International Journal for Students as Partners

Vol. 2 No. 2
Fall 2018

Published by

PAUL R. MACPHERSON INSTITUTE
FOR LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION
AND EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

The International Journal for Students as Partners (*IJSaP*) is published twice a year by McMaster University Library Press and supported by McMaster's Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching.

IJSaP is a journal about learning and teaching together in higher education. *IJSaP* explores new perspectives, practices, and policies regarding how students and staff (used here and subsequently to refer to academic staff/faculty, professional staff, and other stakeholders) are working in partnership to enhance learning and teaching in higher education. Shared responsibility for teaching and learning is the underlying premise of students as partners, and IJSaP is produced using a student-staff partnership approach.

IJSaP is designed to appeal to a wide audience of readers and potential authors in the higher education community. It aims to publish high quality research articles, case studies, reflective essays, opinion pieces, reviews, and other pieces from around the world. Contributions written collaboratively by students and staff are particularly encouraged, although single and other co-authored pieces are also acceptable. All submissions go through a rigorous review process involving both staff and students.

ISSN: 2560-7367

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EDITORIAL

What We Talk About When We Talk About Students as Partners

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Many authors have borrowed the title of Raymond Carver's collection of short stories, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, to frame their explorations of everything from hip hop to running to games. Like Carver and those who have echoed him, we want to surface the multiple dimensions that are integral to our, as to any, complex subject. We acknowledge that the terms used to capture that complexity carry with them intended and unintended associations (such as those with Carver himself). In reference to "students as partners," not only the explicit *what* and *when* but also the implicit *why* can evoke a variety of associations and reactions. A single short story among many, this editorial is one installment in a series of ongoing discussions of what we talk about when we talk about "students as partners."

We, in this case, are two students and two academics/faculty working in partnership as four (of a total of eight) co-editors who intentionally chose the term "students as partners" for this journal's name. Our goals in attempting to unpack this term are to acknowledge and to invite further dialogue about the variety of reactions the term provokes and to move us toward developing generative theories of partnership praxis (Matthews et al., in 2018a). The term aims to capture an aspiration for working together in higher education in a way that rejects traditional hierarchies and assumptions about expertise and responsibility. However, by naming only one participant in the partnership and not specifying the nature of that partnership, the term can evoke associations and feelings that undermine that aspirational aspect. For these and other reasons, some practitioners and scholars might prefer to use whatever term suits their local context, letting, as *IJSaP* Advisory Board and faculty member Peter Felten puts it, "a thousand flowers bloom with the naming of this (widely varied and highly contextual) practice" (personal communication, August 9, 2018). But as "an umbrella term" (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014) with wide recognition, "students as partners" can create a community of practitioners and scholars committed to working together through partnership in higher education.

Drawing on our own perspectives as co-authors and those of critical friends who are members of the journal's editorial and advisory boards, we explore the emergence of the term, the explicit naming of "students" in "students as partners," and the ways that the other words in the term—"as" and "partners"—signal different things to people in different positions and contexts. Our goal is not to argue reductively about definitions and practices associated with the term "students as partners"; instead, our hope is that this editorial, and this journal more generally, can at once affirm, challenge, and, in some cases, change the discourse around how the term "students as partners" is used, and promote a particular, values-based perspective on its use (Cliffe et al., 2017) that enables the creative translation of partnership principles across an array of practices. Throughout this editorial we higlight components of the term we are exploring in quotation marks (i.e., "students," "as," "partners," and "students as partners") and do not use any acronyms (e.g., SaP) to keep the components of the term, the relationships among them, and the entire term itself the focus of attention.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE TERM "STUDENTS AS PARTNERS"

The term "students as partners" emerged in response to a felt need to name students as colleagues—to call into presence and action a constituency in higher education traditionally considered the recipient, not the producer, of knowledge (Neary, 2010). One of the earliest uses of the term articulated clearly that "the vision of learner as passive consumer is inimical to a view of students as partners with their teachers in a search for understanding" (Ramsden, 2008, p. 16). As Cherie Woolmer, staff member and Managing Editor of *IJSaP*, notes (personal communication, August 10, 2018), the concept of "students as partners" was part of a counter discourse to Student Engagement policy drives in the United Kingdom and recognised "that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences" (Quality Assurance Agency [QAA], 2012). In the United States, Mihans, Long, and Felten (2008) used the term "students as partners" to describe their approach in one of the first course redesign projects.

Since these early namings of "students as partners" and partnership as an alternative to more traditional hierarchical relationships, numerous scholars have argued that positioning students in partnership with academics, or staff more broadly (e.g., administrators, librarians, professional staff), challenges a growing conception of students as customers or consumers and offers a counter-narrative to transactional and dehumanising, business-oriented rhetoric influencing higher education (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Matthews, Dwyer, Hine, & Turner, 2018). Some people use the term "students as partners" to signal this work; others use the terms "student-staff partnership" or "student-faculty partnership," naming both participants; and still others use terms such as "co-creating learning and teaching" (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016), naming neither participant. (See Matthews et al., 2018a for a discussion of the most common terms used and the interpretive framing they signal.)

Choices around such naming parallel a similar phenomenon in primary and secondary educational contexts, captured for many scholars and practitioners by an equally contested term: "student voice." This term aims to signal not only the literal sound of students' words as they inform educational planning, research, and reform but also the collective contribution of

diverse students' presence, participation, and power in those processes (Cook-Sather, 2002, 2006; Fielding, 2001; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; see Bourke & Loveridge, 2018, for a more recent discussion). Likewise, students-as-partners work "challenges traditional assumptions about the identities of, and relationships between, learners and teachers" and "imagines and makes way for respectful, mutually beneficial learning partnerships where students and staff work together on all aspects of educational endeavours" (Matthews, 2017, p. 1).

As terms, both "student voice" and "students as partners" question the roles of complacency and compliance in classrooms to which students are typically assigned and also offer a constructive way of thinking about the power and agency students can have. For many who do partnership work, using the term "students as partners" is a way of recognising who gets to shape higher education: "As #highered we are still in a place where we do not realize that students are central to what we do. Anytime our decisions are made with them as an afterthought we are heading down a wrong path" (Will, 2018).

Like "student voice," the term "students as partners" and the various and complex reactions it provokes challenge us to remain conscious and intentional in the ways we work together and the words we use to name that work. However, the terms can be appropriated and used in ways that are "cynical and manipulative" (Fielding, 2004, p. 200) and actually counter the spirit embraced by those who developed them. As Senior Editor of *IJSaP* Mick Healey reminds us (personal communication, August 5, 2018), senior management, governments, and some scholars (and even some practitioners) can misappropriate the term to describe a consumerist, neo-liberal approach to student engagement (Dwyer, 2018; M. Healey & R. L. Healey, 2018; M. Healey, R. L. Healey & Cliffe, 2018).

Continuously reflecting on and talking about the *why* of engaging in partnership work should always be in conversation with the *what*, *when*, *who*, and *how* of "students-as-partners" practices.

THE POWER IN NAMING AND BEING NAMED

To name is to bring into being (Cook-Sather, Bahti, & Ntem, in preparation, 2018; Cook-Sather, Matthews, Acai, M. Healey, & R. L. Healey, in preparation, 2018; Van Manen, McClelland, & Plihal, 2007). Both "student voice" and "students as partners" name students to signal the inclusion of a group of people traditionally excluded from educational analysis and practice. Academics/faculty have typically possessed—and often continue to possess—sole agency and authority in conceptualising, designing, implementing, evaluating, and researching educational practices in higher education. Naming students as partners signals that a change in educational cultures and practices would have to start with those in positions of power. Consequently, student co-author Sandra Leathwick sees the invitation that the term extends as an important starting point to truly rethink power in relationships between learners and teachers.

However, while there are benefits to naming those who have not typically been afforded agency and recognition in higher education, naming only one participant in the term "students as partners" assumes academics/faculty, or staff more broadly, do not need to be named. Thus, by mentioning only students, the term can be at odds with the principles of reciprocity that define the notion of partnership (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Cook-

Sather & Felten, 2017) and are central to power sharing in partnership praxis (Matthews, 2017). Furthermore, as *IJSaP* student co-editor Rachel Guitman notes, in naming only students, the term lends itself to tokenistic inclusion of students and generally tokenistic understandings of the practices the term aims to signal (personal communication, August 12, 2018). Thus, those with the power to name can also appropriate the language, particularly where the principles of partnership—entangled with power and identity—are not valued or understood as complex relational work. For these reasons, the term falls short in relation to practice in which "mutuality, reciprocity, and complementarity are of key importance in the relationship between student and teacher" (Hermsen, Kuiper, Roelofs, & van Wijchen, 2017, p. 3).

Student-staff partnership practices seek to rethink and share power in new ways through ongoing dialogue and reflection. When students work as colleagues with other students, academics/faculty, or staff more broadly, the shift they experience in traditional power dynamics can make the term "students as partners" feel contradictory or constraining. Consistent with standpoint theory, not being named in "students as partners" suggests that the speaker is not a student, which could imply lack of agency and authority to name the practice of partnership. This implication emerges because the term itself, at first an invitation to be included, changes in meaning as partnerships progress. It becomes a reminder to those involved that academics/faculty have had the power to say that students are partners and to initiate such practices. The rationale to name students specifically—as an act of radical inclusion—can become an act of exclusion as the aspirations of partnership are realised.

Rethinking and sharing power do not eliminate power dynamics among participants with different positions and identities; power and identity are always central to partnership practices (Matthews et al., 2018a). However, rather than conceptualising power as a finite resource that students and academics or staff compete for and that one group wields over another, scholars have positioned power as an evolving human creation that can be understood, shared, shaped, reimagined, and transformed through dialogue in partnership (Cates, Madigan, & Reitenauer, 2018; Cook-Sather, Felten, & Bovill, 2014; Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017; Matthews, 2017). As student co-author Anita Ntem argues, the term "students as partners" is an imperfection that invites us into different ways of working together in higher education and provokes us to see ourselves and our positions in higher education differently. Being comfortable with the uncomfortable juxtaposition between invitation and provocation that the term embodies can allow for the expression of fluid identities and the reshaping of power within the social relationships that define partnership.

TERMS IN AND ACROSS CONTEXT: ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND HOW WE ACT IN PARTNERSHIP

The importance of fluidity that we note in the previous section increases as we consider how to name and enact partnership work across contexts where people speak different languages and embrace different cultures. The words "as" and "partners," sometimes more than the word "students," pose challenges of translation across contexts and are interpreted differently in different cultural and socio-political contexts.

The "as" in the term names only one dimension of one participant's identity, which feels reductive to some. Students in both the United States and Australia have talked about how the

"as" makes them feel that the partnership identity is partial or temporary or otherwise not integrated with who they are. While being named "as" a partner can influence self and peer-perceptions, the broader conception of *partnership* implied in "students as partners" can also be troublesome. Thus, the overall effect of the term causes some people to feel excluded.

The word "partner" means different things depending on which part of the world you come from, and the term "students as partners" does not signal the nature of the partnership. Student co-author Anita notes that at the 2018 International Students as Partners Institute, some participants associated the term "partner" with a business relationship—a transactional play on a power-driven relationship. Gläser highlighted this issue in her discussion of how to decide what language to use to name emerging partnership practices in the context of higher education in Germany (Cook-Sather, Woolmer, Gläser, & Felten, 2018), noting that the term "partners" in Germany is likely to signal sexual partners (and plenty of people whose first language is English have had the same reaction). *IJSaP* co-editor and faculty member Ruth Healey (personal communication, August 13, 2018) discovered through conversation with international colleagues that those in The Netherlands share the German interpretation, whereas in France "partnership" evokes the business relationship Anita mentioned. And in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, faculty co-author Alison Cook-Sather learned that the term "partnership" can signal disenfranchisement by evoking what many Māori experience as failed promises made by the British Crown traced back to the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of the country (Cook-Sather, in press; Berryman, Bourke, & Cook-Sather, in preparation, 2018).

Thus, what terms mean to different people in different places is a critical aspect to consider when thinking of ways to convey the essence of this work. Not only is the work that is signalled by the term "students as partners" context dependent (M. Healey & R. L. Healey, 2018) in both how it is introduced and in how it is interpreted, but also the meanings of the entire term and its constituent parts are culturally and linguistically dependent, and differences across cultural contexts set the tone for how the work will be perceived and experienced.

ONGOING DIALOGUE AT THE INTERSECTION OF PRACTICE AND THEORY

The language of the term "students as partners" prompts people to analyse their assumptions and reactions and try to access what those are based on. As faculty co-author Kelly Matthews argues, struggles around what to call this work are deeper than the level of language, of terminology: they are the result of wrestling with the intentionality of the construct of *partnership*, the challenge it poses regarding assumptions about the relationships between learners and teachers, and how these assumptions interact with the structure and hierarchy of educational systems. What really matters are the underlying values and principles of students-as-partners work and how these are translated into practice and then reflected upon to refine both our thinking and our practices. Therefore, whether embracing or struggling with the term, all can experience "students as partners" as a link to an array of practices and a diversity of people in a broader, international community. Working with, through, and against such a term can be a process of community building through dialogue, and the language will evolve if the international movement toward embracing partnership is successful.

Whatever we call this work, questions will remain about its premises and how the work can unfold within traditional institutional structures and dynamics. For example, a recent twitter reply to a comment contesting the term "students as partners" demonstrates how the aspiration of efforts to disrupt traditional identity roles and power structures can be challenged: "Interesting this notion finally gets some play. 'Partners' implies parity and equal status and #studentsaspartners often has a pretentious, misleading, flavour. It denies the very real differences between faculty and students. Don't disguise your position of power" (Wright, 2018). While to our minds, as we discussed above, rethinking and sharing power do not eliminate power dynamics among participants with different positions and identities, the term "students as partners" can seem to claim that it does.

We will have to continue discussing what the words mean to whom, when, and in what context. In our effort to disrupt taken-for-granted cultural norms often operating invisibly in higher education, it is not possible to reduce into a single, easily understood phrase that translates across context, countries, and cultures the complexity of the constructs *student*, *partner*, and *partnership* as they interact with the constructs of power and identity. While we acknowledge the appeal of finding the right name, our collective experiences suggest that affirming the complexity of the work of partnership across power differences and fluid identities of people in higher education is hard, and practice and theorising will always be an important focus of ongoing debate, contestation, and conversation. We all concur with student co-author Anita that the practices of partnership will always be more complex than the words we use to describe them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Sophia Abbot, Peter Felten, Rachel Guitman, Mick Healey, Ruth Healey, Liz Ho, and Cherie Woolmer who offered inspiring insights and helpful guidance as we developed this editorial.

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OPINION PIECE

Increasing Representation and Equity in Students as Partners Initiatives

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"Knowledge is power," he says,
Yet knowledge is held in the hands of few.
And so is power.
The man who gets all the credit,
The privileged, and wealthy, and western man,
Who thinks everyone else is unfit,
And still won't admit, that
Knowledge should not mean power
But empowerment for all.
- *Taleisha Stec-Marksman*

We are all students at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus, which is situated in one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods of Toronto (University of Toronto Scarborough, 2018), and possibly all of Canada. Aakriti Kapoor is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education, while most of the other authors are students whom Aakriti taught while working as a teaching assistant at the university. We come from a diverse range of racialized or gendered identities and abilities. We have all directly been impacted by or witnessed the damaging effects of colonialism and Western hegemony. As such, we hold a heightened sense of urgency to dismantle broader power structures in society, be they related to race, gender, age, sex, experience, or anything else in between. Power structures can be especially evident in student-faculty relationships, but as has already been noted in the past, Students as Partners (SaP) initiatives hold the potential to eliminate such tensions (Reyes & Adams, 2017). In this

paper, we discuss opportunities where SaP can further break down inequitable relationships to allow all students a better chance of success.

We reviewed publications from the *International Journal for Students as Partners* (IJSaP) (Vol. 1, No. 1 & 2, 2017) and the special section on "Students as Co-Inquirers" in *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* (*TLI*) (Vol. 4, No. 2, 2016). Grounded in our review and our first-hand experiences as students, this opinion paper discusses current SaP initiatives from the context of missing voices. Much of SaP as currently practised operates primarily in the west[1] or the Global North.[2] We question inequities surrounding this issue and aim to contribute to an emerging conversation about how the inclusion of diverse perspectives can transform SaP. We discuss how SaP can be more inclusive of non-western institutions as a means to address system-wide inequity, namely by being more inclusive of countries in the Global South. SaP is a global initiative. However, to be a truly global initiative in practice, it would need to better understand how other nations such as India, Kenya, Chile, and Mozambique would understand SaP. Would SaP even apply there? How might other countries look at SaP differently? How might we benefit from learning about cross-cultural approaches to how students can become partners in education? We continue this thread by discussing which students are often not given the opportunity to become partners in SaP initiatives, and how that perpetuates existing systemic inequity.

Publications from the *IJSAP* and *TLI* are mostly from Australia, United States, Canada, United Kingdom, or other western nations. Goldsmith, Hanscom, Throop, and Young (2017), in particular, speak to the need to include more diverse voices in SaP, yet there is no mention of how this can be done on an international level. The *IJSaP* international advisory board, for example, has advisors from a wide range of countries; however, these advisors too are limited to USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and Sweden. These are all predominantly countries from the Global North, and do not represent a truly international worldview encompassing South American, African, Middle Eastern, or Asian countries. The lack of global voices not only reinstates western dominance of ideas, but also could prevent SaP from deeply embodying culturally relevant, decolonized practices. If we want SaP to become more equitable, it must become more representative and accessible to non-western institutions. For example, journals like *IJSaP* can possibly address this limitation by reaching out to a greater number of post-secondary institutions in countries outside of the Global North. Reaching out to scholars in countries like Brazil, India, Pakistan, or Egypt, to name a few, and asking them to serve as reviewers, or help us consider SaP from a cross-cultural lense is one small way SaP can become more representative. In this attempt, we have to be careful to not push SaP on countries that might not want to adopt this initiative, but we should still try to look at more perspectives from the Global South to understand SaP in new ways.

Reyes and Adams (2017) show that SaP programs have the power to make learning spaces more equitable, but a scan of current SaP initiatives raises the question whether SaP fully brings *all* student voices to the forefront. Many SaP projects rely on student volunteers: students have the option to become partners if they choose to participate in the activities available to them (Werder, Thibou, Simkins, Hornsby, Legg, & Franklin, 2016). Alternatively, some SaP projects select student-partners based on grade point averages (GPAs), resumes, and cover letters (Oleson & Hovakimyan, 2017). Does this then include struggling or marginalized

students? Are students who are failing classes or those who do not have time for extracurricular involvement (Marquis, Jayaratnam, Mishra, & Rybkina, 2018) capable of becoming equal partners in education? Dwyer (2018) explains SaP can take on a neoliberal process, which favours high achieving students, and when SaP participation is unpaid or the pay-to-work ratio is unbalanced, SaP can further only favour students who are financially stable or who can manage the extra workload. It is important to consider that students who are struggling may also share intersectional identities relating to race, mental health, ability, gender, sex, or more, which can perpetuate a cycle of systemic inequity more broadly. For example, due to less access to academic educational opportunities, racialized students may at times have lower-than-average GPAs, higher identification of special education needs, or lower likelihoods of taking academic-stream courses than white students (Robson, Anisef, Brown, & George, 2018). Alternatively, a student living with mental illness may struggle to balance academic responsibilities and do poorly in their classes if they do not receive adequate support (Shor, 2017). If SaP prioritizes high-achieving students, then it must also question to what extent that favouring perpetuates systemic privilege and inequity.

