

Finding Voice- Making Community

Action Research Project
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stage 1 Lead on the BA Textile
Design course at Chelsea College

year 1 cohort of 80–100 students

my role is to support students'
transition onto course

develop agency

find community

skills to progress

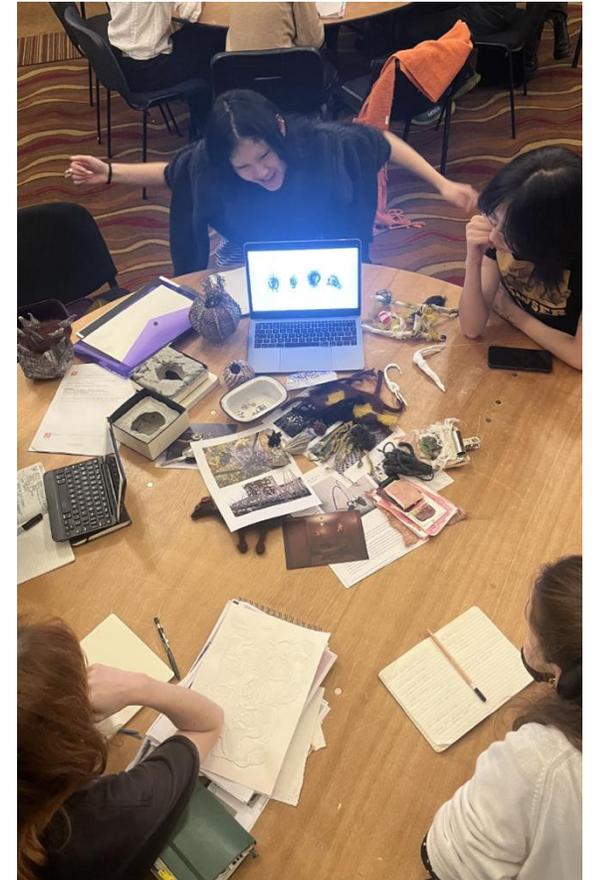
pastoral care



Challenge

students entering university come from
structured learning
transmission-based pedagogies environments
'banking model' of education- Paulo Freire

entering
HE education
divergent learning
experimentation and creative risk-taking
embracing mistakes and ambiguity
develop autonomy
construct their own creative identities
work collaboratively



landscape of education is changing
courses are closing
UK Government's *Skills England* : apprenticeships

many question relevance university

I feel a divide between institutional or staff-led approaches
how students are invited to think and participate.
But their voice feels silent from policy and pedagogy,
and curriculum design, only heard at course committee and survey sessions

Nancy Fraser participatory parity

Importance 'of ensuring community members have *equal voice in public deliberations and fair representation in public decision-making*'

questions

How can co-created learning challenge hierarchies and put student voice at the heart of the curriculum?

What is my role in supporting peer learning?

Co creation

Student-as-partner

IPAR

Inclusive participatory action research

‘with people and not on them’

Recognising all knowledge



For this intervention the focus was on two sessions

Embedded in Unit 2 rotation

4 specialist technical areas

Students develop self-directed research

Both these sessions were co-created with recent graduates

The two sessions were embedded within the Concepts and Process unit, during which students rotate through four specialist textile areas and are introduced to different craft practices. Alongside this, students are required to independently drive their own projects through research and design development, culminating in the production of samples. This unit therefore provided a productive context for exploring questions of voice, agency, and peer-led learning.

Comparative Table: Peer-Led Sessions

Category	Session 1	Session 2
Session title	<i>Design Narratives: Finding Voice</i>	<i>Sharing Working Methods</i>
Unit / timing	Unit 2: Concept and Process Start of unit	Unit 2: Concept and Process Mid-way through project
Duration	2 hours	4 hours
Location & space	Lecture theatre Fixed seating	Studio Movable, reconfigured space
Mode of participation	Largely static Whole-group engagement	Mobile, object-based Small-group, conversational
Participants (total)	73	48
Roles present	68 Year 1 students 3 Year 3 students (contributors) 1 graduate (co-designer) 1 tutor-researcher	41 Year 1 students 4 Year 3 students (contributors) 2 graduates (session leads) 1 tutor-researcher
Focus	Individual research practices Lived experience and storytelling	Project journeys and specialist knowledge Peer exchange, multiple knowledges into dialogue Social interaction, relaxed and conversational
Planning	Co-designed with 1 graduate using shared discussion and live shared document	Planned collaboratively with 2 graduates using live shared document and referring to Session 1 survey data
Methods & tools	Tutor/graduate talk Year 3 presentations Ideas-writing task (physical) Mentimeter (digital survey)	Peer-to-peer sharing of project work Object-based discussion (physical) Worksheet handout Mentimeter (digital survey)
Teacher position	Co-facilitator	Largely stepped back
Survey engagement	High (90%)	Low (35%)

Session 1: Design Narratives – Finding Voice

co-designed with one graduate, with contributions from Year 3 students

start of the unit 2

lecture theatre fixed seating which shaped participation as largely whole-group and static.

Methods: short talks, a physical ideas-writing task,

Mentimeter, which resulted in very high survey engagement of over ninety percent.



The use of Menti meter within the session was particularly successful.

Engagement exceeded 90 per cent of the cohort

The tone was playful and light, good atmosphere: laughter, and conversation, and visible ease.

