



Supporting Improved Learning Opportunities for Hard-to-Reach Groups through the Use of Participatory Arts (SILO)

Final Report

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1. Background

1.1 Policy

The SILO project was supported by the Erasmus Plus funding programme, under the Vocational Education and Training scheme: Key Action 2, Cooperation and Innovation for Good Practices. The project's main aim was to develop and test a framework for artists and creative practitioners through which they could validate adult employability competences, as gained through participatory arts.

The SILO Partnership are:

Safe Regeneration – a social enterprise who provides business support, business incubation units, artist studios, participatory arts programmes and community based landscape management services from it's base in Bootle, Merseyside

ABD – a charity based in Barcelona with a national reach and over 75 programs and services that respond to situations of vulnerability or social exclusion, such as addiction of drugs and associated diseases, migration, violence in the family, early maternity, old age, disability, mental health, or difficulty to cover basic needs such as housing and work.

EST, based in Wadowice, Poland who, amongst other services, design and manage platforms of social learning for adult training through information and communication technology (ICT).

IASIS, a NGO in Athens who provide therapeutic psychological services.

To Protect the Woman, a charity based in Varna, Bulgaria who support and provide training to young people without parents, women at risk, people unemployed, poor or they live with an illness, and works within the framework of a social model for the care of women older than 50 years.

The validation process involved using the European Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning as its standard and also considered other competencies most desired by employers in the UK. Four of the European Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning were considered to align with most effectively with hard and soft employability skills that could possibly be developed by learners taking part in participatory arts programmes.

The SILO framework was subsequently developed in consultation with 75 artist and/or creative practitioners across partner countries: UK, Spain, Greece, Poland and Bulgaria. The framework was then 'tested' with differing beneficiary groups and varying art forms to appraise its feasibility as a tool, and to explore options for its improvement. The findings of the 'tests' were then further inspected and explored through a series of workshops with a wider group of artists and stakeholders.

Underpinning the SILO experiment were three central policy questions:

- Who are frameworks for and whom do they develop understanding of achievement?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of self mapping?
- What does participatory arts achieve for adult learning competencies?

The above questions were explored with the SILO partnership, and also a panel of experts from Participatory Arts and Adult Education organisations.

2. The SILO Process

2.1 Seeking Definition

The first stage of the project sought to clearly define the domain of practice in which SILO sits. The project aimed to impact policy and innovative practice in: adult education, skills for employability, and participatory arts. It also tackles issues of social exclusion and the testing of learning programmes for those furthest away from the employment market. However, clearly stated in the project proposal is the hypothesis that participatory art can act as a vehicle for achieving positive results in improved employability skills. Therefore, defining the project as a participatory arts programme.

A review of literature concerning participatory arts definitions synthesized the values which would underpin the SILO Framework, artist commissioning, and the conditions in which test projects would operate. Foremost, participatory arts should engage participants in meaningful ways (Bishop 2012.1). Moreover, projects should bring about critical engagement leading to evidenced transformations (Arts Council England, 2010), and create artistic outcomes which express participants' experience, outlook or community context (Mental Health Foundation, 2011). Projects should be led by artists who hold a detailed understanding of the issues faced by participants and who develop artistic responses to such issues (ACE, 2010). Furthermore, the participatory process should challenge the dominant view that art is an individualized concept and must give authority to students whilst encouraging self-directed learning (Clements, 2011). The process is grounded in mutuality with the artist relying upon the participants' creative exploitation of the situation in equal part to the participants requiring the artist's cue and direction (Bishop, 2011).

2.2 What does participatory arts offer in relation to adult education?

The changing terminology associated participatory arts (community, liberal, socially engaged, co-production) provides us with a 'nuanced' understanding associated traits and underlying processes, context and purpose (Organ, 2013). As described in a recent study by Lewis et Al (2016) the marrying of both adult learning and participatory arts cultivates creativity and agency in an 'interrelated process' and, both are enhanced through the mutuality of the participatory process. Kester (1998) stated that the collaborative process used in participatory arts 'feels different to the rules and regulations of a classroom'. Therefore, it can be a 'powerful vehicle for experiential learning and appreciation of other value systems' (Clover, 2000). Moreover, its 'educational praxis' has an alternative way of attracting learners who fail to engage with lifelong learning or adult learning (Lawson, 1998). The focus within the participatory process is inclusivity, the educator/artist being the mediator who facilitates individual and collective potential (Mayo, 1997, 155).

