

The Professional and the Academic World Learning Together in Higher Education*

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Abstract

This article presents the evaluation of an innovative experience carried out in the Social Education Degree program at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). The experience consists of a space for collaboration and learning between the academic and professional worlds, which is incorporated into the structure of the degree program that began in the 2011-2012 academic year. Throughout this article, we use an evaluative research methodology to present a theoretical basis related to the changes and challenges in Higher Education at the international level, together with a description of the design of the experience, its development, the results, and some conclusions.

Keywords: Higher education, learning, collaboration, active education, innovation, social education.

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Aprender conjuntamente entre el mundo profesional y el académico en la educación superior

Resumen

El presente artículo presenta la evaluación de una experiencia innovadora realizada en el programa de Educación Grado Social de la Universidad del País Vasco (UPV/EHU). La experiencia consistió en un espacio de colaboración y aprendizaje entre el mundo académico y profesional, que se incorporó en la estructura de la carrera que se inició en el curso 2011-2012. A lo largo de este artículo, utilizaremos una metodología de investigación evaluativa para presentar una base teórica relacionada con los cambios y desafíos en la educación superior a nivel internacional, junto con una descripción del diseño de la experiencia, de su desarrollo, sus resultados y conclusiones

Palabras clave: Educación superior, aprendizaje, colaboración, educación activa, Innovación, Educación Social.

1. INTRODUCTION: BROADENING THE UNDERSTANDING OF LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

Albert Einstein, in referring to teaching, said, “I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn”. Concern about learning is not recent, but what is recent is the interest in research into how Higher Education must create learning contexts that encourage students to be more committed to and involved in their training and that affect the ways and depths to which students strengthen their skills during their university education. Interest in the question of student involvement is growing within the research community and in many universities. In Europe this concern has arisen mainly because of the requirement to build the European Higher Education area (EHEA), which has compelled some universities to think about how to approach Higher Education and how to create learning spaces in which the development of skills is placed at the center of the student learning process with the support of active methodologies (De

Miguel, 2006: Benito & Cruz, 2009: Sánchez & Gairín, 2009: Rué, 2009: Biggs, 2010: Rodicio, 2010: Zabalza, 2012).

Various criticisms have questioned and reflected upon this process of convergence and on the meaning that is given to skills and to the work of the university from the perspectives of policy and knowledge (Bolívar, 2008, Escudero, 2009); yet there are others that show that this process is essential to taking steps towards universities that are interconnected and work in conjunction with the social and economic environment in which the newly formed professionals will work (Tomas i Folch, 2007: Barnett, 2008: Pulido, 2008: Fullan & Scott, 2009: Bowden & Marton, 2011: Alonso & Arandia, 2014) since these environments can support ways of learning that are more complex and profound (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014). Along these lines, one of the recommendations of the European Union's "High Level Group on the Modernization of Higher Education"¹ states, "Curricula should be developed and monitored through dialogue and partnerships among teaching staff, students, graduates and labour market actors, drawing on new methods of teaching and learning, so that students acquire relevant skills that enhance their employability" (2013: 65). When focusing on learning processes from this perspective, it becomes necessary to highlight student commitment and participation in learning.

It is easy to imagine that all this has a strong impact on how educational policies are addressed due to the fact that student involvement and participation are related to academic success. They have also started to be viewed as an indicator in evaluating the quality of university education. As such it is also related to accountability (Zepke, 2014), though as we shall see this continues to be a critical issue for some researchers. Some universities have also observed that students have a certain disregard for what their training offers them; for this reason we have addressed what type of practices could improve student participation in order to be able to create policies and practices that could increase student commitment (Baron & Corbin, 2012). However, before starting this analysis it is necessary to both clarify what is understood by student commitment and involvement given that a variety of understandings are observed in the scientific literature and to know what uses and interpretations this concept is being put to, what limitations are observed in research and what instruments have been developed to measure student engagement in Anglo-Saxon universities. What leads students to become involved in their learning? What do we mean by involvement? What do we mean by commitment? And what do we mean by participation?

