

Interreg



North-West Europe

IMAGINE

European Regional Development Fund

THEMATIC PRIORITY



INNOVATION



TOOLKITS

ON HOW TO ASSESS ENGAGEMENT LEVELS AND COMPETENCES



OVERVIEW

The IMAGINE project aims to tackle youth unemployment by providing sustainable job prospects in the horticulture sector, more specifically for young people (15-34 years old) who are NEET - not in education, employment or training - in (peri-)urban areas of North-West Europe.

In such locations, horticulture, urban agriculture and short food supply chains sectors are growing rapidly and require considerable volumes of low-skilled labour. However, job entry rates post-training in the sector remain persistently low - c20%. The sector also faces other significant barriers to fully developing its potential, including lack of access to land.

Local organisations and communities can (and do) help to overcome these deficiencies by facilitating free access to vacant land and by involving young people using a co-production methodology. IMAGINE looks to support the development, testing and implementation of different social incubation models (access to land and support mechanisms) in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

At the same time, we aim to create a transnational network with an interest in social innovation issues in urban and peri-urban horticulture to increase the depth and width of long-term effects and to help other organisations to replicate the models we have developed.

The IMAGINE project explicitly foresees innovative ways to help the project participants to find a pathway out of unemployment. In that sense the project wants to provide experimental opportunities to apply various principles of co-production to the work we do including that related to assessing engagement levels and learner competences.

The ways in which these principles are put into practice will vary from one partner area to another, depending on a range of different factors including the nature of the 300 NEETs across the six pilot areas with whom the project is being co-produced. For example, in the case of the Social Enterprise model being piloted by the Lycee Technique Agricole Ettelbruck in partnership with the Forum pour l'emploi and other local actors, work is being developed with input from job seekers all of whom are categorised as "difficult to place in the labour market" and all of whom have the status of disabled persons, as determined by the Luxembourg Ministry of Labour. In the UK case, the young people co-producing work in Surrey are all within the youth justice system, being supported towards paid employment or other positive outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

In order to help project partners (or organisation that would like to replicate the model) to assess engagement levels and competences of project participants, we have developed two toolkits. The first addresses the ways in which the IMAGINE project is approaching the subject of just how we assess the levels of engagement that project partners and others have with the NEET cohorts and vice versa. The second looks at how one might assess learners' competences in a way that reflects the objectives and spirit of a social innovation project such as IMAGINE employing a co-production approach.

There is a close relationship between the first toolkit and what had been developed previously as the IMAGINE co-production toolkit under the leadership of Surrey County Council. The second toolkit flows more from the "Roadmap on the minimal social competences and technical skills required in horticulture in NWE" led by the Lycee Technique Agricole Ettelbruck, and, in particular, their project sub-partner colleagues at the Forum pour l'emploi.

When first looking to develop this second toolkit, our focus was on initial assessment – the sort of judgements that might be made at the point of someone joining the IMAGINE project. Our focus has subsequently widened and we are looking at assessment at all points up to – and potentially beyond – completing participation in the project. This version has been prepared at an early stage of the piloting phase and we will be looking to revisit it in light of what we learn during that testing process. The current document is therefore intended as something that is to be used (and returned to) during the time that a learner spends on the IMAGINE project. In particular the focus of the second toolkit is very much on the underpinning rationale for our approach and what its implementation might include; we will want to revisit the "how" in greater detail as our work continues.

The first of the two toolkits is designed for use by the young adults involved in IMAGINE as individual participants although it does make the point that it can, with benefit, also be used by others alongside the participants. The approach of the second toolkit is slightly different – it is intended for use by both participants and others in conjunction. It is not intended as a pure self-assessment tool, at the same time we are not suggesting (we advocate the exact opposite in fact) that assessment is carried out without the meaningful involvement of the human subjects of that assessment – for example we encourage an approach that actively involves participants in reaching decisions as to their competences.

TOOLKIT ON ENGAGEMENT

OUR IMAGINE ENGAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

This tool enables young adults who are involved in IMAGINE to assess their own, personal level of engagement in co-production of IMAGINE pilots, based around our six co-production principles.

