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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

 Enhancing student involvement through action-learning residential workshops

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This session evaluates the use of non-traditional action-learning methods for developing student creativity and employability skills. Action-learning is a method that involves critically reflecting on the process of an action, therefore emphasising the learning development of participants (Zepke & Leach, 2010). The IBL institute residential leadership workshop is identified as a potential model for implementing future action-learning residential workshops. In order to remove students from the comfort of their surroundings this workshop is held annually at Gregynog Hall, Newtown. It involves a series of physical and mental confidence-building activities designed to highlight individual leadership skills and increase student involvement in teamwork tasks. A de-briefing session is undertaken with students at the end of each task to allow for reflection on the aim and usefulness of these, thereby developing ‘learning communities’ (Tinto and Russo, 1994), where instead of remaining a passive receiver of information, students become more actively involved and initiate self-directed learning.

The benefit of this non-traditional action-learning model are examined using data gathered through an evaluator focus group and questionnaires completed at the end of this year’s workshop. Findings indicate that students perceive such models to increase employability skills, such as leadership, confidence-building, team-working and presentation skills. A high level of student involvement was witnessed by course leaders and identified also by the students themselves. Here, the cross-pollination of ideas which stimulated creativity levels was contributed to mixing groups with little previous interaction. Therefore, while in the traditional format academic activities involve desk-based learning and are held with students from the same degree scheme and year group, an evaluation of this model highlights the usefulness of activity-based mixed residential workshops to increase student creativity and employability skills.