

Communities and Students Together (CaST)

Piloting New Approaches to Engaged Learning in Europe

Lindsey Anderson (Ed.)

IDC Impact Series 3



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union





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2 Ghent: An Introduction to Engaged Learning for PhD Students

Courtney Marsh, Noel Klima

2.1 Summary

The CaST project thus far has taken an approach of evaluating Engaged Learning courses that have already been established. However, we have yet to look at the knowledge base that gave rise to these initiatives. In other words, where did the inspiration for these initiatives come from on the part of the educators and/or coordinators? Although Engaged Learning is gaining solid ground throughout Europe as an established way of connecting Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with communities, and Ghent University (UGent) is one such HEI, the question remains: who initiates these practices and where do they draw their knowledge base from?

We took the approach at UGent to take a step back from the creation of Engaged Learning initiatives and focus on how to spread the skills and knowledge necessary for others to create such programmes of learning. Rather than create an Engaged Learning course within the University, we created a series of seminars, in partnership with the UGent Doctoral Schools, to teach (and inspire) early career researchers “how to” create an Engaged Learning initiative within their own disciplines. The aim was thus to create a sustainable future multidisciplinary network of potential educators and community partners who have both the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to establish their own Engaged Learning initiatives.

“An Introduction to Engaged Learning for PhD Students” was a series of three two-hour seminars led by a multidisciplinary team of academics and community partners supported by the University. Led by academics from two faculties, a representative from the Department of Educational Policy at UGent, and a representative from the City of Ghent, this seminar series was attended (online) by 13 learners from eight faculties and twelve departments (including the arts, humanities, and social sciences and the science, technology, engineering, and maths disciplines). This included learners from different levels of education (PhD, Postdoctoral, and Consortium Coordinators) and experience (years 1-4 in PhD and multiple year tenure at universities in an academic capacity). The seminars covered Engaged Learning from three perspectives: the university, the curriculum, and the community.

2.2 Context

Engaged Learning took shape at UGent with Community Service Learning (CSL) as part of the University's Strategic Plan (2012-2016) and later in a European project (2015-2017, Europe Engage – Developing a Culture of Civic Engagement through Service-Learning within Higher Education in Europe [Reference 2014-1-ES01-KA203-004798]). The latter is a three-year project funded by the European Union with the purpose of identifying existing service-learning practice, promoting service-learning as a pedagogical approach, and creating a network in this region, where a lot remains to be done in terms of civic engagement and service-learning. CSL in UGent is defined as “an experience-oriented form of education in which students within a course acquire academic competences and learning content, which they apply in a social context (community) and in which they make a social commitment, about which they reflect critically” (Cress 2005, Eyler & Giles 1999, Furco 1996, Jacoby 1996).

This definition includes internships, projects, master's theses and seminars as an integrated component of the module. However, while these are forms of Engaged Learning, typically these types of approaches have a restricted means of reciprocity when considering the limited active community involvement in the learning process, thus contributing to the ambiguity of Engaged Learning at a higher level in Flemish universities. UGent began a project for developing Engaged Learning initiatives at a university level, which resulted in an inventory of CSL-courses within UGent, as well as an online tool for lecturers. However, following the project's limited duration the CSL unit has been spread out among various areas within the University. In the interim, individual faculties and/or departments were expected to continue the initiatives of their own volition, and while this was done by some faculties, the practice is still very fragmented and not every faculty has offerings that include CSL.

Because of this fragmentation, there are undoubtedly Engaged Learning courses that exist within the university but that are not known to the CSL unit. This considered, UGent has space dedicated to this type of learning on their website with key definitions and guidelines for how to implement such a course and further guidance given within the UGent intranet. However, while there are some resources available through the UGent website, these are largely restricted to those within the University, so for those who are not already affiliated with the University, only limited information is available. The guidelines provided give three main components, consisting of factors involving academic, practical, and reflective sections. There is also mention of reciprocity between the academy and the community, which fits into our definition of Engaged Learning.

Over the last few years, UGent has evolved in the type of educational support offered. Previously the support offered was focussed on purely educational aspects and aimed at individual lecturers. However, now there is an expanded focus on societal topics such as diversity, international relations, sustainability, social impact, and entrepreneurship, as well as on academic literacy. There has also been a shift from a focus on individual lecturers to addressing entire degree programmes, the goal being to stimulate lecturers within degree programmes to work together and create more coherence between course units (Learning Pathways). This means that social impact through education is now a formal part of the structural support for lecturers and this is provided through a dedicated knowledge officer. CSL is considered a powerful approach to realise such social impacts.