This may require staff to continue reimagining what they define as success and talent: how can staff aim to use different strategies to better understand the ideas of students who don't appear to be star students. For example, this paper was written by a lead graduate student and her undergraduate students. The undergraduate students did not need to have prior research experience or high GPAs—anyone and everyone was welcome to join. This, however, did require the lead graduate student to put in more time coordinating the project and facilitating the development of younger students on the team. Even though some writers put in more time than others, what mattered more was that the ideas of all students were considered in the creation of this publication.

Matthews (2016; 2017) emphasizes SaP's risk of appropriation for neoliberal purposes, where SaP goes from a relational process to one focused entirely on outcomes of student satisfaction). When this happens, "the language of SaP is adopted, while the practices become 'watered down'" (Matthews, 2017, p. 5). Yet, a focus on collaboration that dismantles hierarchies of power while actively engaging institutions and students from all cultural backgrounds, class, and social positioning is one that also has the power to create learning models that empower every single student (Matthews, 2016; 2017). We, the students of Scarborough, call the SaP community to think critically about its current practices as to who is involved in shaping the dialogue. Whose perspectives are missing? More importantly, how can SaP be transformed if it relies on partnerships that come from competing worldviews?

Students should be
As partners.
But it looks more like
The Privileged,
Get to be partners.

More than equity
Are we favouring hegemonic power?

We can claim our voices in
Articles.
Opinions.
Journals.
But how many voices will it take?
To break this power?

This
Power
Of educator over student
Of neoliberal capital
Of profit over human connection

When will education be for the
Greater Good?
And not just some overpriced textbook?
When will education benefit,
Not just professors and students
But the whole World!
- *Lamia Firasta*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the students and stories of Scarborough.

NOTE

1. We purposely decided not to capitalize west to avoid giving it this importance in the context of the paper's discussion.
2. Global North refers primarily to nations in North America, Europe, Australasia, and developed parts of East Asia. These nations disproportionately control global resources in terms of wealth, housing, education, digital media access, and numerous other factors, while actively excluding countries in the Global South, which are home to the majority of the world's natural resources and population (Guzzetti & Lesley, 2015).

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OPINION PIECE

Equity and Students as Partners: The Importance of Inclusive Relationships

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education (HE) institutions invite and encourage students from a diversity of backgrounds to participate in further learning, yet expect individuals to both fund this endeavour and conform to institutional expectations of the *successful learner* (O'Shea & Delahunty, 2018). This presents an uncomfortable contradiction about inclusion in HE. Universities are accepting an increasingly diverse student population (Marginson, 2016), but, simultaneously, an increasingly neoliberal agenda shaping HE is driving competition and rewarding individualism with social inclusion practices within university often being diminished (for more on neoliberalism in relation to students-as-partners see Matthews, Dwyer, Hine, & Turner, 2018).

In this opinion piece, I argue that a student partnership approach creates trust filled partnerships between staff and equity-seeking students. Forging these genuine and collaborative partnerships within the equity and outreach space offers potential to both envision and create a university for all, rather than for just some. I draw on my own experiences, practices, and research while contributing to the ongoing discourse in the emerging students-as-partners community.

EXPLORING EQUITY IN THE CONTEXT OF STUDENTS-AS-PARTNERS

Translating existing capitals into those expected and required within university can be difficult in an individualised system, but if we shift the relational aspects of HE to better reflect an environment characterised by collaboration and partnership, this translation becomes more achievable. As Matthews, Dwyer, Hine, and Turner (2018, p. 1) assert, "students as partners is fundamentally about meaningful relationships between students and staff members," which positions partnerships as a potentially powerful framework within the student equity space. If we engage students through partnerships that explicitly value mutual respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility for all aspects of teaching and learning, we ultimately challenge traditional and taken-for-granted assumptions. This is beautifully articulated by Ntem (2017), who states:

> Students as Partners (SaP) is fundamentally about meaningful relationships between students and staff members at a university.

> Too many times, assumptions are made and protected, such as about who has knowledge about teaching and learning… Students as Partners, however, challenges those dynamics and provides insight into what faculty may not always realize.
> (cited in Cliffe et al, 2017, p. 3)

Ideally such mutuality should underpin all efforts to support and engage our increasingly diverse student population. Such recognition would add value to the knowledge these learners bring to HE and assist in forging more cooperative and meaningful learning communities within HE (Matthews, Cook-Sather, & Healey, 2018).

Students-as-partners approaches to co-design and co-create offer a reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally to a learning environment, although not necessarily in the same ways (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). This is important when we consider students from diverse backgrounds because too often outreach and interventions designed to support these cohorts are developed by staff who may have limited understanding of the complex realities that these students may exist within. Well-meaning interventions may slide unintentionally towards deficit perspectives that regard these students as lacking (knowledge, wealth, cultural capitals) and in need of aspiration raising. This perspective then fails to situate activities within learners' actual realities and does not adequately recognise the cultural wealth our diverse cohorts arrive with (O'Shea, 2016).

In response to this situation, I have worked collaboratively with students in the design and development of programs that seek to support learners in their transition into university and during their initial engagement with the institution (O'Shea, 2012; O'Shea & Vincent, 2011). Like Matthews (2016), I regard such collaborations as a means to bring together diverse perspectives in the HE environment, recognising that "this diversity forms the foundation of fruitful partnerships in acknowledging that we bring different but equally valuable perspectives to the joint enterprise of education" (Matthews, 2016, p. 3).

My most recent activities include a student mentoring program that is grounded within the students-as-partners framework (O'Shea, Bennett, & Delahunty, 2017). While we know that peer mentoring programs are beneficial to students, these are often designed and developed by staff *for* student rather than in partnership *with* them. Beginning with the formation of a student-staff committee that unpacked the concept of *mentoring*, our particular approach sought to design a program from the ground up, recognising that it is students who are best placed to "expose the implicit or hidden curriculum of university" as they are "already on that journey" (O'Shea, Bennett, & Delahunty, 2017, p. 114). Such genuine collaborations offer the potential for learning for all participants as both staff and learners navigate alternative understandings about the inner workings of the institutions, as the following comments indicate:

> To be able to sit at a table as an equal with our undergrad students for me, that was an uplifting experience… I believe it's worthwhile.
> (Staff Committee Member, Students as Partners in Mentoring (SaPiM) Program)

> This experience enabled me to collaborate with other educators and engage professionally with colleagues. I learnt that when working together for the same goal

> ideas and action flow quite easily and goals can be accomplished. I also learnt more about the University… and the range of assistances on offer. I have grown … through this experience.
> (Student Committee Member, SaPiM Program)

Mann (2001) argues that the structures and practices of university exacerbate alienation in students, and the ongoing emphasis on "utilitarianism" and "performativity" (p. 8) ultimately reduces learning to functions or competencies rather than recognising individual meaning systems. Arguably the students-as-partners framing refocuses learning to value actual lived experience and also challenges traditional institutional roles such as *student* and *academic*, positions that both have power implications and also reduce individuals to a category or "type" (Mann, 2001, p. 10). Matthews (2017) expands on the isolating nature of HE, to propose how partnership frameworks offer a "counter-narrative to current neoliberal agendas that translate into client-commodity-customer discourses of students" (p. 1). While offering great opportunities, there are also a number of considerations before implementing students-as-partners practices or approaches within the equity field.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CAUTIONARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following recommendations and cautions are derived from my own experiences of collaborating with students in the design, development, and implementation of programs that seek to support equity students during their transition into university and throughout their academic journey. This list offers some insights that may assist others as they undertake similar endeavours:

- The relational aspects of students-as-partners and the need for student and staff ownership of this process should characterise all student-as-partners activities, but this concept of *doing with* rather than *doing to* is particularly significant to activities within the equity and outreach field. This relationship should be collaborative, with power held equally by all parties and outputs and with activities characterised by immediacy and authenticity.

- To further ensure such authenticity, all partner activities in the equity field should utilise multiple channels of contact for student partners, recognising that some cohorts do not regularly engage in on-campus groups or associations. There is also a need to explicitly invite students with diverse life experiences to participate in partnership programs; these individuals include those who have taken a non-linear pathway into and through university, many of whom will have had disrupted university journeys. Such diverse routes provide a wealth of knowledge and experience that can effectively inform programs and support offered to diverse learners.

- With universities, there is a need to adopt a range of less formal ways to engage students in these partnerships, such as not requiring resumes or participation in an interview, as well as building in strategies that avoid targeting only high achieving students.

CONCLUSIONS

While the number of students attending university grows, we must question whether we have achieved a more equitable tertiary landscape. Across a number of countries, the stratification of certain learners relates to factors such as university choice (Reay, 2017), learner pathways (Lim, 2015), and retention rates (Higher Education Standards Panel, 2018). Within equity and outreach, there remains a focus on raising aspirations among students when perhaps, as Cummings et al. (2012) argue, the focus should rather be about "keeping aspirations on track" (p. 1). Students-as-partners practices offer the possibility of accomplishing this in a meaningful and productive way. This perception of aspirations is very different to the static assumption that aspirations are low and so need to be raised. Instead, these need to be regarded as fluid and dynamic depending on the horizons and opportunities of individuals and, more importantly, on learners' access to "peers, family and educators" (Cummings et al., 2012, p. 72). The fundamental strength of a student partnership approach is that it not only creates trust-filled partnerships between staff and students but also engenders what Cook-Sather (2016) refers to as "brave spaces" where multiple aspirations can be considered and supported. As such, forging these types of collaborative ventures within the equity and outreach space offers potential to envision and create a university for all rather than for just some.

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ARTICLE

"Interactions with Purpose": Exploring Staff Understandings of Student Engagement in a University with an Ethos of Staff-Student Partnership

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes qualitative research that used concept-map mediated interviews to explore academic staff understandings of student engagement, within a UK university with an explicit ethos of student engagement through partnership. The research explored how staff conceptualised student engagement and how it was experienced through practice. Our findings indicate that understandings of student engagement are highly individual and contextual and were framed in diverse ways by our participants. However, there were features that cut across these diverse understandings. Reflecting on the difference between staff-student partnership and other forms of engagement, we suggest partnership can be distinguished by an understanding of engagement as a relationship between staff and students, and through the way features and values are put into practice.

KEYWORDS

engagement, partnership, definitions, values, staff

Student engagement is a high-profile topic in higher education (HE) policy, practice, and discourse. Despite its prevalence, the term *student engagement* is perceived by some as problematic and difficult to define (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017; Kahn, 2014; Vuori, 2014; Gibbs, 2016). In part, this is influenced by multiple drivers and motivations for student engagement. Within the UK, there are drivers from a policy perspective. For example, chapter B5 of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* (QAA, 2012) and the assessment criteria of the Teaching Excellence Framework (DfE, 2017). Pedagogic drivers draw on literature suggesting that engagement in "high-impact" educational activities will lead to better student retention, achievement, and outcomes (Kuh, 2008), and possibly enhance "the performance and

reputation of the institution" (Trowler, 2010, p. 3). There are also individual drivers for staff, for whom the notion of engagement aligns with their political and/or pedagogic philosophy, often rooted in ideas of citizenship, empowerment, and emancipation (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). It is perhaps not surprising that student engagement is defined in different ways by those with different rationales.

It is not possible, within this paper, to summarise the huge body of literature on student engagement; see, for example, P. Trowler and V. Trowler (2010), Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) and, specifically relating to partnership, Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017). A brief overview of relevant perspectives is included below to provide context for this study. Many authors follow Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris' (2004) identification of the three dominant dimensions that define engagement:

> Behavioural engagement draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing drop-out. Emotional engagement encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academic, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work. Finally, cognitive engagement draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (p. 60)

Kahu (2013) groups these dimensions within four research perspectives: behavioural; psychological (encompassing the cognitive, affective, and conative); socio-cultural; and holistic. In practice, the relationships between these dimensions are complex and blurred. For example, reflecting on the opportunities described in Kuh's (2008) "high-impact" practices, Bryson and Hardy (2012) note that many of these imply a level of investment and ownership by students (relating to the psychological dimension). However, others have pointed out that the relationship between behaviour and intellectual engagement is not clear, with the lack of visible behaviour not necessarily reflecting a lack of cognitive engagement (Gourlay, 2017; Fredricks et al., 2004). Some have framed dimensions of engagement as hierarchical, with behavioural engagement a baseline, followed by emotional and then cognitive engagement (Harris, 2008; Newbery, 2012).

A common framing of student engagement, drawn out by Solomonides, Reid, and Petocz (2012), is as a relational concept: "'Engagement' then is a term that has been widely used to describe various relationships between the student, study and the institution, including the campus" (p. 15-16). This requires us to ask with what (or whom) are students engaging? In different situations, this may be the course content, pedagogic activities, their professional identity, peers, academic and professional services staff, institutional processes and mechanisms, and the broader discipline/industry/profession.

Like the broader concept of student engagement, partnership is relational, but here the relationship is specifically with other people: with student peers, staff, and external partners. Student engagement through partnership in the context of learning and teaching can be framed

as a process in which all parties invest in and derive mutual benefit from learning and/or working together (HEA, 2016). In partnership, students may share significant control and ownership of their learning, and there is a strong emphasis on notions of community and collaboration with others. In describing specific forms of staff-student partnerships, some authors use terms such as co-production (Neary, 2012), co-creation (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011), or co-inquiry (Werder & Otis, 2010), whereas others use values-based definitions of partnership to describe these kinds of relationships (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Wenstone, 2012). In this paper, we position partnership as a specific form of student engagement. Where we refer to "student engagement," we are indicating the broader concept and where we use "partnership," this relates specifically to this form of engagement. Partnership is only one of many complementary forms of student engagement. Our focus on partnership does not diminish the importance of these other forms, and we recognise Gourlay's (2017) call to acknowledge that student engagement can be an internal as well as externally facing process.

There is a sense that the scholarly study of student engagement (and partnership) is maturing (Flint, 2016), moving from enthusiastic advocacy of student engagement as an unproblematic positive approach to a more critical analysis of the drivers, theoretical underpinnings, and (positive and negative) impacts of engagement activities. Drawing on Fielding (2004), we agree that part of establishing student engagement as a field of academic inquiry is "deconstructing the presumptions of the present" (p.296): unpicking the assumptions and perceptions that may influence the way that concepts like student engagement are interpreted in practice. The theoretical positions and models described above were developed by researchers and scholars immersed in this area of the scholarship of teaching and learning, and we are interested in how far these are shared and applied in practice. This research aims to contribute to this unpicking through exploring ***how student engagement is understood by academic staff within a university that has an explicit ethos of staff-student partnership***.

The institutional context

Birmingham City University (BCU) is a UK university with twenty-four thousand students across four faculties. Its mission is focused around enabling students to access the creative and professional industries, and it has a multi-cultural student population that is heavily commuter based.

Since 2009, the university has run a Student Academic Partners (SAP) programme, which provides opportunities and incentive for students and staff to work in partnership on pedagogical initiatives to improve the student learning experience. A prerequisite for funding is the demonstration of partnership between staff and students, and the funding is only available to support payment of student hours.

At BCU, over 70% of students live at home whilst they study, with similar numbers being employed alongside their studies. In this environment, enabling students to participate in partnerships is testing and led to the decision to pay students who participated in formal partnership work. Over fifteen hundred students have been employed, and five hundred staff members have participated in seven hundred funded projects over the past nine years. Projects

tend to focus on the development of new content or resources, mentoring, employability, and the generation of community activities both within and outside the university.

The SAP programme was founded upon a desire to develop a culture of partnership. The institutional approach to student engagement "places the notion of students working with staff, as partners in the improvement of the learning experience, at the centre of our institutional enhancement agenda" (Nygaard, Brand, Bartholomew, & Millard, 2013, p. 7).

This emphasises student partnership for a purpose beyond just partnership. The goal was for partnerships to improve the student learning experience of the many, not the few. The university could not address "a culture of partnership" by just engaging with fifty students. Those student partners needed to work with staff on projects that influenced the learning of the wider student body. The vision for SAP was to make it "applicable to the majority of students at the university, not just a minority." (Nygaard et al., 2013, p. 11).

The high profile of the SAP programme and the national recognition that followed was significant in that it became a recognised part of the university's core business, and it was celebrated in a student and staff collaborative publication: "Student Engagement: Identity, Motivation and Community" (Nygaard et al., 2013). In its strategic plan, the university stated that it wished to be recognised as a sector leader in student engagement. Working with students became part of the institutional dialogue at the university as funding opportunities and even new job adverts ask, "Where is the student in this?" Student participation and engagement in the very essence of the university was achieved and student engagement became a "state of mind" for staff.

When a way of behaviour is integrated as the norm within an organisation, you inevitably lose control of it. The managers of the SAP programme may have considered, in the early days, that all staff/student partnership activity happened within the SAP programme. However, once the vision was mainstreamed, this could now take place anywhere and be interpreted in different ways by both students and staff. Mainstreaming meant that some staff may not even know of the SAP programme, but would be carrying out a role or way of working with students that they saw elsewhere in the university and thought was the norm.

The SAP team speculated that staff may have been told by managers that they were required to engage in partnership activities with students, but that direction may have stopped there. The number of staff who participated in SAP projects over the past nine years was significant, but a considerable number of staff were undertaking work with students of which the SAP team knew little about. The question arose as to how the theme of partnerships was being interpreted by individuals and whether this really mattered, as long as partnership-related activities were happening. Through this research, we wanted to explore whether this institutional approach to student engagement was shared by staff and how it was interpreted and enacted in practice. In our context, the term "staff" is used to refer to employees of the university in academic, professional services, and management roles. The findings could help inform the future development of learning and teaching activities across the university, through a focused staff development offer (Curran & Millard 2015), and it has the possibility of impacting on future institutional policy.

METHODOLOGY

The research is a small-scale qualitative study comprising ten semi-structured interviews with academic staff. At the start of each interview, participants were asked to draw a concept map reflecting what student engagement meant to them in practice. In selecting this approach, we were inspired by research using concept maps to explore students' expectations and perceptions of their experiences (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). Using a "draw-and-talk" approach we gave participants time to silently create their concept map, then asked them to talk through this before beginning the interview questions. We intended for this approach to provide a participant-led focus to the interview, giving participants time to reflect on and express their views on student engagement in their own terms before interview questions began. Through engaging participants in discussion around their drawings, the process involved collaborative meaning-making and engaged participants in elements of the analysis (Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith, & Campbell, 2011). It also provided a complementary visual alternative to the narrative data collected at the interview, which we hoped would enable us to use participant-generated themes to inform the analysis (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009; Kinchin, Streatfield & Hay, 2010). The interview questions focused on participants' understanding of student engagement, examples they thought represented good practice in student engagement and excellent teaching, and their thoughts on responsibility and community in relation to student engagement.

Given the small number of participants, the intention was not to represent the views of all academic staff but to explore diverse individual perceptions and experiences of student engagement in practice. The sample included academic staff (with different levels of seniority) from subject areas in all four faculties of the university and the educational development unit and comprised five women and five men. Five participants had previously participated in SAP projects. Whilst we recognised that many staff within the institution play important and active roles in student engagement, we deliberately focused on academic staff, as we felt this group often has significant learning- and teaching-related interactions with students.

