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Conference or Workshop Item

Title: Undergraduate engagement with their tutors' original research: a work in progress report

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Version: Presented version

Official URL: http://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/llsconferences/conference-programme/

http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/7700/
Undergraduate engagement with their tutors’ original research

A work in progress report

Carey Hime, Nick Dimmock and Miggie Pickton

Library and Learning Services Conference

18th June 2014
Outline

• Introduction and literature
• Methods and data collection
• Data analysis and key findings
• Implications for practice and reflections

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Introduction

• URB@N project: a joint student/staff research project
• The research team: Carey, Nick and Miggie
• LLS Research Support Team interested in:
  – enabling and promoting open access to university research e.g. through NECTAR, Northampton Open Journals
  – could these services be used in support of teaching and learning?
• ...leading to the broader question of how researchers used their research in teaching and what effect this had on student learning

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Background

The ‘teaching-research nexus’ – conflicting findings:

- Fox (1992): teaching and research activities are antagonistic, competing for time and resources
- Healey et al. (2010): students perceived clear benefits to their learning from staff research, but disadvantages too
- Stappenbelt (2013): qualitative studies of staff perceptions report a mutually beneficial relationship at the individual level, but quantitative studies report little or no correlation between research productivity and teaching effectiveness
- Verburgh et al. (2007): consistent empirical evidence is difficult to retrieve

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### Literature review

Perspectives on the teaching-research nexus: some studies

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Academic staff</th>
<th>Both</th>
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<tr>
<td>Turner et al. (2008)</td>
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Project plan

• Identify area of research interest
• Submit proposal for URB@N project
• Conduct literature review to establish current knowledge: methods used and previous findings
• Construct questionnaire
• Gain ethical approval
• Conduct pilot study
• Commence full study
The questionnaire

- Semi structured interviews with closed and open questions
- Based on questionnaire created by Healey et al. (2002)
- 15 questions addressing:
  - Students’ awareness of research activity at the university in general and of their tutors’ research activity specifically
  - Students’ engagement with their tutors’ research
  - The impact of tutors’ research activity on student learning
  - Students’ ability to access tutors’ research outputs
Data collection

- 31 participants from contrasting disciplines (two campuses)
- Sampling method: opportunity/convenience sampling
- Questionnaire administered face to face
- Data captured anonymously
- Planned to use an iPad to capture responses directly to a Google form
- Initial pilot study
Data analysis

- Google Drive summary of responses: great
- Full response spreadsheet: not so great
  - A pain to navigate in Drive itself
  - CSV export scuppered by commas in response options
- Hacky solution: split responses by \/,\s[A-Z]/
- Better solution: plan ahead
  - Avoid or take care with multiple choice answers
  - Stress test with detailed responses
  - Bonus caveat: you can’t remove responses from the spreadsheet
Data analysis

Anyway...

- Basic analysis via built-in summary
- Some additional Excel work (via Drive export)
- (Eventual) CSV export allows deeper processing with SPSS or custom scripts (e.g. cross-referencing responses)

- Further analysis may inform follow-on research

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Key findings

- Very positive results
- 2/3 aware of tutors’ research
- 2/3 of above aware of use of research in teaching
- Lots of sharing & discussion as a result

- 52 positive impacts vs. 4 negative

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Talk to your tutor about it</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to another student about it</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24%</td>
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Student comments

• “I know one of my tutors has published a book. We haven't really used it in a class activity for anything but we did have a discussion about it which was really interesting to hear about.”

• “I think engaging with tutors’ research definitely helps students to develop a relationship with them. It's great to see what their interests are and see their successful results.”

• “I have a lot more respect for my tutor after reading her research. I trust that she knows the subject she's teaching.”

• “It's really inspiring when tutors tell us about trips they've taken and projects they're doing. It gives me ideas of things I could do when I graduate and what the field is really like to work in.”
Implications for practice

- Students have a high level of awareness of their tutors’ research activity and are generally positive about it.
- The largest numbers of students learned about it through lectures, reading lists and via social media (Facebook and Twitter were most commonly cited).
- They would like to hear more, but only if it is relevant to a lecture topic or assignment.
- Students chose lecture slides and class discussions as their favoured ways for tutors to integrate their research into teaching.
Reflections

• Having an undergraduate student in the research team was a huge asset (thank you Carey and the URB@N scheme!)
• Having struggled with extracting raw data from the Google form we would not recommend this tool for further use
• The face to face interviews allowed us to field test the questionnaire; next time we would consider presenting it as an online survey
• This is a work in progress. We would like to pursue this research topic, perhaps in conjunction with academic colleagues – any volunteers?

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Questions?
References (1)


- Boyd, W.E., O'Reilly, M., Rendell, K., Rowe, S. and Wilson, E. (2012) 'Friday is my research day': chance, time and desire in the search for the teaching-research nexus in the life of a university teacher. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 9(2).


References (2)


References (3)


References (4)