Whilst this tool is designed to be used for individual participants, real insight can be gained by getting a wide range of participants to complete this tool, including professionals and partners alongside participants, and comparing the results.

Our co-production principles¹

Build on people's existing capabilities

To seek out what they can do, not define people by what they can't do.

Deliver in a way that depends on reciprocal relationships

Between project employees and community participants, or organisations and communities

Encourage mutual support networks among community participants

Especially to provide support for the participants at the point at which paid employees move on when the project finishes

Blur the distinctions between employees and participants

Be catalysts for broader benefits in communities

Recognising participants as assets to the projects and the wider community

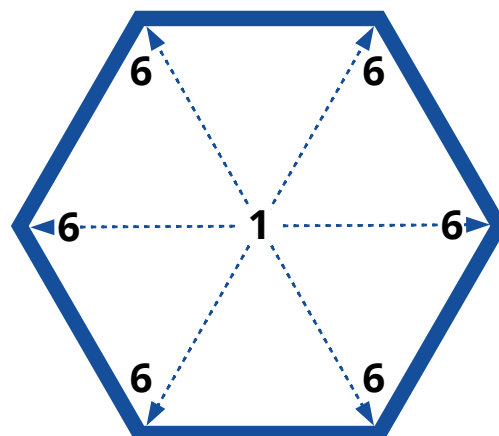
¹ Adapted from [altogether better.com](https://altogetherbetter.com)

OUR IMAGINE ENGAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

How to use the tool

The tool invites you to score six statements from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). These statements relate to different aspects of our co-production principles.

You are then asked to plot your score for each statement on a star chart, which gives a visual representation of your results and estimates your level of engagement in co-production of IMAGINE.



Interpreting the results

The scores given provide a rough indication of how engaged you are as an individual in co-production within the

IMAGINE project, either “basic”, “getting there” or “excellent”. You probably won't find the descriptions against each of the statements exactly match your opinion, so you're looking to judge which most closely matches your view. Each statement is assessed on its own – you won't be adding these together to achieve a total score.

High scores (4-6)

Higher scores should be seen as positive, as they suggest you are strongly engaged in this aspect of co-production of the IMAGINE project and the way the project is being run is helping you to participate in this way. It might be helpful to speak to others about the particular areas where you marked down high scores, to explore what you feel has worked well, how we can learn from this and do it more !

You might want to invite other people involved in the project to also complete the template on your behalf, to get different perspectives about your level of engagement. It can be really helpful to hear what other people think, alongside our own views, and explore differences. Talking to other people involved in the project will also be important in understanding what your scores really mean and how the project needs to adapt in response.

Low scores (1-3)

