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Participatory Partnerships in Education

Seale, Jane

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University of Plymouth

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Teaching Fellowship Award Scheme Guidance on writing the final report

Please read this guidance prior to producing the final report for your Teaching Fellowship Project.

The final report should consist of a brief (1-2 pages) summary of the project and findings, together with a number of more detailed appendices (possibly in the form of conference papers or articles for publication). The summary will be transferred directly onto the Pedagogic Research and Development Database (see www.pedres.net) Please follow the format below as closely as possible to enable this transfer of information.

Name of key contact (project leader) Jane Seale

Department Education

Telephone

Fax

E-mail jane.seale@plymouth.ac.uk

Names of other staff involved

Joanna Haynes and Suanne Gibson

Title of project: Participatory Partnerships in Education

Type of project (e.g. Survey/ Case Study/ Action Research/ Development)

Participatory Research

You may also include appropriate evidence in your appendices, e.g.

Information/letter on ethics approval

Information/progress on conditions (If your initial TFAS application was 'approved with conditions', please provide evidence that these conditions have been met in at least one of the reports.)

Please provide some information about the project, in the format below: (1-2 pages)

Aims of project

Background to project (or context)

Methods used

Results

Associated publications (these should relate to the project, and give full reference)

Website (if directly connected to the project)

Keywords (one or more if possible – see 'pedres' database for examples)

Please forward the final report to rebecca.turner@plymouth.ac.uk by the **28th of September 2012**

Aims of project:

The focus of this proposal is student voice and participation as well as the promotion of partnership between staff and students. The overarching aim of PIE therefore, is to provide guidance about how to facilitate effective participatory partnerships between students and teachers that will have a positive impact on the first year undergraduate student experience. Specifically, the project objectives are to:

- Capture “student voices” on the second year BA Education Studies programme in the Faculty of Education regarding their learning experiences by using participatory methods students will have the opportunity to design and choose the methods by which “voices” are captured and shared;
- Use these students “voices” to explore whether and how the BA Education Studies programme includes or exclude students with a wide range of learning needs from experiencing positive or high quality learning opportunities;
- Involve students in the analysis and exploration of these “student voices” by developing a collaborative partnership whereby students help to develop materials and methods that can be used to inform future teaching on the programme.

Background to project (or context)

Higher Education context: In the Higher Education arena there is a strong emphasis on learner-centred approaches to policy and practice. This is reflected in the HEFCE strategy which acknowledges that Higher Education institutions are increasingly required to promote two-way engagement between all stakeholders in order to ensure high quality learning experiences. The “Student as Producer” initiative¹ positions students as producers of original knowledge and designers of curricula. Whilst there is talk of “participatory pedagogy” and collective construction of knowledge; the teacher is virtually invisible in the proposed collaborative approaches. The PIE project seeks to make both student and teacher visible in the participatory relationships that are developed. The use of participatory methods in Higher Education is an emergent field of activity. For example, ESCALATE, the HEA Education Subject Centre has funded a “Hearing the Student Voice” project which aims to promote and encourage the effective use of the student voice to enhance professional development in learning, teaching and assessment within higher education². At the heart of this project and the PIE project is a commitment to enabling students to have their voice heard, in a way (medium) that they feel comfortable with and with the intention of responding genuinely, with improved insight, to the issues raised by students.

University of Plymouth context: The proposed work, with its emphasis on participation and partnership reflects three key elements of the current UoP Teaching and Learning Strategy. Firstly, it reflects the vision of the Plymouth Learning community where “we see teaching and learning as a partnership between staff and students, based upon co-learning, active participation and mutual respect” [p.3]. Secondly it reflects the stated desire to encourage “encouraging staff to foster an inclusive community and culture, which encourages a high level of student and staff engagement and interaction” [p.4] Finally it addresses Key Theme 2 of the strategy, that focuses on developing “learner-centred approaches that are responsive to the needs of students as individuals” [p.6]

Methods used

1. Whole second year group invited to participate in project in three ways 1) steering committee member; 2) contribute own experiences; 3) as co-researcher- working alongside academics to analyse data and disseminate project outcomes
2. Steering committee met to discuss and design the method(s) by which student voices/experiences would be elicited- A mood-board was chosen as the main method and designed by student committee members

¹ See <http://www.gaa.ac.uk/students/studentengagement/undergraduate.pdf>

² See <http://www2.napier.ac.uk/studentvoices/>

3. Whole second group invited to contribute their voice/experience
4. Academics and student co-researchers worked together to analyse the data from the moodboards
5. The key issues from the mood-board data was used to inform the design of an on-line questionnaire to first year students- to see if first years had similar or different experiences and perceptions.
6. Student co-researcher(s) and academics worked together on a joint conference presentation focusing on the methods used and complexities of interpreting results
7. Student co-researcher(s) and academics worked together to co-write a journal paper based on experiences of taking part in this participatory project

Results

Recruitment was much harder than originally anticipated, resulting in fewer student participants and a longer recruitment period, which has implications for student voice work in the current HE climate of increased fees

- Second Years (cohort = 65)
 - Steering Committee Members = 3 students, 3 staff
 - Contribution of “voice”-learning experience = 11
 - Co-researchers = 2
- First years (cohort = 65)
 - Online survey= 15

Analysis of second year contributions- key emerging themes

Resources: What The Students Get- Learning material made available to students to support their learning e.g lecture notes, reference lists, video clips, library books, literature searching databases

Lecturers: What They Do-How the lecturers behave, lecturing/tutoring style, attitudes towards students-including References to lecturers responding to student requests/feedback

What Is Taught- Comments about curriculum content areas- specific subjects (e.g. English); learning opportunities (e.g. field-trips) or skill areas (e.g. essay writing, referencing)

How The Students Are Taught And Assessed-Comments on way the course is delivered or designed- and implications of the activities that students are required to engage in (what the students do) Comments about how much is taught- length of programme, number of hours in a week-particularly in relation to value for money and fees.

Impact- Student comments about feelings, affect, emotions, judgements, values and beliefs that illuminates the impact of the learning experience on them or the importance/value they place on a particular issue they have raised-including comments on social cohesion of student body, belonging, interaction with peers.

Associated publications (these should relate to the project, and give full reference)

Jane Seale, Joanna Haynes, Suanne Gibson, Rosanna Griffiths, Natasha Harrison; Amy Hunter, Alice Potter (2012) Student voice and participatory partnerships: a critical reflection on what works and what doesn't. Paper presented at BESA 2012 Annual Conference, Huddersfield.

Work in progress- Jane Seale, Joanna Haynes, Suanne Gibson, and Alice Potter are collaborating on a joint paper reflecting on experiences of being involved in the project- from tutor, student and researcher perspective. Targetted journal- Teaching in Higher Education or Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education

Website (if directly connected to the project)

Keywords (one or more if possible – see ‘pedres’ database for examples)