

Topic stream: A. Pedagogic research

Submission type: Presentation

Submission title:

Radical collegiality: Working with students in the review of teaching practices

Abstract:

This presentation draws on research findings from a Teaching Fellows funded project 'Students as Colleagues in the Review of Teaching Practices'. During academic year 14/15, Edinburgh Napier students volunteered to be trained as professional 'reviewers' of HE teaching practices. These 18 students were randomly paired with a willing staff member (from a different discipline) during trimester two and asked to provide reviews on a number of their staff members' teaching and assessment practices. In parallel, we asked staff members to nominate a peer to conduct a traditional peer observation of a lecture or seminar and provide both written and verbal feedback. This provided a comparative element to the research. As such, we were able to ask two main research questions of this study. Firstly, could students and staff develop authentic and collegial relationships during a professional development activity that disrupted traditional notions of expertise and status? Secondly, were there significant differences between the quality and nature of the feedback delivered by students trained as colleagues compared to feedback delivered by peers? Both quantitative and qualitative data sets were gathered from reflective diaries, focus groups, audio-recorded debriefing sessions between staff and student/staff and peer, and completed documentation of the review activities. This presentation explores the results of these findings, and raises issues of standpoint theory, radical collegiality and peer-supported review. We conclude that the approach of involving students as colleagues in the review of teaching practices can be powerful and transformative for both parties. However, there are challenges in doing this, not least in negotiating and recognising inherent differences in roles and experience; however these enrich the process as well as complicate it.