

Prioritising the student voice:

A co-participatory and artful inquiry methodology to capture under-represented students' experiences



Today's presentation

1. Research aims and context
2. Methodology
3. Research in practice
4. Impact on HE practice



Research Aims

1. Exploring the early HE experience of under-represented students
2. In a way that privileges their voice and avoids deficit-models
3. Offering practice-based recommendations based on findings
4. Re-conceptualising student engagement with co-participation theory



Research Context

1. Under-represented students: unequal outcomes and experience in UK HE
(HEFCE, 2015; Christie et al., 2016; McCaig and Stevenson, 2016; HEPI, 2017; OfS, 2018; Read et al., 2018; Vigurs et al., 2018)
 - First year is crucial to continuation (Gale and Parker, 2014)
 - 10 students, less than £25k family income and low participation to HE postcode
 - Southeastern: post-1992 university in South-East England

2. Neoliberalism
 - Deep interconnection between HE, WP and social mobility (Naidoo, 2003; Ball, 2008; Burke, 2012; Hoskins, 2013; Bowl et al., 2018)
 - Self-improvement narrative (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Burke, 2012; Wilkins, 2012; Mavelli, 2014; Zepke 2014)



Research Context: Methodology

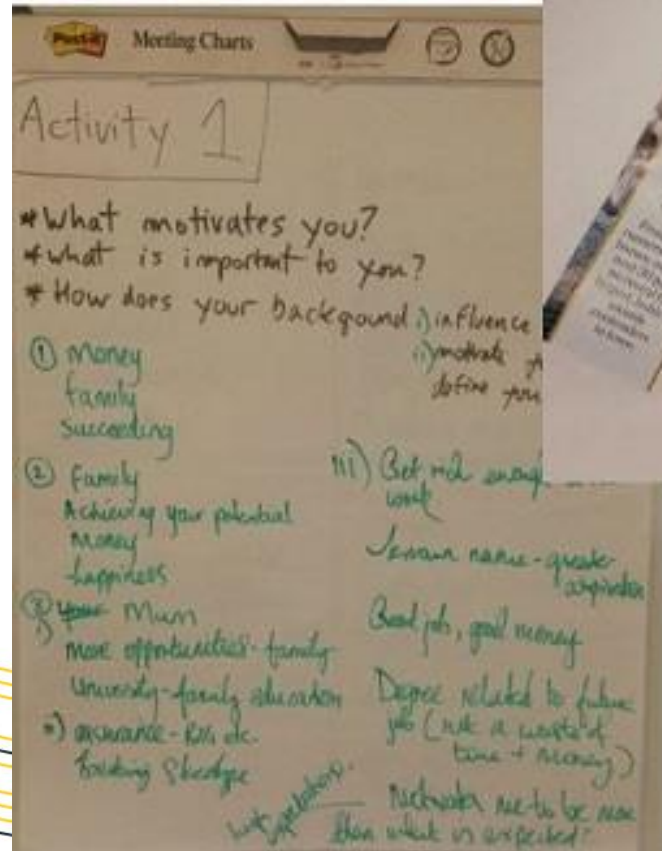
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1. Participatory Pedagogy: co-participatory form of research (Burke, 2012; Farenga, 2021)
 - Developed to engaged those who are traditionally under-represented (Freire, 1996)
 - Acknowledges inequalities, raises awareness and supports engagement
 - “Pre-work” before actual research
2. Artful inquiry and collage making (Farenga, 2021)
 - Use art forms to carry out research and capture experience, emotions, feelings (Vaughan, 2005; Davis, 2008; Eisner, 2008)
 - Cutting, placing of materials to explore individual experience (Butler-Kisber and Poldma, 2010)
 - Collages acted as visual representations of experience and springboard to facilitated discussions



Research in Practice

Starter activity
(outcome recorded)



Individual collage
(outcome recorded)

Group collage
(outcome recorded)