Involvement is understood as the amount of energy (both physical and psychological) that a student dedicates to the academic experience. In this sense, the one who does more work it is the one who gets the best results, and by extending this logic, the best university is one that has the highest degree of student involvement (Paricio, 2015). On the other hand, when talking about commitment, some authors refer to the different relationships that exist among students, their studies and the institution, including their relationship with the activity that takes place within the university campus as well as with society in general (Solomonides, Reid, & Petocz in Zepke, 2014); in our case we want to add another important component, which is the relationship with the professional world in terms of carrying out joint tasks or other educational actions. Finally, participation is understood as the action of participating in different contexts. It seems certain that the students participate in different contexts and that learning occurs both within and outside the formal curriculum when students take part in various tasks and activities (Krause in Zepke, 2014; Baron & Corbin, 2012). The issue, therefore, is to project learning experiences that can have a significant impact on students' education. As we will see later, in the case presented in this article, these can be the actions that arise from a structure that we are calling the Council/Observatory.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (2014), on the basis of the "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education", formulated by Chickering and Gamson in 1987, explicitly indicates that good practices in the first years of university education occur when there are actions such as: (a) promoting contact between students and professors, (b) developing cooperative practices among students, (c) promoting active learning in the classroom, where the students are the main actors and maintain autonomy in their learning process, (d) providing prompt feedback on the tasks carried out, (e) establishing a specific time frame for completing tasks, (f) having high expectations regarding the students' learning possibilities, (g) taking into account diversity in the ways of learning, and (h) setting challenging tasks that require students to face complexity and seemingly unstructured situations. If we follow these general guidelines for the teaching-learning processes in Higher Education, the processes improve, student engagement in learning increases and as a result in-depth learning can occur. Therefore, it seems important to create environments built from these principles, since they can increase student motivation and involvement (Kuh, 2003: Coates,

2005; Kember, Ho & Hong, 2008; Gibbs & Simpson, 2009). As we can imagine, even if potentially powerful contexts are created, there is no cause-effect relationship between teaching and learning, since how the students approach the educational experience is also important. Marton and Säljö (1976) address to this by analyzing the relationships that students have with learning and specifying three possibilities: superficial, tactical and deep learning. In their research they saw that some students read texts in a fragmented way, while others read them more deeply, and they also observed that working on the meaning of the themes and tasks and getting to the bottom of the issues being studied always had positive results. In spite of this, Mann (2001) proposes talking about involvement and alienation in referring to the ways in which students learn, and Krause (in Paricio, 2015: 7) uses the term inertia to analyze students' attitude toward their college experience. Specifically, she says:

Physicists use the term inertia to describe the tendency of matter to maintain its state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line (...) In this context, I am inclined to by the term "inertia" on "non-involvement". This last suggests a separation or active estrangement, while the former suggests a better idea to do nothing and it draws perfectly the state of a group of students who do not take advantage of the opportunities to be actively involved in their learning community. For some students, never come to match the interests, goals or aspirations at individual and institutional level. They don't see the need to get away from their habits to engage with people, activities and to opportunities in the learning community.

This concept of commitment is critically analyzed by Zepke (2014) because he understands that it is necessary to clarify the sense and meaning of the concept as well as the framework for helping students become involved in and participate in their learning. Zepke describes the different approaches within the research on this subject. Some authors connect commitment with the focus of the entire curriculum and practices that are carried out (Nelson, Kift & Clarke in Zepke, 2014); others connect engagement with other powerful facilitators of learning, such as non-institutional environments (Yorke & Longden, 2008; Leach and Zepke, 2011). In any case, much of the research related to commitment focuses primarily on what teachers and institutions have to do in order to enhance student learning and to encourage student participation (Coates, 2005:

Tinto, 2010; Zepke, 2014). A smaller number of authors mention the role that other aspects may play, such as content and how it is dealt with (Zepke, 2013, 2014). Zepke (2014) notes the existence of other critical voices that show the need to introduce a more critical and democratic perspective in the research on commitment. He also notes, based on a review of various studies that are being conducted in this area, that issues such as cultural aspects, the differences between contexts, and the influence of power are not specifically present in the research. So far it seems that the research has been dominated by a more technical discourse and has put emphasis on establishing indicators for evaluating commitment in order to analyze and uncover what methods of intervention can contribute to improving commitment and learning, but it has been found to be much less focused on the review of the meaning of the intervention in Higher Education and the values that guide it. Furthermore, contemplates the reasons that may be behind the extensive research that is being done at present on the subject of commitment. He notes, more specifically, that such research may currently enjoy its prominence because it shares values with a dominant neo-liberal political ideology which understands Higher Education as a place to build human capital and to continue contributing to the market economy within the knowledge society. It seems clear that the research on commitment should take into account the impact that ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, lifestyle and beliefs have on commitment (Zepke, 2014).

