

Increasing staff willingness and involvement

The sense of unfamiliarity with the partnership concept and the perceived lack of student competence supports suggestions regarding the need for preparation and support for both staff and students in the process. Little et al. (2011) suggest that before we can get involved we need to overcome any wariness staff have and convince them that it is worthwhile. The small-scale activity of designing a programme-level feedback strategy was seen as both positive and successful for all cross-disciplinary teams. Therefore, a starting place for staff and students to work together would seem to be a good place to start for programme teams, which aligns with Cook-Sather (2014) practical recommendations for encouraging co-creation. Learning from this, programme teams could choose an area of their curriculum that is perhaps not working as well as they would like and set up a staff-student partnership to explore the issues and offer solutions.

Developing students in the partnership process

Staff felt that they were the decision makers and the subject experts, and questioned both student engagement and expertise. It has to be recognised that staff will have, on the whole, greater knowledge and expertise (Allin, 2014). However, if staff are truly to move away from the position of power and authority, we have to find ways of utilising the staff expertise to empower the students in a way that works for them. Could a partnership approach be built into an early module or unit where the teaching staff and the students work together on one element of the curriculum? Student competence and confidence can also be developed through training activities (Jensen & Bennett, 2016), could also be undertaken with staff to start building on the idea of working together.

Staff as facilitators

Our findings suggest that we have a shift from the staff members as the expert to that of a facilitator of development and learning. Training is needed to support staff in moving from the position of expert, and students are required to engage in programme teams to see the benefit of this type of activity. A cross programme external facilitation, and a clear objective all helped in this study. Student facilitating staff-student interactions diffused any potential power implications. Negotiating is seen as critical to a positive outcome. Programme teams could work with students a little further on in their journey to support those just arriving and utilise post-graduate students to mediate and facilitate the activities between staff and students.

Partnership can be a staff development activity

Working with students can alert staff to where training and development activities are needed. Higher Education is an evolving environment and by listening and working with students, we can benefit and enhance both staff and student experience and understanding and development of the staff and students in higher education are critical to this. Bovill et al. (2016, p. 205) state, the fast pace of change is being constructed and change can help both staff and students begin to think in fundamentally

gain support from central university support for teaching and learning. An external viewpoint can help to support both groups and can then support the dissemination of practice. Re-focusing on a different way of working takes time and evaluation, and this needs to be supported where possible by the wider institution.

CONCLUSION

Although not a new area of study, co-creating the curriculum is emerging as an area of interest in higher education literature, and yet despite this, it is far from common practice across universities. The strengths of the many different approaches suggest that there can be a very positive outcome when students and staff come together to develop and explore learning experiences (Curran & Millard, 2016). However, this does not come without significant barriers. This study has found that through a partnership experience, where staff and students came together to look at a programme-level feedback strategy, the staff stepped over a threshold in relation to their thinking about working with students.

Across the four disciplines engaged with in this study, staff, in relation to Dunne and Zandstras' (2011) model, perceived students as evaluators. Unsurprisingly, this was reflected in the lack of co-creation that had been undertaken up to that point. Almost everything that was said about working in partnership was prefixed with a "but," showing that staff felt the idea had merit but that delivering on this merit was not perceived to be simple. The "but" in staff's otherwise positive view of partnership was also due to the perceived lack of engagement and subject awareness of the students. Partnership activity has been found to increase student engagement and motivation (Little et al., 2011). However, as students may be reticent, a period of transition where students get used to working in this way may be helpful.

Another factor in relation to the "but" was that of professional legitimacy. Clearly, staff placed themselves in the position of expert, and for co-creation to work, this stance is not helpful. Co-creation processes can challenge learning relationships and the power dynamics that underpin them (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013). Empowerment of learners in curriculum design, whilst challenging for some, is reported as a transformative process by pedagogic literature. Therefore, despite the potential difficulties, the end result seems to be worth the struggle. Training and development is crucial for both staff and students; further research is needed of case studies that show the benefits and also models of engagement. If we are to overcome these "buts," new ways of working and understanding will be crucial for future success.

The research was successfully reviewed according to the university regulations.

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