Working in partnership with students to transform and enrich learning and teaching experiences

Luke Millard PFHEA
Head of Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
Birmingham City University
Luke.millard@bcu.ac.uk

A good keynote

• Relevant and challenging
• Models the way through literature
• Provides some real examples that can be adapted
• Authentic
• Enables you to reflect
• Occasionally makes you smile
“Engaging students and staff effectively as partners in learning and teaching is arguably one of the most important issues facing higher education in the 21st century”

Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014)
HEA Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education

Partnership

“A relationship in which all participants are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together”

“Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things rather than an outcome in itself”

Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014)
HEA Framework on Student-Staff Partnerships

The student position – consumers or partners

• *Putting Students at the Heart of the System (BIS 2011)* openly seeks to create the student consumer of higher education – CHOICE

• Collini (2011) has highlighted that ‘the model of the student as consumer is inimical to the purposes of education. The paradox of real learning is that you don’t get what you ‘want’ – and you certainly can’t buy it’.

• TEF – so how do you measure partnership?
NUS - student consumers?

NUS (2012) Manifesto for Partnership rejects the notion of student consumerism

“The students as consumers model assumes that the experience of attending higher education is something that can be packaged and sold .....and negates the ability of students to influence their environment and learning.

conceiving of students as consumers is a thoroughly impoverished way of describing the relationship between students and their institutions, which ought to be one of mutual trust, care and respect.

If we seek to engage students merely in order to find out what they want and give it to them, we reproduce this dangerous narrative of consumerism and lose sight of the responsibility of educators to challenge and stretch students”

NUS and a call to arms

Rachel Wenstone, Vice President (HE) at the NUS states in the introduction to the report:

“We have spent enough time condemning consumerism in education, and now we need to articulate the alternative. Student engagement is a great concept but it needs to be deployed to radical ends. Students as partners is not just a nice to have, I believe it has the potential to help bring about social and educational transformation”.

NUS (2012) Manifesto for Partnership
Co-creation

“..a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally to, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision making, implementation, investigation or analysis”

Alison Cook Sather et al (2014: 6)

Equal or meaningful?

Learner voice participation

![Diagram of learner voice participation]
Different roles that students adopt within co-creation

(Bovill, Cook Sather, Felten and Millard 2015, Studies in Higher Education)

Co-creation: student as...

• Consultant: sharing and discussing valuable perspectives on learning and teaching
• Co-researcher: collaborating meaningfully on teaching and learning research or subject based research with staff
• Pedagogical co-designer: sharing responsibility for designing learning, teaching and assessment
• Representative: student voices contributing to decisions in a range of university settings (uncontrollable and that is the goal)

(Bovill, Cook Sather, Felten and Millard 2015)
A response – Birmingham City University

• Evidence and vision (Professor Stuart Brand) 2007 - 2015
• Focus on student and staff relationships (them & us)
• Strategic development of the learning community
• Student Engagement initiatives at core
• SAP - StAMP

• Veneer of student engagement – the challenge!

Student Academic Partners

An opportunity to integrate students into the academic community of the University. It generates a sense of ownership and pride in the institution and its programmes through a scheme that provides students and staff with a direct opportunity to work collaboratively to strengthen learning and teaching at the University for the benefit of all.

Projects are normally funded for around 100 hours to employ and pay students.
Project categories

- Development of new content/learning/resources/assessment approaches – curriculum focus
- Consultation/survey/network projects/micro-community building/student engagement focus
- Employability, employment, professional practice and placement experience
- Thematic – employability/progression/retention/first year experience

JISC BCU Case study [https://can.jiscinvolve.org/wp/files/2014/10/CAN-BCUvFINAL.pdf](https://can.jiscinvolve.org/wp/files/2014/10/CAN-BCUvFINAL.pdf)
Student Academic Mentors

To create student-led interventions that would better support programme teams seeking to improve the progression and achievement of their students. Projects can normally bid for up to **200 hours** of student employment to develop mentoring initiatives.

Mentoring initiatives

- **Discussion Group Mentoring**: associated to a specific module and provides extra assistance with disseminating module content.
- **Workshop Mentoring**: an opportunity for students to apply theory from classes in a practical environment.
- **One on One Academic Assistance Mentoring/Coaching**: follows a more traditional “tuition” model of academic assistance for modules on a drop-in or appointment basis.
- **Teaching Assistant Mentoring**: provides assistance to academic staff in a specific module in the form of supplemental instruction for students, demonstrations, course development and lesson implementation.
- **Course Induction Mentoring**: provides introduction into how to succeed and introduces the expectations of the university along with giving a student perspective of the course.
- **Employability Mentoring**: assists students in building their CVs, portfolios, covering letters, job searching and interview practice.
- **Placement Mentoring**: provides student perspectives of placements; offers advice for success and assists students whilst on placement.
The rules?

