Serial number	0120
Title	Decision making in co-created learning and teaching: responding to calls to BYOS (Bring your own student)
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SRHE Conference 2017

Decision making in co-created learning and teaching: responding to calls to BYOS (Bring your own student)

Abstract
In this paper I will take a critical look at who makes decisions and how decisions are made within co-created learning and teaching. I will present three models that are useful in thinking about, and discussing decision-making in co-creation: 1) Early design decisions in co-creating curricula (Bovill, 2014); 2) Decision mode levels (Heron, 1992); and the participation matrix (DFID, 2003; Konings et al, 2017; Bovill, 2017). I will then introduce the common practice of staff being asked to BYOS 'bring your own student' to conferences and other similar events. I aim to highlight a range of ways in which decision making takes place in co-creation, as well as specifically about which students are invited to attend conferences and how the notion of BYOS assumes particular forms of co-creation and decision making.

Paper
Internationally, co-creation of learning and teaching and student-staff partnerships in higher education have gained momentum over the last five years. However, the variety of research and practice in this field is vast and diverse. Whilst many people share underpinning values and approaches, equally others have vastly different motivations and practices. A recent literature review (Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2017) highlighted that much 'students as partners' work is small scale and involves only individual or small groups of students, raising calls for the need for more strategic approaches that are more inclusive of all students. There has also been a recent scathing critique of broader student engagement research for being under-theorised (Gourlay, 2016; MacFarlane & Tomlinson, 2017), and whilst this is a significant generalisation with the danger it may undermine many beneficial student engagement efforts, there is a growing sense that we must ensure co-creation, partnership and student engagement work retains or adopts a critical stance.

One area of co-created learning and teaching that seems to have received relatively little attention, is the idea that students and staff might have different roles in co-creation at different stages of a research or practice initiative. There often seems to be an assumption that there will be co-creation or partnership throughout. In this paper, I will present three models/frameworks that enable us to analyse how different individuals are involved in different ways at different stages of any co-creation process. These models are: 1) Early design decisions in co-creating curricula (Bovill, 2014); 2) Decision mode levels (Heron, 1992); and the participation matrix (DFID, 2003; Konings et al, 2017; Bovill, 2017). The first of these frameworks (Bovill, 2014) outlines the findings from a research project where staff involved in co-creating curricula were interviewed about their work. It was clear from the findings that staff were making a range of decisions about for example - which students would be involved in co-creation, or whether the project would focus on course or programme level curricula – before the students were involved in any way. The second model from Heron (1992) also highlights that staff are ultimately in control of any co-creation or partnership initiative focused on learning and teaching, but that there are multiple levels (and opportunities) where staff can either direct, negotiate or delegate decision-making power. The third example is the participation matrix that has been used frequently in the international development sector (DFID, 2003). This matrix

outlines a set of project stages, and maps against these stages, a range of possible participation levels appropriate for different stakeholders including: inform, consult, participate, partnership or control. This participation matrix will be presented using recent examples from higher education (Bovill, 2017; Könings, Bovill and Woolner 2017).

I will then move on to explore a common practice at co-creation of learning and teaching / staff-student partnership conferences, where staff are regularly encouraged to 'bring your own student' (BYOS). This request often assumes a particular form of partnership that involves only small scale student involvement (see earlier mention of Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2017). In these small scale examples, there may have only been one or two students involved and they are the obvious students that come to mind when asked to BYOS. However, these students are also often the super-engaged, or sometimes they are employed by universities as interns or in longer term posts that start to change the nature of whether these individuals are students or staff. In other instances where staff have worked with a whole class, how does a staff member decide which student(s) are considered for BYOS? The most engaged? Those with the highest grades? A student from an under-represented group? Those who will do a slick presentation? Those who will say the sorts of things the staff member hopes they will say? The models I present will provide another way of thinking about the idea of BYOS. If staff are often in a position where they make the overarching decisions about co-creation, is it acceptable that they decide not to BYOS? If different students are involved in different ways throughout a project is it fair only to invite one or a few students when invited to BYOS?

I will invite participants to react to the models of decision-making in co-creation, as well as inviting responses to the idea that the concept of BYOS assumes particular forms of co-creation and decision-making.

Questions to stimulate audience response and participation include:
1) What reactions do you have to the three models / frameworks presented?
2) Which students have you chosen to accompany you to conferences in the past, or to be involved in other presentations? If you are a student, have you ever been selected to go to a conference? How did this feel? Were there any other students involved in the work who also attended/didn't attend?
3) Is it always appropriate to strongly encourage BYOS at conferences and events?

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