In any case, it seems evident that student commitment has to encompass more than the direct work that is carried out in the university classroom. It should be understood from a more holistic and comprehensive perspective, and even as a goal toward which universities as institutions should direct their efforts (Baron & Corbin, 2012). The work that we are doing in the Social Education degree program in the School of Education at the Bilbao campus of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) from within our Council/Observatory structure is consistent with this approach to understanding learning at university. There are certain questions that underlie this structure and the action that is intended to come from it. Some of them include: What type of professionalism do we want to promote and in what direction? What should we do to make it possible for students to find value in their training and feel involved in their learning? What do they learn and what must they learn? How can in-depth learning be encouraged? How do we work to with the

professional world in order to better train future professionals? Reflecting on such questions is what has shaped the structure of the Council/Observatory and the path it intends to follow.

2. THE COUNCIL/OBSERVATORY: A STRUCTURE FOR CONNECTING THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD AND THE UNIVERSITY

Since 2000, the University of the Basque Country has been following a model of cooperative and dynamic learning known as IKD (*Ikaskuntza Kooperatibo eta Dinamikoa in Basque*), which is based on cooperation among the set of agents that make up the educational community: students, faculty, staff, administration and services, departments and faculties, in addition to relevant social partners. The goal is to share projects and initiatives in the teaching-learning processes within a climate of mutual trust (Fernández & Palomares, 2011).

It is within this context that our educational innovation Council/Observatory was born as part of the Social Education degree program (Arandia & Fernández, 2012). This structure, still in its early stages, represents a novel contribution to educational innovation at the UPV/EHU and in Higher Education. The aim is to generate within the degree program a space for encounters, reflection, learning and joint work among teachers, students and professionals, with the aim of fostering the type of socio-educative action that makes it possible, on the one hand, to improve teaching-learning processes for the students via the IKD model and, on the other, to have the university contribute, in this case as teachers and students, to regional and social development. As can be observed in the following chart, the goal is to have an impact on the various aspects of the Social Education degree program as well as on all of the agents involved (Figure 1).

The goals pursued through the action of this structure are:

- To bring together the university and professional worlds by building closer relationships and devising joint projects and other means of exchange.
- To incorporate professional knowledge in the teaching-learning processes for the students in the degree program.

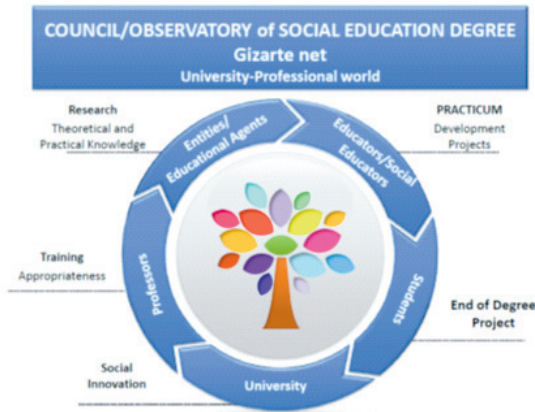


Figure 1. Council/Observatory of the Social Education Degree

- To analyze the status of the degree program from a holistic perspective.
- To generate knowledge related to specific needs that emerge, both in the academic world and the professional world (social education professionals, heads of administrations).
- To facilitate the exchange of information among different actors (students, faculty, research staff, professionals and other representatives of the social world).
- To promote research, pilot studies and viability studies, organize meetings with experts and create working groups that carry out the defined work.
- To reflect on the current status of Social Education and its professional tasks.
- To present the results of the tasks carried out at the university to the outside community.

The Council/Observatory is guided by a committee made up of 5 professors, 4 students, a representative of the Association of Educators in the Basque Country, representatives of relevant networks and entities, representatives of networks and institutions, and the coordinator of the degree program.

Although there are some examples of similar approaches in research, in the transfer of knowledge, and in curriculum development, in

our review of the literature we did not find models like ours, models in which a space for collaboration and lifelong learning is shared by and designed for teachers, students, professionals and institutions is integrated into an academic context.

