

Liberal Arts

Fresh thinking for the great challenges the world faces today



Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching: Frameworks and
Practice Conference

Open University, 6th April 2017

Applying Interdisciplinary Approaches in the Liberal Arts through ‘Living Labs’

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Overview

The Liberal Arts at Keele

The ‘Living Labs’ approach

Examples of innovative interdisciplinarity

Conclusions and Q&A

What is the Liberal Arts?

- New interdisciplinary Faculty wide programmes
- Based in Keele Hall
- Innovative Teaching and Learning based on theory, practice and learning spaces
- 30 credit new LA Core modules over 2 semesters in both Years 1 and 2
- 30 credit dissertation or practical project on based on interdisciplinary research and practice
- Electives chosen from across HUMSS
- Collaboration with Natural Sciences students in 'Learning Sets' and Grand Challenges Lectures, exploring global issues and problems



What are Living Labs?

- allow students to engage with theories and perspectives outside the classroom
- 'field trips' to specific locations
- encourage exploration and application of knowledge and methodologies in situ
- thinking and doing in real living communities
- students engaged in an active learning process in real world physical and social landscapes
- working in collaborative learning groups to investigate and analyse evidence from the field

Informed by models of social constructionist education:

Dewey (1933/1998) problem solving in a social context: real world learning situations

Piaget's Cognitive Development theory (1970) and Conception of Equilibration (1985)

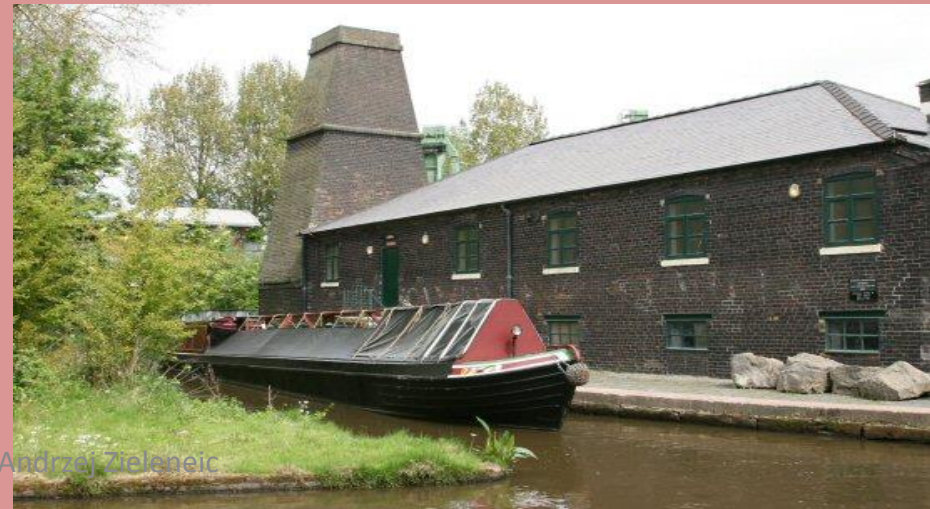
Vygotsky ((1934): how we perceive the world provides frameworks through which we experience, communicate, and understand reality.

Some examples

Themes and topics for the 'Living Labs' - based on Level 4 core module content:

Understanding the World Through the Liberal Arts

Space and Time - Etruria and Wedgwood: Industry, history, location and change



Living Histories - Social, industrial, economic and community change: Ironbridge



Ella Tennant and Andrzej Zielonec



Ethnography and Urban Space - participant observation in public space: Central Forest Park and Hanley Town centre



Conclusions

- The 'Living Labs' approach offers potential to extend innovative learning experience and prepared activities outside the classroom
- This enables creative interactive activity in real life spaces, places, environments and communities
- It leads to new thinking through engaged and participatory, interdisciplinary teaching and learning for both learners and teachers
- The linking of classroom and field activities provides the opportunity to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills
- 'Living Labs' and interaction with the surrounding environment is a reflection of the innovative and distinctive nature of the liberal arts degree programme at Keele.

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