The two authors shared the interviewing, with some conducted jointly, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. Coding and analysis were undertaken by the lead author, informed by a phenomenological perspective (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Close reading of transcripts led to the development of codes grounded in participants' experiences and perspectives. Summaries of the way engagement was framed were produced for each participant's transcript and concept map. Codes were clustered into categories and used to explore themes across the data. The analysis was exploratory, focused on understanding how participants made sense of engagement and applied their understandings in practice. The analysis of the concept maps drew on social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). As part of the analysis, the lead author reflected on how participant understandings of student engagement related to framings from the literature and how participants described the role of different parties (i.e., staff and students).

The data were rich and wide ranging, and it is not possible to represent this comprehensively within the scope of this paper. In the following section, we focus on participants' conceptualisations of student engagement.

FINDINGS

Student engagement as complex and multi-dimensional

The complexity and variability of understandings of student engagement were reflected in participants' drawings, how they talked through these, and their responses to interview questions. Some participants found student engagement difficult to define, and their understandings emergent: "I think part of the problem with engagement is it's an incredibly nebulous word." (Participant 3); "It's evolved somewhat organically." (Participant 8)

Framings of student engagement

Participants' drawings were all classificatory structures, representing the concept of student engagement and its component parts or attributes. They were top-down, placing the viewer in a privileged perspective described as "orientated towards 'theoretical,' objective knowledge" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 149). This is perhaps unsurprising, given participants were asked to represent a theoretical concept. However, structures and framings varied considerably. Although we prompted participants to create a concept map, only one drew this kind of diagram. Others created mind maps, Venn diagrams, and boxed and circular structures. These structures enabled alternative ways of viewing how participants framed student engagement and exploring the multiple dimensions that made up their understandings. For some, this reflected the locus of engagement: one diagram articulated this as relating to scale (university, community, course, and self); another described a pedagogic framing located within the classroom, with engagement linking theory and practice—"where the two worlds meet." (Concept map, participant 5)

Others contextualised their framing of student engagement in the student life cycle (with areas of the diagram reflecting transitions into, during, and out of university) or as influenced by different factors (external environment, attitudes, and institutional processes). Two diagrams reflected a conceptual framing for student engagement; one as a form of student voice, another as collaboration. Finally, some diagrams reflected different stakeholder perspectives, focusing on their individual staff role or distinguishing between their perspective and those of management and students.

Participants explored their understandings more deeply in the verbal part of the interview, with themes emerging around student engagement as (1) a relationship between staff and students, (2) student development and growth, and (3) a holistic concept.

1. Student engagement as a relationship between staff and students

The framing of student engagement as a relationship focuses on interpersonal dimensions, describing engagement as about "people not systems" (Participant 4). Participants spoke of the importance of sharing time and space together through collaborative projects and informal social engagement to make personal connections and enable relationships to grow organically.

> There's quite a lot of engagement, which is just informal. That's just social conversations. We haven't got a water cooler, but if we did, that will be those kind of

> conversations […] That sort of social element, social conversations, I think is key to making the students feel like they're engaged. (Participant 7)

However, these were framed as *professional* relationships and some participants were very clear where the boundaries were. For example, one described how they may go for lunch with a group of students but not for a night out. Another made it clear that they would not connect with students on social media whilst they had a teacher-student relationship but said it was fine for students to connect with them after graduation if they wanted to.

> It's all about relationships. When the students come through the doors we need to build strong professional bonds, relationships with them, live those kind of principles […] I think if you can get the relationships right, then you're halfway there in terms of student engagement. (Participant 6)

2. Student engagement as a process of student development and growth

For some participants, the framing of engagement as a developmental process for students was goal oriented—to support students to achieve their academic and professional goals, and develop social capital. Others described a more general concept, reflecting the transformative potential of education:

> It's about trying to find ways that students can grow. (Participant 1)
> Ultimately, it is about growth and development, isn't it? You do a degree, you go into higher education, it ought to be a transformatory experience. You should come out a different person to the one you went in. (Participant 6)

3. Student engagement as a holistic experience

Participants who spoke about the holistic nature of student engagement described multiple aspects, but a common thread was student engagement as "more than . . ." For some, this was about students seeing their own engagement as more than taking assignments or getting a degree. This also related to the locus of engagement, as some participants spoke about it being more than engaging in the course and encompassing extracurricular activities. The nature and impact of engagement in these different loci was perceived as interconnected and complex.

> [For] the students to engage academically and professionally, personally, pastorally, whatever we're offering, engagement exists on lots of different levels, and they're all…I think it would be quite hard […] to pick and unravel where engagement in perhaps extracurricular activities, has helped them academically […] but all of it is about engagement. (Participant 8)

A holistic framing was also implied in descriptions of engagement involving collaboration across all areas and services of the university and within the context of a wider culture or ethos of engagement.

Features of student engagement

Throughout the interviews, many participants highlighted specific features of student engagement; some of these related to the attitude of and approaches taken by staff and students; others were more akin to values or principles applied to practice and behaviour. Table 1 presents the main themes of (1) features relating to students, (2) approaches used by staff, and (3) features which apply to students and staff.

Table 1. Themes relating to features of student engagement

WHO THE FEATURE APPLIED TO	THEME	DETAILS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES
Students	Ownership	Students taking ownership of elements of learning and assessment activities and outcomes as part of the course or extracurricular activities.	So the only barrier was their own creativity and the initiative. And they took it, they ran with it, and they created some very interesting campaigns as a result. (Participant 5)
	Investment	Students working hard and being motivated.	They've done loads of work, and I think that's engagement. (Participant 3)
	Participation	Students attending taught sessions, being present on campus, and taking part in and contributing to learning activities (e.g., through asking questions, sharing opinions, and challenging ideas).	One is turning up. Two is turning up and listening. And three would be turning up, listening, and taking part in the activities [...] And I'll say the top level one would be, you're taking a lead in those sort of group activities. (Participant 7)
	Reflection and self-knowledge	Students reflecting and developing awareness of themselves.	Your willingness to face up to your own shortcomings and to have the confidence to take that on the chin and see that as actually a signpost of things you can kind of develop and to actually engage with enthusiasm with

			that kind of growth. (Participant 6)
Staff (and approaches to teaching)	Relevant and authentic learning experiences	Enabling students to make connections to their personal, learning, and professional goals, through making content and learning relevant to assessment tasks and long-term aspirations. Examples included "live" project briefs, experiential learning and field work, testing ideas in practice, and professional development.	The first one is getting an external client to give you a brief. The nice thing about that is […] it makes the students feel, "Oh, great. We're doing something for [company name]." Ups the sort of awesomeness of the work. It feels less like I'm doing a university assignment and more like I'm doing some work for [company name]. (Participant 7)
	Setting clear expectations of students	Shaping student expectations of what university is like, how they will learn, and the parameters for their engagement. Communicating high expectations of student achievement.	I think sometimes, it ought to be challenging, but I think we should be explicit about it and supportive of students, so we should be upfront and say to students, "This is going to challenge you." (Participant 6)
	Fostering collaboration	Encouraging student collaboration through teaching and extra-curricular activities (e.g., group work, team projects). Staff-student collaborations and co-creation through social and extracurricular activities and learning and teaching enhancement projects.	Integrated assessments not just across the years, but getting some of our final-year students to do things with the first-year students. (Participant 1)
	Flexibility	Tailoring approaches to teaching and wider engagement to context, taking into consideration the diversity of the student body, the needs and wants of individual students, different levels of engagement, and disciplinary cultures. This may	Best practice in student engagement will be anything that allows for individual needs, anything that allows for individuality of students, I would suggest. (Participant 10)

		involve creating space for student choice, creative freedom, and personalisation.	
	Recognition	Acknowledging and celebrating students' achievements.	We should say that we expect great things of you because we know you can achieve them; our students go on to do wonderful things and we should celebrate that much, much more. (Participant 8)
	Fostering inclusivity	Ensuring opportunities are open and accessible to all (considering scale and diversity) and recognising the importance of being invited.	I don't think it should be isolated to just kind of a key few students who are engaged. I think it should be broadened out as far as possible to other students because some of the weaker students are the ones who need it the most. (Participant 2)
Staff and students	Community	Developing a sense of belonging and community. This might operate at the student group, discipline, institutional, HE, or wider societal level. Some framed this as a learning or academic community.	We should see the university and the schools and however you want to do it we should see it as a community and we're all there for everyone to do well. So engagement just has to be everywhere. (Participant 10)
	Dialogue and interaction	Two-way conversations with students, which can take place in class, through formal mechanisms (like forums), and through informal and social interactions. These varied in scale and form (e.g., group and one-to-one).	So the student engagement for me has been about that central dialogue and communication not just between me as the academic and them, but between the students themselves and how that fits into the broader institution. (Participant 2)
	Communication	Communication was central to staff-student relationships and dialogue. More broadly, this included student voice activities, staff	Student voice is clearly an important thing. So asking students and talking with students and trying to understand what it is that

		communicating to students, and students offering feedback and suggestions.	they need and what it is that they want. (Participant 9)
	Student and staff partnership	Staff and students working together (e.g., on extracurricular projects) and framing the learning relationship and experience as a partnership.	The absolutely shining example of best practice in student engagement is when the students are working in partnership with academic colleagues, when that's included with the administrative staff members. Also, with the students' union and the service providers, I think is when everybody comes together, but the students were included as an absolutely equal voice in that conversation. (Participant 2)
	Power dynamics	This involved a focus on student agency and empowerment, staff and students both having an influence, and equality.	Actually, there wasn't sort of a hierarchy […] they just all ended up working at how we can make this better. (Participant 4)

Other features which related to both staff and students included being open to risk and being proactive. Participants also described values that built relationships (such as honesty, trust, and rapport), and the idea of a shared student and staff experience (mutual learning and shared responsibility, knowledge, interests, and identity).

Desired student attitudes and behaviours

Many participants described attitudes and behaviours that defined engaged students. These included students investing in and taking responsibility for their learning, being proactive and active, being lifelong learners, being intrinsically motivated, embracing challenge and plurality, having intra- and inter-personal intelligence, and being reflective, professional, and articulate. Positive emotional dispositions associated with engaged students included enthusiasm, excitement, and passion. There is perhaps a normative aspect to this, articulating acceptable and expected behaviours and qualities of engaged students.

> I'm trying to think of students that I would consider to be engaged. They are proud of their institution; they take part in things. They tend to attend, actually. You see them around the place, they are…they like the social part of it, they don't necessarily distinguish between work and leisure, they want to be here, they're here at open days,

> they're here at applicant visit days, they are proud of us. And then, they're articulate, they will come and talk to people if things aren't exactly going right. They want to make it better, they usually have a narrative which is, "I'm coming to tell you because I think you should know this, or we could do this." They have ideas, and they just want to get to the right place, so they can be helped with those ideas. (Participant 3)

Staff role in student engagement

Many participants described their role in student engagement as facilitative: encouraging and enabling students to engage; advising and guiding students; setting parameters; and creating a culture that fosters engagement. Some described their role as leading, being a role model and supporting colleagues to develop engaging approaches. Others saw their role as to push students and challenge institutional practices that inhibited engagement. In some cases, the level of student ownership was described as controlled by staff, who created the opportunities for, and boundaries of, this: "we gave them all that structure but enough space that they can have their own stamp on it." (Participant 7)

Many participants referred to their own attitudes or the attitudes of colleagues that enabled engagement in practice. These included being curious and reflective in relation to their practice and how students experienced learning; being enthusiastic about their subject; being approachable, supportive, and responsive; demonstrating care for students and a desire for them to succeed; being creative and willing to try out new ideas and take risks; going over and above what was expected of their role; treating students with respect and professionalism; and seeing students as on an equal footing.

DISCUSSION

The conceptual models of student engagement held by our participants were varied: some were emergent and previously unarticulated, whilst others were clearly framed by core ideas and elements. Participants understood student engagement as multi-dimensional. In many cases, this aligned with the cognitive (investment, ownership, reflection, and self-knowledge), behavioural (participation, collaboration, and interaction) and affective (community, student, and staff attitudes) dimensions described by Fredricks et al. (2004), Kahu (2013), and Kahu, Picton, and Nelson (2017). The developmental framing of engagement (with its focus on confidence, voice, and enabling students to recognise and fulfil their potential) combined with cognitive dimensions, has much in common with ideas of self-authorship—"the internal capacity to define one's belief system, identity, and relationships" (Baxter Magolda, 2007, p. 69; Hodge, Baxter Magolda, & Haynes, 2009). Whilst participants drew on different framings, no participants held uni-dimensional views. Individual conceptualisations comprised plural (potentially dissonant) elements: student engagement could simultaneously involve elements of student voice and partnership despite these being qualitatively different forms of engagement. This concurs with Newbery's (2012) assertion that people hold multiple models at once and that "student engagement is not an either-or phenomenon, but rather a matter of degree" (p. 54). For us, this emphasises the importance of taking a situated and flexible

approach to student engagement, recognising that its exact nature may vary in different settings.

Student engagement as a relationship between staff and students emerged as a theme in our data and was reflected in the emphasis on interpersonal or relational features (e.g., community, partnership, collaboration, dialogue, and effective communication). Given that staff-student partnership describes a specific form of student-staff relationship, we suggest that understanding student engagement as a relationship between staff and students is a prerequisite for partnership. This raises the question: What distinguishes partnership from other forms of engaging relationships?

The features of student engagement described by our participants share common elements with published partnership principles. For example, Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) list respect, reciprocity, and responsibility as three guiding principles for partnership. When asked who they felt was responsible for student engagement, many participants articulated this as a shared staff-student responsibility. Respect and reciprocity were less emphasised. However, when discussing the potential benefits of student engagement, participants outlined these in terms of benefits to staff, students, and the institution, suggesting student engagement was mutually beneficial for all parties. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) outlines nine partnership values (2016): authenticity; trust; honesty; courage; inclusivity; plurality; reciprocity; empowerment; and responsibility. Comparing these with the features described in Table 1, we recognise areas of overlap. Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed that "colleges should foster (student) development by providing an empowering balance of challenge and support. Too much challenge could be overwhelming, but too much support created a static comfort zone" (p. 1). We argue that in the context of relational models of student engagement, such relationships should facilitate the challenge and support aspects to be balanced to enable student development.

Interestingly, some of the defining features in common with partnership principles and values were used across different framings of student engagement, indicating that the presence of the values themselves is not necessarily evidence of partnership. We suggest that it is how these values are applied (and who they are applied to) that distinguishes student-staff partnership from other forms of engagement. In our data, some features (like ownership and investment) were associated with students, some with the approaches staff took, and others applied to both staff and students. It is in this final section, where features are applied to both staff and students, that we feel a sense of student engagement through staff-student partnership is reflected. Issues of power and agency are crucial here.

Reflecting on ladders of student engagement (HEA & NUS, 2011), there is often a focus on increasing levels of student agency at higher rungs. However, when we are considering staff-student partnership, there is a call to consider how partnership values, and dimensions and features of engagement, apply to both parties. This can prompt us to consider how the affective, behavioural, and cognitive engagement of staff, and staff agency, responsibility, and ownership are enabled alongside those of students.

Published visual models of student engagement (and partnership) tend to focus on students, framing this through areas of teaching and learning practice (Healey, Flint, &

Harrington, 2014), student role (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016), and spheres of student experience (Thomas, 2012). In contrast, some of our participants provided rich personal framings that were rooted in staff experience, identity, and practice. Their drawings provide valuable insight into how individuals frame their understandings and potentially offer alternative models of student engagement focused on staff perspectives to complement published models. Harris' (2008) phenomenographic study on teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning suggested that "there cannot be any 'assumed' shared knowledge about student engagement among academics or teachers" (p. 75). In terms of specific models or frameworks, our findings support this. However, our data also suggest common features that cut across different framings. It is unlikely that consensus will be reached on a single definitive approach to, or understanding of, student engagement that applies across all disciplinary, institutional, national, and international contexts. This, and the fact that some participants' understandings were emergent or previously unarticulated, argues for providing space and time for staff to reflect on, articulate, and discuss their understandings of student engagement and their role in fostering it. This process may create the possibility for common ground and approaches to be developed across diverse understandings.

Reflecting on the findings through the lens of the institutional ethos of engagement through staff-student partnerships, this may be implicit in the way some participants described how they understood and applied engagement in practice—for example, through the focus on staff-student relationships, and the features that applied to both staff and students. However, we acknowledge the small scale of this study means that this tentative alignment cannot be assumed across the university. Further research is needed to explore whether this reflects wider views.

CONCLUSION

As we started the research, there was a great deal of discussion about terminology. Researchers and participants seemed to interchange terms so that student engagement and partnerships became blurred. We questioned whether this mattered for those practising. If they were developing partnership activities with students and chose to call it student engagement, did it matter? In truth, it was something the university could not control, so there were times when the language became blurred as staff contextualised it within their own circumstances.

Our findings indicate participants' understandings shared some elements with commonly cited models of engagement and partnership, but there were also differences. We suggest that in defining student engagement, it's not what you do but how you do it: engagement is less an assemblage of specific practices and more a set of values or features that guide and shape practice. Where there is a desire to foster student-staff partnership as a form of engagement, then considering how these values and dimensions apply to both students *and* staff is crucial. We suggest that rather than looking for a unifying model of student engagement, we may need to embrace the plurality of models (as different *ways in*) and look to the values that underpin these to identify commonality and connections across diverse understandings. We encourage others to consider the use of visual methods as part of this process, enabling staff to

individually express the complexity and *messiness* of their understandings of student engagement and collaboratively compare and discuss these with others as part of professional development (Flint, 2018). Our research specifically focused on staff understandings of student engagement. Given the framing of engagement as relational and the importance of staff-student relationships, which emerged from our analysis, we tentatively suggest that the institutional ethos of student engagement through staff-student partnerships is reflected in the way some participants described engagement in practice. It would be valuable to also explore the way engagement is framed and understood by the student partners in those relationships and include students in professional development discussions.

Those of us who have been participating in this work for several years can get very precise about language and the way in which things should be delivered. For those at a different stage in that journey, it can be exciting and confusing. We ask, does it really matter what language is used as long as they demonstrate that partnership? There is a recognition across the HE sector that we live in a world of metrics, which implies we have control over all that we do. What the staff-student partnership approach at BCU has demonstrated is that sometimes it is beneficial for educational developers and others responsible for leading initiatives to let go and enable staff and students to interpret the words of partnership, collaboration, and engagement in their own way, as long as it aligns with the destination of improving the student learning experience.

Ethical approval for the research was given by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic Ethics Committee at BCU.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Abbi Flint *is an independent researcher and educational developer with a longstanding research and practice interest in student engagement and partnership. The research reported in this article was conducted when Abbi held a Visiting Research Fellowship in Student Engagement at BCU (2014-2017).*

Luke Millard *is Director of the Education Development Service at Birmingham City University. He is a strong advocate of student engagement and of co-creating the first year experience to enable student success. He is a Principal Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy.*

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ARTICLE

Collaborative Curricular (re)Construction—Tracking Faculty and Student Learning Impacts and Outcomes Five Years Later

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ABSTRACT

The Collaborative Curricular (re)Construction, or C^3, was an initiative at Creighton University that paired faculty (academics) and students in a process of backward course design, in two cohorts, in the 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic years. Faculty/student pairs worked over the span of a year to redesign a course within their discipline; courses ranged from theory-, skill-, and laboratory-based courses. The study investigated four primary questions:

(1) Was C^3 an effective tool for faculty development?
(2) Did students emerge from the C^3 experience changed as learners?
(3) Did the course revisions result in increased student learning in subsequent course offerings?
(4) Did the effects of the C^3 workgroup affect curriculum as well as the culture within the program or department?