The initiative created for the CaST Pilot Project is a new approach but is closely connected with the University's goals and the above training already offered. However, this initiative differs in its intended audience and immediate outcomes. As outlined in more detail below, the goal of this initiative was to create long-lasting knowledge in how to implement Engaged Learning elements into course work on a multidisciplinary level starting with the early career researcher, or even earlier, PhD researcher. Thus, "An Introduction to Engaged Learning for PhD Students" was created.

2.3 Description of "An Introduction to Engaged Learning for PhD Students"



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"An Introduction to Engaged Learning for PhD Students" was a course created by the UGent team and approved by the UGent Doctoral Schools as an official course offered within the University. The Doctoral Schools within UGent offer doctoral training and career support programmes to PhD students to fulfil their credit requirements for their degrees. Though this course was credit

bearing, it was only available to PhD students and optional to take; the maximum number of students allowed to enrol was fifteen. However, it was possible for postdoctoral students and other UGent employees to attend without obtaining credits, and we had two participants in this category. In order to be officially recognised by the Doctoral Schools, an application must be submitted to a reviewing committee justifying the need to undertake the proposed course and the indicative course content. This course was accepted by the Doctoral Schools under the course heading "Transferable Skills Seminars" within the "Research and Valorisation" cluster. The series

consisted of three two-hour seminars led by academics from two faculties, a representative from the Department of Educational Policy at UGent, and a representative from the City of Ghent.

2.4 Added Value of Engaged Learning to Participants

As Engaged Learning as a practice is focused on reciprocity in the learning process (among the University, students, and involved communities), the seminars are also intended to follow this structure. While the lecturers have been chosen because they hold expertise in the area presented, the overarching goal is mutual partnership and learning. It was foreseen that each two-hour session would consist of a more traditional one-and-a-half-hour presentation to introduce the topic of the session from both theoretical and practical perspectives followed by an interactive thirty-minute session pitching ideas of how to implement the theoretical knowledge into different course structures and/or disciplines. The interaction is meant to activate reflection among the students and connect the learning content to their own contexts and specific topics. In practice, this was not the structure each seminar followed, but this will be reflected on further in the section “Conclusions and Lessons Learned”.

The approach of this course is primarily from a meta and theoretical level, thus contributing to the overall applicability to being interdisciplinary in nature. The course is also delivered over three sessions, each of which is taught by a lecturer from a different discipline, along with guest speakers from more varied backgrounds, drawing on experiences from their own work, further enhancing the interdisciplinarity of the content. Though only three disciplines are officially represented, and while this is still interdisciplinary in itself, the content of the course has been taught at such a

AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGAGED LEARNING FOR PHD STUDENTS

Cluster: Research and Valorisation

level that the skills gained can be applied to other disciplines. In addition, community representatives were invited to complement the academic side of the topic by providing insights on the “dos” and “don’ts” in academic-practice cooperation from their perspective and experiences.

2.5 Aims

We define Engaged Learning as the process where students apply the theory learned at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to a context outside of the HEI by addressing societal concerns, challenges, or needs while producing knowledge in an equitable, mutually beneficial partnership. A large emphasis of our project has been on the concept of reciprocity, whereby the community not only receives a service from those in HEIs but is also actively involved, engaged, and contributes to the overall learning process. This, in addition to the benefits students receive, results in students and community partners co-producing knowledge for mutual benefit. We aim to push forward the agenda of the University as a part of an ecosystem of knowledge production addressing public problem solving.

With this framework in mind, addressing the concept of Engaged Learning at an early stage (i.e. the PhD level) has been thought the most effective way of developing this. Though of course not every PhD researcher will go on to work in university or teaching roles, most of those who do enter those roles have completed a PhD. If given the tools before teaching even begins, it becomes easier to implement them into course material rather than re-working courses that were never envisioned to have such elements. Further, those who do not take up roles within academia may very well end up in positions where they can broker the role of Engaged Learning from the community perspective, which is equally necessary in this equation.

