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Values-led curriculum co-creation: A curriculum re-innovation case study

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Abstract

Personal values influence goals and motivate actions. The case study reported in this paper explored whether an understanding of values would provide a useful framework to guide the co-creation of the undergraduate cognitive psychology curriculum at a UK University. A design team composed of staff and students ran two co-creation workshops to explore underlying values. These values were translated into curriculum ideas which were then shared via an online survey to students and staff for feedback. The activities revealed a set of values that were salient when imagining future curriculum designs: feeling stimulated, choice and autonomy, developing competence, feeling safe and secure, community and fairness. In addition, a deeper value layer was visible which reflected participants' orientations to learning and education. We describe our process for eliciting values and the intertwined and iterative relationship between value elicitation and a co-created curriculum. We also reflect on the position of co-creation within the value landscape of higher education and the social dynamics of staff-student partnerships. We argue that whilst using values to frame co-creation

allows for deeper insight into how to embed curriculum re-innovation, it is important to attend to the value system of co-creation and those who do not participate.

KEYWORDS
co-creation, curriculum design, partnership, staff-student relationship

INTRODUCTION

For some time now, staff teaching cognitive psychology at our institution have observed a lack of student engagement, prompting the present study aimed at re-innovating this area of the curriculum to refresh our offering and better align it with students' needs. Because traditional student feedback mechanisms had failed to provide clear direction in this respect, it was decided to involve students more closely in the curriculum design process. Bringing staff and students together to work on curriculum design has been described as '… creating, working together to reflect shared values and go beyond just your individual interests …' (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018, p. 55). Thus, the importance of discovering staff-student 'shared values' was central to our approach. This paper details our process of co-creating the curriculum with students, using the personal values of staff and students as a framework informing our design decisions. We explore the relevance of different value orientations towards learning and education and how these might impact how values are expressed. Bringing staff and students together in this way leads us to issues around power, and our reflections on the dynamics of staff-student relationships during co-creation are therefore included.

Curriculum co-creation as student voice

The introduction of student fees in the UK in 1998 and the resulting marketisation of HE has increased pressure to listen and respond to students' needs and provide students with opportunities to input into their own learning (Seale et al., 2015). Bodies including AdvanceHE and the National Union of Students (NUS) provide policies for student engagement and 'student voice' is proposed as a measure within current (at time of writing) consultations for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) introduced by the Office for Students. In addition, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) provide a framework for student partnerships, identifying roles for students as evaluators, participants, co-creators or change-agents (Kay et al., 2010).

Curriculum co-creation, as a form of student engagement, is defined as 'the design of the content, structure and processes of courses and programmes through a dynamic interaction between staff and students, both informed by and being influenced by the learning experience of the student'. (Bovill, 2013, p. 463). Co-creation can involve the development of discrete curriculum elements such as assessments or resources, or whole courses (see Bovill, 2014, for examples). Because students and teaching staff differ in their experience and expertise, an awareness of when it is appropriate for staff or students to have relatively more 'voice' is required (Bovill, 2013). Whilst teaching staff are experts within their discipline and pedagogy, students proffer holistic insight into the synergy of different aspects of a curriculum working together to meet their needs as learners (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

The student's role and degree of participation can vary and may include consultant, co-researcher, pedagogical co-designer or student representative (Bovill et al., 2016). Students can benefit from curriculum co-creation through improved academic self-efficacy, higher levels of engagement and ownership over their learning, whilst staff describe greater satisfaction with their teaching and professional development (Bovill, 2014; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018).

Despite the reported benefits, staff-student co-creation is 'far from common practice across universities' (Murphy et al., 2017, p. 12). Explanatory factors include time commitment and the perception that quality assurance mechanisms will restrict implementation of changes (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017), and staff being wary of challenges to their position and relinquishing too much power and control to students (Murphy et al., 2017). Sanders and Stappers (2008) argue 'it is very difficult for those who have been successful whilst being in control to give it up now or to imagine a new way of doing business that can also be successful' (p. 9). Equally, students may be susceptible to the influence of perceived power: 'instinct tells you to avoid heavy disagreement with someone who has power over you, despite staff assertions' (Seale et al., 2015, p. 543). In examining co-creation, the possible tensions around power should not be overlooked; staff may hold power through their positions of relative expertise, whilst students hold power as fee-paying consumers (Tomlinson, 2014).

The success of curriculum co-creation clearly depends on student involvement. Despite the assumption that students welcome these opportunities, some examples in the literature report limited uptake in co-creation opportunities (Mendes & Hammett, 2020; Seale et al., 2015). In fact, Seale et al. (2015) question the central assumption that many students feel the need to have their voice heard. Mendes and Hammett (2020) report that students cite fatigue with requests for feedback, lack of direct personal benefit, and time taken away from studies as reasons for lack of participation. The authors argue that asking students to devote time to co-creation positions them as 'citizens' of their university, which is at odds with a shift toward a 'student-as-consumer' identity. Similarly, Naylor et al. (2021) suggest that participation in engagement activities assume students identify as active agents in their own learning experiences, at odds with the consumer orientation which positions students as entities to be served. Opportunities for participation may also be determined by external constraints such as caring responsibilities or employment.

