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Analysis of the FLLLEX Self – Assessment Tool

Oran Doherty



Contents of Presentation

- First steps in using the tool
- Forming the focus groups
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Background to the Self Assessment Tool

- LYIT FLLLEX representative first viewed the self assessment instrument in January 2011.
- Original thoughts:
 - Amount of questions contained in the tool;
 - In depth nature of the questions;
 - Organising focus groups (would they agree to participate.....);
 - Would focus groups understand questions;
 - Writing the report to represent focus group findings.



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Background to the Self Assessment Tool

- First Formal meeting on March 3rd:
 - Mr. Oran Doherty
 - Mr. John Andy Bonar
 - Mr. Brian McGonagle
- It was agreed that 4 focus groups would be used to gather information:
 - Focus Group 1: LLL decision makers;
 - Focus Group 2: Lecturers;
 - Focus Group 3: Learners;
 - Focus Group 4: Employers.



Background to the Self Assessment Tool

- Focus Group 1 decided that in order to help subsequent focus groups a presentation should be prepared covering the following:
 - Information on the FLLLEX project;
 - Objectives of the Self-Assessment tool;
 - Lifelong Learning in Europe;
 - Lifelong Learning in Ireland;
 - Lifelong Learning at LYIT.



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Focus Group 1

- Focus Group 1 subsequently met 4 times to answer the questions posed in the self assessment tool:
 - March 15th 10am-1pm;
 - March 16th 10am-12.30pm;
 - March 22nd 9.30am – 12.30pm;
 - March 24th 9am – 12.30pm.
- Provided a good forum for discussing LLL and for determining current situation at LYIT
- In the first meeting we identified the composition of each focus group.
- This was important to establish early in order to organise focus groups.



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Focus Group 1

- Between the 3 of us we had sufficient information to respond to all questions.
- One of the main concerns this focus group had was in relation to the suitability / relevance of a significant number of questions for the subsequent focus groups.
- The findings from this focus group were written up and approved by the rapporteur in the days immediately after the final focus group meeting.



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Focus Group 2 (Lecturers)

- **Focus group 2** (Lecturers) met on April 11th from 1.30pm to 4.15pm.
- The rapporteur delivered a presentation providing background information on FLLLEX, the self evaluation tool, lifelong learning in Europe, Ireland and at LYIT. This group then attempted to answer the questions posed.
- The findings from focus group 1 provided a useful reference for this group.
- Prior to the focus group getting together, each member was sent the questions posed.



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Focus Group 3 (Learners)

- **Focus Group 3** (Learners) met on April 15th, 9.30 – 11.50am.
- Comprised of 4 learners (2 full time and 2 part time) at LYIT.
- Rapporteur delivered the introductory presentation and then went through the questions.
- A significant number of questions were not answered by this group as they felt they did not possess enough information i.e. essentially questions about regulations, policies and quality assurance.
- Prior to the focus group getting together, each member was sent the questions posed.



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Focus Group 4 (Employers)

- FG 4 met on April 29th, 1.30pm – 3.30pm .
- Completed after class (Managing and Mentoring People)
- This group comprised of 4 local employers.
- Rapporteur delivered the introductory presentation and then went through the questions.
- A significant number of questions were not answered by this group as they felt they did not possess enough information.
- Prior to the focus group getting together, each member was sent the questions posed.
- Provided very useful information in relation to promotion of LLL to employers/employees, employer engagement, developing customised WBL programmes, flexible delivery, employer perceptions of HE providers and costs.



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Positive Elements of the Tool

Information gathered

- Wide range of issues discussed
- Good at identifying current situation
- The tool has significantly contributed to the revised LYIT Access and LLL plan 2011-13.
 - Employer engagement;
 - Promotion of LLL;
 - Learner needs;
 - RPL ;
 - Access programme;
 - E-learning.



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Positive Elements of the Tool

Inclusion of numerous stakeholders

- A very attractive feature of the tool was that it encouraged the institute to gather the views from numerous lifelong learning stakeholders. LYIT formed focus groups comprised of:
 - Lifelong learning decision makers;
 - Lecturers;
 - Learners;
 - Employers.



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Positive Elements of the Tool

Can be used numerous times

- Tool can be reused annually or every 2-3 years
- Targets can be set and progress can be measured
- Can be modified
- This keeps provider motivated.....