Rewarded or recognised

An inclusive approach

Meaningful not equal?

“not there to make the tea”

Identify students before you start
Students as change agents

• Partnership projects to improve the learning experience
• SAP became a new avenue for proactive student involvement
• Local level implementation and light touch management
• Overt symbolism: Partnership with Students’ Union
• Course design: RoLEx and T-SPARC/DAPS/Rough Guide

Purpose: culture change - ‘Them and us’ – the state of mind

JISC case study https://can.jiscinvolve.org/wp/files/2014/10/CAN-BCUvFINAL.pdf

Present day...

• New Strategic Plan 2020 vision
  • A sector leader in student engagement
  • Students at every decision making point
• Significant partnership with Students’ Union – secondments to partnership working (welcome week etc)
• New student representation system (SAL)
• Engagement embedded within PgCert for new staff
• Extra Mile L&T Awards
• Funding only available for partnership projects
Student Academic Partners 2017

Student Academic Partners (SAP) Funded projects 2016-17

Student Academic Partners (SAP) Student Employees 2016-17

Student Academic mentors 2017

Student Academic Mentoring Programme (STAMP) Funded Projects 2016-17

Student Academic Mentoring Programme (STAMP) - Student Employees 2016-17
Part 2 – integration and engagement

- Isolated initiatives to embedding
- Translate to other aspects of provision
  - Retention and First Year Experience
  - Employability
  - Staff development
  - Student development

- Change model – infection and opportunity
- UKPSF and staff recognition
What Works? Student retention and success

Transition is critical
DESIGNING AN ORIENTATION AND TRANSITION STRATEGY FOR COMMENCING STUDENTS

Tinto’s Model of Student Integration (1975)

The ‘Five Senses’ of Successful Transition

12/06/2017
Specific interventions cannot be recommended over and above each other. Rather the institution, department, programme and module should all nurture a culture of belonging through the way they function and relate to people.

Key message

Student belonging is an outcome of:
• Supportive peer relations.
• Meaningful interaction between staff and students.
• Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners.
• An HE experience which is relevant to interests and future goals.
Belonging, community and engagement

• This echoes the work of Astin (1993:126) which suggested that the level of student involvement with the university is predictive of persistence and academic performance. He stressed that the most important deliverers of student involvement are “academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peers”.

• Pascarella & Terenzini (2005:647) believed that “the greatest impact appears to stem from students’ total level of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are mutually reinforcing”.
McMillan and Chavis (1986)

Membership: Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness.

Influence: a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members.

Integration and fulfillment of needs. This is the feeling that members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group.

Shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences.
What Works:
Our approach to support

Identifying stress points
Pre entry transition mentoring
Extended workshops
Embedded specialist mentoring
Student Success Advisers
Personal Tutoring development

“Offering the personal touch through connected services within the academic environment”
Student Success Advisers

SSA Media activities
• Pre Induction & Welcome Week
• Attendance monitoring
• Personal Tutoring maintenance
• Workshops
• Moodle Monitoring
• Applicant Visit Day Coordination
• Student Tutorials/Mentoring: one to one advice

8% = 19 students x £27k

So, job done then?

• Changing A’ Level landscape = longitudinal, exam

• Motivation, Belonging & Resilience (MH) student success

• The working student

• First year experience shapes perception and sets expectation (NSS) – Learning Gain
The Mehaffy perspective (USA)

“The first year of college is broken”

Changing nature of the student
Other things are more interesting – they can learn elsewhere
Staff autonomy: Work in a silo or on your own
Staff training: is it appropriate
Teaching focus not learning focus
Pastoral not related to the academic
Courses are staff-centric not student centred

The Mehaffy perspective 2

All learning comes from teaching?
We control where that learning takes place?

“As a recovering academic, I have been startled to discover recently that students learn outside of class. Who knew? As a faculty member and teacher, I had always assumed that learning took place only in class. In fact, if I’m honest, I thought learning took place only in my class. And if I’m really honest, I thought that learning took place in my class only when I was speaking.”
The Mehaffy perspective 3

“what mattered most about graduation success was not a specific program or special funding but culture; a campus culture where faculty and staff believed that their role was to help students become successful. Culture is a critical component of a redesigned first year of college.”

The working student: A challenge for partnership

‘work is a fundamental part of life for many undergraduate students’.

75% of dependent undergraduates and 80% of independent undergraduates worked whilst they studied. Not only did they work, but they worked significant hours. The dependent graduate working an average of 24 hours per week, whilst independent undergraduates worked virtually full time jobs with 34.5 hours.