Such discussions highlight the importance of considering co-creation within the value-landscape of higher education. The marketisation of HE supports the commodification of skills and knowledge to become competitive in the marketplace, creating tensions with a perspective that values education as transformative. This tension is described by Molesworth et al. (2009) as the difference between 'having' an education and 'being' a learner. Students have been shown to vary in their orientation as consumers, with those who ascribe to a consumer identity showing lower academic performance (Bunce et al., 2017). In fact, it is possible for both staff and students to have a propensity to either one of these value positions. Being mindful of the potential influence of these values and identities, is, we argue, of particular importance in co-creation projects in terms of who participates and what they contribute.

Values-led co-creation

Values motivate behaviour, whereby a course of action is favoured if it will achieve goals consistent with one or more personal values (Schwartz, 1992). In an approach conceptually similar to staff-student co-creation, values have been used in participatory design practices in the development of technology by end-users and designers (e.g., Van Mechelen et al., 2017). In a values-led design (VLD) approach, methods such as games and storytelling

are used to encourage participants to express their values and help them to imagine how these values would be met in future scenarios. In the context of curriculum co-creation, a VLD approach might be particularly useful when faced with very broad and poorly defined problems. In such instances, methods eliciting educational values could be used as the basis of the design focus (e.g., *provide more opportunities for autonomy or social connection within the curriculum*). The project reported in the current paper applied a VLD approach to align curriculum design decisions to the values held by students and academic staff. To our knowledge, no studies to date have explicitly focussed on eliciting the personal values of students and staff during curriculum co-creation with the intention of employing those values to directly inform curriculum design.

Project context and aims

Cognitive psychology, the study of how the mind processes information, is richly theoretical but can also be applied in many domains. As a core area of psychology, we teach cognitive psychology across all years of our three-year undergraduate psychology programmes. There has been an increasing awareness among staff delivering this part of the curriculum of a lack of student engagement. This is disappointing for staff and affects student attendance and, ultimately, attainment. In an effort to address the issue, teaching staff (CT, AG, BS, RB and MP), alongside an academic with educational psychology expertise (SC), decided that we needed to know more about the students' perspectives on our curriculum and would further benefit from their ideas for curriculum development. After securing internal funding to support co-creation activities, we assembled a curriculum design team (CDT). As we were committing to a co-created approach, two highly engaged students (DB and EQ), both of whom had acted as student representatives, were invited to join the CDT (for a reflective account of student participation in our design group, see Beevers, 2021). Thus, the CDT comprised students who were known to their year-groups in their role as student representatives and staff who were known to the student community as lecturers, module leaders and programme leaders, recognisable for their roles garnering student feedback via mechanisms including module evaluations and staff-student committee meetings. We established three principle aims for the project: to understand the personal values of students and staff in relation to education and cognitive psychology; to facilitate co-creation to elicit curriculum design ideas; to use the resultant knowledge and understanding gained around personal values to inform curriculum re-innovation. A secondary aim, emerging during the project, is to consider how co-creation impacts staff-student relationships and issues of power.

METHODOLOGY

Successful elicitation of personal values will depend on how well participants are able to reflect and report on their own value system, and the extent to which they are able to provide authentic views that are not constrained by the social dynamics of the research context. We propose several ways to elicit values from co-design activities. Creating ‘space’ for participants to offer innovative curriculum ideas allows us to explore values embedded in their designs, an approach aligned with a means-end analysis where artefacts produced during design activities are analysed in terms of their features (means), and the needs and values which they support (ends) (Van Mechelen et al., 2017). Facilitating staff-student discussion around values evoked by curriculum design activities highlights areas of convergence and divergence of values. Asking co-creation participants to evaluate potential curriculum ideas allows analysis of the expression of values in their responses. The use of games and playful

activities, where values emerge or are implicit, reduce demand characteristics that students may otherwise experience when asked to directly express their values in the presence of staff. Equally, allowing participants to consider their perspectives individually and report them anonymously (e.g., through surveys) reduces the influence of the social context. Each method described was employed in our project to elicit values and enable cross-validation and triangulation of outcomes.

The project progressed in three discrete stages (following Mckenney & Reeves, 2019; Figure 1). Stage one involved staff-student co-creation workshops, with participants recruited from outside the CDT. In stage two, data from stage one was translated into eight potential curriculum ideas by the CDT. Stage three used an online survey to present these ideas to staff and students for evaluation and to elicit additional ideas from students. Insight into values gained at each stage informed subsequent stages and modified our curriculum design ideas as illustrated in Figure 1.

Stage 1 co-creation workshops

Co-creation workshops focused on identifying the values staff and students attach to education and the cognitive psychology curriculum, defining a focus for re-innovation, ideating potential solutions to meet student needs, and facilitating the co-creation of ideas between staff and students.

Recruitment

Following IRB ethics approval (University of Salford), invitations to participate were sent to psychology staff members and all second and third-year psychology undergraduate students. First-year students were excluded as they had not yet studied cognitive psychology as part of the curriculum. The invitation did not specify who was involved or that students were part of the project team but did indicate that the project was directed by psychology staff and would help staff design the curriculum, 'have your say, contribute new ideas, and work with academics in developing innovative curriculum ideas'. Participants received an information sheet detailing the purpose of the workshops and outlining the activities, including that they would be asked to discuss their experiences and design ideas with a group of staff and students. Emphasis was placed on the need for a diverse range of experiences and