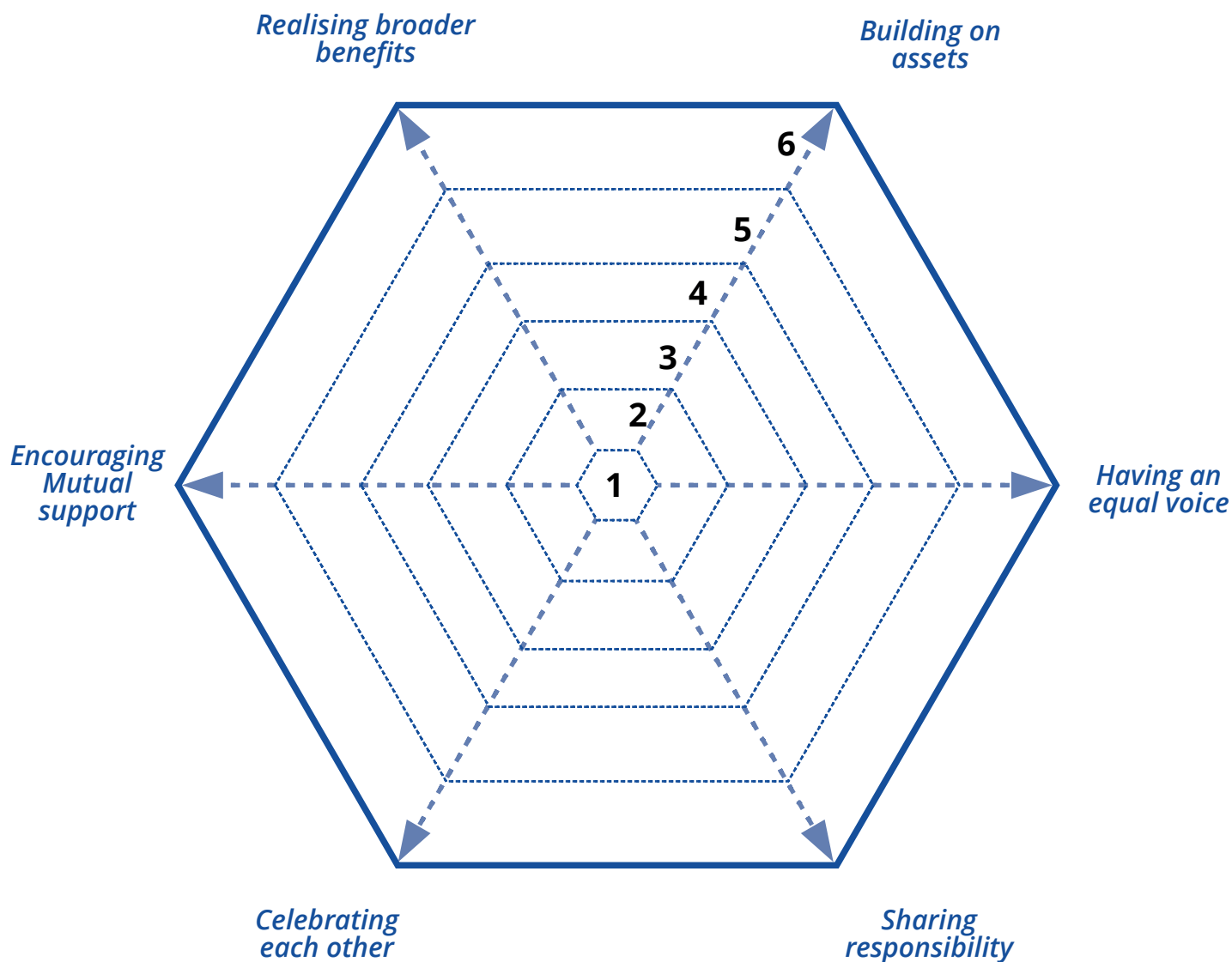
Lower scores suggest you are not yet strongly engaged in this aspect of co-production of the IMAGINE project. This might be something that helps you to personally think about how you can become more engaged, but it might also have something to do with how the project is being run or the opportunities you have been offered. We'd like you to use this template as a tool to help you have conversations with others involved.

Self-reflection

This last section allows you to make additional statements or comments about your engagement experience in the project. You are particularly encouraged to use this section to address any issues that you feel the scoring system above has not covered that you would like to explore further.

