SPECIAL SECTION EDITORIAL

Partnership in fostering socially just pedagogies

Izzy Munevar-Pelton[a], Anika Olsen-Neill[a], Yahlnaaw[b], Nicole De Wet-Billings[c], Kim Hellemans[a], *David J. Hornsby[d], Sumaya Laher[e], Martha Mullally[f], Ruksana Osman[g], Heather Smith[h]

[a] Department of Neuroscience, Carleton University, Canada
[b] Equity and Human Rights Office, University of Victoria, Canada.
[c] Department of Demography and Population Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.
[d] Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Canada.
[e] Department of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.
[f] Department of Biology, Carleton University, Canada.
[g] Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.
[h] Department of International Studies, University of Northern British Columbia, Canada.

Contact: david.hornsby@carleton.ca

By way of an introduction, we ask that you, the reader, review and reflect on the responses provided by the editorial team members to a question we posed ourselves about partnership and socially just pedagogy. There was no prompting, no requirements for citations, no framework in which to fit . . . we just wanted to take a moment and reflect.

What does partnership and socially just pedagogy mean to us, as the co-editors?

Izzy Munevar-Pelton

As an undergraduate student, I believe that partnership is invaluable if one wants to foster socially just pedagogy. A true partnership provides opportunity for students from different backgrounds to have their voices heard and have their input inform pedagogy in real time. To me, partnership and socially just pedagogy are opportunities for personal growth and for the growth of a more diverse and inclusive classroom.

Anika Olsen-Neill

Socially just partnership is a topic near and dear to me as an undergraduate student. Not only is it essential to be mindful of others' experiences and backgrounds, but it is essential to centre student voices in the classroom and continue to grow from them. Your opinions being validated and valued in course design as a student, whether you're providing an educator with criticism or with praise, is a very humanizing experience. Amplifying student voices in the classroom and being flexible to student needs is necessary to move forward and grow as teachers of higher education.

Yahlnaaw

Partnership and socially just pedagogy value the understanding that we are all coming from diverse (and often intersecting) backgrounds. For us to truly engage in authentic partnership and socially just pedagogy, we must understand who our partners are, where they come from, and the knowledges they bring with them as valid and just. We must understand that diverse supports are required for success (equity) and that we position lived realities and experiences as central.

Nicole De Wet- Billings

Socially just pedagogy acknowledges that students enter institutes of higher learning with diverse backgrounds and personal narratives. Despite all reaching the same place, whether it is the institution at large or a particular course or lecture, these students are vastly different. We need therefore to encourage openness, care, and trust in the physical space to encourage positive learning outcomes. Partnership is on the side of the institution, lecturers, tutors, and classmates. It is when this partnership recognises the narratives and encourages working together that optimal learning can take place.

Kim Hellemans

Partnership to me means involving someone else in the conversation; when I teach, I am conscious that while I might be considered the "expert," I am keen to understand, learn, and unlearn ideas, ways of thinking, actions, and expressions from my students. Engaging in socially just pedagogical methods is an extension of this partnership: it recognizes that everyone in the room is diverse and brings their own perspectives and experiences into the learning space. It acknowledges we are here to transform in wonderful, unique ways, like a kaleidoscope pointing to the sun.

David J. Hornsby

To me, partnership is critical to realizing socially just pedagogy. Students co-designing courses with faculty offers a chance to ensure their experiences and understandings of the world are included in higher education. Partnership is a socially just pedagogy as it puts into practice the idea that students have something to offer the learning experience and aren't just vessels to be filled with knowledge. Such an approach has spillovers for student success, inclusion, and a recognition that diversity matters in higher education.

Sumaya Laher

Partnership and socially just pedagogy extends across all areas in higher education ranging from the curricula we teach and the pedagogies we use through to how we interact with our students. It is important to recognise and respect the value that student experience and diversity bring to the classroom and the benefits that can emerge from encouraging mutual sharing. Institutions need to be able to provide safe spaces for staff and students to engage in discussion on issues of concern so that we all become more critical consumers of knowledge.

Martha Mullally

For me, teaching is listening. In my view, socially just, student-centered teaching requires that I listen to my students, learn from them, and engage in dialogue with them.

Centering students in my courses, and in my teaching practice through partnering with them, has meant incorporating their diverse experiences and perspectives into my teaching and valuing their input as co-creators of learning spaces.

Ruksana Osman

There are many acts and processes of genuine partnerships. The authors in this special issue document teachers and students working in partnership to reorganize curricula, partnerships where all those involved in the act of learning and teaching work hard to ensure that power relations in these partnerships are fair and transparent, where all partners work actively to eliminate oppressive everyday educational practices. My sense is that a socially just approach to partnerships means that I look critically at my everyday practices as they occur and that I partner with those willing to do the same. That as partners we note that socially just pedagogies are dynamic and ever changing, that we are always looking out to see that we don't reinscribe injustice in trying to be just in our practices and partnerships.