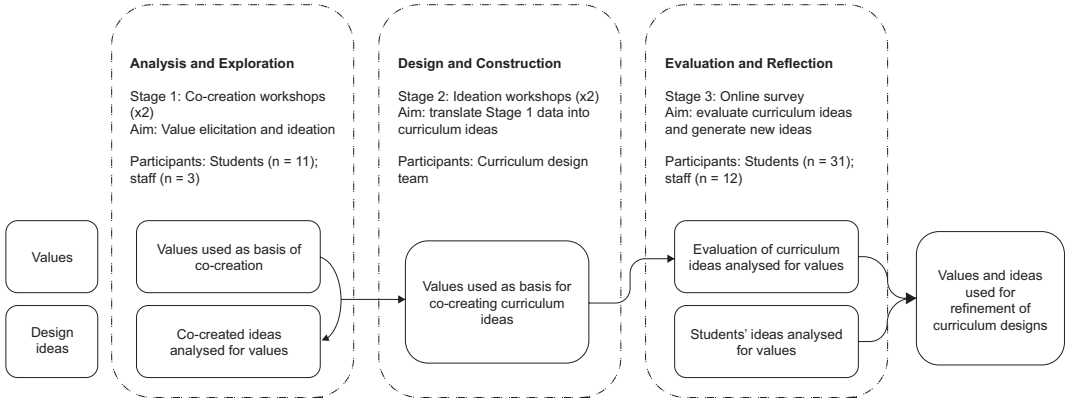

FIGURE 1 Three stages of the co-creation design process

ideas, irrespective of whether students liked cognitive psychology or performed well on previous modules. Students were informed that they could withdraw their data, that responses would be confidential, and that there was a £20 allowance for participation.

Participants

Workshop 1: one staff member and six students; Workshop 2: two staff members and five students. Staff members were volunteers from a departmental staff group of 21. Invites were sent to approximately 300 students. The 11 student participants represent a response rate of roughly 3.7%. Whilst students may have known each other, they were not existing 'friendship groups'. All student participants 'knew' all but one staff member and workshop facilitators, but to varying degrees.

Procedure

Workshops began with an introduction to the project and project aims. This was followed by setting ground rules for participation: no one's ideas were more important than anyone else's; all ideas and opinions were valued and it was important to be honest despite the presence of the teaching staff on the modules in question. Whilst we did not explicitly state that there would be no academic consequences to students' involvement, we were confident that this was clearly implied in our directions that all views were welcome. Before the workshop began, participants consented to being video recorded and agreed not to discuss anything said with anyone outside of the workshops. Such measures encouraged honest and open sharing of ideas. The duration of each workshop was approximately three hours, consisting of the following activities.

Worst possible idea (Mattimore, 2012)

Participants were asked to design a new assessment for a hypothetical module and given five minutes to write down their 'worst possible idea' for the assessment. Instructions assured that ideas could be ridiculous, boring, unsafe, or illegal. Each participant then presented their ideas to the group who were asked to identify why the proposal was, actually, a good idea. The purpose of this task was to create a non-threatening icebreaker that would not privilege the expertise of either staff or students, would facilitate imagination, thinking outside the limits of feasibility, and would reveal values through discussion of the ideas.

Stop, start, continue

Based on the methodology described by Hoon et al. (2015), students were asked to consider four questions about their experiences of the cognitive psychology modules.

1. What would you like us to stop doing?
2. What suggestions do you have for things we should start doing?
3. What is being done well that you would like to continue?
4. Good practice/highlights?

Students were given 20 minutes to individually write their ideas down before placing them around a table. They were then asked to group the ideas into themes, giving each theme a name. Staff and students then each voted on the theme they deemed most important. The theme with the most votes was then discussed, and the facilitator led the group into defining a design focus to provide the stimulus for the final ideation activities.

Crazy 8's (Knapp et al., 2016) and round table discussion

Participants were asked to each come up with eight ideas in eight minutes that addressed the design focus. Participants were encouraged to let their imagination run freely and not be limited by what was currently possible. They were then asked to choose their favourite idea, develop it and display it, anonymously, for the group. Participants then voted anonymously for their favourite ideas, with the most popular ideas explored and further developed as part of a staff-student group discussion.

Post-workshop survey

Participants completed the anonymous survey by responding to the following questions along a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7): how much they agreed that participation in the workshops gave them a sense of ownership over the cognitive modules; how it affected their attitude toward the cognitive modules; how well they were able to produce creative ideas; and whether they felt able to share their genuine views. Free-test boxes were provided to allow any additional comments. Staff were asked the following additional questions: if they felt they had to concede power and the extent to which they were concerned about involving students in design.

Stage 2: Curriculum design team workshop

Stage 1 data formed the basis for further ideation by the CDT. The group ran an ideation activity, ensuring contribution from both the staff and students within the group. Each member was given three minutes to propose a curriculum re-innovation. Ideas were then passed to the person to the left, who was given three minutes to develop the idea further, focussing on why it might not work. In turn, the next person focussed on proposing a solution. The process continued until all participants had contributed. The activity was selected as a democratic process involving all group members. Finally, each idea was discussed and developed as a group.

Stage 3: Online survey

Owing to enforced Covid-19 restrictions, stage 3 methodology employed an online survey hosted on the Online Survey platform (Jisc, 2020), to gather feedback on potential design ideas generated from earlier stages. Each design idea was described in a brief paragraph and respondents were asked to rate whether they ‘loved’, ‘liked’, thought it was ‘just ok’, or ‘hated’ the idea and provide three reasons explaining their response and up to three things that could make the idea better. Invitations to participate were sent to psychology staff and undergraduate students. Twelve staff (all from outside of the CDT) and 31 students responded (Year one: 6, Year two: 9, Year three: 4, unknown: 2). Staff response rate was 50% and student response rate was approximately 7%.

