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Component 2: Community Engagement Reflection

Introduction

Community engagement refers to a strategic process which is designed to be able to work effectively and collaboratively with a particular identified group of people. The members of the group require to be linked by certain interests, geographic locations or affiliations to be able to address and be able to identify the issues that impose an impact on their well being, This essay will relay a reflection of how we will be able to effectively coordinate a community engagement programme successfully based in the future.

The future project I would like to coordinate would be the LSE community Engagement programme which is designed for students to provide them with the support and knowledge to be able to explore services, information and resources from finances and housing to even support alongside their academic studies. The reason why I have chosen this programme is because as a current student, I tend to be drawn to different platforms and programmes which provide students the support and opportunity to expand and seek more knowledge as it is something that I feel I would personally benefit from. This community engagement programme also supports international students and provides them with the knowledge they would require to be a successful student in the UK with the required skilled set and strive within all areas parallel to the academia.

I would like to provide a platform which is dedicated to students and newly graduates which will provide them with the opportunity to gain support and guidance and provide this also to the public which require the necessary skill set that will help settle within the UK and help find a job within the desired field. This interest also is

there for international students who would require help in laws, visas and opportunities because as a Muslim Pakistani woman who is British, knowing many students who have come from international countries to the UK to empower a better lifestyle for themselves and their families. Providing additional resources and support not just during their studies but adjusting to achieve future goals after. I feel that the importance of creating environments safe for international students has benefited and highlighted since the pandemic. The vast amount of students not able to leave the academic world, away from their families and social circles, somewhat stuck in a foreign country to them and a lack of community. Appreciating that the internet and evolution with communicating remotely has been vital to maintaining some normality in an unpredictable time. I feel that having a support system in place to help gather communities in international students to engage with each other. Where they can feel comfortable and not out of place and have conversations with those of similar native tongues. Creating bonds in the community and building an inclusive space for all to find solace in.

The fostering inclusivity and accessibility principle has been embedded in the programme which they have adhered to as they have valued the involvement of the local community and students. The aim of this was to gift the students the empowerment and courage to be able to hold charity events and social events which would provide others with certain answers which most students would have. There are many different segment areas which are supported and covered in these programmes. This highlighted the aim of the project which was to make this accessible which elevated another community engagement principle covered.

Following LSE and their community programme, which is held in certain cities as a public charity event to provide the knowledge, I would like to give the empowerment to students in the future to be able to use social media and technology to widen the community which this can be accessed by. However adhering to this principle, in the future I would like to implement this and enhance by using social media platform to hold different conferences and support programmes which are dedicated to students who are trying to build a future for themselves. This would mean many students all around the country would have access to join and not just limiting it to a certain area where it would make it hard for students to get too and be expensive.

Being able to encourage collaboration and provide empowerment will be used and implanted by being able to collaborate with other local organisations who support students for example university catch up groups and different social media groups who dedicate this service to students to be able to ensure they are able to gain from this programme. Therefore being able to focus on collaboration has been another community engagement principle which has been followed. Providing empowerment to the local students and international, has been another notable community principle obeyed.

Another community engagement principle is maintaining transparency and valuing feedback which has been communicated within the chosen community programme by ensuring project transparency amongst the stakeholders, and local community. However, many initiatives need to be considered for ensuring the programme is adhering to the principal e.g instance justifying the requirement of design expertise and legal advice making it more trustworthy for the public here and internationally.

To be able to participate in the local community engagement programme effectively and efficiently, I will be applying all the principles discussed and learnt in our module to ensure we are widening our range and supporting as much of the public as possible by providing them with the support required. Beginning of, I would like to begin by creating surveys and online forums to gather information and numbers from different students which we can advertise on different platforms so we are reaching to students all over the world who require advise and would benefit from this programme which is for student support. Also creating a platform for them by using different languages, as English is not always everyone's first language. This would be created by multilingual community members volunteering so we can provide this service.

Mental health has always had a certain stigma surrounding the topic where it has been depreciated in times but has made an uprise in our generation and community. As a race, mental health which has evidently been a staple in today's society to ensure that we have the right provisions for humans to be able to engage and communicate how mental health is important and is vital to be spoken about and addressed. Mental illness is a diagnosable illness that affects a person's ability to work or carry out other daily activities and engage in satisfying personal relationships

(Henthorne, 2019). I feel this is a monumentally important representation of how the mental health aspects are just as if not more important than physical attributes in health. As mental health is now seen as a highly important factor in our day to day lives, it is vital to ensure that we educate the topic as it is relatable globally to all, in one form or another. Within students it is at the utmost importance this is addressed, The average self-reported depression point-prevalence among university students is 30% – a rate approximately three times that of the general population. (Jamshaid et al, 2023) Enabling a space for students to have that extra support where they have had to endure more than the average student especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ensuring that individuals can work in high functioning environments which can be very intense and pressurising. As someone who themselves have faced moments of extreme highs and lows in life, I would like to ensure we have trained support for this in our programme so students can access this all the time, because studying can sometimes lead to feeling low when pressured. Support such as a safe space to go too or have someone to speak too. A safe zone where it would benefit to take a moment to decompress or have a representative of the safe zone to confide in and speak too. Even being able to vent and speak to someone and have an unbiased opinion to help understand a different perspective that could support students. This can then be used in continuous engagement and forums created for students in similar aspects to support each other and build a community and relationships. This would strength not just the community but also coinciding most importantly the student's welfare and positively reinforcing a healthy environment filled with care, attention and support physically and mentally.

Conclusion

This reflection report has concluded that the community engagement project at LSE do provide the cultural, economic and educational support to students locally and internationally and allow them to volunteer as consultants for social events and charities that aim to provide the support that students require. Providing a safe zonal area for not only students but the young working community to help them create their

own healthy environments. It would not only help themselves but as a project to gentrify and normalise speaking about the mental health effects, being able to be addressed and support the community whilst creating a sustainable world for our future generations to feel educated, supported and to then recycle for our future. Having these LSE communities to engage in, they could be a catalyst for students for years to come.

References

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