Student partnership in assessment: signaling what and who we value in assessment

Dr Catherine Bovill, Senior Lecturer in Student Engagement
Institute for Academic Development
Catherine.bovill@ed.ac.uk
@cathybovill

Overview

1. Defining the focus: indicating what and who we value

2. Weighing and feeding pigs: the challenge of assessment

3. Changing the lens: involving students

Concluding thoughts

Defining the focus: indicating what and who we value

A brief nod to terminology

- Evaluation and/or assessment
- Staff and faculty
- Alienating students? (Mann, 2001)

Indicating what and who we value

- What we assess indicates what we value (Bamber, 2013, Cousin, 2009)
- How we assess indicates methodologies we value
- Evidence means different things to different disciplines (see Smith & Pell 2003)

Indicating who we value

- Engaging students (institution) and students engaging (students) (Bryson, 2014)

- Staff were rude to me…

- What messages do we convey when we involve students?

- Which students are involved? What message does this convey?

Weighing and feeding pigs: the challenge of assessment

Weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig (Fulcher et al 2014)

Challenges involved in PLAIR

Program Learning Assessment Intervention & Re-assessment

One or more of the stages breaks down

- Lack of programme and institutional level assessment (Weigh pig)
- People often don't use programme outcomes to inform changes they make (Feed pig)
- Implementation of initiative not followed up (Weigh pig)

Fulcher et al (2014)

Other challenges

- Inconsistencies of approach at course level

- Time pressure and lack of other resources

- Lack of experience in approaching L&T in the same way colleagues might research their specialist discipline

- Lack of awareness there might be a problem

- Not involving students…

Changing the lens: involving students

Why involve students in assessment?

- Changes the nature of what we assess (and value)

- Brings in missing perspectives

- Students are key stakeholders often missing from the assessment process

- Assessment done with students rather than to students

- Develops skills of enquiry (students and staff)

- Creates opportunities for dialogue

- Sharing responsibility and ownership for enhancements

(Bovill & Woolmer 2020; Cook-Sather et al 2014; Curtis & Anderson 2021)

Evidence of benefits from partnership

Students and staff share many benefits:

Engagement - enhanced motivation and learning

Awareness - meta-cognitive awareness and sense of identity

Enhancement - improved teaching and classroom experiences
<div align="right">Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014</div>

Enhanced belonging, relationships, confidence, trust

<div align="right">Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2017</div>

Partnership in learning and teaching

"...a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis."
(Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten 2014: 6-7)

Partnership in assessment

"A collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants (e.g., students, faculty, assessment practitioners, educational developers) have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to program-level assessment practices including, but not limited to, developing and interpreting objectives, developing and mapping program-theory, developing/administering assessment protocols, analysis of assessment information, making interpretations, sharing results, and most importantly, working to improve the educational experiences designed to help students learn."
(Curtis & Anderson 2021, p7)

A partnership lens: reimagining all we do

Partnership in assessment

"Student-faculty partnership work itself should help refine this working definition further" (Curtis & Anderson 2021, p7)
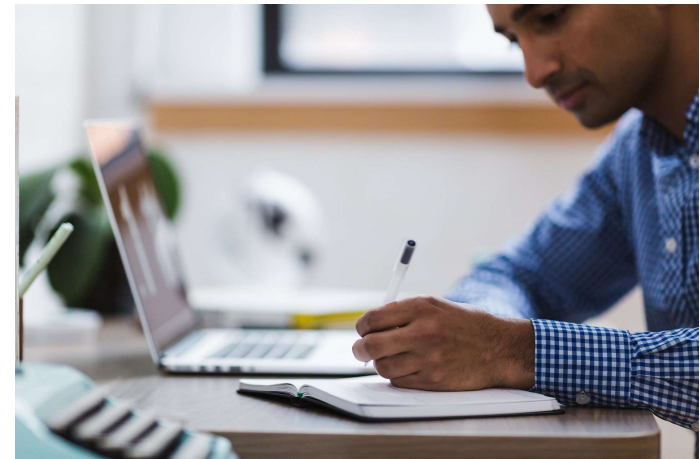
What role do students typically have?