2.3 Validation of Key Competencies for Employment

The SILO Participatory Arts Literature Review aimed to establish an evidence base for the hypothesis that participatory arts programmes develop key transferable skills, particularly those which map to employability frameworks. The review found evidence of skill development in many case studies. However, it also found that many participatory arts projects and programmes have not been inspected through the lens of employability. The majority of projects are achieved with an end product or production as a goal, with skills and learning assessment acknowledged as a consequence of the process but not as a main aim. Moreover, the evidence base for the effectiveness of participatory arts is heavily weighted towards social and well-being outcomes. Skill development is acknowledged as an embedded component of increasing well-being and/or the development of social outcomes. However, the review found little evidence of tried and tested instruments or methods for measuring skill development achieved in participatory arts. The small evidence base is mainly qualitative in nature, relying on first person testimony, although some case studies have developed the use of pre and post self- assessment instruments relating to skills and knowledge building.

There were a number of key case studies and research papers concerning the criminal justice system. This data did contain evidenced skill and competency outcomes across different art forms. Arts projects commissioned by organisations and agencies within the criminal justice system are defined within the following desired outcomes: routes to employability; through the gate support; diversion from offending or being at risk of offending; and building confidence and competence for a successful release. Building skills in life, basic, key and employability are essential factors for such outcomes and are a commissioning requirement.

The following reports offered potential frames of reference for the SILO Framework:

Fine Cell Work – Stitching a Future, Evaluation by Q A Research (2011)

Fine Cell Work (FCW) is a charity who with circa 400 prisoners yearly and boasts a minimal drop-out rate of 18% in both long and short term prisoners. The products created by prisoners are sold by FCW to designers, museums and the general public. Research by QA Research found that along side craft skills prisoners cited the following employability skills gained through participation: Increased motivation; Increased concentration; Learning to finish something they have started; Working to a deadline when working on commissions. The study concluded that FCW had assisted prisoners to think more 'optimistically and constructively' about planning for life on release and aligned this success to the BIS report 'Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation' which 'underlined the importance of equipping offenders with employment skills'.

Inspiring Change a report by Anderson, K et Al (2011)

Inspiring Change was a co-ordinated programme of arts interventions 5 Scottish prisons. The delivery partnership included: Creative Scotland, National Galleries, Citizen's Theatre, Traverse Theatre, Scottish Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, National Youth Choir of Scotland. The programme aimed to build on participant's strengths 'both in terms of arts and verbal and written skills' that were embedded in working practices. The recognition of existing skills and the use of current knowledge as a point of departure for prisoners was a significant motivator. The study claims that participation built prisoners' confidence 'through growing a sense of their potential and ability to achieve'. It also attributed success to an 'outsider's' belief in their abilities, along with an increased ability to judge themselves more positively. The study found that growth in confidence led to an increase in other skills and participants had acquired skills 'which they felt they could use for work.

What's the Point, Arts Council England (2006)

What's the Point summarises the findings of a drama project with young people at risk of offending in Blackburn, Lancashire. The study examined the contribution of participatory arts projects in building the key skills essential to support learning and the reengagement of young people in education and training. It reported positive outcomes in writing skills, development of vocabulary and a renewed confidence in the ability to write. Success is attributed to diverting the focus of writing towards developing content for the drama/performance. Contributory success factors are stated to be the provision of a 'safe place' for positive interaction with peers; and the exploration of feelings and relationships.

Young people responded positively in this situation and demonstrated a 'marked increase' in negotiation and cooperation skills.

The SILO Participatory Arts Literature Review considered over 100 documents relating to participatory arts and skills and synthesised a review of 20 case studies which offered the most relevant learning for the SILO project. The review can be found at:
<http://www.silo.media/productsresults.html>

2.4 Consultation baseline with Artists

The second stage in the baseline process was to engage with artists and creative practitioners to discuss the manner in which they customarily plan and conduct their participatory practice. The partnership was particularly interested in how artists plan their programme in relation to understanding the issues of participants and their social situations. Moreover, the partnership was keen to learn if methodologies for the validation of skills already existed. Semi-structured interviews with 75 artists enabled the consideration of preferred, and tried and tested methodologies for project design, delivery and skill assessment. The data assisted the partnership to develop a toolkit which was grounded in professional practice.

Artists were also asked to provide feedback concerning:

- Methods used when developing arts-based projects in response to the issues faced by the participants
- The maintenance of flexibility whilst adhering to organisational/programme policies and regulations
- The type and level of support is received from non arts-workers and or/organisations?

