



Students as researchers

LTA project

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The Project CT

The aims of initiative:

- To research the first year student experience in order to aid transition into university life and learning
- To raise levels of student engagement in LTA through creative practices
- To support independent thinking, learner autonomy and student skills development
- To support staff and students working together on a research project



The Importance of Transition TBB

- Neave (2006)
 - The very nature of transition is an 'act of anticipation'.
- Retention of students: ensuring that students feel comfortable in the new environment and understand expectations
 - ' a well planned and stimulating introduction to higher education could be a natural part of the transition process, which can help students develop better prerequisites to manage their transition to higher education'.



Student Engagement TBB

- Work with students to develop a shared vision (institutional policy and procedures, curriculum, quality and pedagogy)
- Talk to students as individuals to understand how to work with them more effectively
- Ensure that the right conditions exist for students to engage within the institution i.e. through provision, range of accessible opportunities, regular and positive experiences and effective role models
- Help students develop their personal goals, aspirations, motivation and expectations and become more autonomous, self-directed lifelong learners (HEA guidelines)



Student Voice CT

- Values: student voice work is an ethical and moral practice
- 4 core values (Robinson and Taylor, 2007)
 - Communication as dialogue
 - Participation and democratic inclusivity
 - Impact on unequal and problematic power relations
 - Possibility for change and transformation



Students-as-Researchers (SAR) CT

- Fielding (2001; 2004); Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998): SAR refers to students' involvement in real research activities
- Move away from students as data source to students as researchers
- In SAR practice, students and staff work in partnership
 - Share and extend good practice
 - We are all learning together
 - Equity and authenticity
 - From reflection to action/ change



Strand 1: Reflective Interviews TBB

The project had three distinctive strands:

- The first strand included 9 in-depth, face to face interviews with first year students on their experiences of their crucial first year at university
- Students reflected on processes of learning, teaching and assessment; their fears and expectations about coming to university; the opportunities they engaged in. They also talked about support networks e.g. family, peers, friends



Strand 2: Using Visual Media CT

- Students used visual media i.e. video and photography, to reflect creatively on their transition to HE and their new identities as HE students.
- Individual and pair productions: style and mode of representation originated by students
- Open brief: what were the key incidents in your first year experience as a student and how do you want to represent these visually and aurally?



Strand 3: Students-as-Researchers CT

- Collaborative project involving 2 staff and 4 first year students to design and carry out a project to investigate AS sixth form students' understandings, hopes and fears about HE
- Aim to raise awareness about the student experience in HE
- Encouraging an aspirational orientation towards going to HE (for new WP students)
- Increasing AS students' preparedness for the academic culture of 'HE life'



Findings: Strand 1 TBB

- Reasons for participating in the research
- HE Choices
- Expectations
- Experiences: positive
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Social
- Experiences: negative
- Preparedness for HE
 - Difference A Levels/Access

Findings Strand 2: video and storyboard CT

- Outcomes
 - 4 videos
 - 1 storyboard using original photographs
- Basic practical skills in video-making and editing
- Creative expression: EGs of student videos
- Students' involvement, dedication and application: students became experts!
- Constraints



Findings Strand 3: SAR CT

- Discussion Group
 - research design and interview schedule
 - logistics/organisation
 - roles
 - ethics
- Research Skills
- Developing SHU students' cultural capital
- Fine (1994, p30): educational research should 'challenge what is, incite what could be, and help imagine a world that is not yet imagined'



Where to next? TBB

- Impact on us as teaching professionals
 - participatory teaching and learning
 - embedding an ethic of consultation with students into our ongoing practice
 - Better awareness of pedagogic power and authority
- Impact on students
 - 'real world research'
 - Dissertation in year 3
- Outcomes
 - conference attendance: staff and students
 - joint paper(s)



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