Imperial College
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StudentShapers

Supporting staff-student partnership
in learning and teaching

Working with students as partners in higher education: Rationale for the approach and opportunities for research and dissemination
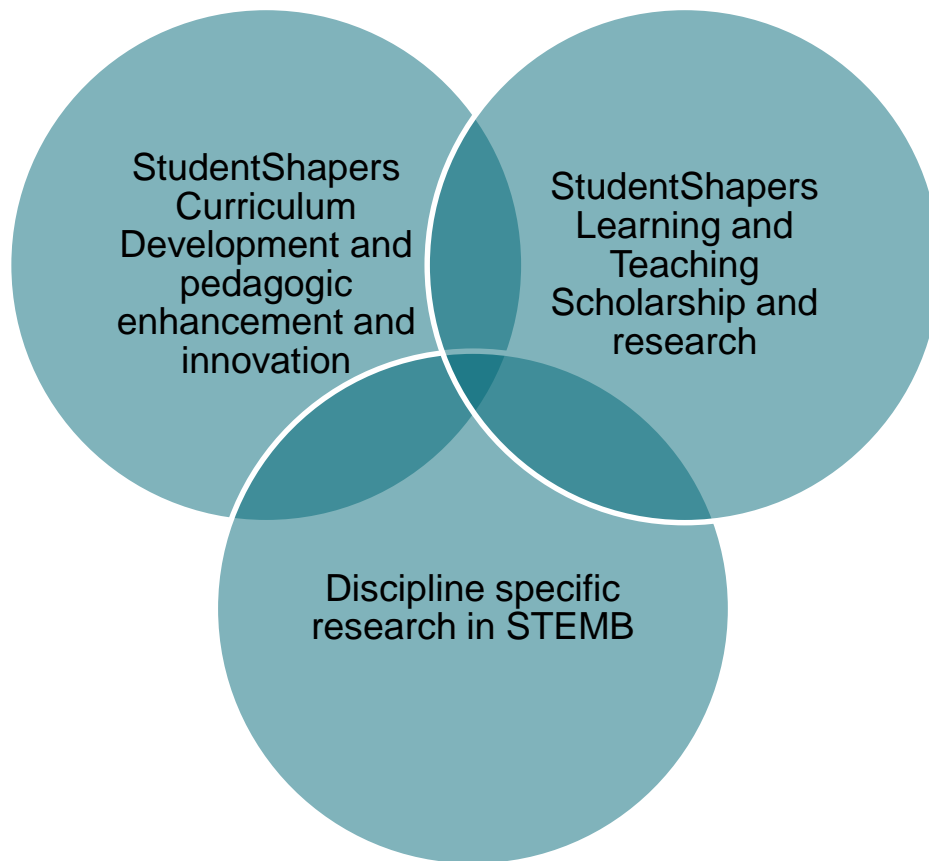
CHERSnet meeting: January 2019

Mike Streule, Director Imperial StudentShapers

2019: (Taught) Students in Higher Education

Interconnected areas of partnership: the landscape at Imperial

StudentShapers Curriculum Development and pedagogic enhancement and innovation

StudentShapers Learning and Teaching Scholarship and research
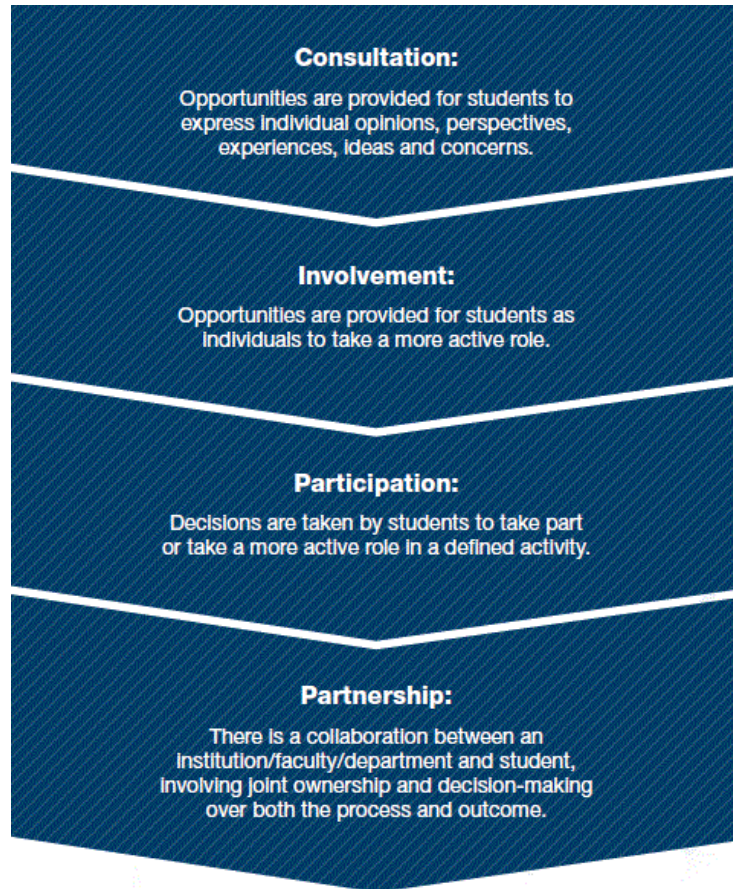
Discipline specific research in STEMB