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Positive Elements of the Tool

Benchmarking Tool

- Can compare performance against other providers
- What are other providers doing better
- Ideas for improvement



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Negative Elements of the Tool

Time & Effort

- Due to number of questions and in-depth nature of some questions, this is a time consuming exercise.
- Organising 4 focus groups also problematic



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Negative Elements of the Tool

Suitability of the tool for all stakeholders

- The questions contained in the tool were suitable and answerable for focus group 1, but for the remaining focus groups (especially the employers and learners focus groups), many of the questions were unsuitable.
- It would not be an exaggeration to state that 50% of the questions posed were unsuitable for employers and learners.



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Negative Elements of the Tool

Too much emphasis on Past

- Vast majority of the questions asked refer to the past and present with not enough emphasis on the future.
- By asking more future orientated questions, a stimulus for change and possibly even improvement can be created.



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Recommendations for the Tool

Different questions for different focus groups

- Significant number of questions only suitable for FG1
- Perhaps having different sets of questions for the different groups
- For example ask **Lecturers** about the following:
 - Their involvement in developing LLL programmes;
 - What new programmes would they like?
 - Opinions regarding promotion of LLL and encouraging more people to undertake LLL;
 - Employer engagement;
 - Delivery of LLL programmes (e-learning, WBL, RPL etc...);
 - Areas for improvement.



Recommendations for the Tool

Different questions for different focus groups contd..

Learners could be asked:

- What they think of the institute as a provider?
- Any ideas for new programmes/modules;
- Problems they encounter;
- Plans for further studies;
- Perceptions of learners of LLL (e.g. why participation rates are low);
- Any additional support;
- Assessments;
- Additional recommendations.

Would on-line questionnaire be better way of getting information from learners?



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Recommendations for the Tool

Different questions for different focus groups contd..

Employers could be asked about:

- Their experiences with HE providers (positive, negative)
- Ideas for new programmes.
- Standard of learning achieved by learners in comparison to the needs of industry.
- Are employers satisfied with the programmes delivered?
- How flexible are HE providers in meeting employer learning needs?

Would one:one in-depth interviews be better for employers?



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Recommendations for the Tool

Reduce the content

- Are all the questions asked in the instrument necessary?
- Some of the questions very similar.
- Instead of 17 themes, 10 would be plenty.



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Recommendations for the Tool

Future Developments

- Not only should the questions relate to past and present, but there should also be more questions in relation to future improvements that could be made.
- It would further enhance the tool if it encouraged improvements in relation to lifelong learning provision at the institute.
- These future improvements could form a plan of action that could be evaluated annually (i.e. have the improvements identified been implemented?). Measureable objectives could be set in relation to promotion of lifelong learning, number of programmes delivered, engagement with employers, research etc...



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LYIT's reaction to the Self Assessment Tool

- A very useful exercise.
- The project ensured that the Head of Development, LLL Coordinator and WBL/RPL Facilitator sat down and formally discussed LLL. Give us good idea of the current situation.
- Better understanding as to our current situation.
- Good to get the views and opinions of several stakeholders and make comparisons.
- Great getting the views and opinions of the expert panel in relation to LYIT and LLL.



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Future Plans for the Tool

- We have discussed using an adopted version of this tool again in 2 years time.
- Possibly 3-4 different versions for the different focus groups.
- More specific questions with measureable results so targets and benchmarks can be compared and evaluated.
- We have taken the results generated from using this tool very seriously and it will have implications for the promotion and delivery of our programmes.
- Very interested to get the views of lecturers, learners and employers – gives us a good idea where we are presently and what we should be aiming for.



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Recommendations for other HE providers using the Tool

- Do not underestimate the work load involved.
- Plan ahead – especially in relation to composition of focus groups.
- Develop an introductory presentation explaining:
 - FLLLEX;
 - Self assessment tool;
 - LLL in Europe;
 - LLL in the provider’s county;
 - LLL at the host institute.
- Ensure the key LLL personnel are involved
- Act on the findings and make a list of “to do’s” afterwards



Conclusion

- Overall LYIT found completing the self assessment tool a very useful exercise. The instrument identified a lot of issues relevant to lifelong learning and promoted discussion and food for thought through analysis of different strategic areas linked to the provision of lifelong learning.
- It provided a good indication of the institute's current situation in relation to lifelong learning. By getting the views and opinions of LLL decision makers, learners, employers and lecturers, we believe we will be better equipped to deliver successful lifelong learning programmes in the future.



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Conclusion

- The findings from the project are very relevant. The views, opinions and recommendations of the various stakeholders will need to be considered and will have implications for the future provision of LLL programmes at LYIT.
- For example the feedback from learners and employers suggest we need to:
 - Promote ourselves better;
 - Develop more flexible programmes;
 - Deliver more affordable programmes;
 - Continue to engage with employers in designing programmes of study.



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