Student motivations for co-creating curricula

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Overview

• Context of students as co-creators of curricula
• Overview of research and informing theories
• Outline of research methodology
• Analysis of data: motivations for co-creating curricula
• Discussion of implications for encouraging and promoting opportunities for students
Why involve students in teaching and learning in the first place?

A natural evolution of Student Engagement?

Student Engagement in institutional processes: representation, quality enhancement etc.
Logical to progress to look at Learning and Teaching.

A desire to democratise learning?

Roots in critical pedagogy: education is political
Pedagogies of dialogue and reflection
A challenge to ‘banking’ of knowledge (Freire, Giroux)
Partnerships between staff and students in learning and teaching

Four overlapping domains of partnership:

1. Learning, teaching and assessment,
2. Subject-based research and inquiry,
3. Scholarship of teaching and learning,
4. Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy.

Healey et al (2014)
Student co-creation roles

Bovill et al (2016)
'Students are commonly engaged in course evaluations and in departmental staff-student committees, but it is rarer for institutions to go beyond the student voice and engage students as partners in designing the curriculum and giving pedagogic advice' (Healey et al, 2014, p. 48)
PhD focus: The actualities of encounter (Fielding, 2014)

• Exploring the way staff and students talk about and understand the processes and products of co-creating curricula in higher education.

• Researching:
  – The scope and nature of a selection of practices in UK HE (in terms of process and product of co-creating curricula).
  – Relationships between institutional context (macro and meso) and group practices (micro)
  – Construction of understandings about co-creating curricula.
  – Articulations of the value and impact of this type of collaborative work.
• Case Study Research.
• Looking for maximum variation across sites in terms of contexts and examples of practice.
• Data collection at 7 sites in UK and Ireland, including 17 instances of practice across 14 disciplines.
• Documentary analysis of institutional strategies.
• 12 staff and 13 students interviewed.
• Included use of visual methods in interviews
Examples of practice from sites

- Students developing content (inc online)
- Students giving feedback on existing courses
- Students undertaking SoTL
- Students co-assessing
- Students are full members of module and programme re-design teams
- Students designing their own Learning Outcomes
- Students co-delivering teaching

Examples included selected groups and whole class
Themes from data

- Conceptualisations of curriculum
- Definitions of co-creating curriculum
- Processes for establishing partnerships
- Motivations (for staff and students)
- Value and impact of collaborations
- Relationship between practice and institutional context
Motivations to engage: staff participants

• Course ‘not working’.
• Wanting to re-energise teaching.
• Provide credibility to lobby senior management processes.
• Frustration with existing feedback mechanisms.
• Benefitting from new insights.
1) Opportunity to rectify or influence curriculum in ways not possible through evaluation questionnaires or liaison committees and to do so in a timely way.

“It gives us the chance to develop the course we want, not just what the academics think we want” (student, Youth Justice)

“When you have a passion for something and you enjoy what you’re learning, it just makes you want to do it more…” (student, Forensic Studies)

“There are many aspects of my experience I would, if I could, change in terms of learning and being taught” (student, Youth Justice)

“I wanted an actionable way of doing something instead of just getting angry about the issue” (student, Sociology)
Motivations to engage: student responses (2)

2) A wish to leave a legacy after studying and to ‘make it better’ for other students.

“For me, I’m dyslexic and so a lot of it has been about trying to make Law more accessible and to work with lecturers to bridge the gap between people who don’t work in one way” (student (1), Law)

“We can help teach the people that are going to come after us…” (student (2), Youth Justice)

“I want to understand and show the benefits of field trips to student learning” (student, Archaeology)
3) Recognition of prior learning/experiences and developing graduate attributes and employability skills

“There is genuine recognition of stuff I’ve done before and that it’s relevant to what I’m doing now” (student, Modern Liberal Arts)

“a lot of people are here for the sake of a degree but I want to develop as a person…” (student (2), Law)

 “[The staff partner] pointed out that if I was interested in being an academic then this is a way to establish that sort of process early on” (student, Modern Liberal Arts)

“There aren’t many opportunities to do this….it will give us an edge” (student (3), Youth Justice)
4) Access to (and influence of) wider university community

“The Dean knows who I am…” (student (2), Forensic Studies)

“It helps to develop a good rapport with your lecturers…” (student (3), Law)

“It has helped me be a better Faculty rep” (student, Drama)
5) An alternative way to engage in university life.

“I’m a mature student and don’t get the opportunity to experience university as a regular student...so, for me, getting involved in the more academic side makes sense” (student (1), Forensic Studies)
Implications for practice?

• There is value in providing other ‘deliberative spaces’ for discussion about curricula. Perceived limitations in current structures such as SSLCs and MEQs.

• Developing graduate attributes and employability is expected but not necessarily the primary motivator for involvement.

• Students’ motivations to *stay* involved appear to develop as the value of the collaboration became apparent. Motivation and impact appear linked.

• Opportunities to provide alternative ways to engage in student life. How can we be more inclusive?

• Not all students are motivated (i.e. in whole cohorts). Acknowledging and dealing with issues of resistance.
Thank you.

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HEA Mike Baker Doctoral Programme