2.4.1 Feedback Results

Artists responded that they don't apply systematic approaches, methods or models when embarking on a new participatory project. The majority highlighted the need to be flexible and responsive to participants needs, comments included:

"It depends upon 'the participant's attitude in the moment (Respondent Bulgaria)

"My way of planning activities cannot be labelled as a method. I can just point out some key points which roughly delineate the steps to be taken in the workshops. Having understood the specific needs/problems of the participants I think of a scenario for the emerging performance. It strategically sets a framework for theatrical activities and involvement of the participant" (Respondent Greece)

“My ten years’ experience points out the need to elaborate individual programmes even in the case of group work. Observing the participants and their individual abilities underpins my method of designing programmes” (Respondent Poland)

“Finding out an individual’s specific interest and encouraging them to set their own targets really plants the seed of engagement and it is my job to nurture that and watch it grow” (Respondent Spain)

“I regularly find my approach and delivery alters as I gain more in depth knowledge of the individuals participating; my predominant aim is always to allow them the time and freedom to explore their ideas and take ownership of their concepts, and as such my teaching methodology is constantly evolving” (Respondent UK)

All feedback concerning project design was organised under 3 main headings in: Methods for understanding the needs of participants; Delivery Methods and Tools; and Methods used in evaluating the project. They are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Understanding Need	Methods/Tools for delivery	Evaluation Methods
Interviews	Art Therapy	Interviews
Questionnaire	Drama	Questionnaires
Group discussions	Guiding/Encouragement	One to One interviews
Conversations	Creative Environment	Conversations
Observations	Group Work	Observations
Individual learning plans	Collaborative Learning	Self Assessment Tools
Drama Techniques	Experiential techniques	Performance
Dance/Movement	Self directed learning	Artistic Product
Drawing	Gradual increase of	
Writing/Narrative activities	challenge, learning	
Analysis of personal data	objective, difficulty of task	
Physical exercises	Connecting theory and	
Initial assignments to	practice	
establish skill base and	Drawing on participant’s	
abilities	experience, interests and	
Creative problems solving	preferences	
Games	Creating space and	
Discussions/Dialogue with	environment of social	
participant’s support	learning	
networks	Individual target setting	

Research mission, aims and purpose of host organisation	Emphasis on curiosity and collaboration Flexible delivery using different learning approaches e.g. audio, visual, kinaesthetic	
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The SILO Partnership were tasked with developing an effective methodology for validating non formal learning in participatory arts projects which would then be tested in participatory settings in each partnership country. Toolkit development was based on the partnership's collective knowledge of participatory arts and also from research with artists.

Artists were asked:

- How do you assess the impact of your work in participatory settings?
- Do you see assessment of impact as an important part of your role?
- Do you measure learning within your participatory practice? (and how)
- Have you ever mapped learning to employability? (and how)
- As a practitioner, how would you prefer validation of learning and skills outcomes to take place within participatory settings and practice?

There were differing opinions and ideas concerning validation, its suitability and application within participatory arts projects. For example, in Greece and Bulgaria artists were concerned that there appeared to be no formal policy for the recognition, accreditation and validation of the outcome of non formal learning.

Artists in Poland claimed that where such systems exist they are too formal and generalised to 'grasp the real phenomena' of participatory practice and felt that validation systems rarely get to the core of the real impact that participatory arts have on its beneficiaries.

In terms of employability measures, artists in both Poland and Spain felt that this was not the usual focus of their work. However, all recognised the development of 'soft skills' within their programmes opposed to hard skill or training outcomes.

In the UK respondents highlighted the difficulties they faced when carrying out formal evaluations of their work, some felt it impinged the process and others stated there was a lack of time to carry it out. Moreover, most felt they had a lack of skills in evaluation methodologies. However, all respondents in the UK acknowledged the need for formalised evaluations of non-formal learning which would benefit their participants progress and to

provide tangible evidence of the impact of their work.

2.5 Development of the Test Template, Skills Assessment and toolkit documentation

Learning from our consultation with artists, our baseline literature review and the partnership's collective knowledge, a series of 'test' toolkit documentation was developed. All test documents can be found @ <http://www.silo.media/productsresults.html>

2.5 The Test Template

2.5.1 The Template

The overarching framework document or Test Template outlined the process for the development and implementation of a participatory arts project which would track skill development. It covered tasks to be completed across 3 stages of the project:

1. Engagement

- Consideration of group needs
- Researching other similar projects and the suitability of artists
- Artist selection criteria and development of artist's brief
- Suitable art forms

2. Developing and Running a Participatory Arts Programme

- Establishing Outcomes, planning sessions and timescales
- Introducing the project to participants, setting individual goals and learning plans
- Project Delivery, assessment, evidence gathering, feedback procedures

