

Handy Hints

Philosophy for Learner Voice Activity

In 2007, Robinson & Taylor proposed that there were four principles which are central to any learner voice work. These principles should guide our practice and be at the heart of any activities and opportunities which we intend to label as 'learner voice':

1. Communication involves a dialogue and should be two-way
2. Participation and democratic inclusion are required.
3. Power relations between staff and learners are, by nature, unequal and problematic.
4. Changing or transforming practice is a possible outcome of this activity.

(Robinson and Taylor (2007:8))

Handy Hints

Engaging learners

There are a huge range of methods which can be used to engage learners in activities which enable them to express their ideas and opinions. The following suggestions are a useful starting point!

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| individual interviews | idea booths | buddying | blogs |
| group interviews | listening posts | coaching | toys |
| surveys | graffiti walls | mentoring | drama |
| questionnaires | collage | peer teaching | role play |
| recruitment panels | photography | learners as researchers | chat rooms |
| the use of forums | drawing | learners as observers | Wikis |
| learner councils | audio-recording | learners as informants | edu-blogs |
| suggestion boxes | scrap books | student governors | policy review |

Handy Hints

Designing effective learner voice activity

In 2001, Fielding suggested a series of powerful questions which we should ask of any activity we intend to call 'learner voice' to help us to determine how effectively this activity has been designed.

- Who is allowed to speak?
- To who?
- What are they allowed to speak about?
- What language is encouraged or allowed?
- Who decides the answers to these questions?
- How are those decisions made?
- How, when, where, to whom and how often are these decisions communicated?

And in relation the audience:

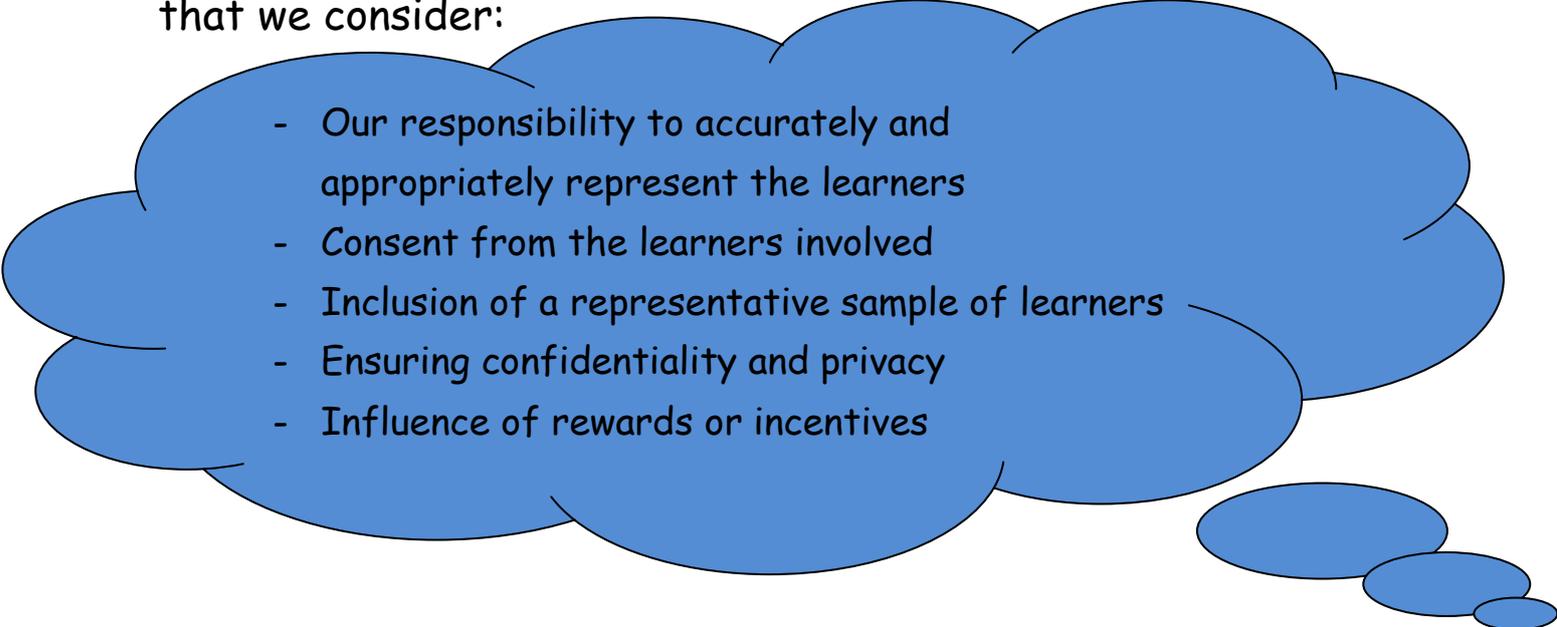
- Who is listening?
- How are they listening?
- Why are they listening?