The seminars delivered were spread among three general topics and given by an interdisciplinary team with expertise in the particular area (the partners are outlined in detail in the next section). The three perspectives were: university level, curriculum level, and community level. The overarching idea was to cover all aspects of an Engaged Learning (EL) initiative within an HEI environment. Beginning with how EL works within a university context and the infrastructures available to those who want to implement EL elements into their teachings (at least at UGent), the following seminar then looked at the other factor of EL within the HEI, the curriculum. This session covered various approaches that have been taken in other EL initiatives (mostly sourced from previous CaST examples described in the State-of-the-Art Report and Case Studies Compendium) as well as the practical elements of what is needed in order to create (and sustain) a successful EL course, as exemplified in the Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic at UGent. The

final session stepped outside of the direct HEI context and looked at community partnership and interaction. For this session an employee from the City of Ghent was involved with the delivery of the content and discussed how the community and universities can co-exist and form mutual partnerships within the context of EL. Though each component was equally important, the amalgamation of all sessions was considered necessary for optimal understanding of our goals, and EL overall, and so participation in all three sessions was mandatory to receive credit.

2.6 Partners

The partners included in this Pilot Project were both internal and external to UGent (as well as the CaST project); these partners also constituted our advisory group for the Pilot. As outlined above, the course was taught from both a theoretical and practical level, and this was reflected in how the partners were paired together for each session. The sessions began with an overview of the seminar's topic (university, curriculum, or community level) from a theoretical point of view, with the objective of giving the participating students the theory behind the practice that could be applied to their own disciplines and fields of study. Following this was the practical implementation of Engaged Learning into (with the exception of the first session) a specific context and/or discipline. This included the UGent Law Clinics for Session Two and community work with troubled youths in Session Three. However, it was stressed that though these examples were rather context specific, the general principles could be applied within other disciplines. This further emphasised the multidisciplinary nature of both the seminars given and Engaged Learning overall. An overview of the partners is given below.

Noel Klima: Noel Klima is coordinator of the interdisciplinary consortium with focus on societal impact IDC Crime, Criminology & Criminal Policy. Noel Klima leads the Ghent team in CaST Engaged Learning. He is also involved in the Erasmus+ funded project Socially Engaged Universities (SEU) and engaged in other research and teaching innovation initiatives. He is regularly guest lecturer in the Master's course "research design in criminology" on the topic of interdisciplinary cooperation and co-creation. Noel is co-editor of the compendium "Engaged Learning in Europe" and co-author of the report "State-of-the-Art of Engaged Learning in Europe". He was invited speaker at an event on interdisciplinary research organised by FWO, KVAB, JA, Department EWI and presented at the ECOOM Days event, and also co-organised the international conference "Engaged Learning in Europe". Noel Klima has broad experience working at the interface of research, practice and policy working in different organisations such as the

Federal Public Service Home Affairs, European Crime Prevention Network or the United Nations. He was also involved in local co-creation initiatives with stakeholders.

Leen Van Gijssel: Leen Van Gijssel is an educational developer at the Educational Quality Assurance Office, which is part of the Department of Educational Policy at Ghent University, where she focuses on social impact and sustainability. In this role she stimulates individual lecturers as well as entire degree programmes to integrate social impact into the curriculum. As Community Service Learning is considered a powerful approach to attain such social impact, she has been building a profound expertise on this methodology.

Prior to this, Leen was an educational officer and program manager with Goodplanet Belgium, an NGO specialised in education for sustainable development. She coordinated the organisation's programme on energy and climate and was involved in several European projects on education on those topics. Reaching out for young people with fewer opportunities, some of these projects also had an explicit socially engaged aspect. Later on, she was communication manager at this NGO and at the Department of Environment of the Province of East-Flanders. As such, her experience and expertise lie at the crossroads of education, communication, sustainability, and social impact.

Courtney Marsh: Courtney Marsh is a senior scientific researcher at Ghent University's IDC consortium "Crime, Criminology & Criminal Policy" based at the Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy (IRCP), Faculty of Law & Criminology & Social Law at Ghent University.

Courtney is currently involved as a researcher in CaST and is co-editor of the compendium "Engaged Learning in Europe" and co-author of the report "State-of-the-Art of Engaged Learning in Europe". She also co-organised the international conference "Engaged Learning in Europe". Through her involvement in this project, she has also presented at the European Society of Criminology on the importance of Engaged Learning in criminology courses.

Prior to this Courtney was a lecturer in criminology at Trinity College Dublin. This position provided her with the skills to present her research in an innovative manner, as the students involved in the course were not necessarily studying the subject as their main pursuit. From this, she was recognised by the University with a teaching award for her practices. She has also been invited to guest lecture at Hibernia College (a primary and post primary teacher education college and the leading provider of initial teacher education in Ireland) on the sociology of education.

Saïla Ouald-Chaib: Saïla Ouald-Chaib is a senior researcher at the Human Rights Centre of Ghent University. She is currently the coordinator and co-lecturer of the course Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic and Migration Law of the Human Rights Centre.

