ESCalate Developing Pedagogy and Practice 2010/11 Grant Project
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Assessment reassessed: A student and lecturer collaborative enquiry

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1. Top line summary

Three research teams, each consisting of three students and one lecturer, engaged in collaborative enquiry with six undergraduate Education programmes. The focus of enquiry was assessment feedback – the strengths and weaknesses of current practices and the potential to develop more collaborative feedback models.

Assessment feedback

Findings indicated a tension between impersonal assessment 'regimes' and the more personal and relational expectations of many students and staff. Both students and staff especially valued dialogue and a number of examples of good practice in this area were identified. Nevertheless, it was clear that an 'inequity of personalities' existed, whereby student identity impacted differentially on the capacity to engage effectively with the feedback process. While collaboration was generally admired and idealised, barriers included external pressures, and feelings of incompetence based on a perceived lack of expertise.

Collaborative enquiry

Different modes of operating within student and staff collaborative enquiry teams were experienced: parity, facilitation, student-led research and team work. Collaborative relations were found to be negotiated, complex, contested, situational and fluid – based on fluctuating power dynamics and the multiple identities of students and lecturers. Engagement in the process had the effect of expanding horizons – through bridging gaps, accessing a 'hidden world' and experiencing the messiness of assessment feedback and educational research. Despite some planning and logistical limitations and difficulties, all participants found collaborative enquiry both rewarding and insightful.

2. Project Overview

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

Drawing on literature that addresses the value of collaborative research, our project developed a staff-student collaborative enquiry within the context of assessment feedback. Underlying this project was the conviction that effective and empowering 'teaching should promote experiences that require students to become active, scholarly participators in the learning process' (Windschitl, 1999). To this, we added the requirement for collaboration: between students, and between students and lecturers. In particular, we drew on the work of Michael Fielding and John Heron, who are at the forefront in advocating student-lecturer collaboration – Fielding with his notion of 'students as researchers' (Fielding & Bragg, 2003) and Heron with his work on 'co-operative inquiry' (Heron & Reason, 2006) and his influential paper revisiting assessment (Heron, 1988). Likewise, Bland & Atweh (2007) suggest the fostering of 'students as researchers' as a strategy to improve learner engagement. Additionally, our project explored the potential for employing more collaborative assessment feedback strategies within higher education. Building on research that highlights the value of such work (Pryor & Crossouard, 2010; Webb, 2010), we understood collaborative assessment feedback to be a dynamic way of improving pedagogy, whilst also developing greater mutuality in staff-student relations.

The aims of the project were twofold:

1. To engage students and lecturers in meaningful collaborative enquiry concerning the characteristics of effective assessment feedback practices
2. To stimulate discussion, reflection and action regarding assessment feedback between and within Education Studies subject areas at seven HEIs (including DMU).

In order to address these aims, we developed the following objectives:

1. To document and evaluate the implementation of a collaborative enquiry project
2. To consider the potential for student and staff collaborative enquiry in both research and pedagogy
3. To examine the perceptions of students and lecturers concerning current assessment feedback practices
4. To facilitate structured conversations about the potential to develop more collaborative assessment feedback practices

We aimed to conduct research with staff and students on seven Education Studies programmes in England and Wales, including our own institution. We anticipated that our research would not only offer valuable insights into collaborative enquiry and assessment feedback but also that it would generate possibilities for innovative practice in these areas at our own and other institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Overall structure

The research was conducted by three research 'teams', each consisting of one lecturer and three final year students on our Education Studies programme. Each team was semi-autonomous – responsible for developing its own research design to address the following research questions on *assessment feedback practices*:

- What good practice in assessment feedback currently exists on Education Studies programmes?
- How do students and lecturers in different HEIs feel about the assessment feedback practices on their courses?
- How might more collaborative forms of assessment feedback be supported and developed?

In order to explore the dynamics of collaborative enquiry, each team also built in strategies to document the research process itself. For this strand of the research, we were guided by the following questions:
- How might student and lecturer collaborative enquiry be most effectively organised?
- What opportunities for pedagogy and research can collaborative enquiry offer?
- How far is it possible to facilitate genuinely symmetric relations between students and lecturers in a collaborative enquiry?