3. Evaluation

- Establishing what has worked or hasn't worked using a 360-degree approach

2.5.2 The Skills Assessment Form

The Skills Assessment Form was designed as a tool for artists and practitioners to track skill development in participants, mapped to four key competencies from the European Key Competencies for Life Long Learning and the 10 key Skills for Work EMP competencies. The framework marries the competencies together thus:

EMP1 Communicating	EMP2 Decision making	EMP3 Commitment	EMP4 Time Management	EMP5 Leadership Skills	EMP6 Responsibility	EMP7 Working Under Pressure	EMP8 Flexibility	EMP9 Team Player	EMP10 Conflict Management	EMP11 Creativity & Problem solving
KC1 Communicating	KC7 Sense of Initiative & Entrepreneurship <i>'SHOWING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, RISK TAKING'</i>						KC6 Social & Civic Competencies <i>'TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EFFECTIVE/CONSTRUCTIVE WAY IN SOCIAL AND WORKING LIFE'</i>			KC8 Cultural Awareness <i>'AN APPRECIATION OF CREATIVITY'</i>

The SILO partnership proposed using the European Competencies for Lifelong Learning as the validation standard for the project. On review, only 4 of the 8 competencies were applied to the SILO Framework. These were:

KC1 – Communication in the mother tongue, described as the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural concepts.

KC6 – Social and Civic Competences, described as personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behavior that equips an individual to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life.

KC7 – Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, described as the ability to turn ideas into action, involving creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives.

KC8 – Cultural awareness and expression, described as involving the appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media including music, performing arts, literature and visual arts.

Artists and practitioners were asked to use the form at the beginning, midway and at the end of the project in order to track and compare the development of participants at different stages. The form tasked artists to clarify if they have formative evidence which is visual, verbal, written, or other i.e. photographs.

Underpinning the Skills Assessment Form were tools used to develop self mapping for participants through the process. Such tools included learning diaries and self assessment forms.

3. The SILO Tests

3.1 Applying the Test

The 'test' projects were completed between November 2015 and March 2016. They involved a range of art forms and creative practice. They also engaged adult learners who were considered to be 'hard to reach' and furthest away removed from the employment market. The 'tests' included the following projects:

- **Safe Productions** recruited a textile artist who worked with a group of young people who had recently left the care system. Using the theme of Alice in Wonderland the young people created intricate corsetry and planned a fashion event.
- **ABD** in Barcelona, worked with musicians who worked with men in recovery from drug addiction to make drums, learn how to play as a drumming group and to give a celebratory performance.
- **EST** in Poland employed a textile and craft based artist who worked with people with physical and learning difficulties to make saleable products such as Christmas decoration.
- **ISAIS** in Athens worked with a drama therapist who supported a people with a diagnosed mental illness to create a devised performance.
- **To Preserve the Woman**, based in Varna worked with a range of group and art forms to test the SILO framework. Their tests included working with women elders and painting and single mothers and a photographer.

Artists involved in the 'tests' were asked to provide feedback and reflections concerning using the SILO in the following ways:

- Strengths and weaknesses concerning ease of use and implementation
- Applying the framework to a creative process i.e. did it assist or impinge the process?
- Did the framework assist in developing a series of workshops?
- Was it possible to record skill development and competencies?
- Does SILO provide any benefits for artists working in participatory settings?
- If SILO were successfully adopted by employers and colleges, would this improve employability prospects for artists?
- Were any new skills or insights gained when using the toolkit?

These issues were also discussed at artist and creative practitioner focus groups in each partner country where the framework was circulated to secure a wider consultation. The results were synthesised using a SWOT framework which was used to bring together key points for what worked well, what could be improved, where and how could the SILO idea have impact and also what would be a threat to implementation or take up.

3.2 Analysis of Results

Generally, artists who delivered the 'tests' confirmed that the SILO framework and accompanying documentation both function in participatory arts practice and the tool kit is adequate and useable. Feedback also established that the Skills Assessment Form and self mapping documentation were efficient in tracking changes in behaviour and skill development in a positive manner.

Artists reported that they were able to validate upward trajectories in many skill areas including: leadership, decision making, taking responsibility, being committed, developing flexibility and improved time keeping. However, they did report that within the limited timeframe allotted to the 'tests' that it was difficult to evidence true competency. Improvements from initial baseline assessments was possible to evidence, but they felt they needed more guidance concerning what being fully competent meant. Moreover, there were 'other' positive changes acknowledged by artists and their participants that were not part of the SILO framework, yet still impacted on skill development.