She obtained a bachelor's degree in Law (2005) at KULAK (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven campus Kortrijk) and her master's degree in Law (2008) at Ghent University. In 2015, she obtained her doctoral degree at Ghent University with the doctoral thesis "Belief in Justice: Towards More Inclusivity in and through the Freedom of Religion Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights". Her doctoral research was conducted within the framework of an ERC funded project called "Strengthening the European Court of Human Rights: More Accountability Through Better Legal Reasoning". In her PhD thesis, she advances potential ways of improvement of the freedom of religion case law of the European Court of Human Rights, by using the social psychology notion of procedural justice.

In 2015-2016, she conducted a study on national action plans against racism (NAPR) and racism and racial discrimination in Belgium in light of the adoption of a Belgian NAPR. She was the project manager of the Human Rights Integration project and a collaborator in the multidisciplinary project "Procedural Fairness in Local Approaches to Multicultural Conflicts". She is also one of the co-founders of the international blog Strasbourg Observers.

Ellen Desmet: Ellen Desmet is an Assistant Professor of Migration Law. She teaches Belgian, European, and international migration law as well as legal anthropology, and coordinates the migration law component of the Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic. Her research interests are situated in the field of asylum and migration law, with particular attention to human and children's rights implications, as well as social-scientific perspectives.

Until September 2016, Ellen was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Human Rights Centre (50%) and at the Law and Development Research Group of the University of Antwerp (50%). She was the Project Manager of the Interuniversity Attraction Pole (IAP) "The Global Challenge of Human Rights Integration: Towards a Users' Perspective" (UGent) and the methodological advisor of the Localising Human Rights research program (UAntwerpen).

Before joining the Human Rights Centre in 2012, Ellen worked as a Senior Research and Policy Advice Officer at the Children's Rights Knowledge Centre and was a Substitute Lecturer in Anthropology of Law at KU Leuven. She complemented her Law degree with a Master's in Cultures and Development Studies and a Master's in Development Cooperation. Her PhD

from KU Leuven (2010) concerned indigenous rights and nature conservation, including fieldwork in Peru.

Alexis Dewaele: Alexis Dewaele is senior lecturer in qualitative research methods in clinical psychology as well as coordinator of PSYNC (<https://www.ugent.be/psync/en>), a Ghent University interdisciplinary consortium dedicated to improving the mental health of all citizens, running research projects in close collaboration with diverse stakeholder groups, and with a clear focus on generating real world impact and societal innovations.

He was one of the key partners in the Horizon 2020 CSA project ACCOMPLISSH on co-creation and currently involved in two Erasmus+ projects (Socially Engaged Universities and Communities and Students Together) as well as a COOCK VLAIO project in which (vulnerable) youth co-create health promotional messages related to COVID-19.

Diete Glas: Diete Glas is a community representative from the City of Ghent who has partnered with UGent on Engaged Learning initiatives previously. She was able to offer her practical experience in community engagement through her involvement with a case study from the City of Ghent: Youth in the public space – case “Keizerspark” that looked at intersectional collaboration with local criminal youth networks and drug use in a local park.

2.7 Innovation

At a time when universities are becoming more aware of their role when it comes to societal impact, new forms of learning with and for society are gaining popularity in European universities. Engaged Learning is one form of this learning and can be defined as interaction between the teacher, student, and the community to connect the learning content and context to real life societal situations and environments. At Ghent University, Engaged Learning is in some cases applied through the Community Service Learning (CSL) methodology.

Funding is one aspect of Engaged Learning that is an important, yet widely varied, factor. From our research, Engaged Learning, when officially recognised, is done on a mostly ad hoc basis within universities, and varies even more when looked at from a country level perspective. Certainly, within the EU there is no systematic approach to Engaged Learning at the university or HEI level. Though these initiatives take a lot of personal dedication and commitment to see them through to completion, they cannot be sustained without funding, and this is a serious issue many HEIs face. Strategic planning for how to plan successful and sustainable Engaged Learning initiatives with tight budgets is an important consideration that perhaps

universities could, or should, be more involved with. Also, teachers and HEI support administration might be made more aware of external funding opportunities.

As seen from our research, particularly when reflecting on the feedback taken directly from the students and community members involved, the Engaged Learning initiatives were always welcomed and appreciated because of their practical, and overall, beneficial contributions both on a personal level, particularly for the students, and the community. Overall, Engaged Learning policies and examples from our research have been quite diverse; however, this was always intended to be viewed as a strengthening factor: Engaged Learning thrives in its uniqueness and applicability to many different disciplines.