Guiding principles

Although the research was carried out by three semi-autonomous teams, some guiding methodological principles informed the project as a whole. Each team adopted an interpretative approach, recognising that both the research and object of study form part of the ongoing process

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of meaning-making that constitutes social reality. Because of their capacity to offer thick description (Geertz, 1973), all teams used qualitative methods both to access participants' existing interpretations *and* to generate further meaning in relation to both assessment feedback and collaborative enquiry. In making use of such methods, we recognised in particular their relational character (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) and viewed the data not as uncomplicated reports of an underlying reality, but rather as important and meaningful constructions generated in interaction between participants and researchers. While working independently, each team also adopted a broadly exploratory and inductive approach, making use of emerging findings to guide the direction of the research as it progressed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). While guided by the principle research questions therefore, each of the teams remained open to the emergence of themes and patterns during analysis, rather than imposing existing categories on the data.

Establishing teams

Teams were established following a competitive selection process, which was administered after consultation with students about how to proceed with the project. This was due to high levels of student interest. Each student submitted a short piece of writing (150-200 words) about collaborative assessment feedback or collaborative research. Following selection of the students who would co-participate in the project the teams were formed. As part of the project focused on the extent to which collaborative research practices can really exist between students and lecturers – the lecturers in each team reflected on the tensions of the recruitment process of students onto the project and considered the extent to which there would be a 'shift' from the lecturer as perceived lead of the team to each team member playing an 'equal' role. These reflections proved to be valuable data for analysis in relation to the collaborative enquiry strand of the research.

Once teams were established, each team met and discussed the project in more detail and started reviewing the literature in this area – with readings on collaborative assessment feedback and collaborative research practices being circulated and discussed in each team. The teams were also guided by initial research carried out at our own institution. This work was conducted by one of the students taking part in the project and involved the facilitation of a focus group with first years on the degree. This was intended both as a way of gathering initial data about students' views on assessment feedback and as a way of beginning to engage in collaborative research. The initial data were analysed to establish themes in the students' views of current feedback practices. Insights

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from the analysis of these findings highlighted students' views on more collaborative feedback strategies. Among these were students' reluctance to adopt more experimental approaches and their understanding of feedback relations along the lines of expertise. Insights from this research also helped us consider the power dynamic within the assessment feedback process.

Research design and methods

Each team conducted research with staff and students on Education programmes at two HE institutions. A variety of qualitative methods were employed to gather and generate data. These included individual interviews, paired interviews, focus groups and qualitative questionnaires. Across all teams, visits were arranged by the lecturer and pre-meetings were held to consider areas for investigation and possible data collection strategies. However, a variety of research approaches were adopted in each team. In one team, for example, 'good' interview techniques were agreed in advance of visits whereas in others a more responsive approach was taken, with research strategies and styles being discussed and re-evaluated following initial visits. In some teams, meetings were held to analyse the data together, whereas in others the data were analysed individually and themes shared. In each of the teams, individual members also wrote up reflections on the collaborative process. Following data collection and analysis within each team, the three teams met to share and discuss findings.

Changes and adaptations

During the research process, a number of adaptations were made to our original plans. These principally involved the timing of the research and the number of institutions involved in the project. We initially contacted our partner institutions in May - following the establishment of the research teams – and were warmly received. However, due to the timing of the university year, many students were unable to participate at this time because of exam preparation. Due to the strict cost implications of our visits to other universities we decided to postpone our visits until October, thus enabling us to interview a wider range of students and lecturers. The benefits of this were that we were able to access a larger sample size- thus contributing to the validity and reliability of our findings, in addition to greater facilitation of discussions about collaborative assessment feedback practices.

Additionally, when we contacted the partner institutions again in October, one of our partners was no longer able to participate. This was due to the involvement of staff and students in another,

internal research project addressing similar aims. It was therefore considered that involvement in our research would have placed an undue burden on staff and students' time. Although other institutions were contacted, it proved impossible to recruit a new partner at short notice. As a result, one of the teams undertook only one research visit at another institution, carrying out their second 'visit' with students on our own programme instead. Whilst this compromised the breadth of the research, it did allow us to explore attitudes and practices relating to assessment feedback at our own institution in greater depth.

