

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))

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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

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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:

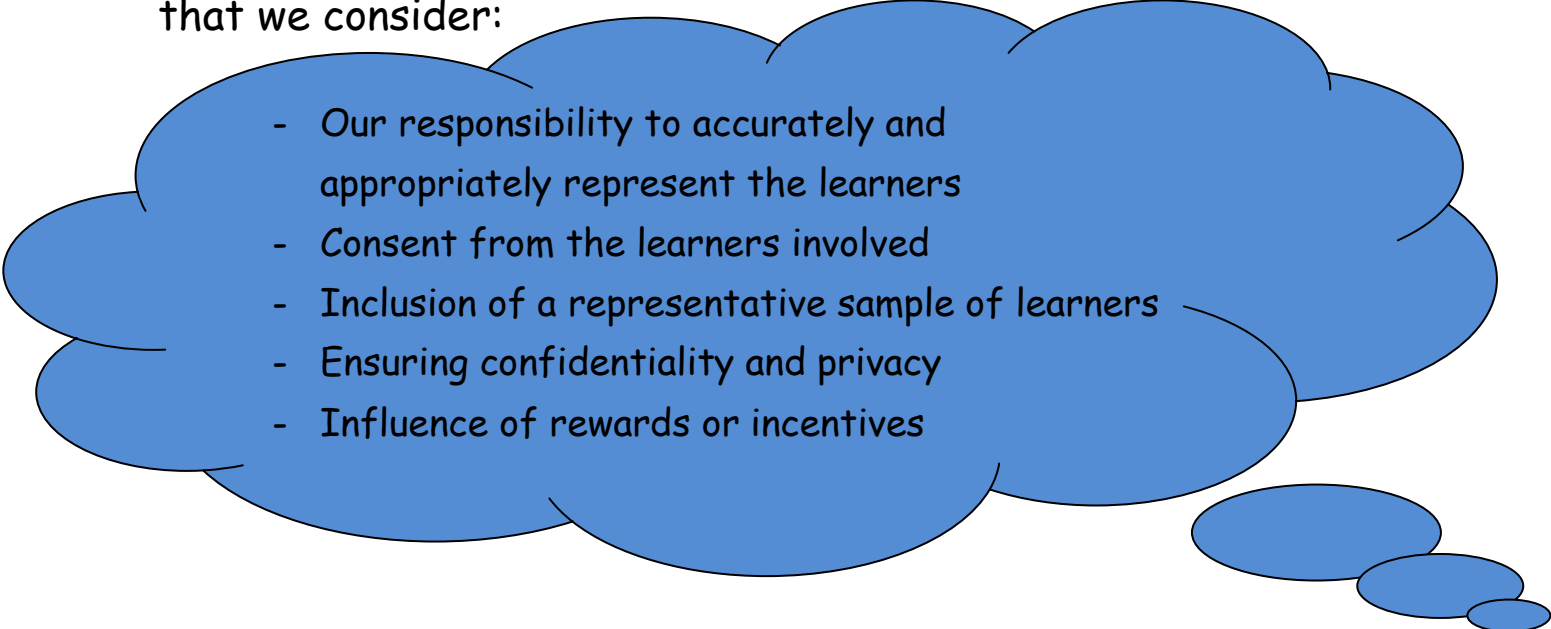
- Who is listening?
- How are they listening?
- Why are they listening?

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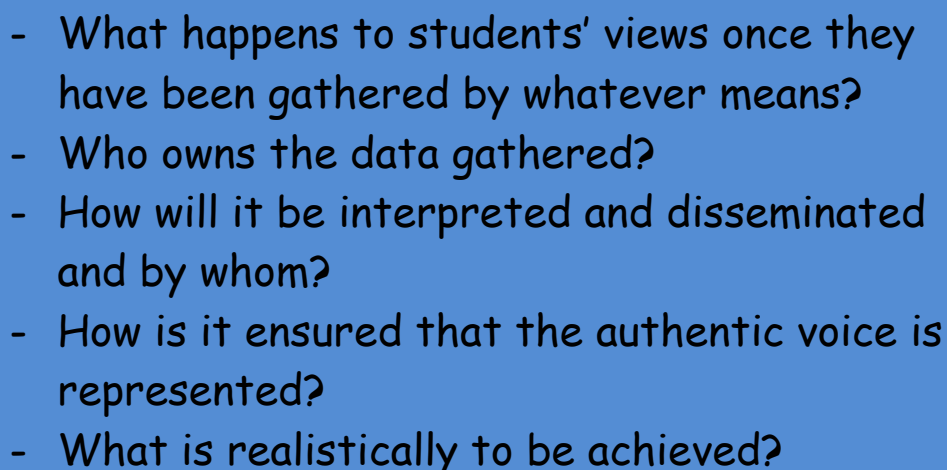
Challenges in collecting/ representing learner voice

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?