Heather Smith

I wonder about the language of partnership *and* socially just pedagogy. The use of "and" seems to separate the two, but for me, Students as Partners is a socially just pedagogy especially if we pay attention to the disruptive intent of much of the Students-as-Partners literature. The Students-as-Partners process challenges us to dismantle power embedded in status quo processes, to listen for the silences in our practices, and to pay attention to not just what is present but also what is absent. This isn't about "adding students and stirring." The transformative potential of students as partners is that it is a socially just pedagogy.

What speaks to you, the reader, when you review and reflect on these responses? What nuances arise? Whose voices do you hear? Does it matter?

We began this editorial with weaving together the editorial team and the collaborative voice and the voices of the students, faculty, and administrators who worked together to produce this special section. We have been quite purposeful in our writing because we wanted to model a metalogue that provides space(s) for the voices that might otherwise get lost in a "we." Metalogues are "written conversations among parties that preserve individual voices while revealing contested areas" (Staller, 2007, p. 137). Through this inclusive writing process, we, as individuals, voice our views about partnership and socially just pedagogy and, arising through the collective voice, we can see themes relevant to the topic at hand. Although we may share a broad commitment to socially just pedagogy and partnership, our interpretations are also informed by difference.

The ideas that inform our responses are broadly consistent with the idea that socially just pedagogy is a practice where critical thinking is developed and fostered to enable learners to exercise critical agency to transform contemporary orders on the basis of social justice. It is about being propelled by a passion to create a just society—"one that . . . links struggle to a new set of human possibilities" (Giroux, 1983, p. 242). The vision for socially just pedagogies is to foster individuals interested in and capable of nurturing social change (Osman & Hornsby, 2018).

As expressed in the reflections by Nicole, Yahlnaaw, and Sumaya, it is clear that we share a commitment to the belief that incorporating social justice ideas into teaching and learning requires that pedagogical approaches be developed that take into account student needs in addition to the needs of staff and faculty. Fraser (2008) argues that teaching and learning environments should encourage participatory parity, which requires pedagogical stances that treat all as equal. Fraser (2009) argues that "overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction" (p. 16). Ultimately this means that teaching approaches in what is taught and how learning is approached need to be tailored to overcome institutionalized exclusions if we are serious about transforming society.

Similarly, there is a shared commitment among us to partnership. Consistent with the Students-as-Partners literature (Acai et al., 2017; Ahmad et al., 2017; Bovill et al., 2011; Felten et al., 2019; Marquis et al., 2016; Seale, 2010; Seale et al., 2015), the reflections by Heather, Martha, David, and Izzy, among others, remind us that staff-faculty-student partnerships can be powerful, empowering, and transformative for all partners. Partnership, in many respects, can pervade every aspect of university spaces and is about a "way of doing things rather than an outcome itself" (Healey et al., 2016, p. 9).

Partnership and socially just pedagogies come together in university spaces and require that students not only play central roles in activities with faculty and staff, but also play equitable roles across the different spaces and places within our institutions (Werder et al., 2016). Therefore, partnership requires that all participants (students, faculty, and administrators) commit to disrupting traditional hierarchies, emphasising the student voice (Kehler et.al, 2017; Bovill, 2011), and building upon the student voice to include students in deciding on and potentially enacting change on account of points raised by students. Indeed, partnership models have the potential to disrupt hierarchical and non-democratic practices in higher education (Center for Engaged Learning, 2019; Peters & Mathias, 2018; Mihans et al., 2008) and to shine light on how teaching practices can be sites of power (Kehler et al., 2017; Verwoord & Smith, 2020). Osman and Hornsby (2017) argue that including the student voice in pedagogical conversations can also be an act of social justice, particularly in contexts where particular racial or ethnic groups have been historically marginalised.

And while there is a broad shared commitment to both partnership and socially just pedagogy, a careful read of the words of the team members also speaks to difference. Our understanding of what constitutes partnership and its relationship to socially just pedagogy is varied, as seen when Heather asks if socially just pedagogy isn't inherent to partnership and Anika references "socially just partnership," thus removing the "and" as well. David views partnership as essential to achieving socially just pedagogy, thus separating the two ideas of partnership and socially just pedagogies, while Ruksana references partnerships that are socially just (because, of course, there are partnerships that are not).

You can also sense a difference in the location and spaces of partnership and socially just pedagogies. Izzy and Anika reflect on partnership and socially just pedagogies in their classroom experience from the perspective of students. Kim and Martha, in their reflections, tend to focus on the classroom from the perspective of the faculty member. Nicole and Sumaya include institutions and higher education more broadly in their reflections. None of this is to suggest that editorial team members would deny the multiple locations and spaces of

partnership and socially just pedagogy, but rather that we wish to highlight the importance of positionality and context. Our understanding of partnership and socially just pedagogy is mediated by the political environments that we inhabit and our experiences.

