

Introduction to Student Partnership – with literature (Screencast) #2

Transcript

0:00

Welcome to our introduction to student partnership and its role within Scottish tertiary education.

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Before we start, we wanted to flag that this version of the presentation cites key literature and goes into more depth than our brief introduction version.

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So if you're completely new to the concept of student partnership, you may prefer to start with a brief introduction version of the resource.

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In this overview, we aim to outline some key definitions, concepts and principles around student partnership, some other potential benefits and challenges of it, its role within Scottish tertiary education, some tips for getting started with student partnership, some related terminology that may help you as you look through the literature and signposting you to some useful tools, further reading and references.

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We've also listed the acronyms that we've used in this resource and we've shared a QR code to our sparqs Acronym Buster, which you may find helpful as you navigate terminology within the Scottish tertiary sector.

1:06

So what is student partnership?

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Well, one of the most commonly cited definitions from the literature is from Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, who define student faculty partnership as a collaborative reciprocal process...

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...through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation or analysis.

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And we've shared quotes from other authors to capture key concepts around student partnership, particularly collaboration and a shift from the notion of students as consumers and passive learners.

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So Mercer-Mapstone and colleagues state in the systematic review that students as partners in higher education re-envision students and staff as active collaborators in teaching and learning.

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And Felten and Kupertadze say that this fundamental shift from passive to active learning is occasioned by giving agency to students and allowing them to make pedagogical choices, which consequently places on them more responsibility for learning...

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...while at the same time increasing their motivation and enthusiasm.

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And other authors emphasise that student partnership is a process, with Matthews stating that students as partners discourse focuses on student academic partnerships as a process for engaging with, rather than doing to, or doing for students.

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And Healey and colleagues state that partnership is framed as a process of student engagement...

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...understood as staff and students learning and working together to foster engaged student learning and engaging learning and teaching enhancement.

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It's a way of doing things rather than an outcome in itself.

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So you might like to pause and reflect on these four quotes to see which ones resonate with you, which maybe surprise you, and which you'd like to follow-up on in more depth.

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Some of the key principles associated with student partnership include the three R's.

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So respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility.

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And shared decision-making is also highlighted as a key principle within a number of publications.

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A range of other principles include one that sparks particularly champions in Scotland, namely, recognising and valuing student contributions as a key starting point for successful student partnership.

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It's also important to establish a culture of student partnership, whether at national level, as seen in Scotland and Australia, for example, or at institutional level.

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And this involves recognising issues such as position, power and influence that staff can bring to a partnership and moving to a partnership approach in which power and control are shared, trust is established and inclusivity is at the forefront of planning and decision making.

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And when we get student partnership right, it can lead to a wide range of positive outcomes for both students and staff.

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These are highlighted in a systematic review of student partnership literature from 2017, which reviewed 65 peer-reviewed publications.

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This highlighted the top four positive outcomes for students as increased student engagement, motivation or ownership for learning, which was reported in 56% of the publications.

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Increased student confidence and self-efficacy, increased understanding of the other's experience, for example, students understanding the staff experience, and enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff.

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Similarly, the same review identified the top four positive outcomes for staff as an enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff, development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials.

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Again, an increased understanding of the other's experience, in this case staff understanding the student experiences, and developing new beliefs about learning and teaching that can change practice for the better.

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The review does also highlight potential negative outcomes from some student partnership initiatives, which for students included inhibited relationships or trust between students and staff, with 6% of papers reporting this.

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A lack of improvement or lack of challenge in desired areas, reinforcing pre-existing power inequalities or hierarchical structures, and decreased student engagement, motivation or ownership for learning.

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We should, however, highlight the very small percentage of papers identifying these negative outcomes.

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And the review also states that very few negative outcomes were reported for staff, with 85%, or 55 papers, not stating any.

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So we haven't included any comparable data for staff in this presentation.

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So let's move on to consider the role of student partnership within the Scottish tertiary sector.