| Which principles are supported ? | Co-production indicator | Basic | | Getting there | | Excellent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Build on people's existing capabilities Recognising participants as assets to the projects and the wider community | Building on assets the assets of all involved are understood and central to the design and delivery of the project | I feel I have limited opportunities to share what I know, what I can do and what's important to me. I don't feel this has a real impact on the direction the project goes in. | | I feel I often have opportunities to share what I know, what I can do and what's important to me. I feel that my strengths are partly used in delivering the project. | | I feel I am always able to share what I know, what I can do and what's important to me. I see that my strengths are used to the full in delivering the project. | |
| | Your score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Deliver in a way that depends on reciprocal relationships Blur the distinction between employees and participants | Having an equal voice everyone has an equal voice in the running of the project | I feel that I have limited opportunities to contribute to the running of the project and/or I don't make the most of the opportunities that are given to me. | | I feel that I often have opportunities to contribute to the running of the project and I make good use of the opportunities I am given. | | I feel I have a constant, active and equal part to play in running, directing, and evaluating the project. My opinions have equal weight to those of others, including professionals. | |
| | Your score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Deliver in a way that depends on reciprocal relationships Blur the distinction between employees and participants | Sharing responsibility everyone has an equal share in responsibility for delivering the project | I feel I am given limited responsibility for the delivery of the project and/or don't feel I make best use of the opportunities I am given to take responsibility. | | I feel I am often given responsibility for parts of the project and I make good use of the opportunities I am given. | | I feel a strong sense of responsibility for the project and have an equal share in its success or failure with other participants. | |
| | Your score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Recognising participants as assets to the projects and the wider community | Celebrating each other the contribution of others to the work is recognised and celebrated throughout the work | I feel my contribution is limited and/or, when I do contribute this is not celebrated within the project. | | I feel I often have opportunities to contribute and my contributions are actively celebrated within the team. | | I feel a strong sense that my contributions are valued and celebrated within the project, and I celebrate what other people bring too | |
| | Your score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Encourage mutual support networks among community participants Be catalysts for broader benefits in communities | Encouraging mutual support creating opportunities for participants and community members to connect with and support one another. | I feel like the network of people I know in the project and local community is limited and I would struggle to know who to talk to for support. | | I feel like the network of people I know in the project and local community is good and is growing, and I know who I would go to if I need support. | | I feel like I have a strong network of people that I know in the project and local community, I know who I would go to for support and people also come to me for support when they need it. | |
| | Your score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Be catalysts for broader benefits in communities | Realising broader benefits everyone has an equal share in responsibility for delivering the project | I feel like I am not very aware of how the project is helping the people involved and/or the wider community | | I feel like I have a good understanding of how the contribution I make to the project helps the people involved and benefits the wider community | | I feel I actively seek to make the most difference I can through my work on the project to a wide range of people and organisations involved in the project | |
| | Your score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



Name :

Date completed :

Role in IMAGINE :

SELF-RELECTION

Please use this space to capture any other thoughts or questions you would like to talk about further

TOOLKIT ON ASSESSING COMPETENCES IN A CO-PRODUCTION CONTEXT

1. ASSESSING COMPETENCE THE IMAGINE APPROACH

In assessing competence, as in any other area of the project's work, IMAGINE partners will look to develop and adopt a range of methodologies which are based on the underpinning principles of co-production, and on a complementary and broader set of values which are rooted in respect and recognition. As this is a toolkit as opposed to a report, we will be trying to illustrate not only what those principles are and how they might come to be applied in the context of assessing competences, but also how we might best support ourselves and others in making judgments about how successful we are in applying these principles and practice

This toolkit is not about determining (or even suggesting) the competences that we (in the broadest sense) might be making assessment decisions about, but is about the ways in which those judgements are arrived at and by whom. In a later annex to the toolkit we will include examples of the competences that are addressed by some IMAGINE partners, and an indication in some cases of the "assessment framework" that is used to do this. These are illustrative only however, and we make no attempt at all to be prescriptive about what is assessed other than to the extent that what is and is not included, reflects, or fails to reflect, the principles we are looking to enact.

2. THE PRINCIPLES

This section of the toolkit is primarily about the co-production principles as set out in the IMAGINE Co-production Manual 2019 and the IMAGINE Toolkit for assessing engagement levels. At the same time however it also draws upon a number of key tenets familiar to those involved in “social education”, social innovation, individual empowerment and community involvement work etc. These include underlining notions about self-esteem and self-value and valuing others, and the importance that should be placed on the type and quality of interactions (transactions) between people. That in turn implies placing equal value on people and their inputs/contributions regardless of their levels of qualification, rates of earning (if any), academic

qualifications, as well as orientating ourselves towards the positive attributes and capabilities of people as opposed to focusing on what is judged to be lacking, imperfect or somehow “lesser”. In short, much of what underpins our approach is about investing in relationships, about valuing ourselves and others and reaping the rewards that follow in terms of motivation and productivity. That in turn has a huge amount to do with communication – not only what is communicated, but the way in which communication takes place. In the more specific context of assessing competences within IMAGINE it also implies that the way in which assessment is done and assessment decisions arrives at directly impacts under the results both current and future.