The work done so far is being carried out in different stages:

1. **First Stage (2011-2012):** The first step was to create a process for building a common perspective in the Social Education Degree Committee and explore it in depth, from the theoretical point of view, aiming to arrive at an understanding of the Council/Observatory concept and its relation to student learning. To do this we completed various tasks, including a meeting with professors, students and actors from the professional world in which a foundational document and accompanying explanations was the starting point for creating a common awareness of the project. In addition to this, a survey was prepared in order to collect student impressions about the idea. The analysis of the survey results is what we present in this article.
2. **Second Stage (2012-2014):** A needs analysis from the theoretical-practical point of view was carried out. For this purpose, each group involved in the process thought about issues that, from their point of view, needed particular, thoughtful and systematic attention. After collecting the needs analyses, further analysis was carried out in order to determine how to address the needs, how to connect them with the curriculum and who would be responsible for implementing them. Afterwards, a temporary space was opened for students, professors as well as practitioners from the professional world.
3. At the same time, the tasks carried out to address to the identified needs did not follow a uniform procedure. Some of them have given rise to a number of short-term research programs (one or two years) and others have become workshops or seminars that provided the opportunity to carry out collective reflections. Additionally, a number of mixed teams were formed in order to implement and carry out various actions.

Third Stage (2013-2015): In addition to the specific purposes of all the identified and planned actions, a cross-cutting goal is to collect information from all the agents involved while the actions are taking place. The aim of this is to shed light on the real lessons that are taking place and their influence on the realities that are affected by the actions under-

taken by faculty, students and the professional world (educators, administrators). The method for gathering information is the use of stories and discussion groups. From the analyses we will be able to detect aspects that can be converted into concrete recommendations for the professional world and the university regarding the training of educators/social educators, professional practices and the required support policies.

4. Fourth Stage (2014-present): Project results are presented annually, and a context of reflection is created and other ways of working together emerge in order to improve the training of future educators and social educators, build further knowledge relevant to Social Education and strengthen a broad network of support for the profession.

3. METHODOLOGY

As stated above, this article presents the results of an evaluation study on the launching of an innovation project in Higher Education. The data gathered address the first stage of the process (2012-2015) and are part of a larger project that evaluates the process of implementing the structures laid out in the degree program's Council/Observatory. We understand evaluation studies as a form of applied research in which evaluation is carried out with scientific rigor (De la Orden, 2012). Our methodological approach is qualitative in that it attempts to understand what is happening and how (Torrance, 2012; Tracy, 2010). The objectives are as follows:

- Discover the potentials and difficulties associated with the Council/Observatory innovation.
- Detect topics that contribute to improvements in student training.
- Identify the aspects that need to be addressed first in order to assure the innovation's sustainability.

The data gathered came from three different events that took place in the First Stage: a) minutes from 8 foundational meetings held with all participating agents, b) an evaluation session with twelve groups of students (230 students total), and c) an evaluation session with 18 professors. The evaluation sessions were designed to be active, participatory events. The sessions were transcribed, categorized and analyzed.

4. RESULTS

A fundamental issue that demonstrates the value of this innovative structure in its initial stage is the work done to put it into place. When the space and its goals were proposed we were able to observe the different agents' responses and note their positive reception. Students and professors as well as educators and institutions expressed the need to foster greater collaboration between the academic world and the realities of the professional world, and they all agreed it would provide training value and professional growth. Along with this positive reception, we also need to point out that all participants found it difficult to find the time to fulfill their commitments. The heavy workload that students, professors and professional educators had made it necessary to measure and carefully consider sustainability criteria. In other words, although there was a strong vision and great enthusiasm, it was crucial to ensure that the initiatives put in place would be truly viable and would not lead to feelings of impotence and stagnation. This was and is a critical aspect of the initiative, as we noted previously: how to sustain the commitment and effort of the various agents given that their work in this structure is on top of their usual work.

In the next sections we describe the results in terms of three axes:

1. Vision of the Council/Observatory: Pros and cons.
2. Collaboration between the academic and professional worlds.
3. Facilitating inter-agent communication and collaboration.

4.1. Vision of the Council/Observatory: Pros and cons

The process of informing students and professors about the project and reviewing it with them was intense, and the process is currently being repeated with the social entities and institutions. The results from this first evaluation were very positive. In the case of the professors, Table 1 shows their support for the initiative thanks to the great added value it provides for the training of novice social educators: training that takes the reality of the profession into account, that collaborates with real practice, and that combines teaching with applied research. One of the bigger difficulties has to do with the increase in workload for students and professors since they have to take on new areas of exploration and action in addition to their already established daily tasks.

