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Editorial: Learning from Students

Rachel Forsyth

As usual, we begin this issue with a piece which is solo-authored by a current student. Adrian Lam Man Ho has taken a user's view of the Common Core Curriculum (CCC) at the University of Hong Kong. The CCC requires students to take courses from each of four areas of enquiry, ensuring that everyone has exposure to undergraduate level work in science, humanities, global issues, and Chinese studies. On a personal note, I experienced something similar at a UK university in the 1980s, where I managed to study Russian Studies, Psychology and Computing alongside my main subjects of Philosophy and Physics. It's a fantastic opportunity if you are curious and provides a powerful argument against cramming the curriculum with the main subjects. Adrian has reviewed the range of ways student engagement with the CCC is encouraged and supported, and identifies the complementary and multi-pronged strategies as key to making the CCC successful, as well as suggesting that most of these approaches could be transferred to other settings, ensuring that student engagement in curriculum design is meaningful and valued.

Next, the current Chair of the RAISE network, Tom Lowe, shares with us Tom Fletcher's 2017 book "*The Meaningful Student Involvement Handbook - A Review of the 'Student Voice Revolution'*". Tom's appreciation of this book and its practical strategies come through clearly, and you will probably want to head off and read the book after reading his review.

Our articles in this issue take a closer look at the ways in which students can be genuinely involved in university activities of all kinds. Perhaps to be read as a companion piece to the book review, as they have used the book in their work, Verhoeff and Guérin look at how student voice can be used meaningfully to improve students' engagement with university activities. They suggest that some university structures can hinder effective communications.

Ruth Crabtree has asked students about the barriers to their engagement, and suggests that understanding of students may not always precede designing more engagement activities. She offers a helpful list of key requirements to make engagement successful. Like Verhoeff and Guérin, she highlights the need for senior management engagement with students' voice and needs.

The barriers to engagement experienced by a particular group, women who have experienced domestic violence, are sensitively explored by Lewer. We have often looked at students with particular characteristics in relation to student engagement (see, for instance, Islam, Lowe et al. 2018, Iqbal 2019, Martina and Lilly 2021) and I think it really helps understanding to hear about these different perspectives.

Underlining the complexity of relationships and individual needs, Lingard et al focus on the ways in which belonging can be fostered in a fully online environment. They identify three themes: relationship development, student support and sustaining

affiliation, which are necessary for effective development of a sense of belonging to the online course, along with practical tips for educators. This complexity of need is also represented in Kinsella et al's review of what turns out to be a successful scheme to employ student advisors to maintain student engagement in a hybrid environment, and provide suggestions for ensuring that both students and student advisors are supported effectively to maintain engagement.

Nerantzi et al describe what might be described as a mega case study, the Global Culture Jam, which involved 20 countries and 30 members of staff, including 10 students employed as staff to support the event. They used co-design and development techniques to ensure that students had full partnership in the project. It is exhausting but inspiring to read about, with plenty of lessons to be learned by smaller scale activities and events. Homer et al also consider co-creation in their case study of co-creation practice in a research-intensive university. They have focused on participant experiences of the activity, and their findings encourage us to be specific about what is meant and how to identify effective practices: they highlight trust, communication, and collaboration, and the need for safe spaces to carry out the work. Cunningham and Cunningham have a fascinating case study of staff perceptions of student engagement during the pandemic, whilst the context was very particular, and hopefully not to be replicated soon, these experiences pointed to a need for us all to review our practices and motivations in relation to teaching and learning.

To end the issue, Prescott and Kannagars offer a case study of a specific student engagement activity, a partnership to bring psychoeducation to a local school. They propose the CASE approach to successful student engagement in extra-curricular activity: Confidence, Application of Skills, Safe and supportive environment, and Employability, and this can be applied in many different engagement activities.

Thanks to all of the authors for choosing to work on student engagement and sharing the outcomes with us.

References

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