

Critical perspectives on participation, voice and agency

BALEAP 2025 Collaboration, Co-creation, and
Community: The transformative potential of EAP

Liz Molyneux - 16 April

Outline

Analytical approach

Student participation, voice and agency

Faculty participation, voice and agency

Analytical concepts

Critique: ‘to think about the ways in which current structures and practices construct and constrain our possible modes of action and being and thus open up possibilities for thinking and acting differently’ (Ball, 2019, 3)

Subject formation: Subjects are produced through positioning and practices; subjects have multiple selves (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016)

Students

Participation, voice and agency

The tyranny of participation

Engagement can have behavioural, affective and cognitive dimensions (Trowler, 2010)

There is often too much emphasis on visible behaviours – students must not only engage but must *be seen to engage*

This can inculcate inauthentic, performative practices (Gourlay, 2015)



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Student voice

“The student experience” homogenises students and deprives them of agency at the same time as apparently giving them “voice”... It is a skilful illusion (Morrish & Saunston, 2020, 55)

‘You said, we did’ customer satisfaction discourses position students as consumers with a diminished form of agency (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017)

Student voice is codified into institutional structure and becomes a form of disciplining; student surveys pre-empt the NSS and university attention is focussed on only those aspects with external currency (Canning, 2017)

Why does the UK have the worst student rights in Europe? Dickinson, 2024



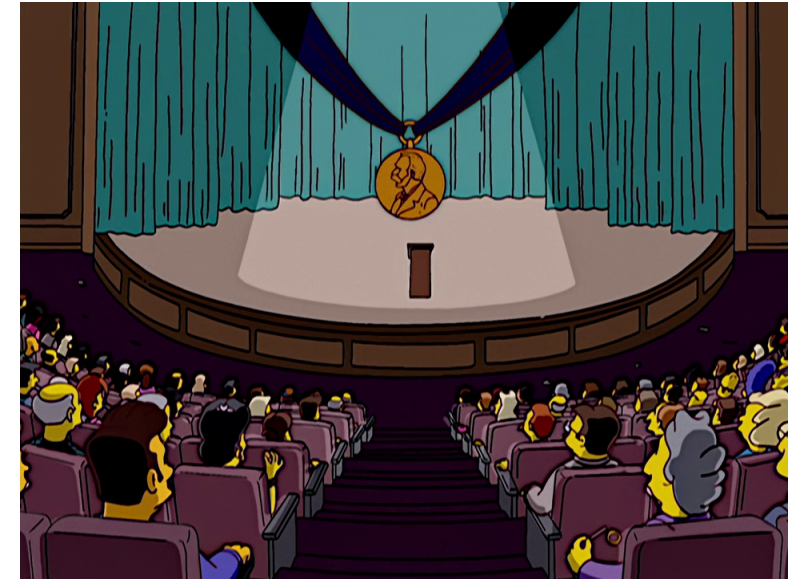
Faculty

Participation, voice and agency

The tyranny of scholarship?

‘[T]he promotion of scholarship was not greeted with universal approval from colleagues. Reactions ranged from enthusiasm and curiosity to indifference and suspicion as well as hostility’ (Ding, 2024, 7)

‘The feat of publishing... tends to be celebrated rather than what its contribution might be to knowledge or practices.... Scholarship, like research, can be highly performative – and devoid of meaning (Ding, 2024, 10)



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Faculty voice

Job satisfaction



02/37

I enjoy my job.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

0 = DISAGREE and 10 = AGREE



04/37

I am being developed.

0

1

2

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0 = DISAGREE and 10 = AGREE

Conclusion

How are participation, voice and agency linked?

- What do we do which might inadvertently promote performative participation?
- Why might students and faculty resist giving their “voice”?
- How might students and faculty be positioned in ways which reduce agency?

How can critical perspectives create space to think and act differently?



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