As part of the survey, students were also invited to nominate a change that we could make to the cognitive psychology curriculum that would improve their learning experience. Ideas were evaluated by the CDT on originality and usefulness, with a prize of £50 for the best idea. Twenty-three students responded to this part of the survey.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was performed on the qualitative data to understand the values underpinning participant ratings. The approach followed that outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006),

incorporating the principles of Van Mechelen (2017), where preferences and choices are considered to be based on the selection of product attributes in order to achieve anticipated outcomes, which are themselves underpinned by values. This involved coding the reasons given for the participants' ratings and in the descriptions of students' design ideas, considering how the codes converged to suggest underlying values and paying attention to similarities and tensions between participants.

RESULTS

Stage 1 co-creation workshops

Worst possible idea

The allocated five minutes was sufficient for participants to generate ideas and they felt able to share them with the group. Ideas included assessments that were too difficult (e.g., writing an essay from memory whilst distracted by staff), stressful (e.g., giving a presentation to the whole year group from memory), harmful (e.g., measuring responses in a frightening virtual reality environment) or illegal (e.g., creating civil unrest and studying the effects). A recurrent theme was that the worst assessments were stressful or intimidating, pointing toward the need for feeling safe and secure as an important value. When discussing what was *actually good* about each idea, the values listed most frequently were that the assessments gave students autonomy and choice, stimulated interest by providing a new experience, and helped develop knowledge through real-world application.

Stop, start, continue

Participants in workshop 1 voted ‘teaching methods’ as the most important theme and suggested that we start using more hands-on psychology tests, incorporate different activities to apply learning, and provide more choice in the type of assessment. They also suggested we continue covering a wide range of topics, employ diverse teaching methods, and carry on with our practical activities. The workshop group discussed the theme and identified incorporating diverse activities into teaching as a focus for re-innovation. ‘Delivery’ was voted the most important theme in workshop 2 with suggestions that we start providing choice in the type of assessment, provide assessment briefs earlier, make the module more interactive and that we ‘try to simplify’. Participants also requested more resources for the ‘dryer’ topics, that we should continue to ‘*make it as applied as possible*’, employ guest lecturers and continue including practical activities. Discussing the outcomes from workshop 2, making activities engaging for everyone was identified as a second focus for re-innovation.

Crazy 8's

Three ‘most popular’ ideas emerged in workshop 1, all involving ‘choice’. The first idea described a system in which students ‘mould-a-module’, affording them choice over learning outcomes, teaching style, and assessment type. The second idea involved providing a range of mini lectures with students selecting which to attend, allowing ‘*students to choose what they want to learn about*’. The third idea involved students voting on the topics and activities for teaching the following week. The round-table discussion evolved into a consideration of

'choice' more generally, exploring the challenges of resourcing choice and considering at what stage students are able to make good choices about their own education. Students commented on the sense of power they would gain from being able to choose learning activities, whilst staff raised concerns regarding increased workload resulting from providing choice. In workshop 2, participants' favourite idea was to ensure the lecture was topical, applying what is happening in the news, for example. The ensuing discussion focussed on the importance of '*lighting the spark*' and '*grabbing attention*' through the use of relevant, real-world topics. Staff discussed pressure to find something topical and interesting whilst students shared examples of good practice from lectures that had piqued their interest and engaged them. Staff and students agreed on the benefits of approaching difficult topics from diverse and applied angles.

Post-workshop survey

Despite a relatively small sample (8 students and 1 staff completed the survey), results offer insight into the social dynamics of the workshops. The single response received from a staff member suggested that they strongly disagreed that they were required to concede power to students in the workshop and they agreed that they were able to share their genuine views. Students reported that they felt comfortable sharing their views and some reported it as a '*friendly environment*' and '*a very open atmosphere and I personally felt it was safe to share my views*'. One added they were able to '*discuss both positive and negative experiences of the module, I believe these were heard by the workshop facilitators*'. Two students did also indicate ways to encourage responses from those less willing to speak '*via a spokesperson*' or a '*suggestion box*', referring to those who '*don't feel comfortable sharing in a group setting*', although it is not clear whether these comments related to themselves or others, or whether it is the group setting in general or the presence of staff within the group that may deter sharing. Those students who did explicitly refer to staff in their comments suggested a positive group dynamic, offering the view that '*the staff clearly care about the students* [sic] *opinions*', that '*my views are important to staff*'. One student described how they '*came away with a sense of togetherness between lecturers are students. We all wanted to make the best of our learning*'.

Stage 2: Curriculum design team workshop

Using salient values 'choice' and 'autonomy', and themes including 'real-world application' that emerged from the workshop data, the design group developed eight re-innovation ideas:

- Using real-world topics to trigger learning about cognitive theories in first-year modules.
- Removing most seminar-based teaching from first year modules.
- Students in the first-year choose which topics within cognitive psychology to study in the second year.
- Giving students ownership over their choice of real-world case study in the third year.
- Creating a library of student work.
- Creating a library of student generated content using digital tools.
- Peer assisted learning.

Stage 3: Online survey

The idea to use 'real-world topics' was the favoured idea for staff and rated second for students. In contrast, ideas related to autonomy and choice were the least favoured options for staff but were rated positively by students, reflecting discussion in the stage 1 workshops where staff expressed concerns around resourcing student choice. Ratings can be seen below in Figure 2.