Perhaps one of the biggest lessons learned from our previous research on Engaged Learning is that without the dedication of the staff involved, there simply would be no initiatives to speak of. Of course, there are other essential pieces, but the dedication of the staff involved is incredibly important. In academic circles it is hard to initiate Engaged Learning programmes if they do not include the catchphrases of employability and sustainability; as such, the higher purpose of education can take on a less important role to accommodate more administrative tasks, such as course organisation and planning.

This considered, one of the issues evident in our prior research is the lack of incentives or rewards given to the staff involved with the initiatives from the University or otherwise. The benefits to both the students and community these initiatives are involved with have been demonstrated very clearly, but the benefits to the staff are less clear. Of course, the potential for publication and personal fulfilment of undertaking such a task should be considered, but this is on a personal level rather than an institutional one.

This then begs the question, is this enough? Is intense and time-consuming personal dedication enough to sustain Engaged Learning initiatives; and further, what happens when those involved leave the institution?

With this in mind, teaching these skills early on in the academic career trajectory provides more opportunity for such practices to evolve and thrive in university settings. Furthermore, while some of the PhD students who take part in this doctoral school programme may stay within the UGent/Gent community, others will move on to other areas which has the potential to further spread the impact of Engaged Learning across Belgium and beyond.

2.8 Resources

There was no additional funding associated with this Pilot Project. The Doctoral Schools do offer funding opportunities when applying for course recognition; however, this was unnecessary for this type of initiative in its pilot phase due to the budget and research days already associated with the CaST project. In future, this initiative will be run based on participants' willingness to contribute their time/effort within their otherwise normal duties and expectations of the job.

2.9 Outputs

The EL initiative developed for the Pilot Project by UGent was not standard in its development, and thus, it is also not standard in its outcomes. Many of the EL initiatives have a more or less directly observable output(s); however, our initiative was developed with long-term goals in mind. Our goal was to introduce the concepts and theoretical underpinnings behind EL in the University context, specifically reaching an under-targeted group (PhD students). Because of this, the immediate impact is only in the attendance of the course.

Ideally, the long-term output(s) of the initiative will be seen in the involvement of those who attended our seminars with EL in their future career paths, both academic and non-academic. Naturally because of this extended timeline, the immediate outputs are limited to the dissemination of our seminar to the UGent PhD (and ultimately post-doctoral and staff) community, which was successful and proceeded as planned.

2.10 Outcomes

This seminar series was attended (online) by thirteen learners from eight faculties and twelve departments (see table below). This included learners from different levels of education (PhD, Postdoc, Consortium Coordinators) and a range of years (years 1-4 of the PhD and multiple year tenure at universities in an academic capacity). The seminars covered Engaged Learning from three perspectives: university level, curriculum level, and community level.

Our initial goals for this initiative were modest, and there was a concerted focus on understanding the needs of the participants and how best to deliver our message effectively in a multidisciplinary environment while our staff, though still from various disciplines, was still limited – primarily within the social sciences. Because of this, our numbers for the seminars were limited to just fifteen, and the length of the sessions were kept to a maximum of two hours. While all of our aims and objectives were met for our humble goals of the first iteration of this seminar, and thirteen out of the fifteen registered

students attended at least one of the seminars, there were also additional benefits to be considered for those who participated, both student and lecturer. However, these will be discussed more in depth in the “Evaluation” section.

Profile of Students

<i>Student Number</i>	Discipline	Position – Number of years in position
1	Architecture	PhD – Unknown
2	Economics	PhD – 1
3	Marketing Innovation and Organisation	PhD – 1
4	Conflict and Development Studies	PhD – 3
5	Social Work and Social Pedagogy	Consortium Coordinator – 9
6	Medicine	PhD – 4
7	Language and Culture	PhD – 3
8	Psychoanalysis and Consultation Psychology	PhD – 2
9	Engineering	PhD – Unknown
10	Business and Public Management	PhD – 1
11	Criminology and Law	Postdoc – 7
12	Public Health and Primary Care	PhD – 3
13	Engineering	PhD – Unknown

2.11 Longer Term Impact / Sustainability

It was always envisioned that this pilot project would continue beyond the scope of the CaST project as an addition to the courses offered through the UGent Doctoral Schools. However, based on the feedback obtained from the pilot (discussed below), there will undoubtedly be changes made to the seminars. This considered, the topics of the seminar, beyond the scope of Engaged Learning from the three perspectives (HEI, curriculum, and

community), were also envisioned to change even prior to the first pilots. The guiding concept was to alternate the examples given in each of the seminars to those which come from different disciplines. This would make the seminars as multi-disciplinary as possible and keep the content fresh and updated with current examples of Engaged Learning within our university and community.