Student partnership can happen across all areas of a HEI's research and education activities…

- Partnership activities may often sit across areas of the partnership landscape

…no one size fits all

Considering Partnership: Representation vs Partnership

Consultation:
Opportunities are provided for students to express individual opinions, perspectives, experiences, ideas and concerns.

Involvement:
Opportunities are provided for students as individuals to take a more active role.

Participation:
Decisions are taken by students to take part or take a more active role in a defined activity.

Partnership:
There is a collaboration between an institution/faculty/department and student, involving joint ownership and decision-making over both the process and outcome.

From Healey et al (2014)

Understanding the landscape of 'Student Engagement': ranging from the Consultation (the student voice; the **Academic Rep Network**) to Partnership (true Student Partnership; i.e. **StudentShapers**)

"There is a subtle, but extremely important, difference between an institution that 'listens' to students and responds accordingly, and an institution that gives students the opportunity to explore areas that they believe to be significant, to recommend solutions and to bring about the required changes. (Dunne & Zandstra 2011, 4).

What partnership 'looks like'?

Partnership is….

*"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 et al, 2014, pp. 6-7).

Why should staff adopt a partnership approach?

- Enhanced the relationship or trust between students and staff

- Development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials

- Increased understanding of the "other's" experience (e.g. staff understanding student experiences or vice versa)

- New beliefs about teaching and learning that change practices for the better

- Re-conceptualization of teaching as a collaborative process to foster learning

- Positively shifted traditional power dynamics between students and academics

after Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2017

Why might students wish to engage in partnership?

- Increased student engagement/motivation/ownership for learning

- Increased student confidence/self-efficacy

- Increased understanding of the "other's" experience (e.g. students understanding staff experiences)

- Enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff

- Increased student learning about their own learning (meta-cognitive learning, self-evaluation, self-awareness)

- Raised awareness of graduate attributes or employability skills or career development

- Increased sense of belonging to university or discipline or community

after Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2017

Changing the mind-set

*"students are neither disciplinary nor pedagogical experts. **Rather, their experience and expertise typically is in being a student** - something that many faculty [staff] have not been for many years. They understand where they and their peers are coming from and, often, where they think they are going"*

(Cook-Sather et al. 2014, 27).

Students as partners *"is a radical cultural shift from staff making decisions to benefit students toward a mindset where students and staff are working together – as colleagues, as partners, as trusted collaborators – with shared goals"*

(Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018, p. 24).

Doing educational research with student partners: positioning

How will you position yourself and the student partners?

Will the students 'do' the research?

Will that create conflicts/coercion issues?

Will they solicit more authentic responses; keep it real!

Or

Would they be better being part of the educational research design process in order to utilise their expertise of being a student

Or be partners in both…..**it depends**…

Working with student partners

A bumpy road to success…

- Navigating a new (temporary) relationship between staff and students
- An opportunity to develop ideas from both staff and students
- Nature of partnership project; time, duration, student and staff contributions vary dependent on the project

…no one size fits all…**it depends**…

Partnership is….