With regard to each of the six co-production principles set out within the IMAGINE Co-production Manual and the engagement levels self-assessment toolkit, we are setting out below some key considerations when it comes to their application to the process of assessing competences :

A. Building on people's existing capabilities

This is key; pivotal to our thinking and approach should be that our participants (like anyone else) come to this work with capabilities already. They are not to be regarded as empty vessels or blank canvasses but rather as individuals who bring abilities with them from the beginning. This “asset based” starting point should shape our approach in actively seeking out and understanding what these existing capabilities are, how they can be harnessed as part of the project co-production more broadly, and in the process of assessing competences more specifically. We might include in our thinking here the “heads, hands and hearts” approach which was put forward as part of the IMAGINE co-production methodology – where heads are about knowledge, hands are about skills, and hearts can be understood to refer to the themes or issues that people are passionate about. In short, this assets based approach should serve as an encouragement for us to go looking for what people CAN (already) do, as opposed to what they are judged to be incapable of.

Taking account of and looking to build upon the existing capabilities of individual NEET participants might manifest itself in the following ways :

- ➔ Allowing for the accreditation of prior learning.
- ➔ Allowing for the accreditation of prior experience and existing knowledge.
- ➔ Actively seeking out and exploring existing capabilities – not solely from within formal learning experiences but more broadly.
- ➔ Encouraging project participants to “bring forward” and be part of the process of contextualising these existing capabilities.
- ➔ Clearly mapping existing capabilities against existing or developing assessment frameworks.

B. Delivering in a way that depends on reciprocal relationships

The reciprocity in relationships between all involved in the IMAGINE project is a key tenet of the approach and should be understood and acted upon by everyone. It applies not just to the individual NEET Participant and to the training delivery entity but to all involved in delivery.

It requires an approach which is rooted in a notion of equality and complementary strengths as opposed to one of hierarchies of roles, power, importance, status etc. where one individual or set of individuals is entitled to make judgements and decisions on behalf of others. Under the preferred model, each individual has a role to play should they wish, in all aspects of project delivery. This is genuine reciprocity, and it therefore follows that in the instance of assessing competence, those who are themselves the subject of such assessments have similar responsibilities to everyone else.

Taking account of our desire to make all relationships genuinely reciprocal might manifest itself in the following ways :

- ➔ Ensuring that any individual who is the subject of assessments is meaningfully involved in the assessment decision-making process.
- ➔ Ensuring that others, alongside the formal assessor and individual NEET participant, (such as support workers), have the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in the assessment process.
- ➔ Ensuring that this involvement on the part of individual NEET participants and others goes beyond the actual assessment decision-making to the design and implementation of those broader processes.
- ➔ Checking that that involvement is meaningful , and testing that with all concerned in an open and non-judgemental way based on the principle of equal worth.

C. Encouraging mutual support networks among community participants

Given the roundedness of the reciprocal relationships described above, it is reasonable that our approach takes account of a multiplicity of relationships between all involved. This includes in the context of support, where we will want to look beyond the support offered by trainer to learner to the support offered in diverse directions, including peer support between individual NEET participants themselves as well as with other members of local communities where the IMAGINE pilots are taking place.

Taking account of our desire to use co-production as a means to encourage support networks between all involved might manifest itself in the following ways :

- ➔ Bringing a dimension of peer-review into the assessment process.
- ➔ Applying due emphasis and recognition to elements of assessed activity or knowledge which have an inherently mutual or joint dimension to them.
- ➔ Broadening the range of what is to be assessed to include demonstrable support given by individual NEET participants to others.
- ➔ Encouraging individual NEET participants to develop their own support networks able and willing to bring forward evidence of competence and similar¹.

¹ We might also think back here to the relationship mapping templates that are referred to in the co-production toolkit – for example within the target diagram. That might in turn prompt us to think about how we might go about reviewing how a participant's network of relationships, and the importance of individual connections, has changed and developed through the project, as part a holistic assessment of competence.