Based on the evaluations from the participants, it is likely the seminars will be expanded in length, as many considered two hours per session to be too short. Ideally in future this course will also be held in person, and thus increase the collaborative sessions within each of the seminars. With this increased collaboration it also intended to increase the capacity of the course beyond fifteen. However, the number of participants will remain limited so that collaboration is not limited by staff numbers for each seminar.

In terms of the initiative being expanded elsewhere, the idea of offering the course to PhD students outside of the University was originally discussed (in the planning phase of the pilots), but for the pilot it was thought best to keep the test case small. However, in future this course could easily be extended as an offer to participants from other universities and/or community members themselves. How this would work in terms of course credits would of course have to be re-evaluated should such an eventuality materialise.

The funding for this course was not applicable in the pilot session, nor is it entirely necessary going forward. However, it would be necessary for 2-4 staff members to volunteer their time to one of the sessions per course. This was not an issue during the pilots as all staff were willing and excited to take part, but this could be a potential obstacle in future.

The first conception of this course was largely based on personal connections the UGent CaST project members had already established prior to the pilot projects. While this is an obvious asset in this rendition of the course, a more concrete network would need to be connected within the UGent community for this to be sustainable in future. However, the UGent educational developer at the Educational Quality Assurance Office, which is part of the Department of Educational Policy at Ghent University, has been involved in the project thus far and it is possible to work from these connections to create a more sustainable course in some form. Through our connections with the Flemish Network for Service Learning in Higher Education, it is even possible to draw on this resource for future developments.

So, where does the project go from here? Some concrete possibilities are outlined in the sections below on “Challenges” and “Evaluation”, but it is foreseen that “An Introduction to Engaged Learning for PhD Students” will

continue beyond its first run. As with Engaged Learning, the course is intended to be flexible and adaptable with each iteration, which should make the sustainability of the course more achievable and allow this course to continue as part of the UGent Doctoral Schools, even if offered to students outside of the UGent community, for the foreseeable future.

2.12 Challenges

Thankfully, considering the newness of this type of initiative as well as the ongoing restrictions from COVID-19, we encountered very few, if any, challenges during our pilot. This is in part due to the overwhelmingly positive approach UGent as a university took to such challenges. There is a drive within UGent to increase societal impact and social awareness, so a programme such as ours was a welcome addition to the Doctoral Schools' repertoire. The UGent facilitation of online learning during the pandemic was also well organised. On a structural level within the University context, we faced no challenges in implementing our pilot.

Further, our team was enthusiastic to take part in such an initiative and so were the students who took the course. Both of these factors were undoubtedly reasons for the limitation of any further challenges. Though there will be improvements upon the course in future instalments, this is due to practical experience from the pilot in how to make it better, not necessarily from challenges encountered.

2.13 Evaluation

The course was evaluated in two phases. Naturally the first set of evaluations was from the course participants; the second from those who were involved in the development of the course. We also conducted a pre-course survey with the participants to have a better understanding of why they chose to take such a course in the first place. The nine who provided a response are outlined below.

The main reason to [take] this course is to streamline my learning from very beginning in a way to be used for practical purposes. As it's just my start, it would be easy for me to understand how theoretical aspects can be put to practical use at different levels.

I have special interest in translating the theoretical knowledge gained during my PhD course work into professional practice. I hope this course prove[s] valuable to achieve this.

I'm choosing this course because I'd like to learn how to activate community engagement.

As I move into my last year of PhD, I feel it's high time I start thinking about how I can use my PhD to make a contribution to my society back

in Uganda, but also my profession in practical and meaningful way. I believe this course can help me achieve this.

I chose the course because I think it will be valuable for my activities as an IDC coordinator, related to societal impact.

I have chosen to be enrolled for this seminar to learn more about creating public impact through co-production of knowledge. It is related to my research area co-production of public services.