FINDINGS

Collaborative enquiry

Developing mutuality

Our analysis indicated that 'mutuality' is the central characteristic of effective student-lecturer collaborative enquiry. This can be understood as a process of developing a collective sense of worth, purpose and understanding based on authentic investment in shared practices. However, our research also indicated that the process of developing such mutuality was a complex and precarious one. We found that our own experiences of developing such mutuality progressed in an arc, as we moved through various conceptions of what it means to work collaboratively as staff and students. This arc began with a relatively uncomplicated conception of staff and students as equals in the research process, in which existing differences were ignored and a parity of roles sought.

However, as the complexities of working together to conduct the research unfolded we found that we adopted more ''weighted' conceptions of collaboration in which either staff or student involvement was privileged. The first of these involved a 'facilitation' view, whereby lecturers were framed as facilitators whose primary role was engage in support, encouragement, asking questions and structuring activity. The second of these involved a view of students as lead-researchers, with lecturers taking a step back. While useful and pragmatic, each of these conceptions carried with it its own problems, particularly in terms of the relative status attached to different participants. Finally, we arrived at a view of ourselves as team workers - different but equal - with a variety of skills and experiences to bring to the project and engaged in meaningful activity with a shared purpose.

This process of moving toward greater mutuality brought a number of benefits, which we would

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categorise via the processes of 'learning together and building relationships' and 'expanding horizons'

Learning together and building relationships

Through engagement in the project, we found that students and lecturers engaged in a process of learning together. The concept of 'students and teachers' and 'teachers as students' found in the work of Freire (1996) and elsewhere help to make sense of this. As we progressed through the project, students and lecturers were engaged together in a learning process – not only about the research questions but also about and from each other. Additionally, the project involved the development of relationships between staff and students, both at the level of our own institution and beyond. In particular, we found that the project provided a space in which authentic relationships between co-researchers could flourish outside of the pressure of assessment regimes. By seeing each other in other roles and other settings, students and lecturers were able to relate to each other in more human terms, which also translated into more positive relations in the class room. Additionally, peer relationships between students were strengthened and deepened. Finally, the project resulted in the development of relationships between and amongst staff and students at different institutions which have lasted beyond the confines of the project.

Expanding Horizons

The project also provided greater insight into a number of processes and settings, as well as developing new skill sets amongst both lecturers and student – which we characterise as 'expanding horizons'. This was particularly significant for the students involved in the research and involved a number of elements including bridging gaps, transforming learner identities, empowerment and greater insight into processes. The project brought students from very different backgrounds together, involved them in talking with senior members of staff and provided experience of how other universities work. It also allowed students to operate within a different kind of learner identity than many had experienced in the past, involving them as active, engaged co-producers of knowledge – a kind of learner identity that has the potential to be transferable beyond the project itself. Additionally, there was evidence that the project had empowered students and given them greater confidence, knowledge and understanding through learning about a 'hidden world' of assessment. Finally, the project provided students with greater insight into the messiness of processes, allowing them to see these as examples of problematic, human and unscientific activity. This was the case both in relation to assessment feedback and

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undertaking educational research.

Tensions and questions

As well as indicating some of the benefits to be gained from collaborative enquiry, the research also highlighted some of the tensions involved in such work. Consequently, the research also raises important questions both about how collaborative enquiry can be undertaken in an effective and meaningful way, and about the value of engaging in such work. One of these questions relates to the kinds of students involved in the project. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was observed that students who volunteered for the project were already very visibly engaged and motivated in their studies, as well as being keen to engage in University activities beyond the confines of their course. This raises a number of questions about collaborative enquiry. Some of these relate to the quality of research that can be conducted through collaborative projects, and the kind of data that they generate. There is the possibility that a relatively narrow range of perspectives are included in such research and that data as a result can be 'skewed' or distorted. Beyond this, the project highlighted the danger that through engaging in collaborative enquiry with self- selected students on our courses, we are at risk of creating an 'exclusive elite' that can sideline the voices of others in the student body.

Other tensions highlighted by the research relate to the point at which students become involved in the research process. Because of the nature of academic bid writing, we found that only some aspects of the process were truly collaborative – while students were involved in planning the research, as well as gathering and analysing data, the terms of the project had already been 'decided' to some extent in advance. This raises an interesting question about how possible it is to engage in enquiry that is genuinely collaborative throughout, within the given constraints of academic research.

