

BOOK REVIEW

Co-producing mental health strategies with students: A guide for the higher education sector by Rachel Piper and Talia Emmanuel**UK: Student Minds (99 pages)**Available at: <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/researchandpublications.html>**Sandra Leathwick**, PhD student, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia**Sandra Hyde**, Lecturer, Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, AustraliaContact: sandra.leathwick@uqconnect.edu.au

Co-producing mental health strategies with students: A guide for the higher education sector is an essential, timely, practical, and comprehensive guide aimed at higher education (HE) staff involved in implementing mental health and wellbeing strategies who value the principles of Students as Partners. Essential, because it explores why co-production is so powerful for mental health, and essential considering the aim of empowering and valuing student experience as a solution to improving mental health. Timely, because student mental health issues have been identified as a significant concern for staff and students, and timely for its contribution to Students-as-Partners discourse with the inclusion of a vulnerable student population. This guide is practical with a focus on “people with lived experience of mental health as experts by experience”. This easy-to-access PDF is written in easy-to-read prose by authors Rachel Piper, staff member, and Talia Emmanuel, student. Key recommendations, explanations, definitions, benefits, challenges, tools, and techniques make this a comprehensive guide for engaging students in strategy development.

LANGUAGE

The terms “student voice” and “student engagement” are used synonymously throughout the guide and are identified as being the central tenets; however, the principles resonate with that of an ethic of reciprocity.

“Co-production” is an umbrella term used in this resource including youth engagement and co-design and is “based on the principle that people who use, may use, or refer others to [mental health] services have valuable knowledge through experience and individual context” (p. 13). Co-production is the term named in lieu of partnership, the highest of the four-stage model of student engagement (NUS/HEA cited in Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, p. 16). This particular term, while not commonly seen in the current Students-as-Partners literature, is relevant, prevalent, and important in the context of health and social care (Clark, 2015). Students-as-Partners (co-production) practice is context dependent, an issue clearly argued by Healey and Healey (2018). The language of co-

CC-BY Licence 4.0 This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons – Attribution License 4.0 International (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed.

production is therefore contextually relevant to mental health and is a demonstration of “creative translation of partnership principles” (Cook-Sather, Matthews, Ntem, & Leathwick, 2018, p. 2). The Students-as-Partners readership might be more familiar with terms like “co-creation” or “student-staff partnership” (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016).

Language is recognised in this guide as being empowering for some while simultaneously disempowering for others. Analogously Cook-Sather et al. (2018) discuss the complexities with the language surrounding Students as Partners. Initially, the term “service user,” provoked a sense of neoliberal ethic in the reviewers. However, the term has important historical roots related to the disempowerment of people with mental health issues.

This guide does not shy away from the difficulties of co-production with explicit reference from page two through to identification of pros and cons in each of the tools. Addressing challenges is particularly important when in partnership with vulnerable groups according to Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014).

Given the incidence of mental health issues in higher education affecting students and staff, this guide has value for anyone engaged in teaching and learning in higher education.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Sandra Leathwick is a healthcare academic (Australian Catholic University) and a PhD student (University of Queensland), who is teaching, learning and researching in the diversity and Students-as-Partners space.

Sandra Hyde is a lecturer in the School of Nursing, Midwifery, and Paramedicine at Australian Catholic University (Brisbane). She is academic lead for mental health studies in undergraduate nursing, midwifery, and paramedicine courses, and the Course Advisor for the Masters of Mental Health on the ACU Brisbane Campus.

REFERENCES

- Bovill, K., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L., & Moore-Cherry, N. (2016). Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: Overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student-staff partnerships. *Higher Education*, 71(2), 195-208. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9896-4>
- Clark, M. (2015). Co-production in mental health care. *Mental Health Review Journal*, 20(4), 213-219. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHRJ-10-2015-0030>
- Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, K., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cook-Sather, A., Matthews, K. E., Ntem, A., & Leathwick, S. (2018). What we talk about when we talk about students as partners. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ij sap.v2i2.3790>
- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. The Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/engagement_through_partnership.pdf

Healey, M., & Healey, R. L. (2018). "It depends": Exploring the context-dependent nature of students as partners' practices and policies. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v2i1.3472>

Piper, R., & Emmanuel, T. (2019). *Co-producing mental health strategies with students: A guide for the higher education sector*. Student Minds. Retrieved from <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/co-productionguide.html>