Shaping Higher Education with Students

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Published by University College London

Tong, Vincent C. H., et al.
Shaping Higher Education with Students: Ways to Connect Research and Teaching.
University College London, 2018.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/81931.

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The chapter highlights the importance of understanding students’ learning experiences in a competitive employment market. As the level of information technology employed in the knowledge economy industry increases, the teaching-research nexus becomes important for graduate employability. Sayara stresses that a review of institutional policies and practices around curricular design and development is required prior to making any changes. A consultation should gather viewpoints of all stakeholders, including students, potential employers, government and higher education institutions themselves on how to shape the academia of the future.

The biggest challenge lies in developing a common understanding between stakeholders about student-staff partnerships, due to the differences in knowledge, skills, experiences and personal circumstances. Interdisciplinary and cross-departmental communication is central to the fair exchange of ideas and views. Giving proper recognition (e.g. letter of recognition, mentioning contributions in university publications and celebrating successes through celebratory events) would help to ensure staff and student motivation. All the aforementioned strategies are equally applicable to introducing a learning-oriented assessment system by reaching agreement on a system of assessment at the department level and by exchanging ideas and views across departments and universities.

In my opinion, it is time to challenge traditional collaborations between staff and students. This can be made possible by encouraging open communication between staff and students across
university departments, and across universities within the UK and the wider world. Databases of research staff and students would allow likeminded people to communicate directly, exchange ideas and develop themselves. Finally, sharing research into innovation in assessment, such as the learning-oriented system discussed by Sayara, individuals and institutions can both gain new knowledge and work to improve students’ experiences of assessment and feedback.