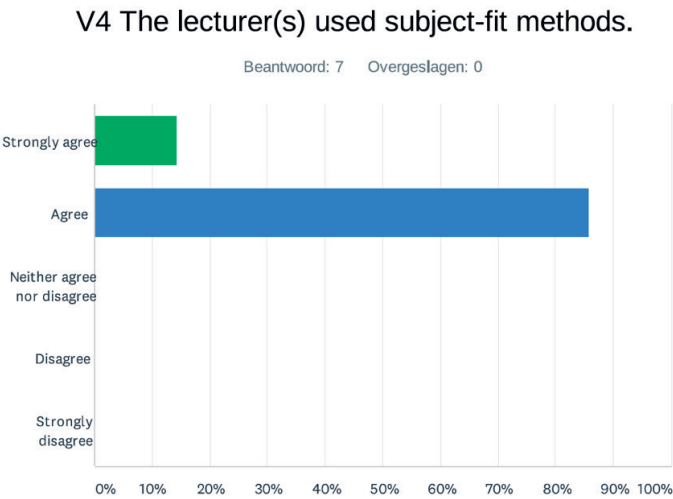
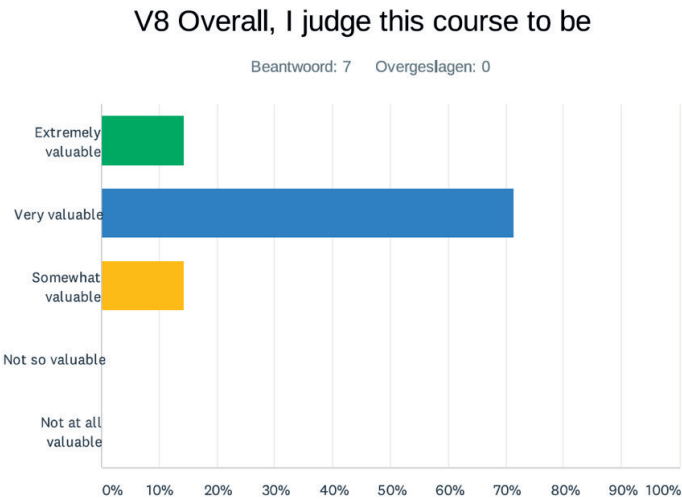
I am particularly interested in involving civil society actors and local community in teaching activities, in order to enrich the experiences students receive in their education and to increase their capacity and confidence.

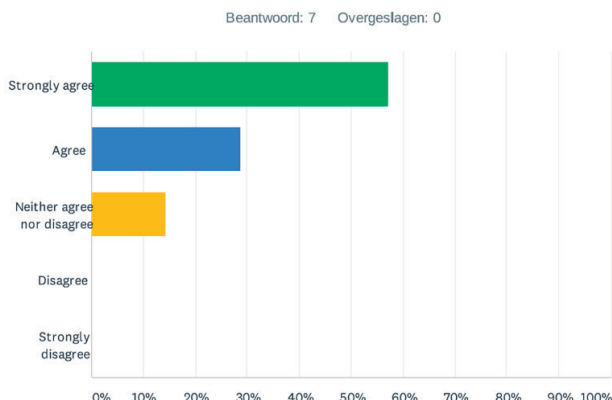
Part of my job is assisting with the supervision of the practical course [redacted for anonymity] in the [redacted for anonymity] Psychology program. In 10 sessions, the students receive an introduction to assessment in clinical psychology. We dedicate a couple sessions to the stories of experts by experience (people with lived experience in mental health, specifically psychosis). They tell their stories in the form of written narratives, video, and audio. I would like to improve the interaction between the students and these materials. The students are very impressed when confronted with the stories of experts by experience, for example about coercion in psychiatry, but I wonder if there are other ways to implement the stories and experiences of these experts in the course.

I found the concept of 'Engaged Learning' intriguing. Learning is key but understanding how one applies this to the outside world is important. As I both study and work, sometimes linking the two can be quite complex.

The above input was circulated to all who were involved with the development of the course several weeks ahead of the seminars so that we could better address these needs in the actual course content. In addition to this, basic information about the participants, outlined in the profile of participants, was disseminated so the lecturers knew who they would be interacting with in their sessions. Following the last session of the course, evaluations (online) were sent to all participants. Seven participants provided feedback, outlined below. Of these seven, 100% agreed they would recommend this course to others.

Feedback from the Course Participants



V3 The lecturer(s) had the expertise required to meaningfully elaborate upon the subject of the course.

As previously discussed, part of the feedback taken on board for future renditions of the course was to make each of the sessions longer. Though six out of the seven respondents said the number of contact (teaching) hours for the course was ‘perfect’, one did note it was too low. It was also felt from the lecturers’ point of view, specifically on the final session on community engagement, that there could have been more time used for additional discussion points. This, paired with the possibility of making the course even more multi-disciplinary, would all make a strong point for an extended session length.