D. Blurring the distinction between employees and participants

For the purposes of this exercise we might understand the term “employee” to refer to those professionals involved in IMAGINE project delivery within the partner organisations – although, in the context of assessing competence, we might most readily think about trainers, assessors, verifiers etc. we should think more broadly, as well as we go on to explain below. This blurring of distinctions between delivery agencies and recipients (or whatever other terms we might choose to use), in part reflects our desire to break down artificial barriers and divides, and any accompanying value judgements, but is also about recognising that relationships are fluid and both multiple and variable depending upon context.

Taking account of our desire to blur distinctions between participants and paid delivery staff might manifest itself in the following ways :

- ➔ Blurring the distinction between those who act as trainers and assessors and those who are the subject of the learning process itself by allowing for active involvement of the “subjects” in the assessment process itself.
- ➔ Blurring the distinction between those who act as trainers and assessors and those who are the subject of the learning process itself by allowing for an element of self-assessment.
- ➔ Allowing for input to the assessment process from a learner’s peers, by way, for example, of witness statements and similar.
- ➔ Taking account of the input of those other individuals engaging with individual NEET participants as has already been suggested with regard to the reciprocity of relationships.

E. Being catalysts for broader benefits in communities

This principle is in part about taking a rounded – in this case, community level – approach, it encourages us to think beyond the individual person and to regard individual NEET participants (and others of course) to be social beings. In particular it encourages an approach which proactively looks to map individual development with a consideration of mutual benefit between that development and the groups of people and places upon which this development might have a positive impact.

In the context of assessing competence it can serve as a spur for us to explore and seek out a greater range of circumstances and contexts within which an individual might be able to gain recognition of competence. It looks to identify those broader benefits for making a contribution towards which the individual might then in turn be accorded recognition. In this way we might also be thinking about encouraging participants to seek out opportunities for bringing about wider community benefit as part of their work, and look to capture the “competency” they develop at doing this.

Taking account of our desire to use co-production as a way to stimulate and capture the ways in which our work can bring broader benefits to local communities might manifest itself in the following ways :

- ➔ Broadening the assessment framework to explicitly capture the relationship between demonstrable competences and broader community benefits.
- ➔ Broadening the assessment process to allow meaningful input to assessment decisions to be gathered from across relevant communities.
- ➔ Enabling and supporting individual NEET participants to bring forward competence established in community contexts.
- ➔ Encouraging and supporting community members to become involved in formal assessment processes as valued and valuable stakeholders.

F. Recognising participants as assets to the project and the wider community

This brings us full circle to the first of the six principles where we considered the sorts of existing capabilities that individual NEET participants “bring to the table”. Here, though we take a broader approach which goes beyond capabilities to encompass knowledge and attitudes so that we are further encouraged to regard participants as “assets” – as having positive attributes from the outset and being able to bring those assets to bear for positive purposes during their time on the IMAGINE project and beyond. In very similar vein to 2.A in particular, this approach leads us to look for, and reflect upon how we build upon, the positives as opposed to focusing on the gaps and shortfalls.

Further, and in line with the community-level approach taken with regard to the potential to act as catalysts (2.E), we are also looking here to achieve recognition of the fact that the positive impact of individuals as assets extends beyond the project itself into broader aspects of the participants’ lives and the communities with which they have an involvement.

Our desire to use co-production as a means by which we might take an “assets based approach” might manifest itself in the following ways :

- ➔ Looking proactively to identify broader personal attributes and capabilities (their assets as “heads, hands and hearts” as previously), which might be drawn upon as part of a competence assessment framework.
- ➔ Supporting individual NEET participants and members of their network to bring forward evidence of competence drawn from across a broad range of contexts.
- ➔ Encouraging and supporting assessors to take an asset-based approach to the identification of sources of evidence of competence.
- ➔ Encouraging and supporting assessors to take an asset-based approach to the processes for arriving at assessment of competence decisions.

3. APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

With regard to just how we apply the six principles above, some practical suggestions have already been offered with regard to the top-line principles themselves (see 2.A to 2.F). In addition to those six headline principles, this section shares further complementary thoughts with regard to the six co-production indicators set out within the IMAGINE Toolkit for assessing engagement level.