Qualitative analysis of values

Figure 3 presents a thematic map illustrating codes (i.e., features most frequently observed during the evaluation of re-innovation ideas) in grey with the number of observed mentions in

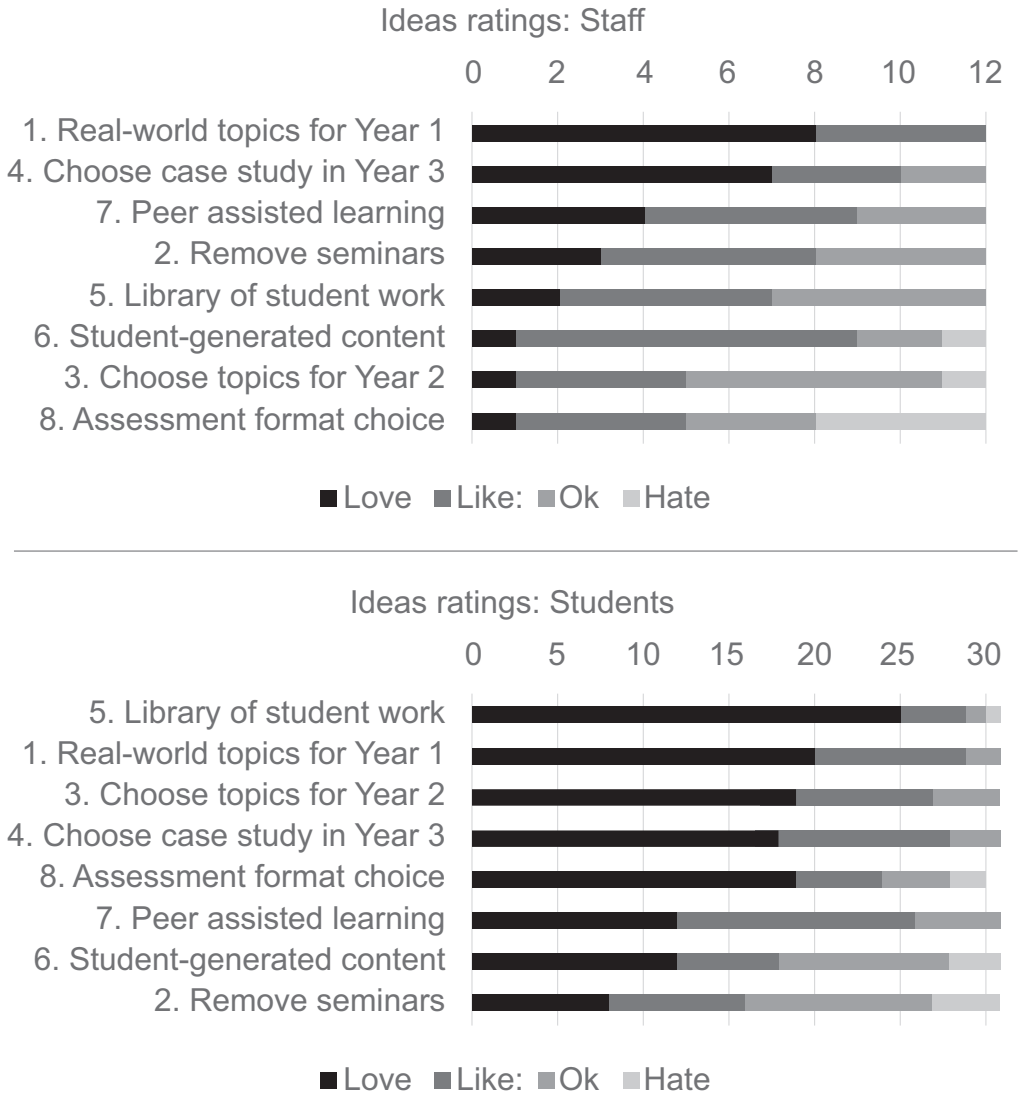

FIGURE 2 Ranking data for our curriculum ideas

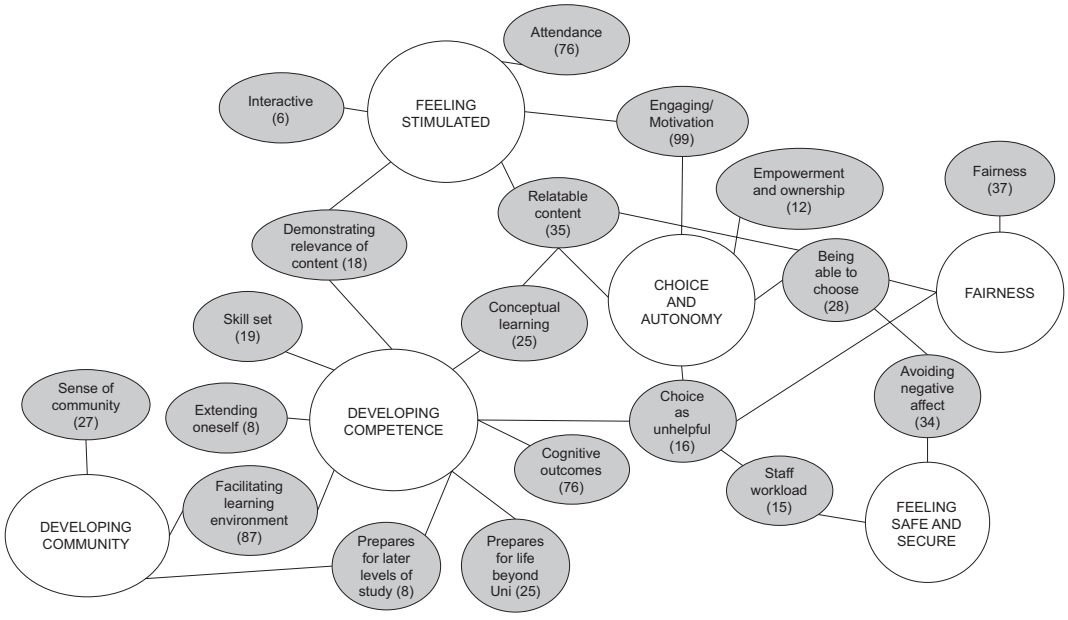

FIGURE 3 Thematic map of staff-student evaluation of re-innovation ideas

parentheses, together with the six themes (i.e., underlying values) represented by the clear circles that emerged through the convergence of the most frequently occurring codes. For example, the code 'relatable content' was frequently used in evaluations and was described as a positive consequence of having choice, related to feeling stimulated, and linked to developing competence via facilitation of conceptual learning. Emerging themes were 'Feeling Stimulated', 'Developing Competence', 'Choice and Autonomy', 'Feeling Safe and Secure', 'Fairness' and 'Developing Community'.

Feeling Stimulated described the value of seeking engaging and interesting experiences. The importance of maintaining interest was a salient theme identified as underpinning learning and memory for course content: '*if they are interested in the topic … [they] will find the information easier to learn*' (student). Responses often emphasised the 'dry and boring' nature of cognitive psychology: '*enjoying modules is key, with something such as cognitive psychology it can be hard to engage students*' (student). This was reflected in frequent suggestions for how to increase interest, such as diversifying the learning materials and bringing in different speakers.

Feeling Safe and Secure was salient in responses from students who sought to avoid negative emotions such as anxiety, stress, being embarrassed, or feeling intimidated: '*We need one to one time with seminar tutors if we struggle speaking in large crowds, it makes it less nerve racking*' (student). For staff, managing students' emotions was frequently oriented towards ('*keep them all happy*'), whilst also acknowledging their own pressures: '*Sounds like a nightmare to arrange*'.

Developing Competence described the value placed on knowledge-based outcomes and the development of skills. Knowledge was described as something to be '*grasped*', '*understood*', '*learnt*', '*remembered*', '*memorised*' or made to '*stick*'. This theme was salient across evaluations of all our re-innovation ideas, frequently cited as a reason for using real-world examples in teaching, helping to reduce abstraction by providing a more concrete frame of reference for teaching and learning complex topics addressed by cognitive psychology: '*Using real-life examples makes the complex theories more understandable, especially if you break it down*' (staff). Frequent descriptions of cognitive psychology as complex highlighted

the challenge of helping students achieve a sense of competence. Students suggested quizzes and additional opportunities for real-world learning to help test, apply or extend their knowledge and understanding.

Choice and Autonomy demonstrated the greatest area of staff-student divergence. Having autonomy was often discussed as a way for students to focus their learning on topics of interest, allowing them to feel stimulated and empowered: '*I would feel as if I have more control in what I am learning which I believe would motivate me*' (student). Students offered ideas about how choice could be embedded, including voting systems to select topics and choosing assessment format. Staff, however, expressed concern around logistics of managing choice, associated workload pressures and reservations that votes on content could exclude students whose choices were not selected. Some students suggested they were not yet in a position to make good choices: '*I'm not set on where I want to take my degree so I don't know if what is interesting to me or anyone else is actually what we need to know overall*'. For some students, choice threatened their sense of fairness.