Finally, our research highlighted the difficulties involved in negotiating relations between 'novice' and 'expert' researchers. These included the difficulty of breaking free from existing hierarchies and the problems that can be associated with novice researchersworking in the research site. Perhaps most interestingly, our research indicated that when staff and students work together collaboratively, they bring multiple identities to the process and that these can result in both problems and valuable opportunities. This was particularly pertinent in relation to mature students involved in the research. While students involved in our project may have been 'novice'

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researchers, they were 'experts' in other fields such as project management and staff appraisal, where lecturers on the project had less experience and might be considered 'novices'. This sometimes led to difficult tensions within the research teams as well as creating problematic situations in the research site. However, this also provided opportunities for more effective research practice and for mutual learning.

Assessment feedback

A number of themes emerged from the research in relation to assessment feedback. These seemed to indicate a continuum in terms of approaches to assessment feedback at the institutions that participated in the research. At one end of the spectrum, assessment feedback was seen as an objective and scientific process that could be kept free of the messy and perhaps contaminating influence of human relations and subjectivity. At the other end of the spectrum, this human, unscientific element was embraced and assessment feedback construed as a relational and subjective process involving collaboration and risk taking. While some institutions in the research seemed to be characterised more by one approach than the other, we often found that these approaches existed side by side – and often in tension with each other – within current practices. The themes presented below relate firstly to instances in which a more relational, subjective and collaborative approach to assessment feedback was in evidence and secondly to the tensions between this and a more 'scientific' approach to feedback in which objective systems are prioritised.

The importance of process

Our findings indicated how important the entire process of assessment and assessment feedback is in creating opportunities for meaningful feedback that is also useful for learning. We found that the process of formative assessment was valued by both students and staff, and that students often expressed a desire for more formative assessment and feedback. In particular, they expressed the view that such formative work would be useful in helping to improve both attainment and motivation, as the comments from one student respondent below indicate:

> *'we really do need it, it would be beneficial...there would be a knock on   effect which would make everyone start to work harder.'*

Additionally students felt that discussions following feedback were necessary in order to help them

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understand how to improve their work. In some cases we found that careful work was conducted with students from early on in their engagement on the degree programme to help them understand the vocabulary of assessment. This resulted in students who felt more confident in what was required of them in assessments, and were more able to interpret and use their feedback autonomously. A process of demystification appeared to be happening here, whereby the sometimes distant and inaccessible world of assessment was denuded of its mystery. This resulted in a more meaningful and empowering experience of feedback that allowed students to progress better.

The significance of relationships

Another theme to emerge from the research was the importance of relationships, both between staff and students and among students. Students valued the opportunity to give each other informal feedback on their work. However, in relation to peer feedback for assessed work, students were often reticent about allowing other students to mark their work and highlighted the importance of trust in this process. They indicated that having trust in the person marking their work – both academically and personally - would be an important factor in their willingness to engage in peer feedback:

> *'I think it would need to be someone that I knew and trusted...it might be awkward if I didn't know the person'*

The data also revealed that staff-students relationships were significant in the process of assessment feedback. This was manifest both in lecturers' views that awarding grades was a difficult process when they had a personal relationship with students, and in the view expressed by some students that good personal relationships with lecturers would be a prerequisite for engaging in meaningful and challenging conversations about feedback. It appeared that in order to talk openly about feedback with lecturers - or indeed to challenge the feedback they were given - students needed first to feel that a positive relationship with lecturers was in place.

Collaborative feedback and inequalities in student personalities

The research also indicated that differences between students in terms of their identities and personalities were important, particularly in relation to collaborative assessment and feedback practices. It appeared that some students would be more likely to engage in collaborative

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assessment feedback strategies - and to gain from them - than others. Factors affecting this included age, year group, past experiences and levels of confidence. Some students expressed higher levels of confidence and even a sense of entitlement in their attitudes towards their studies:

'I want a first for this'

Some also indicated that they might even expect more support and feedback based on the kind of students they were:

'I think they would be more willing to help me as they know I will take it on and improve in my work'

This raises the interesting question about whether inequalities in student identities and personalities can make collaborative assessment processes exclusive, in that some students are more likely to engage in them and benefit from them than others.

Standardised versus individualised feedback
One tension that emerged from the data was the desire for both the standardisation of assessment feedback and an individually tailored approach. This existed both for students and lecturers. Students expressed a desire for consistency in feedback, as the following comment from one student, expressed in frustration indicates:

'Each teacher wants something different from each criteria'

This (sometimes frustrated) desire for consistency was also expressed by staff interviewed for the project:

'we try to ensure we are all working within the same understandings of   what the academic criteria are.'

