

## Activity 1: SWOT analysis

<b>Topic assessed:</b> The Adult Learner Journal: forum for debate about new knowledge and skills for adult learning	
<b>Helpful</b> in achieving the objective	<b>Harmful</b> in achieving the objective
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>Examples of factors considered under strengths could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The adult learner is a tried and in tested product for linking research and practice adult learner ( the Journal is in its 28<sup>th</sup> year of publication)</li> <li>- The Journal provides a forum for critical reflection on research and practices for all those working in the adult and community education sector – academic researchers, policy makers, teachers and community researchers all contribute to debate through the journal</li> <li>- The journal has an editorial board which includes representatives from all sectors of provision i.e. universities; community policy; practice;)</li> <li>- The journal is freely available online</li> <li>- The Journal has excellent support with Irish Government funding being made available through AONTAS- The Adult Learning Association of Ireland</li> <li>- Funding is available for administrative support and the printing of the Journal each year.</li> <li>- A considerable amount of good will exists among the sector to support the journal</li> <li>- through voluntary support from professionals working in a wide range of services</li> <li>- The Adult Education Officers' Association, the representative body for adult and community education in Ireland, supports the publication</li> <li>- The Journal provides a useful forum of debate for practitioners, researchers and all those undertaking academic programmes and training courses in the adult and community sectors.</li> <li>- Good administrative support is available from AONTAS(The Irish Adult Learning Association) , which is the hosting body for the journal</li> <li>- The editorial team have a wide range of skills and knowledge which is necessary for the quality management process of the</li> </ul>	<p>Examples of factors considered under weaknesses could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing bridges between academic research and practice can be difficult- the academic style and approach to communicating key messages from research is not always understood and this can create barriers to learning from research and implementing change</li> <li>- The academic community do not always value this kind of research publication and so researchers may seek other forums for disseminating their research</li> <li>- The user group is largely drawn from the national population</li> <li>- Although available online, the journal could be more widely used and national and international level.</li> <li>- The publication has limited ways of communicating messages which are almost exclusively through writing or articles and reports etc;</li> <li>- It has so far proved difficult to attract international interest in the journal, though this is growing</li> <li>- The current economic downturn provides pressures on organisations which limits the amount of support that can be made available.</li> <li>- the Journal is largely dependent on the good will of professionals working across various sectors. This can sometimes prove problematic, if not enough time is available.</li> </ul>

Internal Factors

	<p>journal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Journal supports the philosophy and values of Government policy and practice in Lifelong learning and improving promoting quality in provision</li> <li>- It also provides an independent forum for critiquing policy and practice.</li> </ul>	
<b>External Factors</b>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Examples of factors considered under opportunities could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Journal provides excellent opportunities for networking across the sector of adult and community education which could be further developed</li> <li>- The journal could further develop its international profile, thus enabling readers to benefit from global experience in the field.</li> <li>- The publication of the Journal online provides many new opportunities for the Journal in terms of methods of publication, encouraging new ways of communicating with audiences, including interactive communication</li> <li>- The publication is largely print focussed; new ways of communicating messages including use of the spoken word and through visual representation including video and podcasts need to be further explored;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Examples of factors under threats could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The need for ongoing funding to support the work of the Journal</li> <li>- The need for developing new formats to promote exchange of knowledge between research and practice will be important for the ongoing survival of the journal</li> <li>- Technological advances call for new ways of making new knowledge available; traditional methods of publishing results which are focussed on the written word and may become outdated;</li> <li>- The need for ongoing financial support by Governments at local, national and international level supported by policy to support the ongoing development of adult and community learning will be important in ensuring an ongoing audience who can benefit from the journal at local, national and global level.</li> </ul>

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

Many of the issues raised by this case study are relevant at national and international level.

**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.**

- Different backgrounds – different people have different needs; academic researchers want forums for publishing their research; The knowledge must be exchanged in a way that is understood.
- The way in which research is undertaken and the exchange of knowledge from this research needs to be better understood and new kind of partnerships developed to facilitate this kind of work; the academic community is not the only body involved in research in local communities;

- Perhaps one role for the academic community is to support others to carry out the research
- Government funding of research needs to encourage and support new and creative ways of doing research and facilitating its exchange.
  - Lifelong learning policy at national and European level should be more focussed on the relevance and importance of research in lifelong learning;

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

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

Promote more consultation across sectors on policy for lifelong learning  
 Make funding available to support lifelong learning research, partnerships and collaboration across sectors;  
 Make funding available to support the dissemination of research  
 Train more people in methods of research  
 Examine new ways for recognising and validating research outside the university.

#### 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
Irish Government funding agencies. European Union Lifelong Learning Programmes	Provide increased funding to support research in ULL; Support new and innovative ways of working across sectors in ULL;
AONTAS- The Adult Learning Association in Ireland	Become more active in carrying out research and its dissemination
Editorial Board- Various actors including staff from Universities; the Adult Education Officers' Association etc;	Encourage people in their organisations to contribute to and make use of research published on adult and community learning ; Act as ambassadors for promoting research partnerships ;
Users Organisations of the Journal	Encourage other individuals and groups to contribute to and make use research published on adult and community learning ; Act as ambassadors for promoting research partnerships
Adult Learners	Make use of and contribute to published research
International organisations and associations	Promote further exchange of knowledge through international publication forum and websites;