

### Activity 1: SWOT analysis

		<b>Topic assessed:</b> Cooperation between practitioners and researchers NUI Maynooth, Kilkenny Campus	
		<b>Helpful</b> in achieving the objective	<b>Harmful</b> in achieving the objective
<b>Internal Factors</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good student research at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels.</li> <li>- The Kilkenny campus was established as a result of research into participation levels in the Kilkenny region. Low level of participation in second and third level education and a high level of early school leavers were educational issues at the time.</li> <li>- The conceptual vision for the campus developed out of the Department of Adult and Community Education. The Department's ethos, philosophy and values underpin the pedagogy and teaching methodologies employed by campus staff. Commitment to social justice, civil rights and a person centred approach to education are all core values of the campus and the Department. Thus practitioners are imbued with these values too. Consequently research is not a separate activity from practice but rather integral to it. All activities on campus are developed in tandem with research, consultation and in collaboration with external and internal partners.</li> <li>- Course offerings are often inter-departmental and interdisciplinary. The courses are developed as a result of a dialogue between Campus staff and teaching staff in departments at NUI Maynooth Campus.</li> <li>- The practice of using small participative learning groups is part of the teaching practice at the Campus. Teaching staff are often unfamiliar with this approach and learn how to do it as part of their experience of teaching at Kilkenny.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kilkenny staff view their practice as research, however they do not own an identity as researchers because more traditional and conventional notions of what a researcher is dominates in the discourses on research practice.</li> <li>- The definition of research in the institution, and in higher education generally is very conventional. However this is changing particularly in the social sciences and the arts faculties.</li> <li>- Lack of time AND money! This is the greatest barrier at present as staffing is reduced due to the recession. Decreased staff or staff changes – Early retirement means that many experienced staff are leaving. The Employment Control Framework does not allow replacement of permanent staff as a result of early retirement. Temporary short term contracts are becoming the norm. This results in an over-reliance on occasional staff who often carry responsibilities beyond the expectations defined by their post requirements.</li> <li>- Although research is an ongoing activity for all staff, little has been published about the campus and its activities.</li> </ul>	

	Opportunities	Threats
External Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publication of a book about the Kilkenny model of education the role and impact of Kilkenny Campus in the community</li> <li>- Research opportunities are numerous. The campus is about to embark on a new project. The 1<sup>st</sup> Arts programme is to be delivered in 2013. This will mean that it will now have to facilitate learning for more traditional students eg 18year olds. The irony is inescapable. A campus designed and set up for mature students is now going to offer courses to 'typical' students. This offers a unique research opportunity for Kilkenny.</li> <li>- Kilkenny campus could be viewed as a test bed for mainstreaming Adult Education practice in a third level context. There is a need to record how this education model has impacted on students, staff (administrative and teaching) and others who engage with the campus as partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding for research is problematic. Without funding institutions are reliant on individual practitioners and student research. Sourcing funding can be time consuming and there are not guarantees of success</li> <li>- Decreased funding- as above- and overall funding for the Campus from the Higher Education Authority could come under question in the context of cut backs in the overall third level budget nationally.</li> <li>- Economical context – as mentioned elsewhere the current economic crisis has resulted in a reduction in staffing, an Employment Control Framework that has reduced salaries and constrained recruitment of new staff and in relations to lifelong learning (part-time) the population has less money of their own to spend on education. The hike in fees for full-time higher education means that families are prioritising education for their young people and putting their own educational needs in a secondary position.</li> </ul>

**2. Can the hindering factors (weaknesses and threats) be generalised and applied at national level? Which other hindering factors can be identified?**

It must be acknowledged that Ireland is going through a difficult and sustained economic depression. The effect of is outlined above.

**3. Once you have identified the general hindering factors, please try to analyse their reasons to find out how these factors are embedded in your respective learning and research culture.**

As outlined above it is impossible for staff to formalise their research and publish it because of the economic depression and its consequences as outlined above re staff etc.