Previous work has described the immediate impact to faculty and student; here, however, findings include the long-term impact on faculty and on student learning in the redesigned courses. Results conclude that even a brief faculty/student collaborative redesign experience has lasting impacts on student learning and, in several cases, on program-wide curriculum.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, higher education, student learning, scholarship of teaching and learning

"Asking students to talk about their education is so simple that—whether we are teachers, partners, researchers, or policymakers—we inevitably forget to do it."
(White, 2010, p. xi)

Despite two and a half decades of educational evolution from teaching-centered to learning-centered instruction (Angelo & Cross, 1993), much of our educational research and practices still assume a "conventional conception of learners as subordinate to the expert tutor/faculty in engaging with what is taught and how" (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011, p. 133). Huber and Hutchings (2005) advocate "students need to be part of the discussion about learning" (p. 113); scholars of teaching and learning are responding to that call to explore student engagement and student voice, with some creating Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) to engage with and give voice to students' classroom experiences. These learning communities that engage students have begun to be studied under the common umbrella of Students as Partners (SaP) (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

This research project grew out of a desire to create and test a model for an academic Faculty Learning Community using SaP principles, mainly the maximization of student engagement and learning. FLC are a special type of community of practice. As characterized by Cox (2010), FLCs are multidisciplinary groups of eight to twelve members consisting of faculty or a mix of faculty, graduate students, and administrative professionals who work collaboratively on year-long scholarly projects to enhance and assess teaching and learning; participants select a focus course in which to try out their innovations; assess resulting outcomes (including student learning); and finally, present project results to their institutions and at conferences (p. 10).

Student engagement is widely accepted as critical to student success; "grades, persistence, student satisfaction, gains across a range of desired outcomes, and engagement go hand in hand" (Kuh, 2013, p. 12). Further, "active learning implies not only a shift from passivity to agency but also from merely doing to developing a meta-cognitive awareness about what is being done" (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011, p. 134). But as Matthews (2016) points out, student engagement is not enough. Student engagement initiatives "quickly degenerate into deficit views of students who are not doing what they should be doing wed to 'an academics know best notion' of student engagement" (pp. 1-2). SaP, on the other hand, embodies an "ethic of reciprocity" (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017) reflective of mutual respect and shared responsibility in teaching and learning.

Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) two-part model engages SaP in Higher Education through: (1) student engagement in learning, teaching, and research, and (2) enhancement of learning and teaching practice and policy. Positive outcomes emerging from recent SaP literature include "positive learning impact for students," "increased sense of leadership in, responsibility for, and motivation around the learning process," "transformed sense of self and self-awareness for both students and staff," and "development of more inclusive teaching practices" (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 2).

This research, built upon the aforementioned theoretical foundations of student engagement in the SaP model and FLC, embraces Fielding's (1999) "radical collegiality," in which "students are agents in the process of transformative learning" (p. 22). This study included faculty and students from different disciplines, representing undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies programs. Drawing upon Poole's (2012) qualities of a good collaboration as well as Bielaczyc and Collins's (1999) fourteen principles for powerful, formative learning communities, faculty were invited to partner with a student to examine and

redesign a course to improve student learning. These efforts focused both on outcomes as well as on the formative processes. And because the literature is so rich in terms of benefits to both faculty and students in SaP models, we specifically sought to determine the impact of the model on student learning and overall culture and curriculum at our institution.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Pairing students and faculty to collaboratively redesign courses took the form of a faculty/student development initiative we called Collaborative Curricular (re)Construction, or C^3 for short. The model sits at the intersection of the categories of Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, and Curriculum Design and Pedagogic Consultancy in the model of Healey et al. (2014). This project was funded by the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment (AEA), essentially Creighton's Teaching and Learning Center, headed by Danielson. Faculty participants were invited using the following criteria: tenured status, a reputation for openness to curricular innovation, a general willingness to engage with students, diversity in gender, and representation from different schools/colleges within the university—for faculty, one of the chief draws of working in such a group is the opportunity to meet and work with colleagues from different colleges and schools. Each faculty member was asked, upon invitation, to do the following: (1) identify a course that would benefit from redesign and student input; (2) select and recruit a student participant, ideally a student who had taken the course recently; and (3) attend at least six meetings over the course of the semester, both in large groups and in individual meetings with their student partner (SP). In recognition of the value of this collaborative work, some compensation was provided. The compensation was nominal; faculty received a copy of *Understanding by Design,* by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), as well as $100 in faculty development funds, and students received both a copy of the book and a $100 credit at the campus bookstore. Faculty participants were much more motivated by the opportunity to improve their own teaching by working closely with a student than by any offer of compensation. Several invited participants did, however, decline to join the program; lack of time was cited rather than any issue with the provided compensation.

Participants were recruited early in the fall semester and met at least six times over the next several months (see Table 1), culminating in a final large group meeting in December.

Table 1. C^3 work summary

Meeting	Meeting Summary
Meeting 1 (large group):	Introductions of participants and courses Explanation and clarification of the purpose of the workgroup
Meeting 2 (large group)	Mini-workshop on Backwards Design Principles Group discussion of purpose and objectives of courses Group discussion of learning objectives of courses

Meetings 3-5* (individual)	Reconstruction of the course syllabus Work on key learning activities and evaluation tools Work on course content and readings
Meeting 6 (large group)	Group sharing of curricular redesign of courses Implementation plans for the newly designed course

* Many faculty/student pairs met much more frequently, some weekly or bi-weekly.

Two separate faculty-student cohorts completed the C^3 process: although eight faculty were invited, only four faculty-student pairs accepted during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic years. Rather than inviting new faculty when the originally invited faculty declined, the study proceeded with smaller but clearly diverse cohorts. The two cohorts had faculty from the following disciplines: biology, chemistry, education, fine and performing arts, law, nursing, and pharmacy science.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the initial C^3 project, our primary research questions were the following:

1. Are students changed as learners by participating in a SaP experience?
2. Are faculty changed as teachers by participating in a SaP experience?
3. How does such a partnership change the nature of the course being designed?

The first two questions, of course, probe the impact on students and faculty: Is this an effective method to develop both faculty and students? Duda and Danielson (2015) showed that student participants approached learning in subsequent courses differently, and faculty were profoundly affected by this experience and changed many aspects of their teaching and the way they designed courses as a result (see associated Appendix: Redesigned Courses for full description).

The SaP literature has demonstrated the validity of this cooperative approach and the benefit to both instructors and students. However, there has been little research done on the impact such partnerships can have on student learning in the redesigned courses. Furthermore, a measure of the effectiveness of an approach to faculty development such as C^3 would be the promulgation of resulting curricular changes through programs, departments, and colleges. Marie and McGowan (2017) also examined student and staff perceptions or lessons learned one year later, an approach that identified a series of partnership values necessary for student learning. The original C^3 cohort met almost five years ago; although faculty intent was to immediately implement changes, many implementations were delayed by sabbaticals, off-cycle courses, changing teaching assignments, and even a core curriculum overhaul. In fact, one course implementation was delayed until spring 2017. To capture student learning in these

revised courses, it became necessary to adopt a longer longitudinal design than originally intended.

Given these factors, in this paper we examine the following research questions:

1. ***Faculty development: Was C³ an effective tool for faculty development?***
2. ***Student development: Did students emerge from the C³ experience changed as learners?***
3. ***Student learning: Did the changes result in increased student learning in subsequent course offerings?***
4. ***Curricular change: Did the effects of the C³ workgroup affect curriculum as well as the culture within the program or department?***

METHODS

Several qualitative research methods were employed to study our research questions; where possible, quantitative analysis was also employed, particularly to examine evidence of student learning gains in specific courses. This work was reviewed and granted exempt status from the Creighton University Institutional Review Board, and follows best ethical practices for educational research. One-hour-long semi-structured interviews with faculty participants (N = 8) were conducted and reported, principally to collect information on long-term impact and on student learning in revised courses. Although most of the SPs had graduated several years ago at the time this article was being written, one former SP was currently teaching part-time at Creighton and participated in the semi-structured interview with their faculty partner (FP). Faculty and student participants also completed online surveys at the end of their participation in C³. Additionally, the AEA office sponsored a one-and-a-half-hour-long forum/panel discussion on the C³ project at the end of the second iteration of the project; seven FPs and four SPs spoke on that panel. This focus-group-like session (recorded and transcribed) addressed the primary research questions posed in a free-form discussion with minimal prompting from the authors.

RESULTS

Faculty development

Faculty discovered this process nurtured and gave an outlet for some of their natural "tinkerer" predispositions while it encouraged active reflection and concrete pedagogical changes. FPs described themselves as "looking for a change," "by nature open to change," and "creative, flexible, a tinkerer." This openness to change predisposed them to accepting the C³ invitation; more importantly, it naturally led to both affective and behavioral changes. As one FP noted, it "opened [his] eyes," while other FPs appreciated seeing their courses through their "students' fresh eyes," even as they struggled "to 'get' how their students were not 'getting it.'"

Beyond this shifting to a more student-centric perspective, faculty learned they had to "stick with the plan," even as they saw students struggling. For example, one FP overcame his natural desire to step in and intervene when he saw students struggle. Following his SP's advice, the FP did the following: (1) clarified course expectations (e.g., it is very important you study in advance of the course sessions); (2) allowed students to "fail" in weeks one and two (e.g., failing quiz scores); (3) intentionally aligned quiz items to better match the instructional

session; and (4) reduced material coverage to 80% of previous semesters. His SP admonished him, "Believe in your own idea!"

SPs commented on their FPs development, as they found FPs to be "extremely open and accepting of [their] input and working collaboratively to improve the course." They also shared the realization that "professors really do work hard to make sure their students get something from the class they are in."

Faculty continue to be open to changes and have not forgotten the lessons learned from their student partners. More than one FP reported that they continue to solicit feedback from students; while one FP utilizes multiple opportunities to communicate with current students (e.g., mid-semester feedback, lunches, students' daily visits to the office), another FP finds a continued "openness to learn from students," even when students prove the FP to be in the wrong. As she noted, "I really didn't want them to be right, but they were!"

FPs' initial analyses and innovations persist: current activities include conversations and even collaborations with other faculty, often within their department or school/college; changes in their teaching of other courses; and active solicitation of more meaningful contact with students. As described by one FP, "the most essential change was motivating [me] to start doing changes that have been only contemplated in the past."

Student development

Students' "learning" extended from deepened understanding of their course's subject matter to faculty design and course preparations to reflection on both their own and fellow students' study habits. As one SP explained, "It required me to look further into the study of [my course] in order to see how I learn as an individual and how those around me learn."

Collaborations with FPs allowed students to better appreciate "what goes into developing a course." Further, the student learned "how to verbalize and understand [what they] had been doing as a learner and how to describe that process in words and then develop a course based on those experiences." Faculty expressed appreciation of students' sharing as they exhibited "unbridled enthusiasm" from "one[s] who hadn't been trampled yet" by academia. As faculty confirmed, students were true collaborators in that they "helped identify the [course] problems and came up with solutions." FPs' pride in their SPs' work was evident, as was their vocal encouragement. As one FP encouraged the SP, "You have a voice, so use it."

Students' behaviors changed (in subsequent courses) because of what they experienced during this collaboration; specifically, "I have tried my best to get involved in each of my classes as much as possible because I understand how much energy and time my professors have put into creating the course" and "I now will look more in-depth at these objectives in order to more fully understand the class structure and my teacher's goal." These former student partners carry and translate their lessons into their current professional practices, be it as students in professional degree programs or as teachers, developing and delivering actual course instruction.

FPs were committed to and excited by the opportunity to partner with students as part of ongoing student development. At the initial meeting, FPs were more enthusiastic in their introduction of their SPs than themselves or their courses, and in the final group sharing, more than one FP interrupted the student's presentation to inform the larger group that some critical

idea or innovation was, in fact, the idea of their student. This commitment to student development did not end with their course redesign effort. In the follow-up interviews, all eight faculty members immediately identified their SP and their SP's current employment or educational status. It was evident that faculty and student partners maintain an active professional relationship.

Student learning

For practitioners of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), there is no question dearer than that of student learning. Any classroom innovation must be ultimately judged by the following metric: Did it increase student learning? Although it is difficult to assert a causal or correlational relationship between involving students in a course redesign process like C^3 and improvement in student grades, insight into student grades and improvement in student scores is presented as one source of evidence. Taken into consideration with other lines of evidence, such as qualitative interview data, we believe that there is sufficient evidence that the C^3 program (student-faculty partnerships to revise courses) led to positive outcomes and, in particular, increased student learning.

The faculty interviewed all strongly believed their participation in C^3 led to stronger courses and more robust student learning. For example, the FP in the music theory course spoke passionately about how students had gained a greater ability to actually compose music for their final project because of the scaffolding of composition exercises that the course team had built into the course. The FP says,

> But by having them do the composition exercises, they had to take the information they knew and apply it … so that actually made going into the final exam, which was a presentation of a composition, the final composition, much more meaningful to students. They're much more engaged, much more interested in it, and **they do a better job**. Rather than just an introductory "write a few measures of music," they're actually letting this music do a conversation back and forth between the instruments that are involved.

Besides anecdotal and qualitative evidence, there is particularly compelling quantitative data from several courses. In the interest of brevity, we present three examples, one each from chemistry, biology, and pharmacy.

1. Biochemistry Laboratory is a required course for chemistry majors that complements a three-credit lecture-based course. The purpose of the lab is to introduce students to very practical lab-based techniques in biochemistry, which they will encounter in industry, graduate school in biochemistry, or other post-graduation professional programs. The laboratory course meets weekly for a one-hour pre-lab session, along with a two-hour laboratory block. This pre-lab meeting has traditionally been used to supplement lecture and teach some of the theory behind the experiments that occurred in the lab. Instruction in the pre-lab meeting was delivered via lecture.

In the biochemistry lab course, the intervention of flipping the classroom and providing students with additional scaffolding to identify key concepts and ideas led to increased student learning. The midterm quiz in the course focused heavily on conceptual understanding, and the instructor reported that it is a good indicator of student learning. Compared to two sections that the same faculty member taught in the fall of 2013, the midterm exam scores were statistically significantly higher ($p = 0.003$, ES = 1.37) for the course that used the C^3 modifications (see Table 2).

Table 2. Student scores on the midterm and final quizzes in spring 2014 (vs. fall 2013)

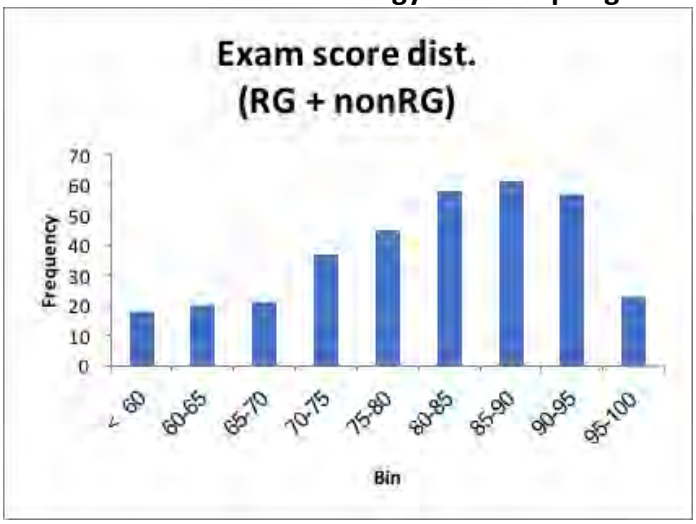
	SPRING 2014 (C^3, N = 7)	FALL 2013 (N = 27)	STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE SPRING VS. FALL
MIDTERM QUIZ (AVERAGE)	45.7	39.2	Statistically significant (ES = 1.37 p = 0.003)
STANDARD DEVIATION	2.98	5.1	
FINAL QUIZ	43.6	46.7	Not statistically significant
STANDARD DEVIATION	3.3	6.1	

Scores are out of a maximum possible of fifty points.

The final quiz for the biochemistry lab course was not focused on conceptual understanding; instead, it was a more traditional lab final with numerical problem solving. Despite the flipped-classroom approach, students in spring performed as well as students in the fall (who had sat through traditional lab lectures). In other words, not only did the flipped-classroom students demonstrate a better conceptual understanding of the material, but they also performed just as well on more traditional measures.

2. General Biology II is the second semester of a freshman-level general biology class, typically taught at Creighton in two or three lecture-based sections of approximately two hundred students. Recitation groups for this course were introduced in spring 2014 on a limited basis: a small number of students could self-select into a smaller recitation group (RG) of about eighteen students that met once a week for an hour and fifteen minutes. These students were excused from attending the large lecture sections and instead watched recorded versions of the lectures outside of class. Students were given readings to complete before attending their RG, and time during the RG meetings focused on more difficult material using active learning pedagogy (such as small group discussions, tutorials, or simulations). The FP for the recitation groups in the General Biology II course came to C^3 with two issues: (1) a bi-modal grade distribution and (2) a problem with coverage of content defeating the purpose of the RG model. As can be seen in Figure 1, the general exam distribution for the course in spring of 2013 (the academic year prior to C^3 participation) peaks in the B to A range.

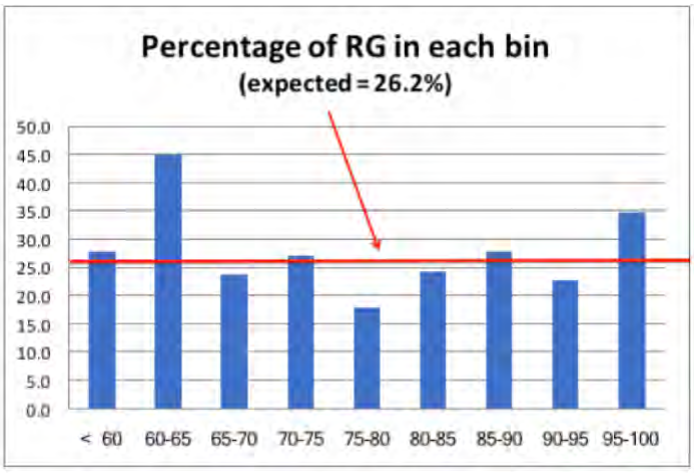
Figure 1: Exam score distribution for General Biology II in the spring of 2013



Both RG students and non-RG (traditional lecture) students are included.

Plotted in Figure 2 (below) is the percentage of RG students in each of the grade ranges (bins) of Figure 1. Given that RG students made up 26.2% of the total class, if RG and traditional students had performed identically on the exams, each grade range from Figure 1 should have been made up of 26.2% RG students and 73.8% traditional students. Instead, Figure 2 shows that RG students are overrepresented in poor exam grades and overrepresented in A grades, hence a bi-modal distribution.

Figure 2: Percentage of RG students in each bin for General Biology II exams in the spring of 2013



Here only RG students are included. RG students make up 26.2% of the total course number.

The most recent iteration of the RGs in General Biology has been extremely successful. After implementation of the course revisions developed in the C^3 workgroup, students participating in RG have outpaced traditional lecture students in terms of their learning gains.

For example, Table 3 shows the exam score average for the four exams and final exam for RG and non-RG students.

Table 3. Exam 1-4 and final exam averages for RG and non-RG students for General Biology II in spring 2018

	RG STUDENTS (N = 189)	NON-RG STUDENTS (N = 288)	Δ (RG – LECTURE)
EXAM 1 AVERAGE	79.2%	79.0%	0.2%
EXAM 2 AVERAGE	74.5%	72.4%	2.1%
EXAM 3 AVERAGE	82.3%	79.6%	2.7%
EXAM 4 AVERAGE	81.0%	78.4%	3.4%
FINAL EXAM AVERAGE	78.0%	74.3%	3.7%

The difference between the RG and traditional students on Exam 1 is not statistically significant, but for each subsequent exam, the difference is statistically significant; the difference increases for each subsequent exam. Furthermore, the bi-modality that was seen in the spring of 2013 completely disappeared. In spring 2018, RG students were underrepresented in C, D, and F grades and overrepresented in B through A grades.