There were additional free-text responses at the end of the participant survey outlining both the positive and negative aspects of the course. These are noted below, but two in particular from the sessions stand out. The seminar participants placed a large emphasis on connecting with their native/home communities, which was particularly interesting considering that most of our participants were non-Belgian/European. The way this course was structured on both a theoretical and practical level, meaning the tools given and skills learned are transferable, was an overwhelming advantage in the drive to connect globally.

V6 Positive aspects of this course?

Beantwoord: 7 Overgeslagen: 0

#	REACTIES
1	The use of theories to address societal problems
2	Practical.
3	*Methods to apply theory into practice *Practical examples
4	Interact with different faculties and their research work
5	It teaches us the strategies of integrating theoretical knowledge into real world practice
6	Learning about how can we convince people to join to our project
7	Real-life examples of engaged learning

V7 Negative aspects of this course?

Beantwoord: 7 Overgeslagen: 0

#	REACTIES
1	The use of theories may not always work well in the practice.
2	Each session is a bit too short for discussion.
3	Examples were limited to few departments unrelated to most of the students participants so sometimes it was hard to understand the key concepts.
4	Not too many stuff for my field
5	Not identified.
6	Few participants from engineering department
7	None

2.14 Feedback from the Course Staff

Feedback from the staff during this pilot was critical as they were involved both during the planning stages as well as implementation. In the pre-planning stage, it was considered efficient and clear what was expected of each lecturer in their session. However, it was not always clear what the more detailed differences were among the three sessions. This feedback is understandable given that each session briefing was given individually to the lecturers in that session, primarily due to scheduling conflicts among the seven lecturers involved.

The main positive takeaways were the uniquely (for this type of course) diverse audience to whom the sessions were delivered. However, the inherently interdisciplinary nature of this topic also made engaging with

students from different faculties and/or disciplines a challenge. Further, the overall engagement with students with a topic like this while in an online format proved to be a challenge. Interaction in an online environment when the students are not from similar backgrounds made natural interactions among each other slightly stifled, but the breakout sessions and assignments lessened this obstacle slightly.

Each of the sessions were two hours long and the feedback on length varied from session to session. While some thought the sessions were an adequate length, others would have preferred more time. It was also considered that having more time during the sessions could increase the amount of breakout sessions and thus help engage and personalise sessions more. In this vein, having more time could mean including more concrete examples, and thus, make the session content more practical and/or useful to students from the various disciplines. Further, increasing the time could make it possible to provide more in-depth examples of what EL looks like in each of the disciplines and provide a clearer idea to understand the benefits of taking a course such as this.

Going forward, there were two main recommendations: (a) widen the scope of the course; and (b) change the online format to in person or hybrid approach. In terms of widening the scope, it was always intended to offer this course beyond PhD students, including teaching assistants and other early career researchers. There was also potential to widen the scope beyond only the UGent community. This particular limitation was kept in place solely for the pilot project within the CaST project.



There was a lot of discussion regarding the format of the course beyond COVID-19 times. For obvious reasons, this pilot was held completely online, which had its advantages as well as drawbacks. The online format of this pilot allowed for students from all over the world to join, and indeed we had students join the live sessions from not only around Belgium, but locations such as India and a national wildlife reserve in Uganda. In order not to compromise accessibility while also having live sessions, a hybrid approach has been discussed; however, the infrastructure for this type of class is not yet widely available within our university facilities so this would be a challenge.

If we were to consider a fully in-person approach, a longer, one day course may be more suitable than three individual sessions over different days when accounting for schedule availability and expenses/travel. However, a one-day online approach was not considered suitable. There was one additional approach discussed in the feedback sessions and that was a mixed learning environment. The idea consisted of pre-recording the more theoretical/practical aspects of the sessions (and thus making this usable in future and more sustainable as these sessions would not have to be redone each time) and having live in-person sessions for the interactive and discussion portions of the sessions. All of these approaches are something to carefully consider in the next rendition of this course.

2.15 Conclusions and Lessons Learned

There are many conclusions to be drawn from our pilot project. Perhaps what resonated most profoundly within the context of our work was discussed in our third and final seminar, “nothing about us, without us, is for us” (Charlton, 1998). The idea that building relationships leads to co-creation was cemented as a core component of our EL priorities here at UGent. Further, communication with participants is one of the most important aspects of the entire process. Most particularly, communication is vital to the success of an EL initiative as people in groups can have different ideas of what matters, thus impacting how an initiative will go forward, if at all. Similarly, EL is difficult to implement because not everyone who is involved has the same drive for co-creation. As discussed in previous CaST publication, Engaged Learning in Europe², this need for personal commitment is not only desired, but also required for an EL initiative to begin and be sustainable in the University setting.

2.16 References

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