At the same time however, both students and lecturers expressed the view that the ideal approach to assessment feedback would be a more individualised system based around one-to-one tutorials. The research therefore raised the question of how much and to what extent these two imperatives

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can exist side by side.

Impersonal systems and personal responsibility

Another tension highlighted in the data related to the use of impersonal, 'objective' systems and structures, and the personal responsibility of those involved in the assessment feedback process. In some cases we found that the use impersonal systems such as anonymous marking and online plagiarism detection tools were (or were seen as) an abdication of lecturers' personal – perhaps even moral – responsibility to students. One student expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that a high percentage score on Turnitin had resulted in a low mark, seemingly with little interpretation of this percentage score from the lecturer marking her work:

> *'I don't know...I don't think I trust turnitin'*

On the other hand, some tutors appeared to see impersonal systems such as anonymous marking as a way of avoiding too much personal involvement or influence in the assessment process, referring to an 'interference in judgement', which they sought to avoid.

Organisational and systemic pressures

Finally, the data reflected a tension between the kinds of assessment feedback practices that lecturers would like to engage in, and what they felt able to do within the constraints of their institutions and - more broadly - the higher education system. Some staff appeared to experience pressure from both 'above' and 'below' as they sought to balance students' requests for more one-to-one feedback with the pressure of increased student numbers and directives from management:

> *'we've been told to stop marking drafts of students' work'*

Another way in which systemic pressures were visible in the research was via a consumerist and individualist approach to assessment feedback expressed by some students:

> *'because I've paid for my degree, I think we should at least get a one-to-one...it makes me think, what have I paid the money for?'*

Lecturers also reflected this trend, at least in terms of perception:

> *'Now the fees are rising, this is just going to get worse'*

At times, lecturers seemed to employ a kind of nostalgia for older, freer and perhaps more collaborative approaches to feedback in order to cope with this, favouring a tutorial model that they associated with older universities:

> *'Oxbridge was right'*

Discussion

The findings of our research help to illuminate some important themes and processes identified in the literature on assessment and particularly on assessment for learning. Much work has been done in this field on the importance of a establishing a 'fit' between students and lecturers' understanding of what constitutes a good piece of work (Sadler 1989, 1995; Hounsell, 2008). Our research indicates some obstacles that can hinder this process, such as tensions in the different views of assessment feedback brought to the process by staff and students and the impact of external pressures. However, they also indicate that with careful work, a process of demystification can be implemented that helps both staff and students to come to a shared understanding of what is required in assessment. Our research also adds to work on the importance of dialogue in assessment feedback (Bloxham and West, 2007; Rust et al., 2005) and indicates ways in which this can be promoted – for example in the establishment of strong personal relationships between staff and students than can support feedback conversations. In addition, our work illuminates some of the challenges associated with more collaborative approaches to assessment feedback, the value of which have been explored in the literature (e.g. Pryor and Crossouard, 2010; Webb, 2010). Our research shows that reticence around collaborative strategies such as peer assessment among both staff and students can be a significant barrier to carrying out assessment feedback in collaborative ways. However, it also provides examples of how – with time, commitment and supportive structures – such collaborative practices can be successfully implemented.

Finally, our research points to the potential impact on assessment feedback of current finding changes in higher education. The research highlights that this could lead to greater student expectations in terms of assessment feedback and a perception amongst staff that student

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demands will be difficult, or even impossible, to meet. While such increased demands, wihtin a more consumerist model of higher education, can be seen as an obstacle to effective assessment feedback strategies, they may also act as a springboard for more engagement in the assessment feedback process and increased student appetite for truly engaging, collaborative and innovative strategies in this area.

PROJECT IMPACT

Impact so far

As indicated in our discussion of the findings in relation to collaborative enquiry, the project has already had an important impact on staff and students involved in the research. In particular, staff-student relations have been positively affected and students have indicated greater confidence in relation to their studies and beyond. The findings on assessment feedback have also prompted a reconsideration of our practice as lecturers on the course. In particular, they have highlighted to us the importance of demystifying feedback for students and have increased our awareness of the complexities involved in implementing collaborative assessment feedback within our programme.