3. Pharmacy Lab: The FP that taught the P3 pharmacy labs was reassigned to teach P1 pharmacy labs in the fall of 2014 before the innovations that she and the SP developed could be tested. However, the ideas that they developed collaboratively transferred easily to this new laboratory setting (the P1-P3 labs focus on similar content). Furthermore, the pharmacy faculty interviewed students to discuss what could be done to help them with the process of prescription verification (checking) and sterilization verification, using the entire course, in effect, as SPs. Using that feedback, the FP developed online practice modules for these activities. As can be seen in Table 4 below, students who utilized these practice activities had statistically significantly higher final grades for these lab components ($p < 0.01$).

Table 4. Mean scores on prescription verification lab activities for P1 students in 2015/16

	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Control Group (no online practice)	55	88.8%	9.7%
Experimental (online practice)	24	96.6%	3.0%

Wider curricular change as a result of C^3

The ultimate measure of success of a program like C^3 is not that it affected a single course within a department or program, but rather that participation in such a program helps lead to wider curricular and cultural changes (e.g., the creation of learning communities). However, such change, given faculty turnover, sabbaticals, and new teaching assignments,

often takes time. Even given the limited time since the original pilot, there is evidence that C^3 has affected departments and programs in a wider sense.

1. At the time of this study, the FP for the Nursing Care Management course was also the chair of the nursing curriculum committee The committee was working on a complete revision of the nursing program, and in part, because of their C^3 experience, the FP pushed for the incorporation of active-learning and pre-lecture activities in every course. Every fifty-minute block in the new nursing curriculum will include fifteen minutes of active-learning activities to be done outside of class. Nursing faculty, though initially resistant to this change, have been convinced by 25% increases on practice exams for the NCLEX-RN exam.

2. In the contracts course within the Law School, the course team introduced the use of midterm exams. Midterm exams have served as an early warning indicator and have allowed faculty to work with students who are at risk of failing out of the program. As the FP reported, "Whereas before we might have had three to four students at a failing level at the end of our first semester fall class, now we have one or two. The greatest impact is on the C, D, or F level." Since a midterm exam was piloted in Contracts I, almost all faculty in the Law School have adopted the use of midterm exams. The FP continues to be an "early adopter" of pedagogical and technological innovations, many of which have spread to other faculty (like the use of clickers during lecture and collaboration with legal writing instructors).

3. The RGs in General Biology were an experiment with initially one faculty member (who participated in C^3). The FP here unfortunately did not return to teach RG in the spring of 2014, because of staffing issues, and then took a yearlong sabbatical in the 2015/16 academic year. However, RGs returned to the General Biology II course in the spring of 2017, and the FP began implementing the changes made with the SP in C^3. Spring 2017 had nine RGs taught by three faculty members. In the spring of 2018, the RGs were expanded: twelve RG sections were offered, taught by five different faculty members. The success of the RG experiment has changed the way general biology is taught at Creighton. It has also changed expectations for faculty: RG has been shown to work with *any* faculty member; therefore all biology faculty members are now expected to have meaningful instructional contact with first-year students; and it has allowed the faculty to engage with each other in new ways. This engagement has affected the way upper division biology courses are taught as well. As the FP put it, "Do I teach better in my genetics class because of this? YES!"

4. The School of Pharmacy and Health Professions, at the urging of the FP involved in C^3, has informally adopted SaP as a way to revise courses. For example, several faculty members gathered students to do a focus group about a recent fall 2017 elective course. Students expressed interest in participating in a mock rounds-type case that covered multiple diseases and treatments; typically, only a single disease or treatment is covered. The pharmacy faculty then piloted a mock rounds-type case in a third-year pharmacy course as an online module and simulation.

Even in this limited sample, there is evidence of the effects of C^3 promulgating outward from single courses to departments or programs. Of course, there are other factors at play here other than participation in C^3. Faculty members were selected who were leaders or emerging leaders in their departments/programs with a reputation for pedagogical innovation. However,

in our follow-up interviews, every faculty member attested that C^3 helped them think differently about their teaching and their relationships with students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The C^3 model has proved to be an effective tool for faculty development. It nurtured faculty creativity and pedagogical flexibility. It gave faculty permission to start experimenting in their courses as they only "contemplated in the past." Further, it opened faculty eyes to student perspectives, difficulties, and challenges resulting in new instructional designs or strategies such as flipped classrooms, active learning elements, and experiential learning. Finally, the research team also observed that this process gave faculty a sense of connectedness to other faculty and allowed them to collectively shoulder the responsibility for understanding and improving student learning.

Students emerged from the C^3 experience as changed learners. Changes included a deepened understanding of the course's subject matter, appreciation of the importance and centrality of course learning objectives, and an increased desire to more actively engage with their own courses. These changes echo what Hutchings (2005) has described as pedagogical intelligence—"an understanding about how learning happens, and a disposition and capacity to shape one's own learning."

When curricular changes resulting from C^3 were implemented, there was increased student learning in subsequent offerings. Anecdotally, all faculty participants believed that their courses were strengthened, and student learning was enhanced through their participation in C^3. Assessment data provided further evidenced statistically significant differences on a number of measures in multiple courses.

Beyond increased learning in subsequent sections, one of the effects of the C^3 workgroup was more widespread curricular and cultural change. Colleagues who did not participate in C^3 in disciplines such as law, biology, nursing, pharmacy, and others were persuaded to experiment personally with new pedagogies. Now, faculty are more open to student participation and to using this model for subsequent course revision. One FP expressed the sentiment that he regretted that he didn't continue with this practice of student partnership in the subsequent semester. Faculty more automatically think of getting student feedback and collaborating with students; it is now more naturally a part of who they are as a faculty member.

While there were four primary research questions addressed in this study, conversations with FPs and SPs offer implications for future studies. Both faculty and students were intrigued and enthusiastic at the initial call, but what didn't become clear until the end was how important personal qualities and traits of the participants were. Openness, flexibility, and creativity were important faculty qualities. Student self-confidence, or as one FP described it, "sassiness," ensured students contributed a strong student voice to the process. Both faculty and students, however, shared a sense of vulnerability, both with their partner and the larger collective. As a student shared, "Truthfully I was a little bit nervous about this process as I was not sure what to expect."

There are broader implications for this work as well. Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy comprises about 40% of all the SaP literature surveyed by Mercer-Mapstone et al.

(2017). As this research illustrates, opportunities exist for combining this area with learning, teaching, and assessment. The intersection of multiple categories of student engagement allows for an expansion of our understanding of student partnerships. In particular, the SaP literature can begin to look beyond process to long-term impacts/outcomes. For example, "Can student and faculty engagement in SaP activities lead to increased student learning in subsequent course offerings"? Our study supports this conclusion, but there is room for further work in this area. Incorporating SoTL-type work into the SaP framework could also be conducive to students taking a co-author role.

This study (#817092-1) has been reviewed by the Creighton University institutional review board and was granted exempt status.

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ARTICLE

Enacting Student Partnership as Though We Really Mean It: Some Freirean Principles for a Pedagogy of Partnership

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ABSTRACT

The idea of student-staff partnership working is becoming increasingly popular in higher education. However, there is a risk that, as the idea spreads, the radical nature of partnership working can be diluted and domesticated by established power structures. This article explores the theoretical and practical implications of adopting approaches to partnership working informed by the ideas of Paulo Freire. This is partnership working with a political point—consciously seeking to resist the forces of neoliberalism and any attempts to domesticate partnership to that paradigm. Instead, a pedagogy of partnership, informed by Freire, is juxtaposed with neoliberal domesticated partnership, and six principles are offered for enacting partnership as though we really mean it.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, pedagogy of partnership, Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy, higher education

As the establishment and immediate popularity of this journal attests, student partnership has become a major developmental theme across and beyond English-speaking higher education (HE) (Bengtson et al., 2017; Cliffe et al., 2017; Frison & Melacarne 2017; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Singh, 2018). Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) argue that "engaging students and staff effectively as partners in learning and teaching is arguably one of the most important issues facing HE in the twenty-first century," (p. 7) and, illustrating the growing quantity of work in the field, Healey's published bibliography on student partnership currently runs to over 40 pages (Healey, 2018).

Student partnership has often been promoted as a means of resisting the excesses of neoliberalism in HE (Dwyer, 2018; Matthews, 2017; Matthews et al., 2018a; Matthews et al., 2018b; NUS, 2012). A contested term in itself, "most scholars tend to agree that neoliberalism is broadly defined as the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the

economy, politics, and society" (Springer, Birch, & MacLeavy, 2016, p. 2). Thus, neoliberalism argues that free markets "are the most moral and the most efficient means for producing and distributing goods and services" (Cahill, 2012, p. 111). It is a way of viewing the world that has come to underpin government policy in recent decades, for the UK and much of the western world, whatever political party has been in power. Its insidious nature is that it is a particular political position presented as apolitical common sense. Neoliberalism's domineering economic logic reduces HE to a commercial exchange between HE providers and student consumers, operating within a marketised system (Molesworth, Scullion, & Nixon, 2010; Saunders, 2010). In this knowledge economy, universities, academics, students, and learning itself are all diminished where universities are competitive, managerial corporations; academics are employed training providers; students are passive, paying, individualised consumers; and learning is a packaged product (Molesworth, Scullion, & Nixon, 2009; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Patrick, 2013). Notions of the university as a public good—a learning community making a valued contribution to society by providing time and space for academics to pursue knowledge for its own ends, while enabling students to grow and flourish intellectually, personally, and collectively—are lost in this reductive system (Collini, 2012).

Levy, Little, and Whelan argue that "the theme of staff-student partnerships reaches to the heart of debates about the values and role of the twenty-first-century university" (2011, p. 2). The National Union of Students in the UK proposed partnership as an antidote to both the traditional apprenticeship model and the increasingly dominant neoliberal consumerist model of HE (NUS, 2012). But they warn that it can only work if it truly entails "a meaningful dispersal of power" (2012, p. 8), echoing a core question posed by Levy and colleagues:

> To what extent can power relations between staff and students be challenged and changed in HE given its prevailing ideological and structural characteristics, or are the barriers such that it is not possible to envisage wide-scale cultural change in the direction of genuine partnership? (Levy, Little, & Whelan 2011, p. 12)

The implication is that genuine partnership requires more than consultation, involvement, or active participation of students as consumers; it demands a view of HE as a learning community in which students are equal participants, sharing leadership and authority with academics and HE managers (Peters, 2018). The student-partnership literature highlights barriers to enacting partnership in the face of established HE culture and customs, structures and practices, and identifies limitations to achieving genuine inclusivity (Bovill et al., 2016; Bovill & Felten, 2016). We also need to be ever alive to the possibility that Students as Partners (SaP) "could be appropriated for neoliberal purposes" (Matthews et al., 2018a, p. 15). This paper, then, argues for the adoption of six principles for student-staff partnership, grounded in the critical pedagogy work of Paulo Freire, as a route to achieving genuine partnership and resisting such appropriation.

Truly enacting student partnership involves both a different view of HE and a shifting of power and, as such, constitutes a revolutionary attack on the established order of marketised HE practices. No wonder it is beset with obstacles. The threat is that, without a clear theoretical base and sense of its roots in critical pedagogy, students-as-partners practices could quickly

succumb to the domestication that has often befallen other initiatives, such as student engagement and student voice research (Cook-Sather, 2007; Fielding, 2011; Bovill, 2013; Kahu, 2013; Seale et al., 2015; Peters 2018; Matthews et al., 2018b; Zepke, 2018). To better understand the radical principles of partnership and the challenges faced in bringing them to fruition, there is value in returning to the founding father's work of critical pedagogy and partnership in education: Paulo Freire. By theorising students-as-partners practices as a Freirean pedagogy of partnership, it becomes clear that there are indeed neoliberal, domesticating, and technocratic threats to meaningful partnership working.

PAULO FREIRE AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

Paulo Freire (1921-97) was a Brazilian educator, theorist, and activist. His championing of mass literacy campaigns in north-eastern Brazil, as a form of democratic education in action, led to his detention by the military government, followed by exile from Brazil for fifteen years, from 1964-79. He developed many of his ideas through conversation with contemporary theorists while in exile, before returning to serve as secretary of education for Sao Paulo and professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo. An inspirational writer and educational activist, it is clearly impossible to do full justice, in the brief space here, to the nuanced ideas of someone who has been described as "perhaps the most influential thinker about education in the late twentieth century" (Smith, 1997, paragraph 1). His most influential early work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, 1996), critiques what he calls the "banking model" of education, in which students are characterised as the passive recipients of unproblematic knowledge content, delivered by knowledgeable teachers. Examples of such attitudes and practices he cites include the following:

> The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
> The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
> The teacher talks and the students listen—meekly;
> The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
> The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it (1996, p. 54).

Further, students in this banking model are treated as "marginal" individuals who need to be "integrated" into society as it is, through pedagogic approaches that promote unquestioning acceptance and a "culture of silence" (Freire, 1996, p. 55). This de-humanises them, destroying hope and producing fatalistic acceptance of the way things are. In his later works, Freire expanded on the damage done by the banking model of education to our ability to be and become more human; to hope, dream, love, and grow.

A particularly insidious aspect of the banking model is the way it presents teaching as a politically neutral act. Thus, not only are students reduced by it, but the educational process is neutered. "Neoliberal doctrine seeks to limit education to technological practice. Currently, education is no longer understood as formative, but simply as training" (Freire, 2007, p. 4). And, again,

> The neoliberal point of view reinforces a pseudo-neutrality of the educational practice, reducing it to the transfer of information content to the learners, who are not required to apprehend it in order to learn it. Such "neutrality" serves as the foundation for reducing the education of a plumber to training in the techniques and procedures involved in wrench mastering (Freire, 1997, p. 46).

So, the teacher becomes a training provider, and the student is reduced to a trained wrench operative, with the skills to fulfil their role in the workforce; yet neither is engaged in an educational process that might lead them to question, challenge, or transform their world. Freire's alternative to the banking model should be immediately recognisable to student-partnership practitioners, as it is grounded in learning *with* each other. It is an approach that fundamentally seeks to tear down the barrier between teacher and taught, draw on the experiences of tutors *and* students, and through "problem posing" engage all in mutual learning through meaningful discussion:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire, 1996, p. 61)

Thus, the educational process is not one of merely providing answers but is instead founded upon the asking of questions and the generation of curiosity. This is education as a profoundly political act—an act of liberation—an act of becoming collectively more conscious, through dialogue, of locating our critical awareness as a basis for collective transformative action. Such education seeks to reveal and question existing power structures, to hold them up as problems to be addressed, and to encourage the co-design of workable alternatives.

> There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the "practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Freire, 1996, p. 16)

Freire highlighted tensions between a supposedly neutral banking model of education (rooted in neoliberalism with clear power hierarchies in operation, and seeking to domesticate the educational process and the participants in it) and *education as learning together* (from and with each other, as a means of questioning, challenging, and changing our world—education as liberation). Thus education, for Freire, does not separate learning *about something* from moving into *doing something* about it. Instead, the practice inherent in the educational process—problem posing and the co-development of solutions—means education combines

learning and acting, a form of learning *through* action. As he articulates, "democracy is taught and learned through the practice of democracy" (1997, p. 91).

Through this vision of education as a democratising force, Freire is the central figure in the landscape of critical pedagogy (in which scholarship and advocacy on the part of oppressed groups are intertwined). This varied terrain is occupied by many whose work is at times shaped by a deep pessimism about the current state of the world in general and university pedagogic practice in particular. Freire, however, encourages us to join him in a hope-filled space, where a recognition of the unfinished nature of the human project (2014) allows us to remain optimistic for our students and ourselves: "How would it be possible for a consciously inconclusive being to become immersed in a permanent search without hope?" (1997, p. 93).

Freire inspired the academic bell hooks (1994); Henry Giroux, who drew heavily on Freire's work when he first conceptualised "critical pedagogy" (2009); and others to strive for democracy in the classroom and to resist the instrumentalised pedagogy that shapes much of what qualifies as teaching in our marketised HE institutions. Hughes (1998) describes her first reading of Freire in the following way: "It was and has continued to be the most inspirational reading I have ever done, both intellectually and in terms of my teaching practice" (p. 137). But Freire did not seek esteem for himself or his work, rather he saw his ideas as merely a step along the way to a future he was unlikely to witness (1997). In the project of student partnership as it is characterised here, we hope he would recognise a response to his call for *re-invention*—and not mere re-enactment—of his ideas (Freire, 1996). It would seem, then, that the students-as-partners movement, including its practices and conceptions, owe Freire a great deal, and that the enactment of a Freirean pedagogy of partnership lies well within our reach. However, it is important that we maintain awareness of the challenge we are undertaking and the powerfully domesticating forces operating against any form of educational practice which unsettles the established order.

THE TENSION OF LIBERATION AND DOMESTICATION IN STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

It is all too easy to see examples of domestication in students-as-partners practices across our current HE landscape. This can happen in many ways. First, if power relations remain distinctly uneven, partnership working becomes a sham, less a matter of collaboration and more a case of co-option. Second, and more insidiously, partnership can be reduced to a technocratic exercise in itself, shorn of democratic purpose. When this happens, it is possible to see partnership working deployed not as a means of challenge and transformation but as a means of control, subjugation, and othering. Furedi (2011) is right to warn us that "the conceptualisation of students as change agents may represent a form of unwitting manipulation of students to act in accordance with the logic of marketisation" (p. 3). Partnership can be framed in marketised ways—as a business-like, contractual relationship, or as a purely technocratic exercise. Unfortunately, Furedi's (2015) proposed answer to this risk undermines the democracy of the classroom that Freire advocates, falling back on claims for the primacy of academic authority whereby "students must trust in the authority of their teacher" (p. 166). White (2018) has also recently argued that students-as-partners practices can "damage the moral authority of the teacher" (p. 163) in that it gives power to students who have not yet finished their education. This contradicts Freire's teachings in two ways: by

implying our students have nothing to teach us and by suggesting that their unfinished state means they are, thus, not ready to be decision-makers in their own education. Thankfully, Freirean partnership calls on us to be watchful of such potentially patronising understandings of HE — to see them as domesticating forces and to resist their rhetoric — instead maintaining our hope that democratic education through partnership is possible and achievable.

