

Student Voice Beyond the Classroom

Dr Nina Bhardwaj

UNE Business School, Armidale





Where Does Student Voice Really Begin?

"After a workshop, a senior engineer approached me— not about an assignment, but about a decision affecting his life and leadership."

Not about grades

Not about content

About real-life decisions

This is where student voice truly begins.



Professional Learners, Not Traditional Students

- Managers, engineers, healthcare professionals, public sector leaders
- Balancing careers, families, and study
- Learning under real-life constraints

They are not learning for grades — they are learning for decisions that affect real people.

Why Traditional Engagement Falls Short

**Designed for full-time,
campus-based students**

**Focuses on participation
(discussion, surveys)**

**Often ignores lived
professional realities**

Student voice is often collected— but not deeply engaged.



Relational Pedagogy as the Enabler

1

Psychological Safety

Enables honest sharing

2

Reflection

Connects theory to lived experience

3

Thinking Partner

Educator beyond content expert

Student voice is not extracted— it is invited through trust.

Research Question

How does student voice and engagement manifest among professional learners in higher education and industry training contexts?

Research Methodology



The study adopts a reflective, practice-based approach, drawing on two forms of qualitative evidence.



First, contemporary students' feedback from postgraduate Organisational Behaviour (OB) teaching highlights strong cognitive, emotional, and applied engagement.

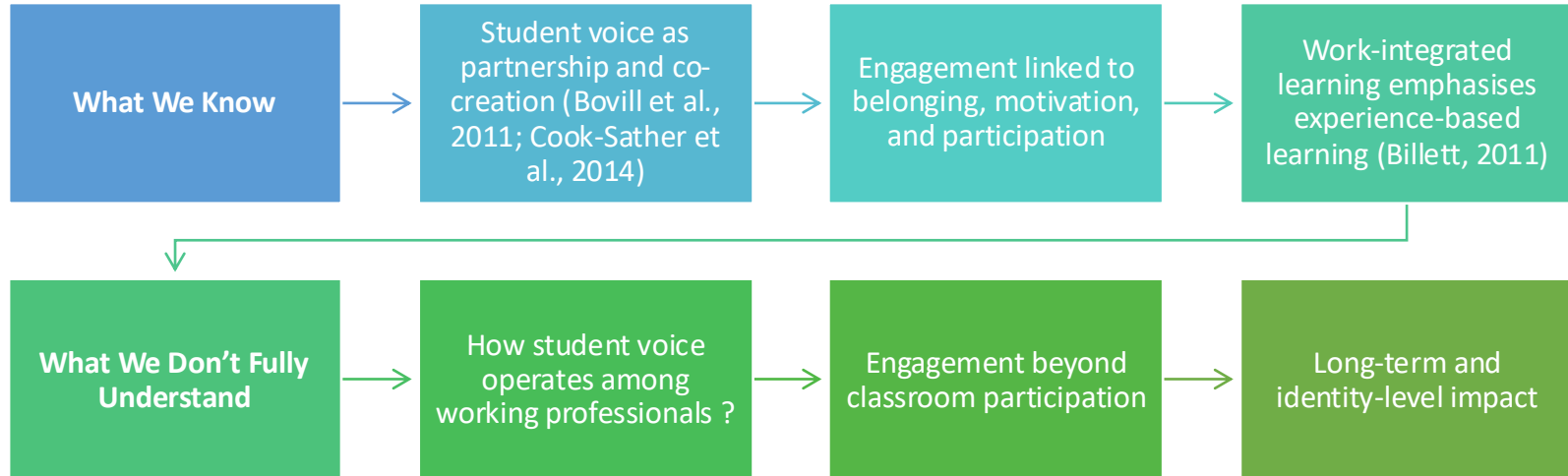


Second, longitudinal case insights from industry training participants illustrate deeper transformational outcomes.



In some cases, engagement extends well beyond the formal learning experience, with learners maintaining ongoing connection and dialogue with the educator over many years.

Literature Review



In Practice

- Real workplace challenges as learning material
- Reflection on behaviour, not just concepts
- Mentoring embedded within teaching
- Conversations beyond classroom boundaries

The classroom becomes a space where life and learning intersect.



Student Voice — In Their Own Words

“

"I have practised what I learned at work."

”

“

"If I enrolled in this unit earlier...this would have contributed massively to my career."

”

“

"You made the subject genuinely enjoyable."

”

“

"You pushed us to think deeper."

”

“

"I'm balancing work, family, and study—but this keeps me going."

”

This is not engagement as participation— this is engagement as application.

How Engagement Deepens

1

 **Immediate**

Participation

2

 **Reflective**

Making meaning

3

 **Transformational**

Behaviour change

4

 **Longitudinal**

Sustained connection

Engagement doesn't start deep— it becomes deep.



What Changed?

- Experience recognised as knowledge
- Documented shifts in thinking and behaviour
- Application in real workplace decisions
- Sustained engagement beyond the semester

Learning did not end with assessment— it continued in practice.



What This Means for Us



Design for real-world integration, not abstraction



Build psychological safety intentionally



Treat experience as core curriculum



Invest in relationships, not just delivery



Student voice is not something we collect. It is something we earn.



Thank You

Questions / Reflections

*When students are professionals, engagement becomes application,
reflection, and transformation.*