Fairness was referred to frequently by both staff and students in relation to being inclusive, accessible and providing an equal experience. However, contrasting views were evident, with some arguing for parity of experience ('*Everyone should be assessed the same so it's fair*') and others promoting '*playing to your strengths*'. One student suggested '*it isn't fair to grade everyone in the same way when everyone is more confident with different things*'.

Developing Community referred to the relational and interactive aspects of some of our proposals that could benefit a sense of community: '*This would create a great cognitive psychology student "community"*' (staff). Students praised opportunities to meet new students, connect with students in other year groups, and getting to know staff: '*It helps us to get to know the Psychology staff by having seminar tutors and helps us gain confidence in staff*' (student).

Although not a principal aim, data allowed analysis that provided insights into 'student-as-consumer' identities and 'having' an education or 'being' a learner orientations (Molesworth et al., 2009). Molesworth et al. (2009) suggest that a 'having' orientation is associated with the commodification of skills and knowledge, a strong vocational drive, a sense of entitlement to a good education and minimising effort. A 'being' orientation favours transformational experiences that lead to new ways to know and act. The analysis did not reveal evidence of extreme positions of 'having' and 'being'. Rather, one staff member championed opportunities where '*… students can start to think about each example from a psychologist's point of view*', highlighting how education can be both transformational and vocational. Only one respondent, a student, explicitly referenced a consumer identity in relation to the value of 'feeling stimulated': '*if they* [students] *have no interest in a subject they shouldn't have to spend their years and heavy university loan learning about it*'. Reflecting a consumer identity, the comment also orients towards the importance of enjoyment and away from the need for required knowledge and skills for employment or longer-term goals. There is further evidence of the importance of enjoyment in relation to the value 'choice': '*More choice, and not forced to partake in a subject they do not enjoy*' (student). In contrast, the 'need to study' is acknowledged, ('*what we find of personal interest does not negate the need to study things that give us a broader understanding of a topic*', student), often in the context of the employment: '*if the university has a role to play in preparing people for the world of work, then being able to engage in the types of work in which you don't naturally excel is important*' (staff). Students also accepted the importance of being challenged in order to develop important skills: '*as much as people don't like presentations it does build team working and presentation skills needed for employment, its* [sic] *good to talk about on cv and in interviews*' (student). One student commented that optional sessions with guest speakers were '*giving students the option to "get ahead*"', reflecting an awareness of the parallels between education and a competitive market economy, where students strive to out-perform their peers. In

