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Talk About Teaching

Exploring Mental Health & Wellbeing in HE



Belonging, participation and a sense
of place in a learning community

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Project Overview

- Our main aims were to explore:
 - The degree of trust students placed in the rationale for module tasks and assessment
 - The reasons why students might have recourse to friends rather than staff when seeking assurances about their learning
 - The relationship between student confidence, senses of belonging and development of learning
 - Student perception of learning communities and their role in their learning
 - The extent to which students' pre-university experiences shaped their learning and confidence at university
- Use of educational biographies to explore these questions

Pilot Questionnaire

- Student as Researchers scheme with 2nd-year student Caitlin Finn
- Small-scale pilot questionnaire sent to students in the School of Humanities, with the following questions:
 - What kind of further education establishment did you attend?
 - How would you describe your experience of learning and education before university? Was university your first choice? Had you always intended to do a Humanities degree?
 - How confident were you in your learning?
 - Do you feel confident in approaching the assignments laid out by lecturers?
 - During your time at university, do you believe you have utilized university resources to increase your confidence?
 - Do you believe there is a disjunction in the community between students and staff?
 - What do you feel creates, or could create, community between students and staff at our university?

Preliminary Thoughts and Questions

- From preliminary analysis of 14 respondents, the following themes emerged:
 - A considerable correlation between confidence in learning and a sense of community
 - Pre-University learning confidence correlated with strong senses of community
 - A set of values that underpinned ideas of community and how staff fostered these:
 - Openness, friendliness, honesty, authenticity (i.e., staff being themselves)
 - Care and attention paid to student ideas and opinions – sense that they mattered
 - Importance of hierarchy to previous learning experience
 - Some appreciated the horizontalizing of hierarchies at university, others correlated this with a loss of support

Further Research

- Multiple avenues for further research:
 - A refined questionnaire sent to all Schools
 - Questions focused on: Year; Subject; Residential/Commuter/International; Levels of P/T work
- Further refine and explore our preliminary hypotheses:
 - Does lower confidence in pre-University education equal lower confidence at University?
 - What crossover exists between University community/belonging and educational confidence?
 - What do students consider important in creating community?
 - How far are pastoral, educational or social elements important for community building?
- Work-in-progress article for *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*

Discussion

Brief Audience Survey

- Use the Mentimeter to state your School and your main role (e.g. Teaching, Professional Services etc.). The code is: 31588379 Contexts could be illuminating for understanding responses

Questions/Issues

- In what ways do any of the themes we have raised ring true to your experiences of teaching and supporting students? How common are our perceptions and experiences?
- What would you like to know about students' sense of community?