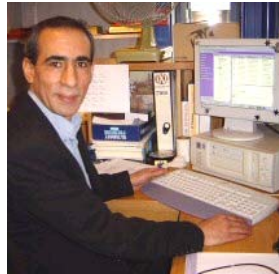


NIACE Development and Research



Key Findings



Photos © NIACE

Evaluation of Disadvantage, Disengagement and Discrimination Research Project (3Ds Project)

Abstract

NIACE was asked to conduct an evaluation of the 3Ds research project, based at the Working Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University. The purpose of the 3Ds project was to map and analyse projects and initiatives in the London region that aim to enhance the employability of individuals from particular disadvantaged groups, or to assist them in gaining direct access to jobs. The project also sought to explore the inter-relationship of disadvantage, disengagement and discrimination and how learning and skills provision works to counter their affects.

Research methodology:

The 3Ds project methodology involved two inter-related strands. One was a mapping exercise conducted through a questionnaire survey of providers offering learning and skills development, information advice and guidance, and employment brokerage. The second strand involved qualitative research to explore in more detail, issues relating to market disadvantage, disengagement and discrimination, with representatives of target user groups (participants), learning and guidance providers, social partners and funding agencies. The role of the NIACE evaluators was to explore the effectiveness of these two strands in meeting its declared purposes.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ This was a well-conceived and well-run project. The heart of the project's value is its determination to put information to use. The analytical phase has been attentive to the complex needs of service users.
- ❖ A wide range of project information was gathered, although some constraints on the transfer or sharing of data made the construction of the database a longer and harder piece of work than first envisaged.

- ❖ The qualitative research carried out with providers yielded significant information and demonstrated how many of the organisations work with an extremely sophisticated view of the complexities and interlocking difficulties that affect both learning and entry or re-entry into work.
- ❖ A significant contribution to evidence gathering was the decision to undertake focus groups and individual interviews with participants. The evaluators were impressed (though not surprised) by their grasp of the issues and their lucidity. Two particular points that emerged from these discussions that have strategic resonance are the high value set on work experience, and the limitations of a free-to-learners English language learning framework that only extends to Level two.
- ❖ The evaluators felt that the project aims were not fully met in relation to employers, as it was hard to get sustained engagement with employer organisations. The two exceptions were the construction industry and the voluntary sector itself. The project's findings support the conviction that more could be done to enable and support work experience as an effective and holistic approach to learning.
- ❖ The 3Ds project developed five exemplary case studies. Although they each had different emphases according to their target group, what they held in common was a respect for the autonomy and professional skills of the delivery organisation; attention to local circumstances, both as a challenge and as a resource; an open mind about what the learning programme needed to be; and a recognition of changing a person by changing their situation and responsibility.

Recommendations

- ❖ The major output of the project is the database website. The evaluators had some concern that the balance of responsibility for its updating and development needs to be negotiated with a view to keeping it current. A research approach has been powerful for the first survey of existing practice and for its interpretation. For maintenance, updating and development, there needs to be a shift towards an administrative approach, which needs to be appropriately funded.

Output

- ❖ Evaluation Report for NIACE: The 3Ds – Disadvantage, Disengagement and Discrimination Research Project

The 3Ds Research Report and copies of the CD-ROM toolkit can be downloaded from: www.3dslondon.info

Funder: LSC / ESF

Duration: January 2005 – December 2006

Project Manager: Judith Gawn RDO (London)

Email: judith.gawn@niace.org.uk

Requests for 'Key Findings' in other formats, such as large print, are welcome. We would be pleased to consider your request.

niace
promoting adult learning

21 De Montfort Street
Leicester LE1 7GE

Tel: +44 (0)116 204 4200/1
Fax: +44 (0)116 2854514
Website: www.niace.org.uk

A company limited by guarantee.
Registered no. 2603322
Registered Charity no. 1002775