Are we ‘failing to recognise that higher education is generally not the primary life environment of working students’.

Perna, L. (2010) Understanding the working college student
The full-time student?

NASES (2012: p7) proposes that over 60% of UK students undertake paid employment whilst studying.

Over 110 Universities offer job shops to their students to support students who need employment to ensure they are able to complete their studies.

National Union of Students (2012) report, The Pound in your Pocket, research into the financial wellbeing of students in FE and HE states ‘many students are struggling to make ends meet, concentrate on their studies and stay the course, because financial support is systematically inadequate across both further and higher education’.

Lifewide learning

....is learning in different places simultaneously (Barnett)

• Liquid learning
• An individual inhabiting several learning spaces simultaneously
• The learner and university without boundaries
• Learning taking place in any learning space

.....university loses control of learning
Who controls learning?

• Do students only learn at university?

• Where do our students learn?

• When do they learn?

• Learning at a different rhythm

Students as co-workers

“The flexibility of the job is great and it is nice to be able to organise and cooperate with others. My line manager has inspired me to think about my future and aiming for the best. This environment does push you.”
Research outcomes 2017  
(154 respondents of 350 students surveyed)

- have a better relationship with staff (86%)
- work harder at studies (64%)
- more likely to ask questions (67%)
- more understanding of the university (80%)
- more motivated to succeed (76%)
- belong more (89%)
- spend more time studying on campus (57%)
- Time management skills improved (78%)
- Better at prioritising work (77%)
- Better organised (80%)
- Confidence has grown (90%)
- Talk to university work colleagues about studies (75%)

Avoiding the issue?

- Markwell (2007) highlighted a moral imperative to provide an engaging environment. Markwell suggests that “...we need to put in front of students and staff alike a vision of student and staff engagement within a wider vision of an academic community.... presenting a compelling and exciting vision of what university life can be like, and of the great benefits that flow from it may not be sufficient but it is surely necessary for making substantial progress”.
- Kuh (2009:685) believes that “What the institution does to foster student engagement can be thought of as a margin of educational quality – sometimes called value added – and something a college or university can directly influence to some degree”. ......Learning gains?
Empowerment

“the promise of a lifewide curriculum is that it holds more potential for encouraging learners to see themselves as the integrators of their life experiences and their own learning, than an academic curriculum alone” (Jackson 2011:109)

• Making academic learning more connected to the real world
• Appreciating challenges of the modern world
• Develop student capabilities that transcend discipline only contexts

Possible partnership responses

• encourage students to gain worthwhile experiences outside of their courses and design courses that enable it.
• Accredit additionally lifewide learning experiences
• Accredit opportunities for self-reflection within existing courses
Learner voice participation

BCU Graduate+

- Extra-curricular awards framework (Bronze to Gold);
- Personalise approach – design your own future;
- recognises the employability/life skills that our students develop within and outside of the university through their lifewide experiences;
- raise awareness and broaden engagement from students;
- builds on the home communities of students.
A return to partnership

“A relationship in which all participants are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together”

“Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things rather than an outcome in itself”

Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014)
A spectrum of partnership

Student work on campus
Ambassador – engagement and community, but no input

Student representation
Representation and consultation, but little direct influence

Student as co-creator
Partner through leadership, change agency and influencer

Students’ Union President – Extra Mile L&T awards

“We are a university where partnership between staff and students has transformed the curriculum and we anticipate its impact in the new academic year. We are a university where partnership has allowed students to be a voice for all through the student representation system, continuously working alongside staff to develop the experience for students. We are a university where partnership has allowed students to input into the Teaching Excellence Framework submission, emphasising the distinctiveness of BCU and highlighting their own definition of teaching excellence. We are a university where partnership is currently contributing to the eagerly awaited education strategy.”

Jo Goodman, BCUSU President, Extra Mile awards May 2017
Metrics - Becoming a state of mind

NSS
Teaching quality 87%
Assessment and Feedback 76% (+2%)
Academic support 82%
Personal development 84% (+2%)

TEF
The narrative
NSS
Retention data

To conclude

• Partnership needs to reward/recognise all participants
• It’s a process that can have products
• It can be scary because you may lose control
• It’s about culture and integration – state of mind

• Danger is that partnership is seen as woolly
• Define the measurables and show impact – integrate and weave
• Embed as swiftly as possible to ensure sustainability
European First Year Experience Conference 2017 at Birmingham City University
28-30 June 2017
http://www.efye2017.co.uk/

For any further information please feel free to contact me:
Luke.millard@bcu.ac.uk

Thank you for listening
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