suggested about **timing**: It would be best if the students had completed the methods course before doing this course; the week free of lectures should come later – we suggest a logical order below. We disagree with the students about the timing of the report-writing session – it should not come right near the beginning (we fear that might skew their research), but perhaps 10 days before they submit their draft report

Suggested order: Introduction, stakeholders and mobilisation, evaluation methods, approaches (practical) & frameworks (logframes/ theory of change) ... i.e. the tools and concepts the students need in their group work

Followed by the broader approaches like gender, HR, risk & resources, culture and integral ecology, accountability & report writing

2. The group work component of the course is compulsory and the lectures actually contained a great deal of group work (with students literally working in their project groups) to apply concepts immediately. Some students missed a lot of 'lectures' – and therefore also group work. If we rename the contact-time with the students as '**workshops**' with instruction it will change the way students view the contact time – and the way we plan our teaching (for the better we hope!). Only the introduction needs to be a lecture, all other topics can be included in 'workshop' with instruction

Other comments – we did not ask the students about the **literature**, but feel that it was entirely appropriate for the course. Many of the articles came from journals like "Development and Practice". Maurice commended us on the reading list!

Evaluation by organisations

The contact persons for the organisations gave very positive feedback during the presentations, but have not yet responded to the email questions sent out on 20 April.

1. How was the collaboration useful to you?
2. How was it a burden? What could have improved the collaboration for you?
3. Was communication with the course leader sufficient in terms of
 - a. Information
 - b. Frequency
4. Would you be willing to collaborate with us again? (Yes/ Yes, but not next year/ No)
5. Any other comments?