This difference can be seen in the ways in which team members operationalize partnership and socially just pedagogy. Yahlnaaw reminds us of the fact that students bring different knowledges and experiences into learning spaces. Kim speaks of the disruption of expertise and the need for faculty to unlearn, and Martha emphasises the importance of listening. Ruksana speaks to reflexivity and attentiveness to everyday sites of power. It is through this attentiveness to positionality and difference that we engage in the disruption of power. The editorial team came together in partnership through and with socially just pedagogies to dismantle sites and practices of oppression from the everyday to the global—something that the papers in the special section also model.

The papers in this special section underscore the myriad of ways that student partnership can lead to more socially just pedagogical practices. There already is ample talk of components, such as development, empowerment, participation, and caring for others in the discourse of partnerships (Osman & Attwood, 2007). We hope that the special section furthers the robust discussions and debates that take place in this journal and beyond about how student partnership in pedagogical design can challenge traditional power dynamics and create possibilities for a more socially just university and society. As bell hooks (1994) reminds us: "The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (p. 12).

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NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

The editorial team combines a range of experiences and contextual understandings. We came together as a set of colleagues connected through common collaborative histories spanning the entire breadth of Canada and South Africa and cover a broad cross section of disciplines including education, Indigenous studies, biology, psychology, demography, neuroscience, and political science. The team consists of award-winning instructors and students who have published within the area of the scholarship of teaching and learning previously. All have a long history of adopting pedagogical strategies that seek to engage students in the classroom and draw scholarly understanding from their work. The editorial team is also methodologically and conceptually open and has experience across the range of writing approaches that *IJSaP* promotes: narratives, case studies, small-n and large-n empirical studies, and conceptual essays. In collaborating in the editorial activities, we divided up into teams that included students with professors and Canadians with South Africans.

Izzy Munevar-Pelton *is a fourth-year undergraduate student in the Combined Honours Neuroscience and Biology program at Carleton University. She recently completed a student partnership with the Department of Neuroscience alongside Dr. Kim Hellemans and Dr. Zachary Patterson. She also co-leads a team of first-year neuroscience peer mentors dedicated to working with each other as well as with first-year students to help them adjust smoothly to their first year of university.*

Anika Olsen-Neill *is a fourth-year undergraduate student in the Honours Neuroscience and Mental Health program at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Anika recently completed a Students-as-Partners project with Dr. Kim Hellemans and Dr. Zachary Patterson. Anika was the VP science of Carleton University's chapter of Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), an international campaign to encourage and promote women and girls to pursue careers in science and engineering fields.*

Yahlnaaw, *a 3M national student fellow, is Skidegate Haida from HlGaagilda Xaayda Gwaii and was born and raised in Lax Kxeen (Prince Rupert, BC) on Ts'msyen territory. As an Indigenous, Queer, Pansexual, Transgender woman navigating what feels like a limb stretched into many worlds, Yahlnaaw aims to bridge these different epistemologies (ways of knowing), ontologies (ways of being), and axiology (values) into her life and work to set the stage for the learning journey she has ahead.*

Nicole De Wet-Billings *is an associate professor and head of programme in the Department of Demography and Population Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is the recipient of two Andrew Mellon Grants and the National Research Foundation Thuthuka Post-Doctoral Grant and has published extensively in the areas of family structure and socio-demographic factors in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

Kim Hellemans *is an instructor in the Department of Neuroscience and the associate dean of science (recruitment and retention) at Carleton University. Kim has a rich and varied background in higher education teaching and is known for her dynamic and inclusive approach to engaging students in the classroom and beyond.*

David J Hornsby *is a professor of international affairs and the associate vice-president (teaching and learning) at Carleton University, Ottawa. Having published in both the biological and social sciences, David's research interests span a number of different topics, including higher education studies and the scholarship of teaching and learning.*

Sumaya Laher *is a professor of psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. She specializes in the field of psychological assessment and contributes to research on Indigenous knowledge systems with her work on traditional healing systems, particularly those proposed by Islam, Hinduism, and African approaches.*

Martha Mullally *is an instructor in the biology department and Institute of Biochemistry at Carleton University. She is also the coordinator of the biotechnology program. Her ongoing*

research interests are in the field of biology education, with a particular focus on ways to assist students to visualize molecular processes, including the use of virtual reality (VR) in visualization. She currently holds the Carleton University Chair in Teaching Innovation.

Ruksana Osman *is a professor of education and senior deputy vice-chancellor academic at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. She holds the UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education for Diversity and Development. She has an established research reputation in higher education policy, pedagogy, and students' lived experiences of equity and access.*

Heather Smith *is a professor, global and international studies at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). She is a 3M national teaching fellow (2006) and an active contributor to the scholarship on Students as Partners and the scholarship of teaching international relations.*

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