Research in Practice

- Individualism
- Financial motivation
- Strategy

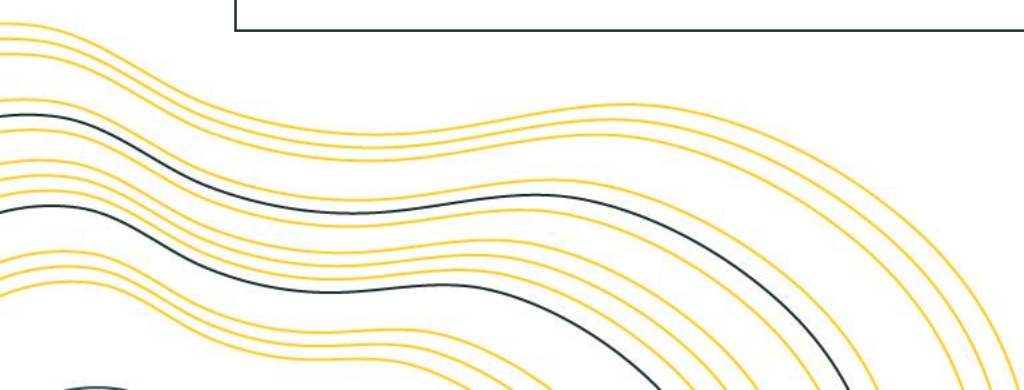


Research in Practice



Research in Practice

“[I] see it like, in a race, everyone starts off at the same point, but there are certain people who might be starting a few metres back and might have to run a longer race to get to the same place as someone else, and that’s why I need to go out there and find opportunities, make opportunities, and go and grab them, not just wait for something to come to me because that will be very unlikely.” – *Kiki*



Impact on Practice

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1. Institutional misrecognition

- Students displayed feel for the game based on expected neoliberal behaviours in accessing and performing in HE
- Despite this, they encountered early struggles and little support
- Indicate an environment that does not understand them—or even seek to

2. New form of student engagement

- Combining Participatory Pedagogy and capability approach empowers students, allowing them to reclaim agency
- A form of student-staff partnership to re-shape experience and practices
- Focused on minority groups (UUK, 2019)

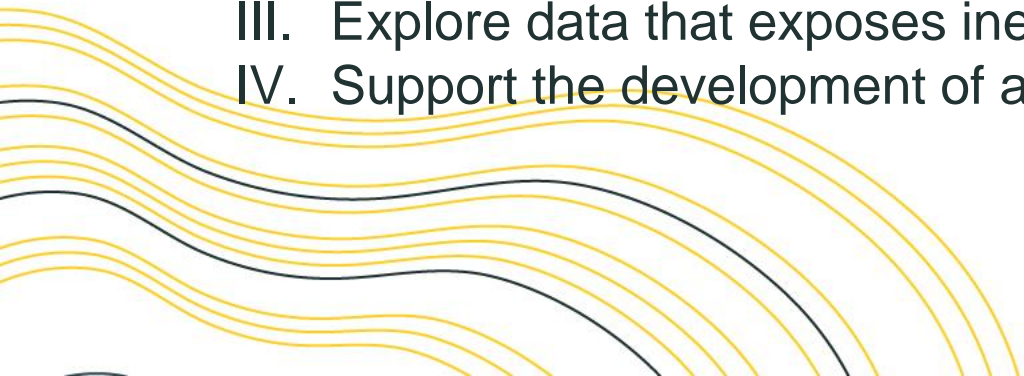
3. Blended research

- Using artful inquiry and traditional qualitative methods to support each other



In Practice: Student Shadow Board

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1. **Vision:** a collaborative, representative, reciprocal platform between staff and students to scrutinise decision-making and actions affecting the student journey
 2. **Purpose:** provide more in-depth student feedback from degree programmes and the student experience
 3. **Aims:**
 - I. Hold the School accountable for its decisions that impact the student experience
 - II. Utilise student voice to influence key decision-making and actions
 - III. Explore data that exposes inequalities (i.e awarding gaps)
 - IV. Support the development of a thriving, inclusive School learning community
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In Practice: Student Shadow Board

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“I really like how things are set up and the fact that it's big on student voice, that we are being given opportunities to speak out, to have a conversation with other students and staff members regarding issues, that we are involved in the changes that are happening in the School. You do feel your opinion, your voice matters.”



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