Some artists and focus group attendees would like to see a mechanism for participants to state 'other' aspirations and goals, which are outside of the European Framework/EMP competencies, but are still valuable in the employment market and participant's own ambitions. Thus, capturing a true picture of achievement and also creating an environment of shared decision making, whilst maintaining the participatory arts tenet of mutuality. Conversely, some artists felt that time spent 'one to one' with participants using the test

format 'immense' and there was too much form filling. Feedback from artists was also concerned with the vulnerability of some participants, and some found that interviews or conversations produced pressurised situations which made some people nervous.

Although it was made clear to artists the SILO 'paperwork' was to be used as 'Framework' for collecting evidence of achievement. And, that the Skills Development Form offers a range of options for evidencing skill development. Many artists felt that the system was less than creative. They offered a number of suggestions for gathering evidence with and from participants including: case studies, real life stories, video capture, oral feedback rounds. However, no artists chose to apply these to their project. This may be due to the 'test' conditions and strict timescales. However, future projects would clearly benefit from more artistic input in evidence gathering and this should be made clear to artists that they can apply methods which work for their practice, maintain warmth and conviviality, whilst also being robust evidence tools. It should also be stressed that there was no standardised training plan agreed amongst partners. There was an organic approach to developing the SILO Product and standard training may not be applicable across the different groups, art forms, and the different presenting issues of participants. However, training and developing a clearer understanding of the flexibility of the tool kit in hindsight should have been a consideration.

Artists involved in 'tests' and focus groups stated that they believed that the SILO Framework could be used across many different locations, host organisations and with multiple end users. Positively, some felt that the toolkit made their session planning easier. Moreover, some stated that they were able to plan activities that would enable competencies to be practised and tested. Therefore, providing opportunities for competency development. Some felt that the system validated their participatory practice and they were able to identify, evidence and articulate the impact of their work which is sometimes ethereal and and substantiation of impact can be anecdotal. Feedback also included that artists valued the tracking of participant's journeys through the programme and that the process was not concerned with only judging an end result.

It was also reported that the framework worked as a motivational tool for some participants and enabled them to explore, practice and also understand that they held creative potential. Artists stated that using a framework designed to track skill developed enabled them to discover talents in people that they may not have noticed in their usual programme delivery methods.

There was a misunderstanding in one of the tests and in a focus group concerning what artists were being asked to evidence and validate. There was concern that judgements were being made on the artistic/creative quality of the products being made by participants. There was a comment in the feedback that you cannot validate or score creativity. The validation of

the quality of creativity or products was clearly not part of the project. The ability to have creative ideas, display innovation and take risks are within the EU Key Competencies for Life Long Learning, but artistic talent isn't. This is a misconception that needs to be tackled if SILO is rolled out in the future. This issue also aligns with the need for a standard training programme for artists using the product. A comment from a focus group mentioned that a professional teacher should be available to support the artist in evaluation or validation. This too could be part of a standard training package.

A number of issues were highlighted concerning organisational readiness. The SILO Framework was designed for use by artists but also for the benefit of organisations whose main aim is to enhance life chances for those furthest away from the employment market. Some artists felt that they had different goals than host organisations and that consensus concerning projected outcomes for the tests or workshops should be agreed before commencement. There was also some concern that host organisations do not assess 'readiness' for the course adequately. This is something that artists find difficult to do when they are not employees and are employed as freelancers. Often it can be part way into a series of workshops when issues arise or artists can confirm that participants are not ready for this type of engagement with an arts programme. Methods for assessing readiness could be developed for future SILO projects.

Comments from artists, in particular arising from discussions with the artist who conducted the 'test' at Safe Productions were concerned with levels of 'competency'. It was felt that the system didn't allow for progression through competencies and also it was only evidencing what had been practised and not necessarily achieved. Neither did the system allow for levels of competency. This has prompted discussions with the Delphi Panel (see section 4) concerning what does being competent denote and how can this be scored effectively and in a manner which could be recognised by Further Education Colleges and employers. These concerns also align with comments that the Framework isn't systematic enough and doesn't provide enough space to comment effectively on what has been achieved by participants.

There were other concerns about the generic nature of the Framework and that it lacked provision for participants with low basic skills and literacy problems. Also, some felt that the Framework was not adjustable for people who have special educational needs. There is an argument that as the Framework is flexible that the skill base in the artist/practitioners who made these comments were not at a level where they felt confident to make adjustments. Also, it is clearly stated that there are a range of ways to validate or evidence competency development and that participants should not be forced to read, write or participate above their level of confidence.

Feedback concerning other opportunities for using the Framework included working with those who are not deemed hard to reach. Artists felt that this type of programme could be

offered to any adult learner looking to improve, practice and evidence employability skills. Also, some of the SILO partner organisations are working with refugees and migrants whose are not speakers of the host community's language. These participants are people most in need of proving their employability in safe environment. As such, it would be an advantage if funding could be sought to develop the Framework in other languages.

