

Violence, Identity and Peace

Queen's University Belfast (QUB) was established in 1849 and is a public research university in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It has 24,000 students and 3,900 staff. It offers academic degrees at various levels and across a broad subject range, with over 300 degree programmes available. Queen's is a member of the Russell Group of leading research intensive universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the European University Association, Universities Ireland and Universities UK. It's vision is to be 'a world class international university that supports outstanding students and staff, working in world class facilities, conducting leading-edge education and research, focused on the needs of society'.

As part of this focus on the needs of society, the University has had a Science Shop operating for almost 30 years. Funded by the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy through the Higher Education Innovation Fund, it works jointly with The Science Shop in Ulster University to provide the fullest possible service to civil society organisations (CSOs) across Northern Ireland. In an average year, the QUB Science Shop completes 65 research projects for CSOs and directly engages 270 students in doing this. The QUB Science Shop has been involved in 4 European Commission funded projects and has mentored dozens of Science Shops around the world in this time.

Training in Responsible Research and Innovation

Violence, Identity and Peace is a module offered in the QUB Sociology department. It introduces students to sociological approaches to identity, peace and conflict in Northern Ireland. The nature of Northern Ireland's peace process is analysed in relation to contemporary local evidence as well as to scholarly debates about conflict transformation. Lectures are mainly given by visiting speakers from diverse backgrounds. Students are offered experiential learning opportunities, eg visits to exhibitions about the conflict (locally known as 'The Troubles') at the Ulster Museum; a Black Taxi tour of Belfast and a (voluntary) visit to the theatre to see a relevant play. There is also peer learning and students are given preparation for designing, carrying out and reporting on semi-structured interviews with so-

cial actors and then carry out this interview. In the EnRRICH pilot, the module was co-ordinated by QUB academic staff who have a strong profile in public engagement and was supplemented by a series of visiting lecturers who could bring different perspectives on Northern Irish society. The module is worth 10 ECTS

The aim of this pilot was to test specific methods for promoting responsible research. These methods were:

1. *An ethnographic approach to research:* understanding society better through interaction between social actors:
2. *Understanding social divisions:* specifically, by challenging a perception that the only division in Northern Irish society that matters is one between two blocks (Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist, Republican) which are presumed to be internally homogeneous, externally differentiated and representative of the whole of Northern Irish society
3. *Promoting reflexivity:* not taking 'selfies' or looking in a mirror but encouraging students to think about other students and other people's (Family, friends, guides, interviewees) experience of events
4. *Understanding Ethics* through the practical application of principles in designing, carrying out, recording and interpreting research

Case Study

Teaching approach and activities used in the pilot

- *Didactic*: A series of lectures, mainly by visiting speakers e.g. the experience of a Transgender woman before, during and after the Troubles: a view of the varieties and significance of evangelical Protestantism; flags, parades and symbols
- *Experiential*: visits to exhibitions about the Troubles at the Ulster Museum; a Black Taxi tour of Belfast and a (voluntary) visit to the theatre to see a relevant play
- *Learning from peers*
- *Preparation for designing*, carrying out and reporting on semi-structured interviews with societal actors
- *Feedback* on learning journals completed by students each week

Clearly a course in Northern Ireland on Violence, Identity and Peace has potential to engage with social issues but what was crucial was that the experiential learning and reflective practice forced students to think about how their identities had been formed and reinforced and how this relates to violence and peace e.g. their experience of segregation in education, where they live and their social lives - including ongoing experiences at QUB.

Learners and trainers' profiles

The course was open to all QUB 2nd year Bachelors Sociology students. In 2016-2017 24 stu-

dents enrolled, from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds.

Two academics (both with background in educational studies) supported students with their learning, supplemented by a series of visiting lecturers who could bring different perspectives on Northern Irish society. The module is worth 10 ECTS.

Capacity building

Learning outcomes of the module are that students will be:

- Familiar with sociological debates about Northern Ireland as a 'society in transition'
- Capable of critiquing different analyses of the causes of conflict in Northern Ireland, understanding multiple perspectives and complexity
- Able to engage in systematic, critical and reflexive reasoning about change in Northern Ireland society
- Confident in using different types and sources of data to analyse contemporary society
- Students will know how to interact ethically and inclusively with social actors in order to enhance their own learning and contribute to society's understanding of conflict
- Students will have enhanced appreciation of the importance of their own values and those of others
- Students will have enhanced awareness of the value of appropriate collaboration in learning



Conclusions and Future actions

The students who engaged clearly enjoyed going outside their comfort zone and learned a lot. Five students out of 21 did not engage and dropped out. Over half the course got First class marks. This reflected the high quality of the learning journals the presentations which were peer marked generously.

What worked well

- Reflective practice: the students needed a lot of feedback to get the idea but most of them did
- Field visits: for many of the students, including the local ones, they learned a lot from the Ulster Museum and Black taxi tour about Northern Ireland, but they also learned to observe critically, mainly from each other
- Staff choosing the interviewees and randomly allocating them to students took them out of their comfort zones and made them aware of unfamiliar perspectives
- Fieldwork and presentations: the students needed a lot of preparation, in order to carry out the research ethically (E.g. learning not to ask leading and closed questions) but a certain lack of confidence and fear of doing it wrong, meant that they were willing to learn, and they were often elated when the interview and/or presentation went well

Learning points

- Attendance at classes was not mandatory, however it was vital in the frame of RRI since students needed to learn both the skills and theory behind undertaking interviews in an ethical way. When the time came to do the interview assignment, staff did not think it would be ethical for these students to carry out fieldwork if they had not been prepared adequately. If the situation had been understood earlier, the students could have been made aware of the relationship between attendance and outcomes.
- The marking scheme did not specifically cover the production of a Topic Guide for and Transcript from the interviews.
- Since this was a pilot, there was insufficient integration with other modules which the students had done or were doing.
- Engaging students with education for society
- The interviewees were carefully selected to reflect diversity of class, gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliation and migration but this was limited by the fact only 8 interviewees were required. They were mostly

older people because we wanted people with experience of the Troubles.

- The course was very demanding for the students because it required them to expand their cognitive knowledge (Of Northern Irish society), their skills (Research, presentation) and their self-awareness (Identity, ethical standards) and awareness of others (Fellow students, family, social actors) though the central idea being that ethnographic research does all three things.
- The example is having a Transgender woman as a speaker. Many of the students said that this was the first Trans person they had met (Though this was probably not true) and they learned a lot about the vocabulary around identity and the experiences of Trans people, but they also learned about how highly personal topics can be discussed and about their own attitudes and those of others.

Advice on replication

In Queen's, and in other UK universities and across Europe this kind of work needs to be located within existing provision rather than added on and four sites suggest themselves: Research principles and practice; Modules on the social context of disciplines; and Interdisciplinary studies.

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Disclaimer:

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