**Table 1. Evaluation of the Council/Observatory innovation
by professors**

Potential	Difficulties	Topics of interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•To benefit the Degree, student learning, and the profession.•To improve the training of new professionals.•To maintain the relationship between the Degree and the professional world that was present in the design of the Degree.•To promote little applied research in this field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The current heavy and dispersed workload makes it difficult to involve the students and the professors.•The need for student work to be included within the curriculum for it to be sustainable.•The need to provide meaning within the training that is given in the Degree.•Almost all of the proposals come into the university from the professional context; proposals that go in the other direction are missing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•This is an opportunity to address the needs that have been detected in the Practicum.•Work on needs related to Mental Health and Socio-Educational intervention, assault against professionals, good practices in the practical training in institutions, young people, forms of leisure and social inclusion, etc.•To promote lines that are already receiving attention, such as Women, Gender and Social Education, and Professional Ethics.

Students were also enthusiastic about the initiative and pointed out various positive aspects, which are shown in the word cloud in Figure 2; the word cloud comes from the active sessions held with over 200 students. The word that appears most often is “different”, which has two connotations. On the one hand, this initiative is clearly “different” from the training normally given in university, and it gets highlighted for its unique nature. On the other hand, it highlights the importance of collaborating in “different” areas and of having objectives not only related to learning but also to improvement and change in the professional environment of social education. The word cloud shows how the students value the potential that agents and actions bring to their training. The students also believe that the major obstacles to putting this kind of innovation into effect are the lack of a culture of collaboration, the lack of student participation in university structures, and a closed curriculum that does not allow for participation in initiatives such as ours unless students make the effort to participate on their own time, paying the personal costs that come with taking on extra work.

Given the above, the following lines of inquiry are planned:

- Continue to develop the work laid out in this structure, using the criteria of transparency, flexibility and commitment. We consider it important to maintain transparency and open communication about what we are doing, and to that end all the information that is generated from the Council/Observatory will be made available to the faculty in the Social Education degree program as a technology platform.



Figure 2. Evaluation of the Council/Observatory innovation by students

- Whenever a need is detected, in order for it to become transformed into a collaborative action it will be necessary to create a time and place for professors and students to come together and have the opportunity to be informed of the planned action and to join the work groups.

It is clear that open and fluid communication as well as sustainability comprise the basic aspects that need to be worked on in order to be able to guarantee credibility, engagement, collaboration and sustainability in the actions that emerge from the Council/Observatory.

4.2. Collaboration between the academic world and the professional world of Social Education

Our analysis has identified topics which, due to their training value and their short-term nature (one or two academic years), can be translated into implementable actions through collaboration between professors, students and professionals. Carrying out the actions that emerge from this structure is an opportunity to bring together two parallel lines of action within the degree program. On the one hand, there is the Practicum Committee, which identifies training needs using formal and informal methods and via the recommendations made by the practicum tutors. And on the other hand there is the Council/Observatory, whose proposals are related not only to improving training but also generating knowledge about Social Education and creating multiple spaces for learning for students who wish to participate in them.

Currently, we are working on four lines of research. There are two studies on learning on the streets, given the recent mass phenomenon in

Spain of youth gathering places. These studies are being undertaken by professors, educators, social institutions (socio-educational entities and public administrations) and students. Students participate in various ways: through completing Final Year projects, through providing input to subjects or curriculum and through receiving an official certification for their collaboration in the proposals, which they can include in their curriculum vitae. Our first evaluation has been very positive. The interest in and the potential for collaboration between different agents is an aspect that all participants have highlighted.

We are also part of a team that is working on an ERASMUS + project on youth and employment, and on an educational innovation project related to the practicum in Social Education. All these lines of research emerged from an initial diagnostic of the Council/Observatory and from its launch. A preliminary result has been the many possible lines of interest and study that have emerged, and in a future stage we will choose lines of study following our criteria for sustainability. At the same time, we are being careful to balance the steps we are taking and the collaborative actions that we are pursuing given the human capital available in the degree program. In this regard, although there was great enthusiasm during the first stage due to the novelty of the initiative and its launch, it's clear that other types of institutional support will be required to ensure its continuation within the degree structure and in the profession. Thus we believe that all the processes that emerge from this structure need to be integrated in one way or another into the goals and functions that the various agents have to fulfill, as well as in the curriculum and institutional structures.