- National surveys e.g. NSSE, NSS…
- Institutional questionnaires, focus groups
- Programme-level assessment
- Course level design - Brooman et al (2015)

New lens = new questions

- Where are the students?
- Which students are invited/given opportunities to be involved?
- In what ways are students involved?
- Who isn't here who should be?
- Am I listening or talking?
- How can I continue to have dialogue with students?

Which students are involved?

- Who initiates the partnership?

- Are you selecting students or involving all students?

- Who are the students – current, previous, future?

- What year of study are the students in?

- What is the nature of involvement (e.g. informed, consulted, involved, partners, leaders)

- Does involving all students have to mean questionnaires?

- Students outnumbering staff and faculty

Bovill (2019) A co-creation of learning and teaching typology

+ What are you involving students in? micro, meso, macro…

Course level partnership in assessment

- Whole class collaborative assessment

- Students design the questions they will answer

- Start stop continue – sharing responsibility

(Bovill 2011; Bovill et al 2010)

Partnership to respond to NSS results

University College London

- Invited students to be part of discussions about how to improve assessment and feedback

- Departments scoring badly in the NSS

- Departments with low student satisfaction probably had weaker relationships with their students

- Also brought partnership working to areas less likely to be engaging in partnership

- Effective in increasing satisfaction scores & students gained trust in their departments, increased community

(Marie and Azuma, 2018)

Institutional partnership schemes (UK)

- Student staff collaboration beyond 'student voice' (broader focus on more than just assessment)

- Structured opportunities for partnership across university

- 11 of 13 identified schemes responded

- Questionnaire and reflective narratives

LESSONS

- Inequities can be redressed or exacerbated throughout

- Often small projects, not connected, not linked to strategy

- Careful of assuming institutional = large scale

(Bovill, 2020; Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill 2020)

Co-evaluation of co-research

Ali et al (2021) 2 students and 2 staff, University of Surrey

Semi-structured interviews with staff and students

20 co-research projects

FINDINGS

- Different staff and student views of partnership

- Most successful where pre-existing relationships

- Sense of community, enhanced belonging and value

- Importance of open communication

- "the roles don't have to be completely equal, but you can still be equal in the way you work together" p12

Questions of scale

- Whole group or selected students
- Institutional ≠ large scale
- Scaling up good practice
- Programme level – promising (Curtis & Anderson 2021)
- Need for varied evidence, different scales and forms
- Need to apply lens and mindset to all we do

A partnership mindset (Peseta et al 2020, p110-111)

"It is through being a… student partner that I have cultivated the partnership mindset that I now actively apply on a day-to-day basis… I mean carrying with me the unapologetic mentality of looking to develop genuine partnerships with individuals I come across every day…At the university, this might be in the way I work with other students on a group assessment task or with… staff to develop future curriculum. Outside the university, I have become a lot more confident in my job at a… pharmacy in bringing my knowledge into my workplace... rather than clocking on in the morning and being eager to leave in the afternoon, I... engage with the environment and give active suggestions regarding enhancement."

How do we influence others?

A nod to the other kind of assessment

Principles for student partnerships in assessment

- Develop assessment and feedback dialogue

- Share responsibility for assessment and feedback

- Create an assessment and feedback environment that fosters trust

- Nurture inclusive assessment and feedback processes

- Connect partnership in assessment and feedback with curriculum and pedagogy   (Bovill, Matthews and Hinchliffe 2021)

Apply the partnership lens e.g. Sadler (1989)

Concluding thoughts

- If we value students - more than sources of information

- Connect larger scale and smaller scale approaches

- Changing lenses / mindsets changes everything

- In all that we do, ask:

  – Where are the students?

  – Which students are invited/given opportunities to be involved?

  – Who isn't here who should be?

  – Am I listening or talking?

  – How can I establish and continue to have dialogue with students?

- Weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig, BUT this is not enough
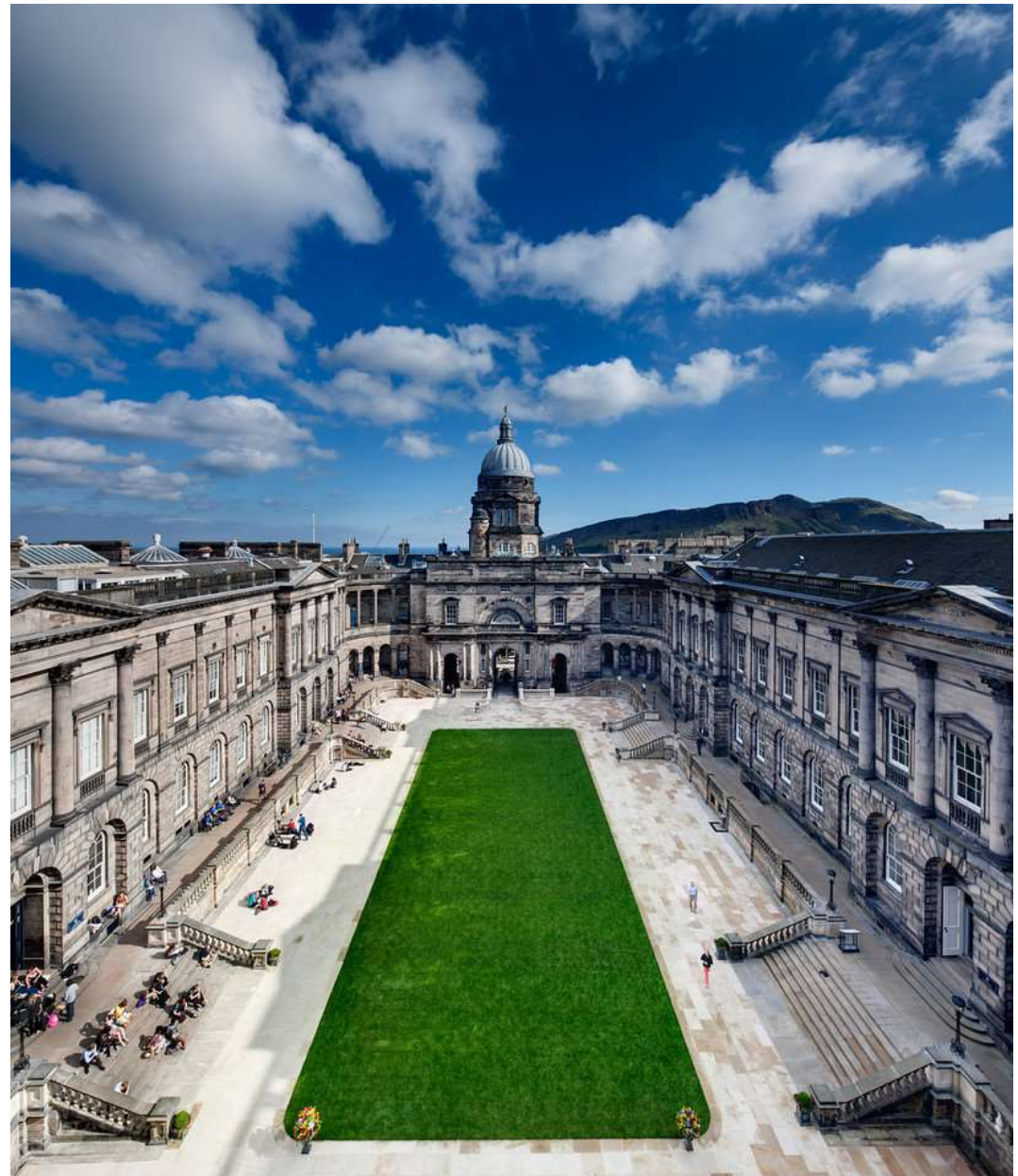
THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Thank you

Photo credits:

- Allan Bovill 17
- Catherine Bovill 3,5
- Pixabay 4,5,8,11,16, (+thumbnail17,19-29),18
- University of Edinburgh 14,20,30

Contact details:

Catherine.bovill@ed.ac.uk
Twitter: @cathybovill

Ali, X., Tatam, J., Gravett, K. and Kinchin, I. (2021) Partnership values: an evaluation of student-staff collaborative research. *International Journal for Students as Partners* 5 (1) 1-14.