Potential for further impact

In addition, we have identified a number of ways in which the research could inform future practice both on our own programme and at other institutions. In particular, we would argue that the collaborative enquiry approach we adopted in the project has transferability to other areas of our practice in higher education. One area in which we envisage such transferability is in dissertation supervision, where a joint approach to conducting research and could be adopted, with supervisor and supervisee as co-enquirers. By constructing the dissertation as a shared learning project, more equitable staff student relations could be fostered through small scale research. Additionally, we envisage the development of staff-student working groups on aspects of the degree programme such as curriculum, assessment and evaluating practice. Adopting a collaborative enquiry approach similar to the one employed in this project could have real value, allowing both staff and students to work and reflect together on issues of real, shared significance on their day to day experiences of the degree programme. Finally, staff-student reading groups could provide space for joint engagement in enquiry in literature based research.

3. Outputs

Conference

- 'Democratic Learning Conversations: A two-part student and lecturer conference on collaborative enquiry and assessment feedback in higher education'. (16th December 2011)

Conference papers

- 'Developing mutuality in research and practice: Reflections on a student-lecturer collaborative enquiry into assessment feedback' (Society for Research in Higher Education, 9th December 2011)

- 'Assessment reassessed: Findings on assessment feedback' (Democratic Learning Conversations, 16th December 2011)

- 'Considering student-lecturer collaborative enquiry: Thoughts from our ESCalate project' (Democratic Learning Conversations, 16th December 2011)

4. Details of any future planned dissemination activities

Planned conference papers:

- 'Can marking be more democratic? Reflections on collaborative assessment' *DMU staff workshop* (8th February 2012)

- 'Student and staff feedback relationships: An ESCalate project exploring assessment feedback practices on Education Studies programmes', *British Education Studies Association annual conference* (June 2012)

- Learning together and expanding horizons: A student-lecturer collaborative enquiry, *British Educational Research Association annual conference* (September 2012)

- 'Encountering a 'hidden world': Reflections on a student-lecturer assessment feedback collaborative enquiry', *British Education Studies Association annual conference* (June 2012)

- Bridging gaps: Reflections on a student-lecturer collaborative enquiry into assessment feedback in Education Studies, *British Educational Research Association annual conference* (September 2012)

Guides:

- 'Making assessment feedback work' (To be published on HEA website – April 2012)

- 'A guide to student-lecturer collaborative enquiry (To be published on HEA website – April 2012)

Articles: *(all to be submitted in 2012)*

- 'Learning together and expanding horizons: A student-lecturer collaborative enquiry' – *to be submitted to Gateway Papers: A journal for pedagogic research in higher education*

- 'Encountering a 'hidden world': Reflections on a student-lecturer assessment feedback collaborative enquiry' – *to be submitted to the Studies in Higher Education journal*

- 'Student and staff feedback relationships: An ESCalate project exploring assessment feedback practices on Education Studies programmes' – *to be submitted to Educational Futures: the BESA journal*

5. Expenditure profile

Submitted to ESCalate

6. A 300 word (approx) summary in journalistic style – suitable for the ESCalate Newsletter or Bulletin

The project aims were two-fold: first to explore notions of collaborative assessment feedback with undergraduate Education programmes at six higher education institutions, and second to develop models of student-lecturer collaborative enquiry.

An assessment feedback continuum was identified – from 'scientific', objective practices at one end and subjective, creative and interpersonal at the other. The latter emphasised the significance of student-lecturer relationships and dialogue as central to the feedback process. The factors critical to the success of collaborative enquiry were the development of trust and support within teams and the time and space to build these relationships effectively. All participants felt that they were learning together and expanding their horizons – in terms of bridging gaps, accessing 'hidden worlds' and understanding the messiness of the feedback and research processes.

In our own department, we intend to re-evaluate the styles of assessment and feedback utilised on our programmes – focusing on the enhancement of more collaborative approaches. In addition, we intend to develop a number of more informal spaces for student-lecturer conversation and enquiry. We are conscious of the need for a multiplicity of student voices to be engaged with, but mindful that not all students can or wish to participate in more formal settings.

We have found real benefits in the use of student-staff collaborative enquiry. For colleagues interested in developing opportunities to embed 'students as (co-)researchers' in their practice, we recommend its applicability to a range of settings - for instance, the implementation of student-lecturer 'working parties' to monitor, evaluate and develop curriculum and assessment. We also see this approach as offering potential for more engaging dissertation supervisory relations and in the continued development of online collaborative conversation.