4.3. Facilitating inter-agent communication and collaboration

Although implementing an innovative process such as the one we are evaluating is important, what is even more crucial is how to keep it going over time, the ways that establish connections between the two worlds, allowing educational, innovative, and reflective actions as well as inquiry to emerge and move forward year after year. Hence, the momentum that is generated every year should be transformed into an event that provides a space for the academic and professional communities for meeting, collaboration, reflection and learning. Such a space will enable us to move ahead in a joint effort to detect and carry out proposals for collaborative work in the professional context. Maintaining such a structure over time

will have significant effects on the professional growth of all parties involved in carrying out actions. At present this process of creating a network made up of the various agents is priority for this innovation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The initial evaluation that we have presented of our educational innovation called Council/Observatory aims to understand the value that it provides to student learning as well as to the professional development of social educators and professors of Social Education that have connections with the professional context. Some of our conclusions to date are the following:

- The initiative, in conjunction with other initiatives that are part of the degree program (the practicum experience, the development of active and service learning methodologies, the tradition of conducting research in professional environments and the incorporation of professional educators into the academic endeavor), has contributed positively to the development of the program of study for the degree program in Social Education. It has also made it possible to introduce improvements and innovations into different aspects of the program.
- The collaborative undertaking among various agents has had a positive impact on other areas of the training curriculum. This fact is giving rise to new opportunities to design and evaluate other curricular initiatives linked with classwork, with the practicum experience and with the Final Year projects. Without this kind of collaborative work it would be more difficult to incorporate into students' training the pressing issues found in professional intervention as well as professional knowledge more generally. This line of study is in agreement with the reflections and results of other studies (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014, Bowden and Marton, 2011, Barnett, 2008, Alonso and Arandia, 2014, High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2013) which emphasize the value of having students participate in research projects as peers and to create environments that allow the ideas of different agents to come together, which will have a significant impact on the construction of their professionalism.

- Having students be involved in implementing and undertaking actions alongside other students, professors and social education professionals results in greater engagement in the learning process. The Council/Observatory structure makes it possible to generate rich learning experiences for students, experiences that lead to in-depth learning. Baron and Corbin (2012) agree that it is important to reflect upon learning experiences such as the ones we propose since they have an impact on students' commitment to and engagement in learning. Similarly, the Center for Teaching and Learning (2014) set forth good practices in the initial training of students. Among those practices is the experience reported here, namely the promotion of interaction between different agents and actions where students can be genuine protagonists in their own learning process.
- We see that benefit comes from building bridges between different types of agents and creating a climate of trust, enabling collaboration and creating synergies between the academic and professional worlds. Both impact the generation of knowledge in the field of Social Education as well as contribute to the curriculum in Social Education for future educators and social educators. Developments at the curricular, institutional and regional levels lead to important advances; as a report by the European Union points out, it is necessary to create new models for understanding teaching and learning, where both students and relevant external social agents play a larger role in students' learning process. Close collaboration between the academic and professional worlds contributes not only to greater growth in the profession but also to the initial and life-long learning of students (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2013).

There are still issues that need attention in order to strengthen the initiative and to make sure it becomes part of the culture of the degree program and the profession. These are a) thinking of ways to make the initiative sustainable and ensure that it will contribute to the learning of all agents involved and to their personal, educational, and professional growth; b) securing resources and institutional support in order to strengthen the initiative over time and to make it part of the educational culture of the degree program and a hallmark of its identity. All of the contributions that come from processes of profound change serve to highlight the fact that not only must the project be clearly defined and vi-

able, but that it must also have sufficient institutional support and recognition (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012; Keesing-Styles, Nash and Ayres, 2014). When this occurs, innovative processes can continue developing and acquiring depth and human capital becomes enhanced.

To conclude, it is important to stress that we are embarking on a new, and from our perspective, irreversible scenario in which the interaction between the academic context and other practices that are related to the transfer of knowledge and service to the community will become one of the key factors (Malcolm and Zukas, 2009) that will contribute to in-depth learning, not only for students but also for professionals within and outside of academia, for entities that engage in professional practice and even for public administrations in charge of social policy. Our initiative can be an alternative path to breadth and change, in contrast to existing structures. This new and innovative experiment and its evaluation will generate ideas that can be extended to other similar initiatives in other degree programs at the University of the Basque Country and other universities, always with the purpose of making universities a place for learning as well as social and community development.

Notes

1. Report presented and published on 18 June 2013. <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-releaseIP-13-554en.htm>.

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