Artists also told us that there is an opportunity to develop art-type specific documentation, which could be marketed to artists working with different genres. Such documentation could provide clear examples of where and how participants could practice, develop and achieve key employability competencies mapped to the activities associated to participatory practice by art form. Moreover, decoding the Framework in this manner would make it easier to market to practitioners.

Other opportunities suggested by artists were providing information sessions or training about social issues which relate to participant groups. Some artists felt that their sessions would have been better planned and more effective had they known more about particular issues.

4. Delphi Panel Process and Results

4.1 Delphi Panel Members

The SILO process ended with a testing of the programme results with the opinions of a panel of 'experts' across Adult Education and Participatory Arts Practice. Using a Delphi Panel process, we aimed to bring about consensus between our 'test' results and making policy recommendations.

Our Delphi Panel included:

- Dave Eva, Head of Union Learn
- Catina Barrett, former Head of Inclusion at Niace, now leading BIS Community Learning Mental Health Pilot
- Kate Anderson, Helix Arts
- Helen MacKeith, Barnett and Southgate College

Also providing commentary was Greg Coyne, Workers Educational Association, North West England.

4.2 The Delphi Process

The Delphi Process was developed by the RAND organisation and is often used in the development of public policy. The process hinges on a number of ‘blind’ rounds of consultation with those considered ‘experts’ in the field under scrutiny. Feedback is collected from consultants in an iterative process: the synthesised answers or consensus from Round 1 questions lead to the development of Round 2 questions and so on. The number of rounds can vary depending on the complexity of the issue. In general, the Delphi Process ends with a workshop where consensus is reached.

The SILO Delphi process involved two rounds of online survey interviews and a workshop.

4.2.1 Round 1

Table 3. Round 1 Questionnaire

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could you describe a system or process that validates competency effectively in informal learning settings?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would you agree that validating at differing levels of competency within group settings is a good thing? Or should there be a level playing field?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What other evidence of competency could be produced through a participatory arts project?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could you describe what you feel are appropriate ethics when designing self- mapping tools? And, could you share a tool you have used or know of which is suitable for hard to reach learners?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you feel the barriers to understanding validation of competency are for those outside the work skills sector?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could you describe what should be involved in designing training the trainer course for artist who are going to validate work skills competencies?

4.1.2 Feedback

Validation of Competency

The panel advised that any evidence framework should be able to track ‘changes and movement’ across different levels of progress for the individual and should also validate achievement across varying levels of competency. They agreed that within a ‘competency’ there are different starting points and leaving points and it would be clearer for the artist/teacher and learner and participants if competency levels were described in ‘statements’ that could be discussed and agreed.

Statements which describe levels of competency should also have examples of how each stage is achieved and what is considered as evidence. Structured levels in this manner would make assessment easier feedback on progression easier. Traits applicable to each competency should be laid out clearly with different methodologies for assessment. All agreed that any competency based assessment must align with the aims of the arts programme at the underpinning the participatory arts course.

Also suggested in feedback was the production of a clearer contextualisation of the SILO Framework. The panel felt that there needs to be a well-defined explanation concerning the purpose and objective of the Framework, and the issues and sensitivities involved in validating competence in informal settings.

Self Assessment

The panel suggested that self assessment should involve a participant working together with the artist and a support worker from the host organisation. It was felt that working with a known support worker before embarking on a SILO programme could make the goal setting process more comfortable. This would also be applicable during any reviews of progress. Members of the panel felt that self mapping should be conducted at multiple points throughout the project to mitigate for self reflection on 'bad days' in situations where participants are vulnerable or lacking in self confidence. There should also be a clear expectation set out for participants so that they don't create for themselves unrealistic goals.

Barriers for Artists

It can be challenging for freelance artists and creative practitioners to observe new traits in participants when they hold limited prior knowledge about their abilities. This can be a particular barrier to setting a starting point for participants. It can sometimes be detrimental to ask participants to completely 'self score'. Furthermore, sometimes participants can over score their abilities and this can prove to be demotivating when they find themselves understanding less about a competency than they originally thought. It was felt that artists could benefit from training in recognising and attributing an action, activity or trait by participant to a growth in a particular competency. They also need very detailed information concerning how competencies can be interpreted.