- Insufficient network- There are many adult education related networks in Ireland. The most successful are the associations whose remit was established by legislation eg The National Access Association; Aontas; NALA; IVEA; AEA. There is no network for adult education in universities although attempts have been made to set them up e.g. Higher Learning Network. A regional network is being established in the Dublin area called the Widening Participation Network however its focus is access, progression and transfer, it has not established itself as a university lifelong learning or adult education network.
- Different backgrounds  
Education in Ireland is divided into two groups – compulsory education and post compulsory education. Adult education comprises the latter including: further education, community education, work based training and education, higher education. Its remit is very broad. It

operates at the level of teacher education across all these sub-sections of post compulsory education but also it is identified with course delivery across a range of topics e.g. workplace courses, community education courses, continuous professional development. This area of adult education is also called lifelong learning. There is confusion about what adult education is as much as there is confusion about what lifelong learning is or purports to be. Adult education is underpinned by principles and philosophy around equality, inclusion and widening participation. It takes a constructivist approach and in many cases is opposed to the 'banking' model of education. It is learning and learner centred and promotes models of flexibility not on the basis of serving the economic needs of society but because they serve individuals and promote participation. It is committed to student/teacher engagement through small group learning and fosters personal development in all its activities. Lifelong learning has not yet articulated a position, underpinning principles or a philosophical basis. It is argued here that it is most often associated with work and the economy and its inclusion and equality agenda relates more readily to these needs. These differing backgrounds are problematic because the adult education identity is multifaceted and complex and often misunderstood.

- Organisation of Work  
As outlined above in the philosophy of Adult Education , practitioners are viewed as researchers but in practice there is little scope in terms of time or funding for them to take ownership of that and to write and present their findings due to the lack of time and the culture of traditional separation of roles in the academy.
- Acceptance of LLL – Lifelong learning in Ireland is not as central to the agenda as it was in the past. It has been replaced by the urgent needs of the economy and the perceived need to upskill the workforce to increase job opportunities for the growing number of unemployed. Lifelong learning is not funded by the government other than as part of the labour activation strategy known as the Spring Board.
- Polemical character of LLL – Those who are committed to LL have a passion for it however this group are generally those who see its role as delivering education for all. Government funders become weary of polemical arguments and look instead evidence based research and impact measurements. It could be argued that as lifelong learning practitioners do not have the formal publication base to support their polemics consequently they find themselves and their arguments consigned to the margins.

#### **4. Actions that could be carried out to overcome these identified reasons for barriers and hindering factors to cooperation between ULLL researchers and practitioners or solutions**

Please identify and explain possible solutions for the identified reasons of barriers.

A culture of research could be fostered in all areas of practice and more an emphasis on the role of practitioners as intellectuals should be promoted. Thus publication training could become an integral part of CPD for practitioners and it could become part of their job description also. The goal would be that all practitioners would become researching professionals or in some instances professional researchers.

**5. Actors which (could) play a role in carrying out these actions (based on the network analysis of activity 2 and 3) and reason:**

Please reflect on how the identified actors of the network analysis could help to overcome identified barriers and constraints.

Actors	Reason
HEA	They provide funding and influence research agendas, as well as their role in policy making.
DACE/NUI Maynooth	The Department of Adult and Community Education at NUI Maynooth have always espoused the culture of encouraging and fostering a research element into the practice of staff who would not traditionally have research as part of their remit. The Department can continue to highlight this position through its own research agenda and influence the culture, both of its own University, including Kilkenny Campus and in the wider national and international context.
AO NTAS	As the organisation that has very successfully represented the interests of adult learners, AONTAS are well placed to keep this goal highlighted in their publications and conferences.
Kilkenny Campus	The Campus is a rich test bed for both adult education and innovative models of delivering third level education to school leavers from 2013. The Campus can strategically focus on its research agenda and embed the promotion of the practitioner as researcher in its bid for resources to promote this agenda.
EUCEN	Can facilitate and disseminate an exchange of experience and research on this issue.