A. Building on assets

The assets of all involved are understood and central to the design and delivery of the project

This relates closely to the content of both the first and last of the principles addressed above – at 2.A and 2.F respectively. Having, (assuming that we have), accepted the necessity and desirability of the assets-based approach if we are to achieve optimal benefits from a genuinely co-produced project, we need to ensure that those assets are fully and accurately understood and that they are a real factor in determining the ways in which IMAGINE is designed and delivered.

In the context of assessing competences that means :

- ➔ Capturing the assets of all individuals and organisations involved.
- ➔ Doing that in a way that itself follows the co-production principles.
- ➔ Using that information and the assets themselves to shape the structure and content of competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Using that information and the assets themselves to shape the processes and division of labour within competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Using that information and the assets themselves to test, review and revise competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Using that information and the assets themselves to better understand the impacts of competence assessment arrangements, both positive and negative.

B. Having an equal voice

Everyone has an equal voice in the running of the project

Considerations of equality are especially pertinent to our underpinning concerns about respect and valuing each other and therefore giving equal weight to the input of all involved.

In the context of assessing competences that means :

- ➔ Being very clear with all involved that IMAGINE operates on the basis of all having equal voices.
- ➔ Achieving some sort of shared understanding of what that equality of voices means in practice in the context of assessing competences.
- ➔ Achieving commitment from all to that principle.
- ➔ Ensuring that the principle is transparently embedded in competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Testing the effectiveness of embedding the principle in competence assessment arrangements.

C. Sharing responsibility

Everyone has an equal share in responsibility for delivering the project

This is about the responsibilities that evolve naturally from our position that there is an equally valid and equally important role for everyone in the IMAGINE co-production process. That equity of inputs is reflected in an equal distribution of responsibilities for delivering that which is co-produced.

In the context of assessing competences that means :

- ➔ Co-designing a series of competence assessment arrangements within which account is taken of who has responsibility for what.
- ➔ Ensuring that sharing responsibility in an equal way is transparently embedded in competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Encouraging and supporting each other in accepting that responsibility, and fully understanding its nature and implications.
- ➔ Encouraging and supporting each other in delivering on those elements of shared responsibility.
- ➔ Ensuring that ongoing review and monitoring of the competence assessment arrangements is itself a shared responsibility.
- ➔ Embedding individual NEET participants' contributions by way of sharing responsibility into the framework of competences to be assessed.
- ➔ Pro-actively looking for and capturing the competences displayed in that context.

D. Celebrating each other

The contribution of others to the work is recognised and celebrated throughout the work

This element of our co-production approach serves to remind us that one indication that the approach is being implemented in the ways to which we aspire, is that the contributions of all those involved in the process is not only recognised but celebrated. And here we might see an echo of what we have already said about an asset based approach – where seeing other people as assets and celebrating their success are themselves part of that approach.

In the context of assessing competences that means :

- ➔ Co-designing competence assessment arrangements which clearly show the nature, extent and source of all contributions to those arrangements.
- ➔ Ensuring that the nature, extent and source of all contributions is apparent within the delivery of competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Ensuring that the nature, extent and source of all contributions is apparent when reviewing competence assessment arrangements and recording the results of such reviews.
- ➔ Celebrating the various and varying contributions made by everyone to the competence assessment arrangements at design, delivery and review stages.
- ➔ Embedding individual NEET participants' contributions by way of celebrating each other into the framework of competences to be assessed.
- ➔ Pro-actively looking for and capturing the competences displayed in that context.

E. Encouraging mutual support

Creating opportunities for participants and community members to connect with and support one another

The sort of breadth and depth of support mechanisms to which we aspire as part of a co-produced project is unlikely to naturally occur without stimulus. How then is such stimulus to be provided and by whom? It is highly likely that opportunities for connection and support will have to be created and supported on an ongoing basis and become an integral dimension of our work.

