

Reinvigorating student learning: Teaching strategies that enhance identity development

This is the third in a series of papers from a project that seeks to reinvigorate learning among higher education students by embedding learning and teaching strategies that enhance the development of professional identity. The project is underpinned by the premise that students' deep engagement with curricular content is directly impacted by the perceived relevance of this learning to their future lives and careers. Thus, the development of students' personal and professional identities—salient identities—is crucial to student success. Identity development is particularly problematic for music students, whose future work and career is often unknown and may be narrowly defined. It follows that required courses such as those in pedagogy and business can be poorly received, and it is for this reason that music students were selected as a case study cohort. The study reported here drew on earlier findings to refine and evaluate the use of reflective journals, life and career planning, and musician profiles. Surveys, completed activities, reflections, drawings and journals all contributed to the project data and were analysed in terms of both individual student response and whole-class attitude. Particular attention was given to the reflective journals. Whilst some students initially wrote quite mechanically about what they had learned, journals became a more reflective tool as the students became more involved in the unit. Indeed, a sense of fun and purpose permeated the later journal entries. Insights gained from the study have considerable implications for the pedagogical approaches adopted for courses that some students view as peripheral to their development. This paper unpacks some of these approaches and discusses their potential as strategies for professional learning.