



# More than just listening: The role of student voice in higher education

**Lincoln Higher Education Research Institute Seminar**

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# Aims and objectives

- To explore the increase in the involvement of students in institutional approaches.
- Outline the political contexts that influence the positioning of students in higher education.
- To explore how we need to move from consumerism to partnership through a joined up institutional approach.
- Offer a number of recommendations to assist.

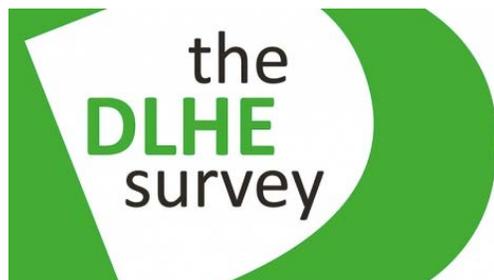


# Background to student involvement in higher education

- Increased accountability within the UK has seen a **shift** to placing more emphasis on **enhancing learning** and increasing **learner engagement** (Little and Williams, 2010).
- Bovill et al. (2015) illustrates how students are also becoming involved in other ways beyond **student representation** and governance structures shaping their own learning through *co-creation*, *acting as consultants*; working as **co-researchers** or as pedagogical **co-designers**.
- Changes to governance regimes in higher education open a whole array of questions as to the **actors** involved, their **relationship, roles, power** and **culture** Klemenčič (2014).



# Neoliberal, Marketised & Consumerist Discourses



# Consequences of neoliberal position

- Student satisfaction, relaxation of number controls and opening the market to new providers has placed universities in to direct competition with each other.
- Regulatory bodies such as the QAA promote student involvement in institutional governance to promote student choice.
- As a result the relationship between the metrics and the regulatory requirements is conflicted.



# Student Voice

## – what is it & what does it mean?

- At a basic level can be “listening to” and “valuing of” student views
  - Enacted through module evaluations / reports, subject committees, institutional surveys, NSS (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005).
- At a more advanced level student voice is characterised by a form of participation that sees staff working in partnership with students as equals to influence change, empowering them to take an active role in shaping their education (Seale, 2010).
- Whilst student voice activities are often regarded positively there is a lack of clarity around the purpose of student voice and the ideologies that have informed its development (Freeman, 2016).



# Student Voice as Partnership

Concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility are important in determining the relationship with students and the agency provided.

*“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)



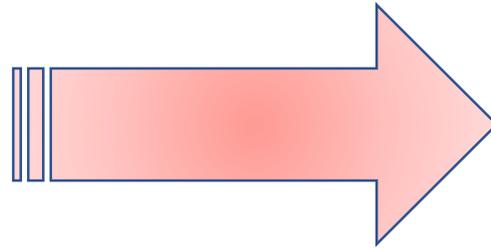
# Consumerism to Partnership in student voice

## Consumer identity

- Imposed through legal & policy frameworks
- QA is a means of engaging students
- Promotion of an entitlement culture

## Partnership identity

- Active collaboration
- Opportunity to co-create
- Reciprocal process



- Underpinned by profitable HEI's, satisfied customers & investment in human capital

