Challenging knowledge asymmetries: Photovoice, low income students and conditions and practices of inclusion

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HELTASA conference
22 November 2018

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What is photovoice?

- A process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their shared community through photographic material.

- As a research and pedagogical practice, photovoice has three main goals, to:

(1) enable people to record and reflect on their thematic stories,

(2) promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through discussion of photographs, and

(3) reach policymakers and practitioners.

Why are we using photovoice?

It allows us to:

- Explore and deepen our understanding of how students experience and perceive inclusions and exclusions at university.

- Involve students as co-researchers in a simultaneously creative and critical knowledge making process.

- Enhance students' capacity to tell stories of capability formation using visual narratives.

How are we using photovoice?

Workshops:

- Day 1: Introduction to photovoice; river of life drawings; presentations; group discussion.

- Day 2: Reflecting on experiences of inclusion and exclusion in students' university lives, and how these experiences affected and/or continue to affect their learning. Identifying powerful stories about inclusion/exclusion that students want to tell, and working together to develop a storyboard.

- Day 3: Photography training, including ethical considerations for taking photographs of people for research and artistic purposes. Spending the day taking photographs that align with storyboards.

- Day 4: Curation of the photos and enhancement of stories. Students reflect on their stories and check the coherence, sequence, themes and overall narrative. Completed by giving their photo story a title and each photograph a title and caption. Presentations. Group discussion.

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What has been the value of a photovoice approach?

- The approach has allowed us to triangulate life history interviews for more fine grained accounts of life at university for low income students.

- Students have generated powerful visual stories of exclusion and inclusion at university told by them and based on their personal experiences.

- Students provided the knowledge and also benefitted from the process of creating it (more than they are able to do in e.g. interviews or focus groups).

- More even distribution of responsibility for generating and disseminating knowledge means we have converted students' knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing capabilities into functionings (that they have reason to value).

- Improved the reciprocity in creating knowledge, which is a step closer towards incomplete epistemic justice (in and through research).

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Thank you.

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