Partnership schemes that follow a business model are governed by contractual relationships. The university sets out its provision and requires students to accept the arrangement, including limits to their rights and an imposition of responsibilities. As such, students are expected to forgo key aspects of their agency in the relationship. This form of partnership—a joint but unequal agreement of services to be rendered and behavioural expectations to be met—denies all sense of human connection and growth (Cook-Sather, 2007). Commercialising the partnership model limits the human spirit and leads participants to acquiesce to certain conventions and limitations that remove the human element of hope and values. Such contracts work to limit the claims we can make on each other, a technical exercise that circumvents the messy authenticity of personally meaningful interaction (Felten, 2017). The contractual view of partnership has been explicitly rejected by even the Quality Assurance Agency for HE in the UK. Their UK Quality Code states the following:

> Partnership working is based on the values of openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between partners. It is not based on the legal concept of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership work recognises that all members in partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned. (2012, p. 5)

Student partnership can also go the way of much work on student engagement and experience, becoming focused, not on creative and collaborative potential, but on deficit models to be addressed by technocratic means. Instead of recognising the complexity and potential of situated, growing, human relationships, work on student engagement (or partnership work carried out in this guise) can quickly be reduced to a means of addressing problems with student retention or endeavouring to counter the latest disappointing National Student Survey returns. The work of the UK's Higher Education Academy (HEA), now AdvanceHE, often falls into this trap. For example, the HEA (2016) urges HE institutions to acknowledge that "engaging students through partnership casts students as active participants in their learning" (p. 3). If we accept a constructivist view of learning, this is a meaningless statement. Students cannot be anything other than active participants in their own learning. This statement tends to be used when what is meant is that we want students to own what *we* wish them to learn, to engage in the ways *we* require, and to accept *our* teaching methods without challenge. Thus, student engagement and partnership working become strategic, institutional initiatives appropriated to neoliberal ends—a means of tying students into HE so that they complete their award, pay their fees, and provide feedback that satisfies metrics. The HEA's original overview model for SaP (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, p. 25) fell into this technocratic trap of presenting partnership working as a system—a technocratic solution to

issues of engagement, devoid of explicit values. This was corrected to some extent in the final version by the addition of underpinning values, drawn from Healey, Flint, and Harrington's companion publication and guidance, though these still lack clear radical purpose or a social justice dimension (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, p. 14-15; HEA, 2016).

Writers from a number of perspectives have highlighted the particular dangers of education without explicit values and purpose. This warning underpins David Orr's plea that we think collectively about the purpose of education for sustainable development:

> The truth is that without significant precautions, education can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth. If one listens carefully, it may even be possible to hear the Creation groan every year in late May when another batch of smart, degree-holding, but ecologically illiterate, *Homo sapiens* who are eager to succeed are launched into the biosphere. (1994, p. 5)

A pedagogy of partnership requires that we remain hopeful and believe that an education based on questioning, values, and our collective humanity can equip us to transform our world for the better, not the worse. Thinking about science education in universities more generally, Maxwell (2014) has consistently urged us not to teach only knowledge, but also wisdom; to explain not just *how* we might do something, but to discuss *why* it might or might not be worthwhile and wise to do so.

Our resistance to the neoliberal trap of technocratic, supposed value- and purpose-free educational practice, needs to be grounded in a clear understanding of why the discourse of student engagement has become so problematic (Zepke, 2018). We know that "no practice is as vulnerable as education to political and scientific fashion" (Fairfield, 2009, p. 1), and the preoccupation within HE research around the nature of student engagement attests to this. Attempts to understand styles of engagement (Coates, 2007), perspectives on engagement (Kahu, 2013), and models of engagement (Trowler, 2010) all offer partial insight into the interplay between student and institution in the pursuit of learning. But, in focusing on either the individual attributes of the student or the mechanistic processes of the university, something can be lost. By implication, there is something reductively mathematical about the formulae offered to ensure that students succeed and institutions survive. In such explanations, the very idea of a meaningful pedagogical relationship is denied. Both Matthews (2016) and Zepke (2018) ask us to reject those understandings of student engagement and partnership that lack nuance and neglect the fundamental importance of human relations in educational collaboration. As White (2018) suggests, we must guard against such "non-moral, thin, functional conceptions of higher education" (p. 170) and their potential to "hollow out higher learning" (p. 171).

If Williams (2006) is correct, we, in this domesticating age, risk being witness to the "end of social hope" (p. 160) and of holding on to deficit views of the student in which opportunity and notions of quality are seen as proxies for access to a meaningful education (Antonucci, 2016; Kuh, 2009). A reading of Freire encourages us now, more than ever, to re-think how we address the student body (Neary, 2012). Dwyer (2018) argues that our scepticism about the current appropriation of partnership for neoliberal ends is well-founded, while Zepke (2018)

asks us to re-engage with the moral purposes of education through the work we do to engage our students. Critical pedagogy, as an authentic tool with which we can tackle oppression, opens up before us, inviting us to instead see the "potential" (McLean, 2006) within each of us, and university life as a moment in which we can "prioritise life over profit, and autonomy over performativity" (Amsler, 2015, p. 18). Student partnership, as an expression of such values, can allow us to legitimately locate "collegiate and mutualist" practice (Callender & Scott, 2013, p. 217), in even the most commercialised of educational spaces. As Arendt (2006) asserts,

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it, and by the same token save it from that ruin which except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable. (p. 193)

It is possible to contrast the language of technocratic partnership with that of Freirean ideas of partnership to elaborate the tension. See Table 1.

Table 1. The languages of partnership (Peters, 2018, p. 185)

FREIREAN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP	TECHNOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
- Romantic partnership	- Business partnership
- Love and hope	- Contract and charter
- Community action	- Stakeholder involvement
- Possible dreams	- Addressing shortcomings
- Social justice	- Employability
- Social benefit	- Individual benefit
- Community action	- Individual mobility
- Conscientizing	- Personal development
- Radicalisation	- Domestication
- Political	- Apolitical
- Holistic	- Technocratic
- Being more	- Empowerment

Many of the contrasts here should now need little explanation. The Freirean idea of partnership is human, emotional, and romantic, in the sense of investing the educational relationship with our hopes and dreams for each other. It emphasises the collegial and collective over the individual, seeking positive social change and benefit for all rather than social mobility and empowerment for particular individuals. This idea of individually and collectively "being more" is a richer vision of growth in consciousness and action; it entails coming together and taking power rather than waiting to be empowered by others. As Matthews and colleagues (2018a) suggest, students-as-partners, viewed in this way, is "dedicated to enriching each other as human beings and seek[s] to test what could be possible in society" (p. 10).

SIX PRINCIPLES OF FREIRIAN PARTNERSHIP

A genuine idea of partnership should entail rejecting banking models of learning and teaching in favour of education as a transformational experience in which all grow. Along with Freire's work, the pedagogy of partnership should therefore draw on theories of change, transformation, and development, which emphasise hope, authenticity, and growth. For example, it is possible to combine the ambition of critical pedagogy with the positive collective growth of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) as a means of working with students to collectively "be more" (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014). While Appreciative Inquiry lacks the political and critical awareness of critical pedagogy, it provides a framework for hopeful collective development of a vision and collaborative design of a better way of being together (Cockell, McArthur-Blair, & Schiller, 2013). It does this through emphasising dialogue and storytelling, focusing on what "brings life" to our collective endeavours, and taking the community through a four-stage framework of discovery, dreaming, design, and destiny or will to change (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001). Equally, living educational theory (Whitehead 1989) calls for authenticity in the way we live our values, and provides another way of thinking about how we might develop practice based on values of social justice and liberation, as long as we turn that analysis to collective, as well as personal, theory-in-action. In essence, we will each blend our own value-based pedagogic approach from a bespoke range of sources, but what is needed is to illustrate how these ideas might apply collectively to the pedagogy of partnership. Six guiding principles for this are offered below.

Building from a shared hope and believing in our transformative potential

The first step is a shared belief that together we can make a positive difference. As Freire (1997) puts it, "Hope is an ontological requirement for human beings" (p. 44). This is not passive wishing for the best but an active engagement, as Solnit (2017) says, "Hope is a belief that what we do might matter, an understanding that the future is not yet written. It's informed, astute open-mindedness about what can happen and what role we may play in it" (paragraph 4). Barack Obama built his campaign for presidential office around the importance of hope as a progressive ideal and a means of uniting people. This explicitly drew on the civil rights movement and was expressed on his arrival on the national stage at the 2004 Democratic Congress through the title of his second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, in the single-word campaign poster "hope," and finally, through his description of his victory as:

> "The answer that led those who've been told for so long by so many to be cynical and fearful and doubtful about what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day." (2004, 2008a, 2008b, paragraph 5)

This hope-filled approach—assuming that we care, that we want to make the world a better place, and that we can do so collectively, even if that may be in certain small or focused ways at first—should be axiomatic to HE. And yet, too often, such hope is overwhelmed by criticality and fatalistic cynicism, which denies the hope of a possible alternative and grudgingly accepts the dominance of neoliberal rhetoric while seeking individual advancement within it.

The antidote is a position that sees academia as a vocation and a calling, across Boyer's four scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching and learning (1990), and equally, positions studying within HE, not as an act of personal self-improvement, but of collective social action. It is Freire's emphasis on collective hope and transformation through democratic pedagogy that underpins partnership working. This is true, as with the other principles, not just for the social sciences, humanities, and arts—where participatory and discursive critical pedagogies are perhaps more common—but for all HE disciplines; science cannot be done without the hope that it will result in improved understanding and the possibility of transforming our world.

Asking how we can collectively *be more* and establishing a shared dream of transformation

Being more is preferred here to the competitive *being the best* or feeling *empowered*, because it indicates human growth and presence without competitive edge or necessarily giving power to, or taking power from, others (Freire 2007). It means creating opportunities and space to explore what we all hope can be gained during our time in HE. Whether this is about sharing our dreams, helping each other to achieve our academic and professional goals, setting ourselves more challenging missions to contribute to human knowledge, or making a difference in our communities, this is not a focus on fitting in with the way things are, but about making a better future. Again, this requires a rejection of the prevalent cynicism of critique and the maintenance of hope. Freire (2014) begins *Pedagogy of Hope*:

> We are surrounded by a pragmatic discourse that would have us adapt to the facts of reality. *Dreams*, and *utopia*, are called not only useless, but positively impeding. (After all, they are an intrinsic part of any educational practice with the power to unmask the dominant lies.) (p. 1)

As Levitas (2007) points out, "What matters is that the utopian experiment disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present" (p. 53). Thus, we are called upon to focus on formulating our ethos and allowing this to guide our actions (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2018). There is a reason why Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech still echoes through to the present; there is an educational power in dreaming.

Promoting respectful dialogue

Such approaches cannot avoid discussion of our values and intentions. "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking" (Freire, 1996, p. 73). Space must be created to hear under-represented voices and share experiences. Partnership working is underpinned by the recognition that our diversity is a strength, bringing together a vast range of experience, knowledge, and understanding, which we can learn from and build upon. To do this, we need to listen with open hearts and humble mindsets, before leaping to debate and critique. This applies as much across a humanities seminar group as it does across major international science collaborations. It can also move beyond the usual academic-student dichotomy to include advisers, professional and support staff, practitioners,

and all community members in learning and working together in what Freire (1996) called "culture circles" (p. 101). This often requires acceptance, allowing ourselves to hear hard and unpalatable truths, truths that question whether we are living our values-in-action and ask us to recognise how we often oppress or essentialise our students (Cook-Sather, 2007). Such genuine listening is an integral part of movements to decolonise the curriculum across all subject areas and requires us to acknowledge that we have been complicit in oppression (Le Grange, 2016). This is the democratic, intergenerational learning, which Fielding (2011) presents as the pinnacle of student voice work, "a pedagogy of relationships and listening" (Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 15).

Engaging in co-investigation, shared reflection, problem posing, curiosity, rational exploration, and creativity

The range of specific learning and teaching methods that could form part of the pedagogy of partnership is vast; examples include research-based teaching, project working, inquiry-based learning, and peer assessment. Their uniting features are that they should be authentic, meaningful to those involved, active, and collaborative. Students and tutors do not have to work together in groups at all times, but there must be a sense of collective purpose and of pooling ideas. Critical curiosity can take many forms, but it starts by questioning what is, why it is so, and whether it must be that way. It requires us to challenge ideas of common sense, to hold our traditions and assumptions up for question, and to query expectations of progress. It is generative of new ideas, explanations, and possibilities. Fundamentally, it aims to be democratic, inviting contributions from all and valuing all those contributions. It stands against the continued dominance of lecturing as a perceived means of conveying accepted knowledge to passive, consuming students. Thompson (1991) provides an example of the humility needed to hear under-represented voices and the openness to question the arc of progress. In his now-famous foreword to *The Making of the English Working Class*, he sought "to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'Utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity." But this questioning and problem posing was not limited to the study of the past, or to the classroom; it included acknowledging the contribution made by his students to that great book. He states, "I have…learned a great deal from members of my tutorial classes" (1991, p. 13) and elsewhere argues, "All education which is worth the name involves a relationship of mutuality, a dialectic." (1968, p. 16) He further joined with his students to occupy and critique his own university for its increasing commercialisation (Thompson, 2014).

Seeking the co-construction of solutions aimed at a better way of being together

Addressing authentic issues has the potential to produce meaningful changes that promote social justice and improve our collective lives. A Freirean pedagogy of partnership will not just deliver particular outcomes or improvements in understanding, but is also focused on social benefits, promoting a greater understanding of how we can work together to tackle greater challenges. It is about caring about, and for, each other and increasing our capacity to collaborate effectively. Whether they are aimed at decolonising the curriculum, opening up

access to support for previously under-represented groups, or engaging in service learning—as examples of partnership working have done at our own institution—such principled approaches to student-staff partnerships have the capacity to contribute to the life of the institution, those who study and work within it, and the communities, both local and global, with which it engages. Campbell and Lassiter (2010) provided an example of this with *The Other Side of Middletown* project. Beyond the project itself, they explored "the relationship of collaborative ethnography to modes of collaborative engagement and, especially, collaborative pedagogies—processes by which faculty, students, and members of local communities work as an enlarged community of co-learners, co-researchers, and, ultimately, co-citizens" (p. 370). Authentic partnership means doing something, changing something, acting—as well as critiquing.

An on-going transformative and collaborative process of being and becoming

By its nature, the pedagogy of partnership cannot be contained in formal programmes or teaching sessions. It will spill out into other aspects of study and life. For example, working in partnership with students on Appreciative Inquiries changed the tone of student engagement work more broadly across one institute of education (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014). Two participants in that project observed that "confidence and ability have been instilled in us since day one of the project…the positive outcomes for us personally are evident in our academic achievements and belief in our own potential" (Tutton & Snell, 2013). Partnership is enduring and unconfined and, once experienced, there is no going back. As one student partner at our own institution explained, "I have learnt that I value who I am, where I have emerged from and what I represent for my community…[I have] learnt what [my] voice can achieve [and do] not want to go back into the silent shadows or [my] previous existence" (Locke in Lea, 2015, p. 178).

CONCLUSIONS

The implications of adopting a Freirean approach to students-as-partners in our role as academics are manifold. This is not about adopting a few new tricks, techniques, or strategies, but instead entails a personal, philosophical, and political commitment. It is to move consciously away from being the sage on the stage (McWilliams, 2009), towards a pedagogy in which "you don't try to impress the students with oratory, you try to challenge them, get *them* to question *you*" (Chomsky in Farndale, 2010, paragraph 10). For both students and staff, authentic partnership working demands genuine inward reflection and outward dedication to collective effort. As Angela Davis (2013) reminds us, "You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time" (p.u.). Authentic partnership requires the maintenance of hope that we can and will collectively challenge the dominance of neoliberal ideas in HE. We have to stay romantically attached to the certain belief that education is a profoundly subversive and transformative act of "renewing our 'unfinished selves' as we teach and assist students in becoming active, democratic citizens, capable and confident of transforming their world" (Peters, 2018, p. 187).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is based on "The pedagogy of partnership: Six principles for action" by John Peters, first published in *Educational Developments, 17.4*, 8-9. The authors would like to thank the Staff and Educational Development Association for permission to develop it for this publication.

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ARTICLE

Hunger by the Sea: Partnerships in the Brave Third Space

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ABSTRACT

In this article, co-authored by two undergraduate students (one international) and two academics in a media faculty of a post-92 university (e.g., Polytechnic), in England, we share the findings and offer a reflexive lens on the process of a media practice education collaboration in the community, through the co-production of the animated film *Hunger by the Sea*: https://vimeo.com/234840520 . The contributors to this research are media practice academics, media and journalism students from related but distinct disciplines, and the users and providers of a food bank on the English coast. The food bank users and providers have not been involved in this writing, but their voices are (literally) heard in the project's primary outcome—the animated film. In this article, we articulate reflections on how the project, in bringing together academics, students, and community participants in a challenging but rich space, enabled exchanges of expertise and new, boundary-crossing ways of being in education that can be discussed as "third space" interactions.

KEYWORDS

Media production, third space, animation, community, co-creation

Figure 1: Hunger by the Sea

Figure 1: Source: Sue Sudbury

THE PROJECT

This is a partnership between two academics and two students, and the providers and users of a food bank. The academics are a documentary maker teaching a media production course (Sue) and a researcher in pedagogy and media practice (Julian). Sue led the project and recruited two undergraduate students, one from journalism (Charlie) and the other from Animation (Xue). In this article, consistent with the conceptual framing of Students as Partners (SaP), a collective voice (we) is used for the majority of our account and reflections, but where perspectives are specific to role or individual, the voice is presented as singular.

This media practice partnership was linked to the university's Student Research Assistant (SRA) scheme, which Sue applied to. The first application was for a student (Charlie) to work on a participatory video project with food bank users. Subsequently, the first phase of the research led to a change of plan, requiring animation rather than documentary video as the practice research mode, so Sue applied for a second SRA to make the animated film. Each SRA would be paid ten pounds an hour for a maximum of 120 hours. The SRAs applied in response to an advertisement on the university's student portal. Only students with average marks of 70% and above could apply, as part of the university criteria. Whilst the criteria limited the potential reach of the partnership, the fact that students were paid made Sue feel far more comfortable with the partnership as a working relationship, from her experience as a media practitioner.

This project framed established lines of enquiry into partnership and co-creation (Marquis et al., 2016; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016) with the concept of the third space (Bhabha, 1994). The third space has been of interest for the pursuit of designing pedagogy for equity and social justice. Gutiérrez (2008) offered the third space as a way to think about the social actors in a given setting, their autobiographical and temporal specificities, and how these could be accounted for in the design of an emancipatory form of educational experience. Third spaces in higher education have the potential to foster co-creation through porous expertise (Potter & McDougall, 2017). This porosity addresses the question of whose knowledge counts and how boundaries of expertise can be negotiated formally and informally across and between various knowledge domains. This is achieved through more curational, negotiated, reflexive, and inter-disciplinary forms of pedagogy.

With regard to university learning and teaching, the first space is home/community/family, the second space is the university, and the third space can be a physical, metaphorical, or digital/virtual space (or a combination of these), which is in between the first and second; whilst this can be a physical space, it is more importantly a space for thinking and working differently. For this project, we are not claiming the food bank as a third space, but we are suggesting that the way we worked in partnership was indicative of a third space in which pedagogy is negotiated and in which different forms of knowledge are acknowledged and validated. The signature pedagogies in these spaces are qualitatively different because they demand that the values and the culture of the participants feature in the space. Third spaces are, therefore, in significant ways, contested, negotiated, political spaces in which students are positioned in partnership with educators. Finally, from this project, we are also looking ahead to another second space, the media workplace, where our student partners are now working and have worked in the past. The transformative experiences we observe from this project will, we hope, impact on this 'second second space.'