Bamber, V. (Ed.) (2013) *Evidencing the value of educational development*. SEDA Special 34.

Bovill, C. (2020) *Co-creating learning and teaching: towards relational pedagogy in higher education*. St Albans: Critical Publishing.

Bovill, C. (2019) A co-creation of learning and teaching typology: what kind of co-creation are you planning or doing? *International Journal for Students as Partners* 3 (2) 91-98

Bovill, C. (2011) Sharing responsibility for learning through formative evaluation: moving to evaluation as learning. *Practice and Evidence of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 6 (2) 96-109.

Bovill, C., Aitken, G., Hutchison, J., Morrison, F., Roseweir, K., Scott, A. and Sotannde, S. (2010) Experiences of learning through collaborative evaluation from a Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Education *International Journal for Academic Development* 15 (2) 143-154.

Bovill, C., Matthews, K.E. and Hinchliffe, T. (2021) *Student partnerships in assessment (SPiA).* York: Advance HE: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/student-partnership-assessment-spia

Bovill, C. and Woolmer, C. (2020) Student engagement in evaluation: expanding perspectives and ownership. In Lowe, T. and El Hakim, Y. (Eds) *A handbook for student engagement in higher education: theory into practice.* Abington: Routledge.

Brooman, S., Darwent, S. and Pimor, A. (2015) The student voice in higher education curriculum design: is there value in listening? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 52 (6) 663-674.

Bryson C, (2014) Clarifying the concept of student engagement In C Bryson (Ed) Understanding and developing student engagement: perspectives from universities and students*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C. and Felten, P. (2014) *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Cousin, G. (2009) *Researching learning in higher education: an introduction to contemporary methods and approaches*. London: Routledge.

Curtis, N. and Anderson, R. (2021) *A framework for developing student-faculty partnerships in program-level student learning outcomes assessment*. Occasional Paper No 53. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Influencing the world since 1583

Fulcher, K.H., Good, M.R., Coleman, C.M. and Smith, K.L. (2014, December) *A simple model for learning improvement: Weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig. A simple model for learning improvement: Weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig*. (Occasional Paper No. 23). Urbana, Il: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Mann, S.J. (2001) Alternative Perspectives on the Student Experience: Alienation and engagement, *Studies in Higher Education*, 26 (1) 7-19.

Marie, J. & Azuma, F. (2018) Partnership support for departments with low satisfaction. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal* 2 (1).

Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S.L., Matthews,K.E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammas, R. and Swaim. K. (2017) A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education. *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1 (1) 1–23.

Mercer-Mapstone, L. & Bovill, C. (2020) Equity and diversity in institutional approaches to student-staff partnership schemes in higher education, *Studies in Higher Education* 45 (12) 2541-2557.

Peseta, T., Pizzica, J., Beathe, A., Jose, C., Lynch, R., Manthos, M., Nguyen, K. and Raza, H. (2020) A partnership mindset: students as partners in and beyond the campus. In L. Mercer-Mapstone & S. Abbot (Eds) The power of partnerships: students, staff, and faculty revolutionizing higher education. Elon University Center for Engaged Learning Elon, North Carolina

Sadler, D.R. (1989) Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems *Instructional Science* 18 (2) 119-144

Smith, G.C.S. and Pell, J.P. (2003) Parachute use to prevent death and major trauma related to gravitational challenge: systematic review of randomised controlled trials. *British Medical Journal* 327 (20-27 December), 1459-1461.