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Scotland is recognised internationally for our reputation as leaders in student partnership, and particularly in terms of student partnership in quality processes.

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It's worth highlighting that in the early days, when we set out our intention to work differently with students, not everyone was comfortable with the concept.

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The way we work with students today gives some significant agency within the system, and working in this way can be challenging for staff at all levels.

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But for the last 20 years, we've worked hard as a sector to develop our approaches, and we've achieved this through a range of initiatives, including embedding and building on tools such as the sparqs Student Engagement Framework, which was co-created with the sector and adopted at national level from 2012.

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Our enhancement-led approach to quality in Scotland has enabled us to work collaboratively as a sector to develop and evaluate new approaches.

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And student partnership is now embedded within our quality processes for colleges and universities, which are known as Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework, or TQEF.

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And the sector consultation that informed the development of TQEF identified a large number of respondents stating that they wanted to build on our previous student partnership successes in Scotland and to continue to push boundaries and remain at the forefront of practices internationally.

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So the TQEF places students at the heart of the framework and it has six core principles, one of which is student engagement and partnership.

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And to support institutions to meet the expectations of TQEF, the Scottish Funding Council commissioned sparqs to develop two new resources, which are now sector reference points within the framework.

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The first, the Student Learning Experience model, built on an existing sparqs model, and it further developed and refined it in partnership with the sector and more than 300 students in Scottish colleges and universities.

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It breaks the Student Learning Experience down into 9 building blocks...

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...with accompanying reflective questions.

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And it's designed to be at the heart of dialogue between students and staff at all levels.

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The other resource, Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership, captures the ambition we share at national level to harness the voices of students to ensure that Scotland's tertiary sector provides the best possible student experience for all.

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Importantly, it also captures the different features represented as pieces of a student partnership jigsaw...

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...that we'll need to work on, as a sector, in order to achieve that ambition.

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You can find out more about both of these from other resources in our Academic Development Toolkit.

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So we've already highlighted some potential challenges with student partnership, and it may not always be easy to get started with it, particularly if there are tensions with institutional or local team cultures.

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It can also be challenging to develop inclusive approaches.

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So we'd recommend considering this at the outset and considering whose voices are represented and whose may be excluded.

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However, ultimately, we'd encourage you to give it a go, to be brave, to find allies, and to start with a small student partnership initiative to get you going.

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The potential benefits can be hugely rewarding, both in terms of reinvigorating your own, or your team's, learning and teaching practice, as well as developing your understanding of your students' perspectives...

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...and enhancing their curriculum and their overall Student Learning Experience.

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And to support you with getting started on this journey, we'll share a range of useful tools, frameworks and literature at the end of this presentation.

10:03

We recommend pausing the presentation in order to engage with them in more detail, and you can then make a note of the ones that interest you and find them using our linked 'references and further reading list'.

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And as you engage with more literature, it's worth being aware of other terminology that has relevance to student partnership.

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You may have heard of the term student engagement, student voice, student participation.

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And there are key differences between these and student partnership, one of which is shared decision-making processes.

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The term students as partners, students as change agents and co-creation are related.

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But again, there are some differences between them.

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And you can find out more by engaging with Cathy Bovill's 2019 paper around a typology of learning and teaching, as well as other literature in the 'references and further reading list' that accompanies this resource.

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Less frequently encountered terms include participatory design, relational pedagogy, and partnered learning communities.

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But it is useful to be aware of these and you may want to use them as search terms if you're doing a literature review.

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So in conclusion, we hope that this overview has introduced you to key elements associated with student partnership and related literature.

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The rest of this presentation will highlight a number of useful tools, frameworks and other literature that you can engage with at your own pace, and you'll find full references at the end of the presentation.

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And you can access hyperlinks to them through the 'references and further reading list' that accompanies this resource.

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And this is shown as a separate Word or PDF document within the Academic Development Toolkit.