Figure 2: Recruiting the student partners

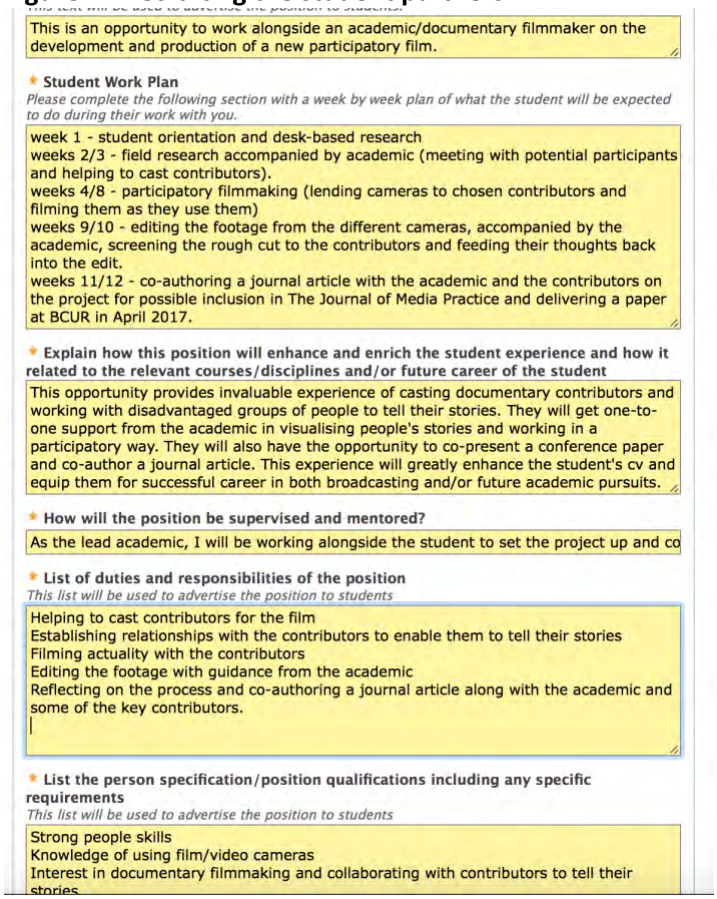

Figure 2: Source: Sue Sudbury

THE SETTING

The Trussell Trust is a UK charity which runs a network of over 400 food banks. In recent years, austerity economics and reforms to social security benefits have led to a significant increase in the use of food banks by people in work as well as the unemployed. In the year before the project, its 424 food banks gave out three-day emergency food packages to 1.3 million people—double the number of people who were needing to use food banks five years ago.

By asking people who use a food bank to participate in the production of an animated film sharing experiences from their everyday lives, this project sought to provide users with opportunities to speak directly to policymakers and politicians, and to self-represent, informed by ethnographic principles. However, we make no dubious or potentially exploitative claims for the food bank as a third space. The research presented here is restricted to a focus on the experiences of students and academics in a new kind of partnership and on the research outputs as existing in a third space across and between this written-up article and the visual media it speaks to. Converging the established field of SaP with our interest in third space, and as SaP and digital literacy initiatives both progress to maturation in Higher Education (HE), as the inception of this journal suggests, we are obliged to reflect on their transformative and redistributive impacts:

- What happens to students and teachers working as partners—in a (digital media) third space?
- What impact might this have on the second spaces of the university and the workplace (in this case, the media)?

THE APPROACH

In our exploration of the process and outcomes, we describe the distinct nature of the food bank project and hypothesise that SaP can take back to their second spaces those rich experiences that disrupt apparently neutral functional and economic discourses about *why* we are learning in digital media spaces as opposed to *what* we are learning. In this way we accept and embrace that a students-as-partners approach requires "a multiplicity of practices predicated on power-sharing and reflectivity from all involved, which can make partnership challenging to enact" (Matthews, 2017, p. 6).

THE FIELD

Readers of the *International Journal for Students as Partners* (*IJSaP*) will be familiar with the core principles of partnership that inform the community of practice it speaks to, for, and with. As SaP is an emerging research field, approaching a maturation phase, a number of sub-fields have developed, among and across which, we will situate our research.

SaP as a strategic response to the need to repurpose "student engagement" through embedding partnerships in institutional cultures is a values driven and "troublesome" threshold concept (Cook-Sather, 2014, p. 186). Student engagement is an endemic concern as the identity of HE, potentially in crisis, is re-negotiated, and SaP is presented as both a macro-level response, extending stakeholder relationships into industry and community, and a micro-level "way of doing" (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016, with outcomes usually disseminated within an action research and/or case study framework. Consider Shaw et al's reflections on how "The words used by students to describe the experience shifted from "painful," "challenging," and "frustrating" pre-SaP to "successful," "productive," and "fun" post-SaP." (2017, p. 6).

Research into SaP distinguishes loose classifications (Bernstein, 1996) of this approach from genuine practice, which fosters collaboration across the whole institution, with some key shared principles (Matthews, 2017): inclusive and ethical partnerships for transformation; power-sharing relationships and uncertain outcomes, although we might see the more ethnographic flavour of embracing uncertainty and the objective to transform as a site of tension. This sub-field draws heavily on Freire (1970) and the desire for 'praxis'. Crucial to this is the clear awareness of, and strategic resistance to, the adoption of SaP as a reproducing technology of the self, so that the 'uses of SaP' are always a site of struggle:

> The risk for SaP is that it becomes appropriated for neoliberal purposes that shift the discourse of SaP from a relational process to one of achieving outcomes of student satisfaction (which has been observed in terms of student engagement). In this scenario, the language of SaP is adopted, while the practices become "watered down" to ensure particular outcomes that maintain the power structures that SaP seek to disrupt (Matthews, 2017, p. 5).

However, research shows that this broadly Freirian aspiration for SaP is often impeded by an underestimation of power (Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017). Research into SaP is usually presented—as with our work here—by its protagonists, claiming agency and speaking to an emancipatory discourse. The workings of power and authority on the part of those driving the intervention are often annexed with the students' voices reduced to data. Avoiding this trap requires "a willingness to be mindful about the layers of power in our respective positions…, a personal commitment to mindfulness, vulnerability, and a

willingness to change. Most importantly, SaP is a lived process that must engage the heart." (Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017, p. 12).

Using a privileged lecturer-researcher voice on partnership in scholarly work might be viewed as manifesting a number of institutional framing processes—article authorship, research conventions, funding and research metrics combine to restrict opportunities for meaningful giving over of power or more transformative inexpertise (Rancière, 1991). But SaP research also bears witness to more overt and willful resistance, particularly in curriculum design and development. Murphy et al. (2017) indicates that academic staff are signed up to the spirit of SaP but articulate a series of disclaimers about whether all students are sufficiently "engaged" to work as equals in decision-making and sufficiently "expert" in terms of curriculum:

> Almost everything that was said about working in partnership was prefixed with a "but," showing that staff felt the idea had merit but that delivering on this merit was not perceived to be simple. The "but" in staff's otherwise positive view of partnership was also due to the perceived lack of engagement and subject awareness of the students (Murphy et al., 2017, p. 12).

For a more developed and systematic literature review of Students as Partners in HE, see Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, L. S., Matthews, K. E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammas, R., & Swaim, K. (2017). For our purposes here, we can return to the shared Freirian principles of inclusive and ethical partnerships, power-sharing, and transformation, and we can be mindful of problems in the field, such as the under-representation of cross-disciplinary initiatives, the lack of evidence of partnership extending beyond staff and student collaboration within the university, the focus on impacts on individuals as opposed to institutional cultures, the lack of scale in published studies, low rates of staff-student co-authorship and, related to this, the absence of student-centric reporting of research and an over-emphasis on positive outcomes. Addressing some of these issues was a key objective for our project.

Our partnership students and staff, and a food bank and its users took us to the heart of ethics and power, and very different, at times conflicting, transformations. A key line of our enquiry is the inter-disciplinary and sub-disciplinary key learnings that took place for all of us. We are open about the problems encountered in the "brave space" and you are reading a co-authored article drafted and edited by two students, one film-maker academic, and one practice researcher, which we intend to be student-centric. The area we can't explore, beyond tentative implications, is macro institutional culture, and we can't claim scale or generalizability from our "small story."

THE PARTNERSHIP

There have been several written academic studies on food banks in Britain and observational broadcast documentaries set in food banks in the north of England and Scotland (*Britain's Hidden Hungry*, BBC, 2012 and *The Food Bank: Scotland's Hidden Hunger*, BBC, 2015). However, there has been no research carried out where food bank clients are given cameras, where subjects become first-person storytellers, so this research was conceived as a participatory film-making project with users of a food bank addressing narratives of poverty with marginalised groups.

After Charlie spent several weeks volunteering in three local food banks, it became clear that people using food banks frequently had chaotic lives, struggling to make ends

meet, with benefit changes and/or low-paid work, and the prospect of using cameras was too difficult. Responding to this problem, the project was repurposed as an animated film in which users could speak anonymously, and we recruited another student co-researcher, Xue, from the animation department. Even with this new plan, it took approaches to fourteen different food banks before finding one that was prepared to let us record users' voices.

This is the first time Sue had co-researched with students, and it was an enriching experience, with cross-faculty participants working in an interdisciplinary way to facilitate genuinely reciprocal learning. Working alongside a professional filmmaker, editor, and sound designer, the journalism, animation, sound design and radio production students learned industry practice in a real-life setting.

The four-minute animated documentary, *Hunger by the Sea*, is a practice output of this research, presenting the human voice of food bank clients to policymakers and government officials. It was shortlisted for the 2017 Arts and Humanities Research Council Research in Film Award in the "Innovation" category at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts; it won an Award of Merit in the Best Short Film Awards and was screened at the London International Documentary Festival. Film director Ken Loach, whose *I, Daniel Blake* had been an influence for this project, said of *Hunger by the Sea*, "with originality this film tells a shocking story with great sensitivity. It's a very well-judged and paced film that really draws you in. A delicate piece that makes the awfulness of people's predicament all the more shaming" (2017). The charity Feeding Britain, set up by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger, feature the film on their website, so this example of a students-as-partners project has the potential for impact at a national level (see https://www.feedingbritain.org/).

Sue and Julian had both watched *I, Daniel Blake* and been very moved by the food bank scene and were thinking about whether scenes like this were playing out in the real world, as the film suggests. The university was recruiting student research assistants, and this was an ideal way to fund a project of this kind. The way Sue had worked for a previous third voice project, *Village Tales*, with women in India (Sudbury, 2016), would be taken into a food bank, working in a participatory relationship with users of the food bank. There had been some very good observational documentaries about food bank users, but the powerful dimension of subjects authoring their own stories had not been attempted hitherto. Three food banks agreed initially, and Charlie, an undergraduate journalism student, was recruited to work as creative partner. Charlie began by volunteering in the three food banks to understand the operational realities of the setting and hear the stories of the users, so he was the researcher, as he had been on previous broadcast productions for his degree and outside of his studies. He slotted in easily to that role and to the meetings with Sue, working as director, to share his findings and, crucially, to discuss the lack of willingness on the part of the users to go with the initial plan—to take the camera and produce a video diary. We had assumed, from existing documentaries, that people would be able to understand their situation in a political context, but we had not anticipated the amount of shame people would be feeling in the local setting (about their low income, difficulties in managing their finances, the need to ask for help) and the prevalent internalisation of neo-liberal ways of thinking about this being their fault and a feeling that they should be doing better. We tried to keep our own political feelings in abeyance, working with an open mind and listening in the field.

Whilst changing the plan in response to Charlie's research was not a significant shift from previous professional media practice, Sue had never worked with students in this way before; working with a current student as a researcher, outside of the classroom, with such a large degree of autonomy and trust. This was a hybrid project, coming out of the academy with a new configuration of expertise and knowledge building. Sue was in a different position, realising the only way the film could be made to give voice would be through animation, as this would maintain the participant voice but with the safeguarding distance of the drawings and the removal of the physical and emotional burden of the filmmaking. Contingent factors enabled us to recruit a second student assistant, Xue, from a vacancy elsewhere, from the animation department. This was where the learning began in earnest for Sue—as she had never worked on animation before—and for all of us, because on one visit by Charlie and Sue to the food bank, the users that happened to be there on that day and were prepared to be recorded offered an abundance of stories that would normally take several trips to harvest.

Charlie's prior experience in the research phase helped with trust building; he spoke the language and understood the context of the stories recorded. Sue, as producer/director, left the room for the recordings, something that would not happen in the industry, which hands over a high level of trust to the student, who in this moment was more expert than the academic. This, in turn, enabled a higher level of trust between the student and the users than would have been the case had the more experienced, but less familiar, academic (Sue) been present. Sue used her experience and expertise as a documentary maker to decide that it was less intimidating for the interviewee if only one person was present, and Charlie had volunteered in food banks up until this point, so he was familiar with the subject—it was a partnership of porous expertise.

With the researcher (Charlie) recording the voices without the director (Sue) present, Sue was dependent on Charlie's knowledge of context when working with sound without pictures. When the animator (Xue) joined the project, Sue and Xue worked together, discussing metaphorical images and their connections to the recordings (e.g., red lines around a seaside helter-skelter tightening to connote red tape). Sue hadn't previously appreciated the complexity of, or time required to, realise animation; when Xue joined the project, she brought a vision and expertise from previous award-winning work, but again, Sue's handing over of trust and relinquishing control of the piece were key shifts in the pedagogic relation. In the final stages, a radio production student was also recruited to work on aspects of audio editing.

It's important to emphasise distinctions and nuances between documentary filmmaking, animation, and audio production. Partnership and collaboration across these domains is about more than just converging different aspects of media. Sue was constantly trying to grasp what Xue's work involved and whether this was beyond the expectations of the project. Xue had never worked on a documentary before and is now developing a postgraduate proposal in the area. Whilst Charlie enjoyed more autonomy than is usually the case when researching for a director, the final cut excluded one story he was keen to see in the film, so the power dynamics of the production relations were restored. With our third-space metaphor in mind, the nature of this partnership as generally fragmented in space and time is also key, with each element being transmitted digitally and Xue and Charlie never working in the same physical space. Finally, whilst Sue's instinct for storytelling through documentary film is in the DNA, her pedagogic *modus operandi* is less entrenched, so the shift here is less profound in one sense than it is in other SaP projects,

perhaps, because the collaborative, agile, and creative working space is defined more by experience from media practice than media education.

Figure 3: Animation storyboard

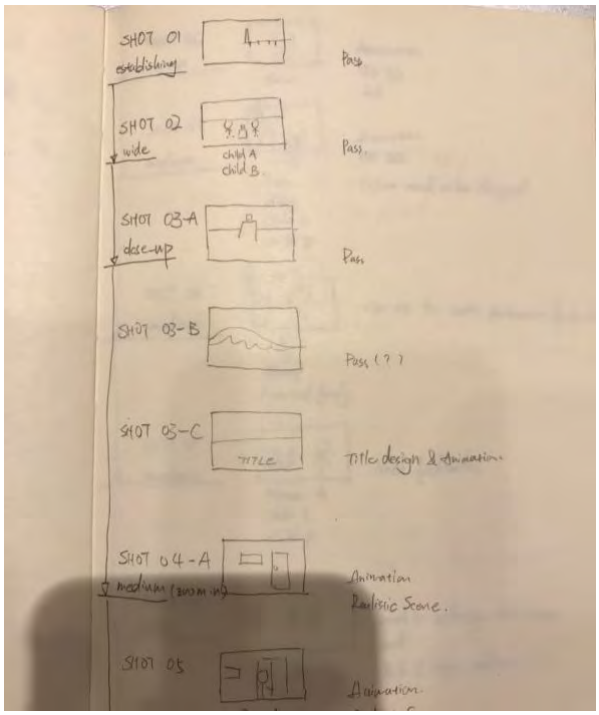

Figure 3: Source: Xue Han

THE RESEARCH

In this section we discuss two data sets—key extracts from the film, where the voices of our participants offer key thematic findings, and the students' production logs. The voice-over sequences combine captured audio from interactions in the food bank, along with extracts from the recorded interviews with both users and staff.

Looking now at the production logs:

> *Charlie: I had a positive meeting with Sue. I think I understand her vision for the film. It's a great idea—participatory filmmaking for a misunderstood demographic. It's not really been done before. During our chat, I quickly realised that I don't know as much as I thought about the subject. I'll need to know more.*

> *Xue: I am a student but I feel more like an artist working on this important project. My original intention [in] joining this project was only to accumulate many experiences, but I have learned far more than this. In my main course, our duty was to accomplish a commercial 3D project, graduate, and find a job. The working process was regularly following the CG industry. Compared with my main course, this project opened a new window to me. Firstly, I don't just focus here on how many exquisite details or realistic pictures I can make but more on how to build up the characters by just listening to their voice[s]. I need to close my eyes and imagine the people. Secondly, the project lets me know more about the UK and it makes me think about the society—how are people living outside our campus and our comfort zone?*

> *Do people have the same food problems in my hometown? Do we have an organization like a food bank? Both this project and my graduation project together helped me with my confidence. I know myself better. I know I can use multiple methods to work and I have better time management.*

These extracts present a reflexive articulation of "known unknowns," but more importantly, these are very closely related to both the partnership with academics and the third space. Three key themes emerge, understanding and helping to form the vision of the teacher/director; feeling more like an artist than a student, and gaining confidence outside of the comfort zone. These are all facilitated both by the shift in working relationships and also by the third spaces—working with the misunderstood demographic in the food bank *and* the transition in media practices away from two second spaces—the vocational aspects of the degree curriculum and the previous experiences with the CG industry—the third space here is a fusion of these two second spaces with the food bank, but also enabled by the digital affordance of the virtual engagement with the users. The very different first-space contexts are also part of the reflection.

> *Xue: Sue has been helping me, supporting me, and encouraging a lot. She provided me sufficient freedom to create. She treats me like a real artist, not only a student. This is the first animated documentary I participated in [making]. It means a lot to me. [First], animated documentary is still a controversial art form in my country. [Second], every single frame of the film is painted out from my hand. The process was like raising a baby, both toilsome and happy. All the other team members are like the other parents. At last, I win the challenge with a new technique. I'm a 3D student, and 3D software is my regular tool. But in this case, I have to choose an efficient, quick and simple tool. I use Photoshop to finish all the shots, which I don't think [many animators are doing].*

> *Charlie: As I don't really understand food banks, I've taken quite a bit of time to do some reading around the subject. It's amazing. The work of the volunteers and the generosity of the public. But it's got me angry—the arrogance of some politicians is gobsmacking in some cases. It just feels so pointless. These people shouldn't be getting hungry in the first place. Nevertheless, it's important to crack on. There are two amazing documentaries already out there by Vice and Panorama. Vice's is shot amazingly—it vividly captures the grit of a north-east food bank and the people that use it. However, Panorama's has real stories. We follow people who need the food bank and [see how] they'd do without it. I think we should concentrate on this. There could be some powerful stories behind closed doors.*

In these reflections, two very different transformations from first and second spaces are presented. The baby metaphor emphasises the elevated levels of engagement in this partnership, compared to the "vertical discourse" (Bernstein, 1996) configurations of following the university course and/or industry training. The anger generated by this real-world learning is self-evident, but it appears to support our finding from previous research that both partnership and third-space learning initiatives are given more energy by a political premise than neoliberal employability framing.

Charlie: Today was our first meeting with the Trussell Trust. It was really positive actually. The lady in charge is so passionate about what she does. It is clear this is a really complicated subject matter though, and she's also been let down in the past. I think Sue and I should keep this in mind.