contrast, some students felt some activities threatened 'feeling safe and secure' and 'fairness': '*presentations were a lot more difficult for me in terms of delivering the information to the audience than someone without those anxious experiences*'. Although there was no evidence of extreme positioning, findings do indicate the presence of a consumer identity, with a greater orientation towards 'having education' than 'being a learner'. 'Having' was however represented in different ways and varying degrees of strength. For some, accepting being challenged in order to 'have' knowledge and skills for employment was secondary to the need to 'have' enjoyment in learning.

DISCUSSION

The project sought to develop, deploy and evaluate values-led co-creation methods to re-innovate our cognitive psychology curriculum. Whilst there is a growing body of literature describing curriculum co-creation, we believe ours is the first description of a process led by elicitation of personal values. Analysis of participant responses and group discussions prompted by the different phases and activities of the project revealed discernible perceptions and values relevant to curriculum re-innovation. Perceiving the cognitive psychology curriculum as complex, dense and dry, participants discussed valuing choice and autonomy in their learning, feeling stimulated, developing competence in the topic, feeling safe and secure, fairness and community. These values emerged indirectly, through workshop activities, and directly, in the discussion. The same values continued to be salient features in the evaluation of the curriculum ideas proposed by the CDT and in the ideas elicited from the participants in both the workshops and the online survey. Further exploration of the data with regards to consumer identity (Molesworth et al., 2009) suggested an additional layer of value orientation, with participants orienting more towards 'having' an education than 'being' a learner. Differences in the expression of the 'having' orientation influenced how participants prioritised stimulation, stress and challenge in the curriculum and we suggest that these learner identities provide a deeper, more fundamental level of values shaping the expression of the more surface-level values that emerged through our co-creation activities. We further speculate that deeper level values may be broader in scope and more enduring, whilst surface values may flex relative to the specific context of the co-creation project, which in this case was the cognitive psychology curriculum.

Applying findings to curriculum re-innovation

The project elicited both values and curriculum design ideas from participants, with multiple data sources allowing our ideas for re-innovation to evolve through the different phases of the project. For example, the co-created idea from workshop 1 incorporated the value of choice and autonomy. However, when formalised into curriculum ideas and presented to staff and students in the online survey, responses revealed a varied range of more complex and nuanced views around the appeal of choice. We have therefore taken a more cautious approach to curriculum re-innovation based on choice. Whilst we will introduce choice in assessment topic, this will be scaffolded, with increased choice and autonomy as students progress through the levels of their degree programme. The co-created idea from workshop 2 was to provide real-world examples as a frame of reference to contextualise cognitive psychology topics and stimulate learning. Because this idea was positively evaluated in the stage 3 survey, our curriculum re-innovation has involved focussing on real-world issues to present complex and abstract theoretical content, helping our students engage and achieve competence. One observation from our data was that the design ideas from our participants

were often limited by their own experiences, providing suggestions based on features they had already experienced. However, as participants highlighted the importance of embedding '*fun and interesting ways*' to feel more stimulated, we are exploring ways to engage this value, including considering ideas for virtual reality experiences for students, that go beyond the original ideas generated by the project.

Social and power dynamics within curriculum co-creation

Whilst not an original or principal aim of the study, the activities we undertook as part of the project prompted us to reflect on the social dynamics between staff and students within the co-creation process. Student participants from phase 1 workshops indicated, in their anonymous feedback, that they felt able to contribute openly and honestly. In fact, student participants referenced positive attitudes toward staff following the workshops, reflecting findings in previous co-creation studies (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018). These findings suggest power dynamics were not a salient barrier to co-creation in the workshops. Other studies have reported that students felt disempowered during co-creation (e.g., Carey, 2013), causing us to reflect on which factors may have contributed to creating an egalitarian culture in our workshops. Importantly, it was stressed at the start of the workshop that all participants were equal and that no one's ideas were more important. Clearly, this had some impact, as evidenced in feedback from one student: '*It helped that it was made clear to everyone at the start, by* [facilitator], *that we should all feel free to share, as long as it is not offensive, and that everyone in the room was equal*'. Perhaps equally important in terms of signalling equality, all participants, staff and students, were new to the activities. The first task, 'worst possible idea', was selected because it clearly did not favour those with pedagogical expertise (i.e., staff), helping underline the intention to create a culture of equality and negate any pre-existing power or status dynamic. Tasks also allowed students to share their views anonymously before sharing more openly in discussions that were moderated carefully to encourage contributions from both staff and students. It is plausible the staff who volunteered may have been those more open to, and less threatened by, collaborating with students. A final consideration is that student participants outnumbered staff, possibly helping to shift pre-existing power and status away from staff. As reported by Carey (2013), students in a co-creation project felt intimidated when outnumbered by staff 6 to 1.