 *"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 et al, 2014, pp. 6-7)

HEA: values of partnership

9 HEA values of partnership:
- authenticity
    - honesty
        - inclusivity
            - reciprocity
                - empowerment
                    - trust
                        - courage
                            - plurality
                                - responsibility

from Taylor, (2015)

How can these values be incorporated into partnership activities?
Does the approach to partnership acknowledge these values and how will these values be assured throughout the partnership activity?
Does the activity follow the StudentShapers *Principles for Partnership?*

Navigating a successful partnership

A partnership approach should equally value the expertise of staff and students; this includes a recognition of students contributing an expertise of being learners and of staff being teachers, administrators or managers as appropriate. This expertise should be recognised alongside subject specific knowledge and expertise.

Partnerships should present equal opportunity for all students and adopt an inclusive approach; once the nature of the expertise required for a project is identified, the opportunity for partnership should be made equally available for all who are eligible..

Both Staff and students are able to benefit from the partnership; this does not mean the benefits are the same for staff and student partners, but the benefits should be similar in scale.

Partnerships should achieve an appropriate distribution of power; staff and students should make the effort to familiarise themselves with one another's approach in order to foster a culture in which partners are equally able to critique and challenge practices and approaches, and are able to suggest novel or innovative ways of working.

further reading in: Five propositions for genuine 'students as partners' practice, Matthews (2017)

Ethical approval?

- Curriculum development work (with student partners) would not normally require ethical approval; educational research work normally would

- On submission, Education journals will usually ask for confirmation of ethical approval

- Working with students involves additional ethical considerations:
  - Do you teach them?
  - How will you navigate the different relationship in research activities?
  - The Ethical approval process should cover both your work with your research participants and your (student) research collaborators

After the project: dissemination and impact

- Consider whether this stage is explicitly part of the project – if so, the student partners should be equally engaged in this stage too

- If it is envisaged as 'post-project' phase consider what aspect of student partnership may be feasible, desirable, or indeed ethical. Co-authoring a journal submission, or co-presenting a conference talk can be a highly rewarding outcome for students

- Consider what the intended **outputs** and **outcomes** are; the output is the immediate 'product' of the project, e.g. a set of new assessment methods for the module, the outcome is the longer term change to learning and/or teaching; e.g. an improved student approach to the assessment

The benefits of engaging with students as partners: institutional outcomes

*"[Students and Staff]… saw SaP as a powerful, values-based practice which places students and staff in a liminal space **that encourages a renegotiation of roles and identities**."*

Matthews et al (2018)

*"The opportunities SaP was seen to offer universities included a subversion of power dynamics which emerge from traditional hierarchies, the creation of mutual, transformative learning, and a **cultural shift to respectful and reciprocal student-staff collaboration** as a new means of 'doing' higher education."*

Matthews et al (2018)

*"…there is evidence that the personal development of both students and staff is a welcome outcome of partnership working and one which **has the potential to enhance skills, motivation, and self-efficacy of not just students but staff, too.** In turn, this personal development can **enhance the learning climate**, which is important for extending the benefits of partnership working to students beyond the small numbers that tend to put themselves forward."*

Curran, R. (2017)

After the project: external dissemination

Conferences

 Annual conference, usually in September

 Change Agents Network conference, usually May-ish.

Journals

Or discipline specific journals & conferences

Forthcoming events and dates

- **Partnership Proposal Writing Workshop - 5th February.** More background to working with students as partners plus individual guidance and review of ideas/proposals. Register in Eventbrite via https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/studentshapers/events/

- **Deadline for applications for Summer vacation activity - 22nd February.** Curriculum development and Educational research and investigation projects

- On going: proposals for funding by staff can be made at anytime for projects working on different timescales; if it represents high quality student partnership with impactful outcomes we will endeavour to support it

References and further reading

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning & Teaching: A Guide for Faculty*. **San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.**

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Healey, M Flint, A and Harrington, K (2014) Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education, *York: Higher Education Academy*

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Matthews, K. E., Dwyer, A., Hine, L., & Turner, J. (2018). Conceptions of students as partners. *Higher Education*, 1-15.

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Taylor, Carol. "A guide to ethics and student engagement through partnership." *Higher Education Academy: York), available at: https://www. heacademy. ac. uk/sites/default/files/guide_to_ethics. pdf* (2015).

Matthews, K.E., Cook-Sather, A. and Healey, M., 2018. Connecting learning, teaching, and research through student–staff partnerships: Toward universities as egalitarian learning communities.

A more extensive bibliography on Students as Partners Literature is available at:

https://www.mickhealey.co.uk/resources#
(Students as Partners and Change Agents bibliography)

Discussion, questions….

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