In the context of assessing competences that means :

- ➔ Establishing systems and processes that encourage mutual support between all involved in co-designing competence assessment frameworks.
- ➔ Encouraging mutual support between all involved in the process of co-designing or adapting competence assessment processes.
- ➔ Encouraging ongoing mutual support between all involved in the process of undertaking competence assessment.
- ➔ Encouraging ongoing mutual support between all involved in the process of reviewing the effectiveness and impact both positive and negative of competence assessment.
- ➔ Embedding individual NEET participants' contributions by way of connection and support into the framework of competences to be assessed.
- ➔ Pro-actively looking for and capturing the competences displayed in that context.

F. Realising broader benefits

Everyone involved seeks to achieve wider benefits for others in the community

In order to achieve the magnitude of multiple and optimal benefits to which IMAGINE project partners aspire, we will very likely need to bring an appropriate level of ambition to what we do. Part of that heightened ambition level will be to look for benefits at a broad level extending beyond the individual NEET participant and those most immediately involved in project delivery – although, of course, we should mitigate that potential “gap” by ensuring that the widest possible range of relevant stakeholders ARE directly involved !!

In the context of assessing competences that means :

- ➔ Achieving some sort of shared understanding of what the wider benefits for others in the community might be and why we seek to achieve them.
- ➔ Achieving commitment from everyone to that principle.
- ➔ Co-designing competence assessment processes which allow for and clearly show the nature, extent and source of all contributions to achieve wider benefits for others in the community.
- ➔ Embedding the sorts of actions likely to contribute to realising wider benefits for others in the community into the competence assessment framework.
- ➔ Embedding individual NEET participants' contributions by way of realising broader benefits into the framework of competences to be assessed.
- ➔ Pro-actively looking for and capturing the competences displayed in that context.

4. MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

We will want to understand whether our attempts to take a new approach to assessing competence in a co-production context are successful. That forms a part of the testing and experimentation that lies at the heart of a social innovation project such as IMAGINE. Based upon what we have set out in the previous two sections, we will want to work together to agree specific success measures as our work develops and that therefore lies in the future. Nevertheless, we can set out some guidance points for ourselves from the outset :

GOAL

- ➔ We will want to keep very clear in our minds that what we are concerned with here is the ways in which we assess competences.
- ➔ It is not about the results of that assessment per se - although obviously there is a connection between the process and the outcomes.

HOW

- ➔ We will want to be extremely careful about making connections or assumptions about cause and effect - for example if the rates of attainment of qualifications increases we cannot assume that that is because our assessment process have improved – or worsened !
- ➔ We will not assume causality, but at the same time we will be actively seeking it.

WITH WHOM

- ➔ We will want to be very clear in our minds that different stakeholders (co-producers) will place different values upon different kinds of competence assessment procedures (and their results in the form of diplomas and similar).
- ➔ Part of our co-production approach will be to have ongoing and rounded discussions about this – and here, given the employment focus of our work, we might think especially about the perceptions, aspirations, preferences and needs of employers.
- ➔ These employers are every bit as much a part of the co-production process as any other actor, they are likely to be part of the competence assessment process (depending on local models), and even more likely to be making decisions regarding employment of individuals, based upon those processes.

WHAT

- ➔ Given the content and spirit of much of what has already been written, it is expected that much of what we will want to focus on is “soft” – it is very much related to human and emotional interactions.
- ➔ In that sense we are inhabiting an interesting middle ground where complex, evolving (ever-changing is probably no exaggeration) and delicate human interactions are at play alongside a set of (assessment) procedures and processes in many ways designed to be empirical, clear-cut, objective and definitive.
- ➔ In all likelihood, our approach will make us eager to capture progress at multiple points, in various forms, and of different volumes however slight.
- ➔ In that sense much of what we are setting out to do is about capturing change.
- ➔ In reality, it is probable that at least some of that progress/change (although, real, valuable and extremely important), will sit outside of what is captured in formal competence assessment arrangements.
- ➔ Nor will we be assuming progress to be linear; it may take more circuitous routes, even to the point of seeming circular on occasion! That will not necessarily sit easily against some of the assumptions of more formal assessment regimes.

All of the above, and doubtless other matters arising, will form part of the work of what IMAGINE partners are doing during the pilot phase of the project. Our aim is to carry out that work in line with all the principles outlined within this toolkit and to share the findings as widely as possible.

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