Students responded using multiple languages

It brought collaborative dialogue to the session

The interaction felt genuine and contributed to a strong sense of belonging within the space.

what comes themes come to mind?



love

Lover

猎奇

save

good vs bad

fairies

fiorucci

女同

“猎奇” (curiosity or the strange),
“女同” (a queer/lesbian reference)

90% of students participated in the survey

Dreams: Post a chain of words that connect to this word

Dream, drowing, coraline

Sleep, posture, back pain

lover family puppy

dream, relaxation, peace, tranquility

dream-magical-childhood

hazy, lost, running

Dream, dark, balck hole,

Dream,faceless,unknown

Happinesses,heaven, mindfulness

clouds, fly, freedom

anxious medication mum

Dream, reminiscing, nostalgia, childhood

Dream, stability, harmony, balance,

sleep paralysis demon

Meadows, bombs and unwarranted

Enabled participation in the survey

What topics would you most like to talk about with graduates or other design students?

Their inspirations and developments

Professional practice and interpreting design work with the world both socially and environmentally

life after graduation

How they found their personal design/development styles and different ways in which briefs are interpreted

Ideas and how they're developed into smaller ones

past work

Careers

their design process and how they got into certain placements, volunteering / any other experiences

session_1_ba1_cohort_lecture_theatre-4.pdf

It helpful to see other design students project work?

0 questions
0 upvotes

7

Would you like more session with BA3 students and graduates?

31 Yes, 15 Not sure, 0 No

8

What topics would you most like to talk about with graduates or other design students?

9

10

What topics would you most like to talk about with graduates or other design students?

Session 2: Sharing working methods

led by two graduates, with the tutor stepping back.

mid-way through the unit
four hours in studio.

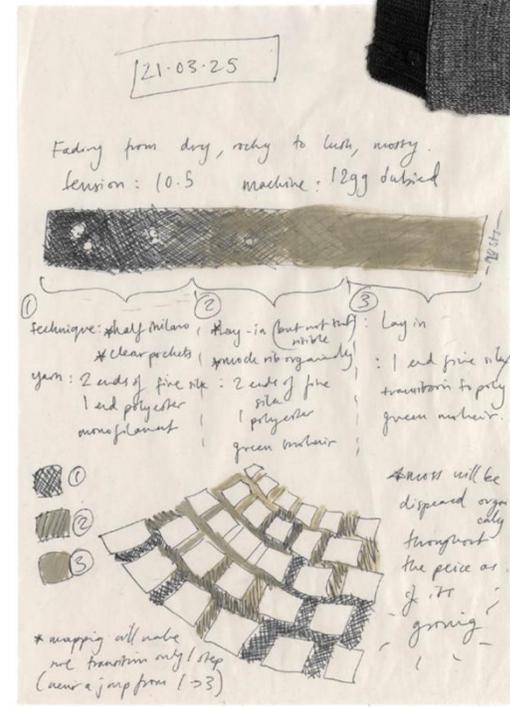
flexible and reconfigured space throughout, allowing
students to move,

work with objects, materials and engage in peer-to-peer
discussion.

Focus: project journeys, specialist knowledge, and peer
exchange.

survey engagement was lower,

session enabled richer **social interaction and dialogue**,
redistributing voice within the learning space.



‘storytelling can function as both
method and meaning’
Kovach (2021)



I stepped back in this session, changing my role as teacher to observer. This shared Live document, (lesson plan) became a platform for Dialogue and insight into student experience

- 10.30-11.30 Graduate 1 and Graduate 2 sharing work

- Graduate 1: – *maybe it's important for me and Graduate 2 to show a portfolio of work from a project instead of final samples so it relates to what BA1 are doing in the workshops now. So, we should talk through our thinking when making these samples and how they lead onto something else more refined. Emphasis on how it's ok to make what they think is a mistake or not great work as it's part of the progress.*

- *I'm not sure this will take up an hour so adding the next task in before going in group peer work.*

Graduate 1:

- *After we've shown the work and spoken about how it's important to keep the work you don't like, students are given the handout with the following questions to fill out in prep for group tutorials.*
- *What were your aims for going into the workshops? E.g. I wanted to understand how to translate my ideas into something tactile.*
- *What techniques would you like to take forward to convey your ideas? E.g. I would like to explore how weaving couple convey my ideas through...*
- *If someone was to look at the body of work, they would be able to interpret a feeling of being hidden? E.g. Looking at the samples I have made, I think there is coherency because...*
- *If anything, what's one thing you could give yourself feedback on?*

Active Participation

“..dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialogues; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind.”

Paulo Freire

Action Research Cycle

Dialogue as the Core of Participation

DIALOGUE

Action • Reflection • Meaning-making

(Freire, 1970)

Circular, Iterative Process



Key Principles

Dialogue is not one stage, but the condition that enables all stages.

This cyclical process connects Participatory Action Research (PAR) with Freirean pedagogy, epistemic justice, and student voice—positioning dialogue as both method and outcome.

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Code

- Language
- Space
- My Role
- Barriers and Enablers

Internal dialogue

Observational notes

barriers

language and cultural difference

words that are not used in general conversation continuous flow of talking - and not moving physically & - uncertain of what is normal or expected within the space - especially as we didn't control the space

idea - key terms -

reflection- brief graduate before

work to be done with language development-specialist terms- Grant

tutor not going to another physical part of room - create pockets of exclusion.

phones- soft talking

(i did not shhh group as i would normally- school to adult ..? tension how to behave)

conflicts

personal conflict collecting data- finding the language to ask - change in role between leader and observer - participant when to lead and when to step back hard to set up space - creating movement within space - dont know until you try how many to expect my own conflicted nature - not getting involved- correcting my involvement - being able to step out

frustrations

time - not having space to reflect and then making decisions that impact project opposite- not going with my instinct

stresses

students stayed on one side keeping in their groups phones passive when is something a question or a statement engaging in conversation I hold the knowledge (course) - everyone is silent stops talking when i come in

enablers

people - good will

clear spatial plan -

structured aspect together with flexible aspects

questions enable questions

movement enable communication and dynamic interaction



Image Credit: Pattern Perception

