

Assessing the Outcomes of Collaboration with Students on Curriculum Development and Design on an Undergraduate Art History Module

Authors : Helen Potkin

Abstract : This paper presents a practice-based case study of a project in which the student group designed and planned the curriculum content, classroom activities and assessment briefs in collaboration with the tutor. It focuses on the co-creation of the curriculum within a history and theory module, Researching the Contemporary, which runs for BA (Hons) Fine Art and Art History and for BA (Hons) Art Design History Practice at Kingston University, London. The paper analyses the potential of collaborative approaches to engender students' investment in their own learning and to encourage reflective and self-conscious understandings of themselves as learners. It also addresses some of the challenges of working in this way, attending to the risks involved and feelings of uncertainty produced in experimental, fluid and open situations of learning. Alongside this, it acknowledges the tensions inherent in adopting such practices within the framework of the institution and within the wider context of the commodification of higher education in the United Kingdom. The concept underpinning the initiative was to test out co-creation as a creative process and to explore the possibilities of altering the traditional hierarchical relationship between teacher and student in a more active, participatory environment. In other words, the project asked about: what kind of learning could be imagined if we were all in it together? It considered co-creation as producing different ways of being, or becoming, as learners, involving us reconfiguring multiple relationships: to learning, to each other, to research, to the institution and to our emotions. The project provided the opportunity for students to bring their own research and wider interests into the classroom, take ownership of sessions, collaborate with each other and to define the criteria against which they would be assessed. Drawing on students' reflections on their experience of co-creation alongside theoretical considerations engaging with the processual nature of learning, concepts of equality and the generative qualities of the interrelationships in the classroom, the paper suggests that the dynamic nature of collaborative and participatory modes of engagement have the potential to foster relevant and significant learning experiences. The findings as a result of the project could be quantified in terms of the high level of student engagement in the project, specifically investment in the assessment, alongside the ambition and high quality of the student work produced. However, reflection on the outcomes of the experiment prompts a further set of questions about the nature of positionality in connection to learning, the ways our identities as learners are formed in and through our relationships in the classroom and the potential and productive nature of creative practice in education. Overall, the paper interrogates questions of what it means to work with students to invent and assemble the curriculum and it assesses the benefits and challenges of co-creation. Underpinning it is the argument that, particularly in the current climate of higher education, it is increasingly important to ask what it means to teach and to envisage what kinds of learning can be possible.

Keywords : co-creation, collaboration, learning, participation, risk

Conference Title : ICCDHE 2019 : International Conference on Curriculum Development in Higher Education

Conference Location : San Francisco, United States

Conference Dates : June 06-07, 2019