Training for Artists

The panel agreed that training for artists in the use of the SILO Framework should concentrate on generic 'Training the Trainer' skills but also involve an in depth discussion on the SILO system. They also agreed that any training programme should contextualise how the SILO framework, participatory arts and the chosen employability competencies relate to each other.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we balance framework design with the needs and abilities of hard to reach adults, artists as teachers outside of FE and, those we are seeking to accept SILO as evidence of achievement/competence?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have examples of frameworks developed by the voluntary sector which are accepted as evidence of competence by employers and colleges?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should we be less concerned with Frameworks and more concerned with evidence of achievement?

4.2.2 Round 2

Table 4. Round 2 Questionnaire

4.2.3 Feedback

Frameworks

Feedback from the panel suggested that frameworks intended to be used for the benefit of hard to reach adults need to use actual assessment for learning as their basis. Designing frameworks in this manner assists skill development and also helps learners to have ownership of the assessment process. One panel member stated “For learning to happen efficiently it has to be based on the needs of the learners. I think evidence collected in this way will be evidently relevant to those who need to be convinced”.

The panel agreed that there is a broader issue to be debated concerning the role of creativity in education. There was also discussion concerning categorising and “delineating competencies” such as problem solving. One panel member thought that is an issue that also needs to be addressed in the current qualification system.

Examples of Frameworks which offer sites of learning for SILO are:

- Theory of Change
- Outcome stars
- Arts Award
- RARP
- Goal Attainment (used in occupational therapy)

Concerning the issue of Frameworks v Evidence, the panel agreed that a framework provides a structured way of collecting evidence. Frameworks were not considered to be the specific issue at state for improving and rolling out the SILO framework in a robust and consistent manner. The panel felt that the collection of evidence and why it is being collected needed to have the clearest definition.

4.3.2 The Delphi Workshop

The Delphi Panel Workshop was held on 24th July 2016. The panel were asked to debate a number of suggested recommendations which arose from the preceding Delphi rounds, and the analysis of the SILO 'test' results.

Firstly, it was suggested that the SILO partnership needs to engage in employer forums with local relevance in order to adapt a framework to which aligned with regional skills gaps and job market needs. The panel thought this would be beneficial, however, it was suggested, that it could be more effective to develop relationships with central government or major employers concerning using the SILO approach to prepare people for apprenticeships and other routes to employment.

A panel member informed the group of a scheme currently being piloted in the NHS which disposes of the usual pre-requisite of holding both English and Maths GCSE's for apprenticeships in job roles which would not have usually required this level qualification on entry. The panel member felt that the SILO approach could assist young people who wished to join an apprenticeship scheme forming the Framework as a 'getting ready for work' programme'. She said:

“Participatory arts may be a way of taking people from where they are to being ready for another programme that could be apprenticeships, Maths or English or even the arts”

The workshop discussion also considered the current situation for funding community learning programmes. The panel were informed that current policy concerning community learning will move to a devolved budget and pooled into the Adult Learning Budget, with non-accredited programmes (where SILO sits) not having a dedicated resource. The local Skill Commissioner will be able choose to fund only accredited programmes only, or to weight the budget towards community based or entry level programmes. It will be a major change for community learning, all decisions will be made locally and there will no one in government with a community learning portfolio. It was considered that local lobbying could be an opportunity for organisations like Safe Regeneration, who already hold positive relationships with local councilors and MPs.

Panel members also considered if and how SILO could become an accredited programme. The BTEC 'Getting Ready for Non Paid Work' was considered as an option and is already used by one panel member. Arts Award was also discussed. As Safe Regeneration are already an Arts Award accredited centre, it was felt that this most aligned with the progression needs of the project, and would enable Safe Regeneration in the UK to use an existing framework.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Framework Development

The SILO Partnership developed and trialled a useable and effective product which was robustly researched from the artist/ practitioner perspective. The partnership was tasked with making an artist 'friendly' product which would not distract from creative methods and the artistic process. The approach to product development benefitted from a rigorous baseline study which considered past precedents, along with artist experience and preference. The effectiveness of this early stage research was evident in the feedback from artists who used the product and confirmed its suitability for their programmes.

The artist led approach had many advantages, particularly in building a small community of practice across the partnership concerning the potential of participatory and socially engaged practice being a vehicle or an approach to validating employability skills. Artists involved in the 'tests' agreed that refocussing their preparatory and delivery methods in participatory arts projects to consider skill development had positively affected their planning, how they viewed success and consideration of impact on participants.

However, discussions post 'tests' gave concern to the process of validation and progression through employability competencies. In this domain artists felt there could be better and clearer guidelines which would make their judgements on progress more transparent and ensure the level of growth within employability competences are clearer for the participant. This issue was debated with the Delphi Panel who brought a different view than the SILO baseline consultation in consideration of mainstream and existing frameworks which offer points of learning. The examples provided by the panel used competency statements which were clear about abilities being developed and how they are evidenced.

