The Events Management Student as Co-Producer: Establishing New Working Relationships

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Introduction - Why Now?

• Recognition of the increasing popularity of academia meeting industry (Sibson, 2011).
• New subject entering the curriculum – UG/PG
• Relative paucity of literature regarding Events Management as a subject and surrounding teaching and learning issues.
• Need to respond to the new student ‘demands’ – tuition fees, economic context and career prospects.
• Pro-active academics
• Beyond Module Evaluations
2012 Student Intake

• This research is prompted by a noted evolution in the student character; ‘they are supposed to become unique, successful individuals, making their own choices and plans to accomplish autonomy’ (Harris, 2004, p.6).

• 35 students – eight male students, 27 female students
  – four mature students
  – All Home/EU students
  – None through clearing (actively seeking events)

• Average UCAS points score was above expectations
Research Objectives

• Investigate students’ expectations of the new programme and their future prospects.
• Open up the communication stream between student and educator.
• Reflect on current teaching practices and subject content and respond accordingly.
Methodology

• Theoretical framework – *co-production*
  – ‘Student, lecturers and others who support the learning process are viewed as being engaged in a cooperative enterprise focused on the production, dissemination and application of knowledge, and on the development of learners rather than merely skilled technicians’ (McCulloch, 2009, p.171).

• Listening to the vulnerable voice
  – ‘At the beginning of their courses, students are on the cusp of the process of becoming. They are open to new possibilities, and this openness makes them vulnerable’ (Batchelor, 2006, p.795).
  – ‘Having a voice partly depends on someone hearing that voice with understanding’ (Batchelor, 2006, p.799).
Methods

- Potential to be longitudinal study
- Questionnaires – once a year, whole group
- Interviews – twice a year with volunteers
- Focus Groups – twice a year with volunteers
- Participatory activities – one-off with volunteers (e.g. collage)
- Blog – dissemination and comment (on-going)
  - See http://eventsresearch.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/
Findings

• Highly creative, expressive, gratitude-seeking and vibrant
  – ‘I like to make other people happy’
  – ‘People who like events themselves, like going to events, like having a good time and have a passion for a certain area.’

• High expectations for themselves and their future prospects.
  – One student when discussing the qualification stated [I want to] ‘be able to take it wherever I would like to.’
  – Discussing a luxurious lifestyle ‘If I’m going to work for it, I don’t see why I can’t have it.’
  – ‘the money does come into it, everyone wants to earn a lot of money, live an expensive lifestyle, but at the same time it is that I want to own my own business and at the same time increase my knowledge of events.’
Findings

• Disappointed with some other students’ lack of drive/ ambition
  – ‘I feel like some of the people in the class have just done the course because it’s something they’ve just wanted to go to uni for. I’ve come here for a totally selfish reason for the fact I want to learn and study events management.’

• Passion for the industry and its breadth of opportunities

• Driven by the desire to please others and receive appreciation/gratitude.
  – Not financially driven when describing future careers (job satisfaction and enjoyment).
  – ‘I like working in teams.’

• Event Management selected for enjoyment, personality match, breadth of subject
  – ‘I knew it was going to be difficult but at the same time I thought it was going to be fun.’
Findings

• Content analysis of qualitative data collected through questionnaires.
Findings

– Majority of students have a business studies background
– Organisation
– Students are open to new opportunities/freedom
  • 49% plan to work in events after graduating
  • 48% not sure what they wanted to do
Actions

• Opportunities for group work and to receive feedback
  – International Office events, group based activities, presentation delivery

• Academic concerns over challenging environment
  – Assignment tutorials, mind maps, new ways of thinking

• Creativity
  – Seminars tailored to engage the students, debates
Next Steps

• Blogging and research dissemination
• Term 2 research – further interviews, questionnaire and focus group.
• Inductive approach – responding to students’ direction, reflecting on teaching practices and engaging colleagues.
• Working with Centre for Educational Research and Development with regards to the co-production of best practice.
• Disseminate information to colleagues and discuss progress and best practice.
References