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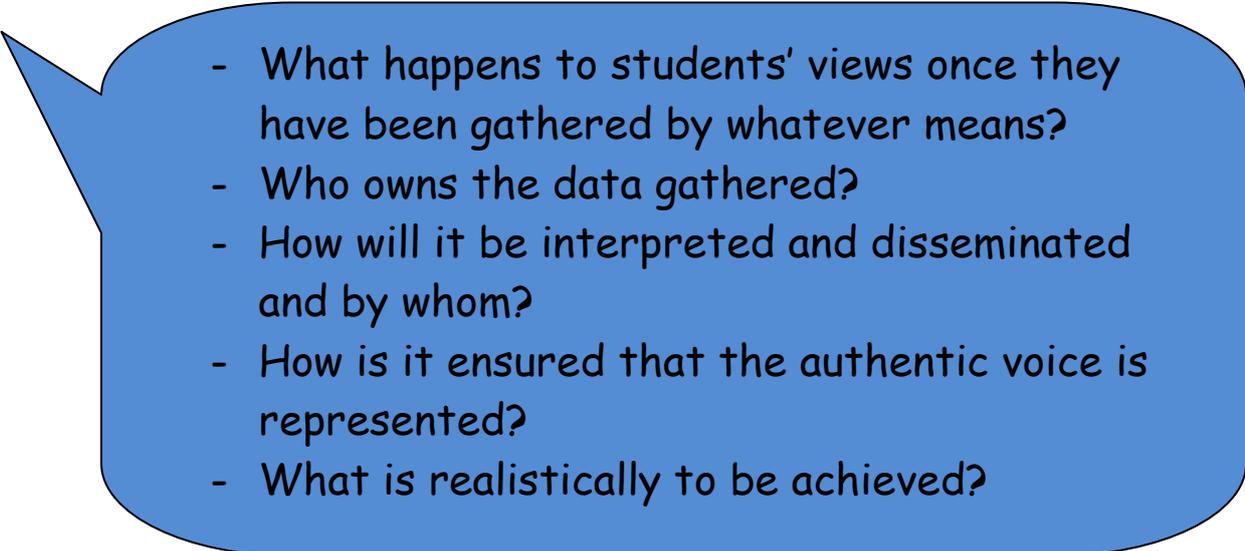
Challenges in collecting/ representing learner voice

We face a number of challenges when ensuring accurate, honest, timely and reflective learner voice information. These challenges must be considered and overcome within learner voice activities.

When designing any learner voice activity we should ensure that we consider:

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- Our responsibility to accurately and appropriately represent the learners
 - Consent from the learners involved
 - Inclusion of a representative sample of learners
 - Ensuring confidentiality and privacy
 - Influence of rewards or incentives

We should ensure that we share with learners:

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- What happens to students' views once they have been gathered by whatever means?
 - Who owns the data gathered?
 - How will it be interpreted and disseminated and by whom?
 - How is it ensured that the authentic voice is represented?
 - What is realistically to be achieved?