- Underpinned by transformational opportunities and development of scholars

# Institutional Approaches

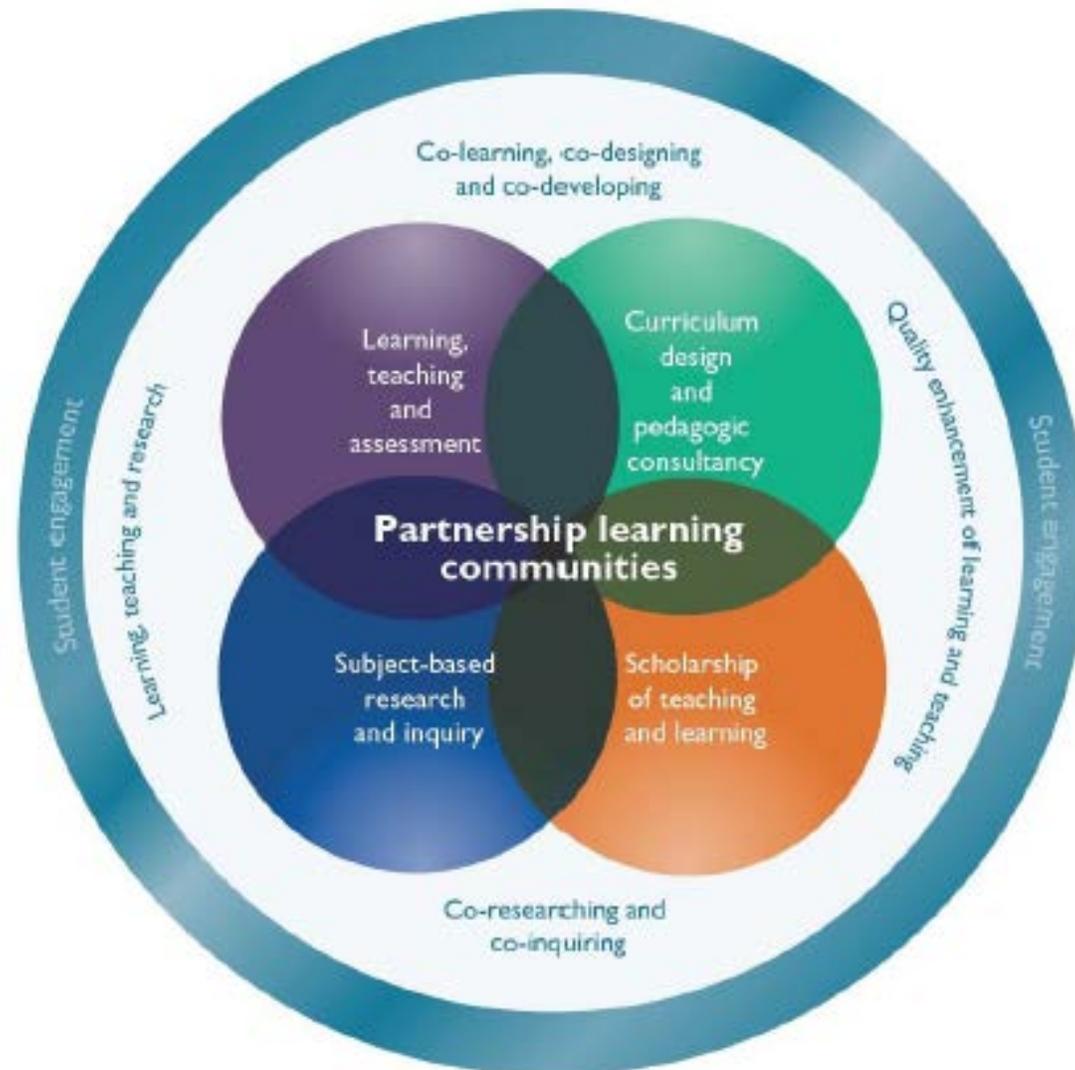


Figure 1. Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education – an overview model (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014, p25)



# Good Practice University of Lincoln

## Student Representation

- School Action Days

## Student Union Academic Opportunities

- Linc-up
- Staff-Student Insight Scheme
- Student Researchers
- Student Recruiters
- Student Reviewers

Informal staff – student meetings

Subject Committees (Co-chairs)

College and University committees

Module evaluations and reports

NSS action plans

Annual programme monitoring reports

UROS

Curriculum design

Teaching and innovation funds



# Inclusive Community #LincolnAsOne

- Institutional approach as opposed to pockets.
- Empower staff and students to adopt such approaches.
- Clear communication, guidelines and shared objectives for all involved.
- Inclusive participation for all voices.
- Consider how power balance can be altered and shared in formal settings.
- Provide space for change and transformation, listening to learner voice alone is not sufficient – work to develop and shape solutions.



# Final thoughts

- Buy-in from all parties is fundamental to success.
- Relationships between students, staff, SU and Management are vital.
- We must resist the temptation of working with students to improve the metrics, or using metrics as a marker of success.
- Shift from isolated good practice and projects to a coherent flexible institutional strategy and approach to partnership that provides opportunities for all students.



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# Thank you for listening!!



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