In order to develop a more robust SILO framework and to take this important work forward there would need to be an investment in the development of competency progression statements that would be applicable to the European Competency for Life Long Learning Key Competencies and the skills most in need by employers in partner countries. The challenge for the SILO partnership in taking forward the recommendations of the Delphi Panel and responding to artist feedback is remaining true to the original SILO concept, which is grounded in an artist led approach. There would need to be a fine balancing of competency

statement development and implementation and the sensibilities of the participatory art process. However, the development of a statement based framework would be the most logical progression route for the SILO partnership this development would be an upward trajectory from the 'test' results and would also bridge a gap from SILO being a stand-alone pilot project to a scalable methodology.

5.2 Training the Artist

The approach to artist development throughout the SILO project was collaborative in nature, involving each partner working closely with an artist known to their organisation in each 'test' of the toolkit. The manner in which artists were selected and informed about the SILO Framework was effective and suitable for the needs of the funded work. This close working relationship with artists enabled fruitful and honest conversations concerning the Framework's development and suitability for the participatory arts process. In consideration of the tight timeline and budget allocated to SILO, there would not have been time or the resources to develop a standardised training product for partners to apply to each test. The project on a whole, was a proof of concept and this was fully achieved.

However, the 'test' results and focus group feedback clearly demonstrated that artists would like formal training in the use of the SILO product. It was also suggested by artists that they would be assisted by training in the needs of participants who have specific social or health issues. There are a number of ways in which these issues could be addressed:

1. The partnership could develop a formal training package for artists in the use of the SILO Framework as it currently exists. This would be an effective dissemination method and would build on the positive work done to date. The package could be a downloadable product which works alongside the online SILO toolkit.
2. The partnership or individual organisations could develop a SILO Stage Two proposal which takes into consideration the development of competency statements in the validation process. This new project could build an improved SILO product which had a funded training element to be developed with artist input. A programme of this scale could include a Train the Trainer element, building the skills of artists in partner countries to train in the use of the product, whilst also being able to offer training to other artists after the lifespan of the funded work.
3. The development of 'understanding our participants' training or information sessions should be considered by all partnership organisations who plan to commission artists unknown to them. Artists who are experienced practitioners may not take up this offer, but new or emerging artists who wish to develop skills in socially engaged practice would most certainly benefit from this learning. Information about general

issues such as understanding the difficulties associated with commitment to programmes and navigating new territories and experiences for some service users would assist artists in planning approaches and their own expectations concerning what success looks and feels like.

5.3 Participant Experience

The experiences and preferences of participants in the 'tests' were considered throughout the project. Evidence gathering tools such as learning diaries worked well in some situations and didn't in others. Although, there were a number of options presented to artists concerning gathering evidence using creative methods other than the forms offered in the toolkit, none took up this challenge. The 'test' results demonstrated that artists had not thought beyond the options presented by the SILO partnership and this was evident in negative feedback from some concerning the amount of form filling and writing exercises being applied to assessment.

In deliberating options for taking SILO forward, the partnership could consider making participant experience the central theme of a new study. Working from a participant viewpoint could offer a different lens for considering the development of employability competencies. The process of self-mapping is certainly an area which could benefit from new and creative input. A project which involves collaborative arts practice which aims to develop creative methods of assessment and self mapping would be beneficial to the community learning sector in general. It could also offer a scalable and replicable product for use with hard to reach adults and those furthest away from the employment market, which has been developed by people experiencing similar barriers to employment.

5.4 Planned Usage

The SILO partners are planning to continue using the SILO Framework and are committed to ensuring its future development. Safe Regeneration in the UK lead a consortium of artists and creative practitioners who are using and evolving the Framework. They are currently delivering an Access to Work project which involves 100 young people 16-29 with Special Educational Needs who will take part in training placements. Safe Regeneration plan to use the SILO toolkit of resources to track the trainee's development.

Furthermore, they are in consultation with national charity – The Canal and Rivers Trust who are interested in using part of the SILO Framework in their national impact framework concerning participation in the waterways. Other developments include working with disaffected young offenders to enhance their perceptions of themselves and their life chances. This will also involve tracking achievements using SILO.

Safe Regeneration are leading on the Well Sefton programme - part of Well North, a regional health initiative which, working with other community organisations, doctor's surgeries and Community Commissioning Groups will create an effective, innovative arts based social prescribing offer. Well North have shown a keen interest in SILO as part of a robust and tangible evaluation system.

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