The meetings of the CDT present a different dynamic. Here, staff members (6) outnumbered students (2). Staff had already worked on developing the project proposal prior to students joining and, as Seale et al. (2015) reports, development of their project prior to assembling the full team reduced feelings of ownership in those joining later. Whilst this may have initially affected feelings of ownership in student members of the CDT, one student's account describes a quickly growing confidence after joining: 'Everyone else seemed so much more aware and familiar with the task ahead. This sense of imposter syndrome, or being out of my depth, led to me assuming I would be reluctant to contribute. However, as the first meeting progressed, staff made it clear I would be treated as an equal. All members of the team were asked for their suggestions and views, and I felt the same level of attention and discussion was awarded to my contributions as to those of other members. My confidence grew'. (Beevers, 2021, p. 142). Carey (2013) reports that students felt disempowered, having to adopt a more passive role focussed on complaints rather than solutions. The use of creative solution-focused activities in the current project may have helped flatten any hierarchy in the group and foster a sense of empowerment in students.

Strengths and limitations

Bovill (2020) emphasises the benefits of conducting co-creation with whole groups of students, recognising that smaller co-creation projects may be more likely to involve students who are already highly engaged. One implication is that designs fail to be tailored to those students who are less engaged and therefore exacerbate existing disparities. The two students in the design group were in fact invited because they were believed to be highly engaged and had worked with staff on other projects previously. Whilst we did not involve the whole student cohort, which would have exceeded 450 students, aspects of the project were intended to promote inclusivity. The project was advertised to all students who could be involved in various ways with different levels of engagement, from joining the CDT to completing the online survey. For co-creation projects, offering different ways to participate may help to increase their inclusivity and representation and therefore validity. Nevertheless, as is the case in other examples reported in the co-creation literature (Mendes & Hammett, 2020; Seale et al., 2015), the participation rate was low relative to the size of the student cohort. This raises concerns that those who did not participate lacked the opportunity to do so due to competing obligations. Alternatively, those students who did participate reflect those who are more engaged with the programme, who identify as citizens of the university rather than consumers (Mendes & Hammett, 2020), and who are more willing to engage with staff. Cooke-Sather et al. (2014) highlight the importance of providing different ways to participate, equal opportunity to participate, and also the opportunity to not participate. Tensions between trying to provide opportunities for all students to contribute whilst also providing the freedom to not engage create a significant challenge to curriculum co-creation.

A further reflection relates to the value positions of the design team. As academics, we may value a ‘being’ learner identity more than many and feel exasperated by students seemingly focussed on maximum yields for minimum effort. Yet pursuing a degree for instrumental reasons is a valid approach for many, and we should not make assumptions about the competing demands on students' time or resources. Not exploring fully our own value systems as the design team may have constrained the project. For instance, our recruitment communications invited students to ‘help us’ and ‘work with us’ and learn about curriculum design, reflecting our values that students have an inherent desire to act as citizens of the university community. In retrospect, the values enacted by the CDT suggest both ‘having’ and ‘being’ learner identities (Molesworth et al., 2009). For instance, we recognised and promoted the transformational opportunities for students in taking part in co-creation activities and invested in developing and supporting the student members of the CDT. The curriculum re-innovation ideas we developed included opportunities to showcase work and support communities of learning through peer assessment, reflecting values aligned with ‘being’ a learner. These ideas emphasise students as citizens of the University rather than consumers of a product (Mendes & Hammett, 2020). However, we also promoted the development of applied skills and knowledge, reflecting the commodification of education, and were motivated by whether ideas would improve marking profiles. Values related to student performance and module metrics no doubt existed in some form in the project design and we suggest that reflecting on the values of the design team, at an early stage, is a necessary step in the co-creation process.

CONCLUSIONS

Focussing on the values that underpin staff and students' experience with our curriculum has allowed us to leverage stakeholder input to better understand how curriculum re-innovation is best implemented. An understanding of values has enabled us to explore ideas for curriculum re-innovation which extend the boundaries of the participants' ideas whilst

remaining consistent with their needs. Being mindful of issues of power, our activities appear to have successfully contributed to a sense of equal status between staff and students and have even led to reports of transformation in these relationships for some participants. However, it is important to question who is participating and why, particularly in relation to their values and identities. Co-creation itself enacts a value system that promotes empowerment and transformation of students, potentially excluding participants who hold contrasting priorities. New methods may be needed to move co-creation from an activity that includes only a small number of engaged students to one which is embedded in the activities of the whole community (Bovill, 2020). This may a require more radical re-organisation of current practices of student engagement. Indeed, a final reflection is that now our project funding has finished, and we have a wealth of informative data, discussions around co-creation have largely ceased. One member of the team has introduced co-creation into postgraduate teaching with moderate success, but primarily we continue to rely on existing methods to hear the student's voice. Co-creation here, as elsewhere in the literature, is largely tied to discrete projects rather than being embedded in ways of working or supported within a whole-university approach. Further research is needed to explore how (and whether) to create more enduring changes which should consider the social and power dynamics of staff-student relationships and the values and identities of the whole community.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the study conception, design, material preparation and data analysis. Data collection was performed by Adam Galpin, Catherine Thompson and David Beevers. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Adam Galpin and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

All listed authors consent to publication.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study was approved by the University of Salford Health and Society Ethics panel. All participants gave consent to participate.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Not applicable.

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