Charlie: First days are always tough. Today was different though. I'll admit, I haven't done as much volunteering as I should have in the past, so my first day at the food bank was different. I did feel like I genuinely helped whilst keeping in mind our project. But I am worried. This wasn't quite what I thought it was going to be. The volunteers are GREAT but they aren't characters. For powerful films, we need good characters. It's also not TV friendly—it's a whitewashed, cold and sterile room. It feels like something from the Department of Work and Pensions.
Xue: The only regret is the pressing time. I thought it was an impossible mission when I knew Sue's target to finish a film; there was not much time when I joined, and there was only one animator, me. So this is really big pressure. However, Sue just kept her countenance and kept discussing things with me. She provides solutions in narrative, which inspires me a lot, and she suggests I use my previous animation working experiences. At the same time, team members who worked on the sound gave me

Charlie: wow. What a different world. Although the staff tell me this is the busiest food bank in the region, it still doesn't seem that busy. Here I am also finding problems. The people coming are here all the same sadly. They either have addiction or mental health issues I'm not denying they need the food bank, but it could be ethically challenging to involve them.. Giving them a camera and bringing them on board could provide problems. Although the staff here are really great too, I'm still a bit worried.

In these reports, we can observe the tensions between the need to develop as media practitioners—to embrace and join the Big Other of The Media (Bennett, Kendall, & McDougall, 2012) and the ethical dimension of this—for example the distinction between volunteers and "characters."

Charlie: People don't want to be filmed. That's okay. I get it. Nor would I. BUT—that's a core theme gone from our documentary. Today, Sue came up with such a great idea. Anonymity via animation. Genius.

Xue Time is ticking away. My free time is increasingly being taken up by my dissertation and this is only going to get worse. So Sue has been working hard. She's made contact with a different food bank and we're going tomorrow.

These accounts from Charlie bring to the surface several "mission central" elements of partnership—the student and teacher are, at this point, in a relationship of equals, but the hierarchy reappears in the edit. Whether this is a return to the teacher-student hierarchy or director-researcher, or both, is harder to know, but the reflexive visibility of the partially inverted pedagogic relation (in Rancière's terms) is important, and the third-space context is fundamental to the issue—this is about more than just cutting out a part of a film, it's about deciding not to let a voice be heard—in this way, the process of editing footage

mirrors the process of selecting research data from transcription and, quite possibly, the process of constructing knowledge (McDougall and Orr, 2018). Charlie and Sue were in dialogue after he left the project, as the audio recordings began to be visualised. In the case of the little boy's story, when Sue learned from Xue how long it takes to animate sequences, she realised it wasn't possible to include full stories, only sound bites. But the little boy's story was also a third-person account from the food bank manager, so Sue felt, as director, this was less impactful as the first-person sound bites.

> *Charlie: It feels weird handing over the project after so long and in such an unfinished state. Especially as I've never met the animator but I trust she's good. It's an odd feeling—picturing what you have in your head and imagining someone completely change that. This has been a great experience though. I feel my views have shifted and I understand more. I'm hopeful for change.*
>
> *Xue: There were unexpected events during the process. The biggest one is some feedback on my graduation project came from my tutors. They asked me to add more elements to the shot, and each of them referred to a 3D software and new techniques. It could cost me a lot of time to solve and might take time from the animated documentary. At last, I dealt with some of them, left the rest to the destiny, and give every other second to this film. I slept less, but finally, I finished both of them!*

These final extracts serve to re-emphasise the nature of this work as a third-space partnership. Xue and Charlie co-produced a film and co-authored an article with two academics, but the four of us have never met in the same place together. Xue describes the second and third spaces colliding, as she was forced to return to the second to react to tutor feedback at the same time as finishing this film. Whilst the distinctions between the usual "signature pedagogy" (McDougall & Orr, 2018, p173) of media practice and our third-space partnership might be fine fault lines, the distinction between the reciprocal relations between the production team and this articulation of "they asked me to" is noteworthy.

DISCUSSION

Reviewing our outcomes in the framework of the maturing field of SaP, we return to the emerging themes above: interdisciplinary working; inclusive and ethical partnership; power-sharing; challenges with uncertain outcomes in the "brave space"; and student-centric reporting. These themes are combined with our over-arching reflective questions about third-space partnerships:

- What happens to people doing education—as partners—in a (digital media) third space?
- What impact might this have on the second spaces of the university and the workplace—in this case, the media?

Working with students, as opposed to teaching them, is facilitated by the change of scene. To an extent this is just about going outside of the classroom and taking on different roles, but in this project, the addition of the food bank offered up a site for third-space relations, if not a third space in itself. The genuine not knowing, or the "known unknowns" of making this animation, were, for the academics, important; this was constructivist and enquiry-based learning in every way. Not only did the academics design the project and

then hand over a great deal of responsibility for its execution, with very high stakes, ethically, but also, a student instigated the change of plan (away from video diaries) and another student realised the final product (animation); Sue, as director, was primarily the facilitator. Future research might take this further by involving SaP in the initial design of the project.

As explained above, the interdisciplinary aspects of this project should not be lost in a general perception of media. As noted earlier, there are clear and present shifts in the practice dynamics and disciplinary conventions—a film documentary maker producing animation, an animator working in new ways and on a documentary for the first time, and a film researcher handing over the sound to an animator without ever meeting—these are clear and present shifts in practice dynamics and disciplinary conventions. In industry a film researcher would never hand over sound to the animator as the director, as team leader, would always be the key team member liaising with different aspects of the production.

For the students, working in third space was key to the learning but, at times, frustrating. Using knowledge from both the first space—relationship skills learned from building relationships—and the second *spaces* (the university and media industry)—enabled confident communication with contributors. For example, the importance of diplomatically excluding more vulnerable users on ethical grounds meant that skills from both the first and second spaces were required for the project to progress. With the shifts in ways of working as media producers arising from the process, the transformative impact of the project is likely to be taken back to the media second space instead of, or as well as, the university.

However, there are some important disclaimers. A stated challenge for the field of SaP would be to move away from positive reporting and, to some extent, the student co-authors here might be accentuating the positive. Furthermore, this is another small story, involving two students who were appointed to research assistant roles, for which the criteria were tough. Both the students had worked in media-industry contexts before, were academically successful, and thus, were confident operators in two second spaces. We cannot generalise from our experiences here, and it's clear that working in such an ethically charged third-space context would be impossible to scale and carries an abundance of risks, so this was a highly situated, specific, and carefully vetted partnership.

But, in concluding, we return to the political dimension. The purpose of the film in addressing the issue of poverty and the need for food banks to support the working poor in a rich country distinguished this project from co-creation initiatives seeking to enhance engagement or employability in neoliberal framings. Xue, as a parent herself, was affected greatly by a mother's story. Charlie was struck by his experiences in the research phase. As he says above, "It's got me angry!"

This is a "small story." However, it signals an original and significant intersection between two related conceptual fields—SaP and Third space. Further research is needed to develop the "threshold concept" of student partnership (see Cook-Sather, 2014, p6-7) to include the framing of the third space, along new lines of enquiry:

- The meaning, nature, and possibilities of facilitating partnership in third spaces;
- Educational strategies for working collaboratively in the third space;
- Suitable methodologies for investigating third-space partnership;
- Ethical and representational issues arising from the "writing up" of third-space partnership.

- How the notion of the Third space might enrich, expand, or complicate thinking about partnerships.

This research was conducted with approval from the university's ethics committee, in full compliance with the university's research ethics code of practice and the British Educational Research Association's ethical good practice guidance.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Xue Han *is studying for MA 3D Computer Animation at Bournemouth University course and is keen to continue to explore her passion for making animation in different art styles. Xue was born in Xi'an and now lives in Shanghai. In her spare time she likes to practice Kongfu for health.*

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Charlie Mott *is a BA Multi-Media Journalism student at Bournemouth University who intends to pursue a career in television. To this end, he has been involved in a number of work experience placements in media environments as part of his course in addition to freelance work in the television industry during his holidays*.

Sue Sudbury *is a Principal Academic in the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth. Sue's film Village Tales won the 2016 AHRC Research in Film Award for Innovation and Hunger by the Sea was nominated for the same award in 2017. Sue is now leading Faculty initiatives to define and expand practice-based research.*

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CASE STUDY

Students as Partners in Action: Evaluating a University-Wide Initiative

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ABSTRACT

This case study was designed as one of many pilot projects to inform the scaling-up of Students as Partners (SaP) as a whole-of-institution strategy to enhance the student learning experience. It sought to evaluate the other pilots in order to understand the phenomena of partnerships and how students and staff perceive the experience of working in partnership. It also sought to explore the extent of benefits and challenges experienced by staff and students throughout the process and identify potential implications for future implementation.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, whole-of-institution approach, evaluation, challenges, shifts in perception, project management

Students as Partners (SaP) has become a hot topic in higher education, with increasing uptake by universities around the world (Matthews, Dwyer, Hine, & Turner, 2018). SaP is a way of thinking and doing that re-positions students and staff as active and equal collaborators in a reciprocal process to enhance teaching and learning; curricula and pedagogy; and to engage in research (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). Praxis is central to enacting genuine SaP, and is a commitment to the embodiment of certain principles and dispositions embedded within the critical pedagogy of SaP. These principles include fostering inclusivity; power sharing via dialogue and reflection; understanding partnership as a process with no certain outcomes; engaging ethically; and undertaking partnership for transformation (Dwyer, 2018; Matthews, 2017). Further, genuine SaP is thought to emerge from the *social space* established by the ongoing processes brought about by the embodiment

of these principles and is therefore something more than just *individual* praxis (Dwyer, 2018; Matthews, Dwyer, Russell, & Enright, in press).

Partnership is enacted across diverse settings; in small to large groups; in courses or across entire programs (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017); or at the institutional level, with a focus on university governance, strategy, or policy (Bovill, 2017; Shaw, Rueckert, Smith, Tredinnick, & Lee, 2017). It is at this latter level—the implementation of university strategy—that this project is focused.

The University of Queensland (UQ) recently introduced SaP as one of the core goals of its Student Strategy 2016–2020, which aims to enhance the students' learning experience, and is planning how to implement the strategy in the coming years. In the latter half of 2017, the Students as Partners Program Design Project was initiated. This project took a collaborative approach to designing the UQ-wide SaP program by trialling different approaches. For each of the 11 SaP pilots, students and staff, with the support of the Student Strategy Team (SST), worked in partnership to contribute to one aspect of the overall program design (to inform university-wide implementation from 2018). Table 1 provides information about the pilot projects.

Table 1. 11 Pilot projects by title

SaP PILOTS
Pilot 1 Incentivising and rewarding student-staff partnerships at UQ
Pilot 2 Auditing student engagement on UQ teaching and learning-related committees
Pilot 3 Designing the teaching consultancy stream of the UQ SaP program
Pilot 4 Developing a SaP community of practice
Pilot 5 Creating resources to support student participation on committees
Pilot 6 Creating a communication strategy for UQ SaP
Pilot 7 Communicating the UQ Student Strategy
Pilot 8 Co-creating and evaluating FutureLearn materials in COMU1120
Pilot 9 Evaluating SaP pilots
Pilot 10 Explicitly embedding communication skills in a compulsory first-year science course
Pilot 11 Designing the UQ SaP program

Overall, 29 students and 22 staff, in teams of two to 10 members, were engaged to work together as partners across these projects (The Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation, 2017). The SST was responsible for recruiting participants. Staff members were nominated according to identified project needs or areas of expertise. Although there was no fixed time commitment, they were required to meet regularly with their project team and actively contribute to achieving the project's goals. Students were expected to spend either 50 or 100 hours on their project and received a stipend midway and at the end—similar to the SaP programs at McMaster University (Ahmad et al., 2017) and the University of Winchester (Lowe, Shaw, Sims, King, & Paddison, 2017).

This case study (Pilot 9) was designed to evaluate the overall project with the intention of informing future implementation. The positioning of this study as an internal evaluation mechanism was considered challenging from the beginning (Volkov & Baron, 2011). Consequently, during the formative stage, we were careful to ensure our role was independent from the SST. To achieve this independence, a staff member from the SST, who was assigned to the evaluation team, was asked to withdraw to avoid the conflict of interest that the rest of the team members had identified. This process required a robust conversation in the early days of the pilot, a process that effectively united the team from the beginning and helped to establish a trusting and respectful relationship.

OUR APPROACH

In a review of the literature on SaP evaluations, we noted predominantly positive outcomes reported for both students and staff. Furthermore, a recent systematic review summarising the benefits and challenges outlined in the existing literature (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) noted that the challenges appeared to be under-reported, with up to 75% of the papers reviewed neglecting to report any challenges. Of those that did, the most prevalent was a reinforcement of pre-existing power inequalities, which inhibited a sense of trust between students and staff. Such outcomes are important to address: a failure to adequately clarify new and unfamiliar roles can impede input and collaboration (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016). Other barriers include institutional structures and cultures, and promoting inclusivity for already marginalised students (Dwyer, 2018). It is unclear if these are common outcomes due to the under-reporting. This evaluation therefore sought to redress this by exploring both benefits and challenges experienced by staff and students throughout the pilots at UQ.

We also made an empirical observation of a cognitive shift that has been consistently alluded to in SaP practice due to its transformative nature (Curran, 2017; Marquis et al., 2015), also described as a threshold concept (Cook-Sather, 2014). A novel aspect of this evaluation was the pre-post survey design, developed to explore whether participants' perceptions of partnership change over the course of the pilots to reflect this shift (Berger, Kerner, & Lee, 1999), and testing potential influencing factors. While the Pilot 9 evaluation was tasked with reporting on other facets of the overall program, this case study focuses on these two aspects.

RESULTS

We designed and conducted two surveys. The first was administered at the mid-project point, the second in the final weeks of the project. Table 2 summarises response rates.

Table 2. Participant response rates

PILOT PARTICIPANTS (n = 51)	RESPONDENTS
Survey 1	24 (47%)
Survey 2	19 (37%)
Both surveys	13 (25.5%)
Gender	75% female respondents
Survey 1 only or both	13 (54%) students 14 (58.3%) staff 1 in both student and staff category

Benefits

The benefits described by participants in this study closely reflected those already described elsewhere in the literature (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). For students, there was enhanced motivation, ownership, and meta-cognitive awareness about their own learning, along with deepened understanding of, and contributions to, the academic community. Staff members, meanwhile, reported enhanced relationships with students and transformed ways of thinking about learning and teaching practices as a collaborative and ongoing process. Picking up on the theme of self-development and the increased meta-cognition described as benefits in the literature, we specifically asked respondents to indicate how their involvement in SaP activities enhanced this learning. Both students and staff noted the impact of face-to-face communication, and the corresponding links between valuing diversity and developing emotional intelligence, in enabling them to work together effectively, as illustrated by the following quotation:

> The fundamental change in my learning processes has been my consideration of issues from different perspectives. Having worked with people across all the faculties for a few weeks now, their differing approaches to problem solving have forced me to consider issues from a variety of perspectives in my own studies and, more broadly, my own life.

In terms of specific skill development, participants reported increased efficacy in multiple areas aside from research and pedagogical-related skills. These included multi-disciplinary teamwork, leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills; project, enterprise, and evaluation skills; stress, time and self-management skills; and the use of various new technologies.

Challenges

The most common challenge experienced by participants in the UQ pilots was time management (76%), compared with communication (15%), managing power imbalances and dominant personalities (5%), and overcoming differences in experience and expertise within the teams (5%). The insufficient allocation of time for the projects impacted participants' satisfaction with the pilots and their ability to develop relationships, a sense of belonging, and commit time to the pilot. Most respondents indicated they required either additional time or additional team members to effectively manage and complete the projects. One participant commented:

> The major challenge for me has, unsurprisingly, been time. Current systems and policies afford very little recognition/acknowledgement of the value of this kind of work and it takes longer to develop meaningful partnerships than it does to tell students exactly what to do, what to be interested in, and how to do whatever it is that needs doing.

For staff, respondents indicated that this may be alleviated if the time spent on SaP projects was recognised as constituting part of their professional workloads. For students, the most reported time management issue was balancing study loads with project requirements. Assistance for students in balancing workloads may alleviate this barrier. Alternatively, undertaking less ambitious and time-consuming projects, or extending them beyond single semester time frames, would naturally reduce this challenge, as has been recently recognised elsewhere (Ahmad et al., 2017; Marie & McGowan, 2017).

The initial challenge of time frames was increased when project teams were unsure of what their project was expected to achieve, and requested more guidance from the SST. This added pressure as teams typically needed to spend more time developing concrete goals and forming authentic relationships (Dwyer, 2018). Typical recommendations from respondents included more clearly expressed and detailed output expectations; reflections on lived experience during induction; more distinct submission deadlines (reporting); and communicating more realistically the level of commitment necessary in advertising for partners.

Exacerbating the time frame issues was the number of additional outputs, which accumulated throughout the semester, in addition to specific project outputs. Reports and reflections on the process for each pilot, required by the SST, as well as requests for contributions being generated from other pilots, was a workload that most found difficult to effectively manage.

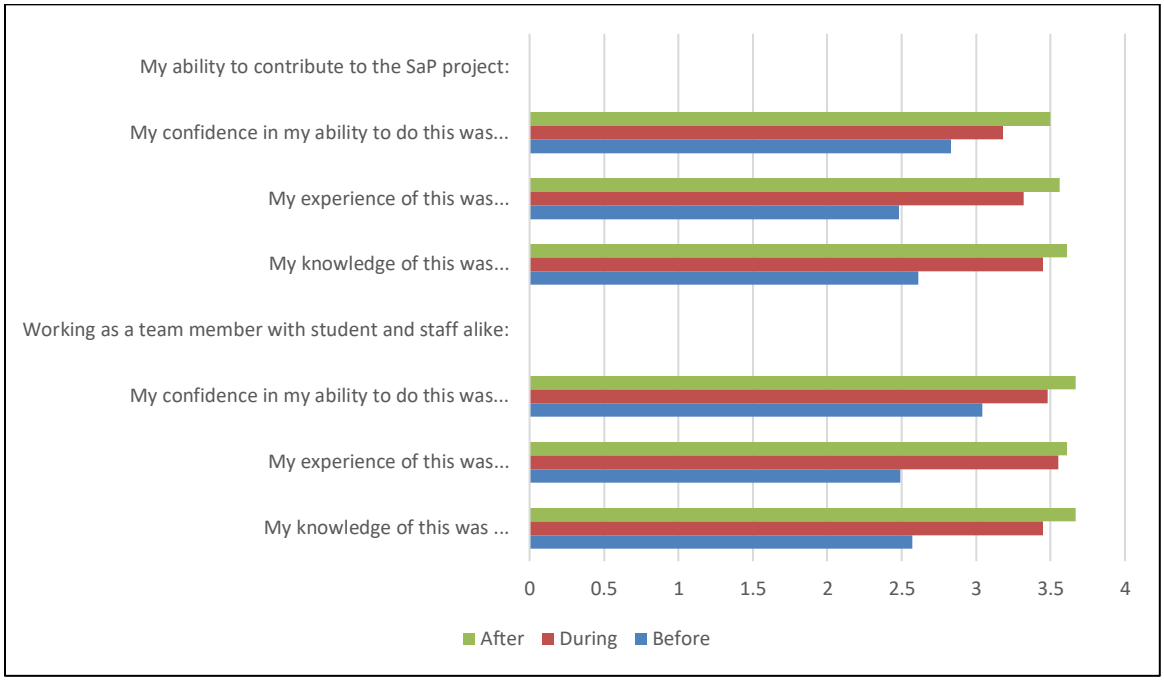
The overwhelming focus on time as the key challenge by participants was likely to be a consequence of the wide-scale implementation and pilot nature of the projects and the need to inform UQ-wide program development. Nevertheless, the need to reduce the total output requirements and limit bureaucratisation for future projects was a clear learning from this process.

Perception shift

Given 75% of participants in the pilots had not previously engaged in SaP activities, they were asked to indicate how they perceived their confidence and ability to do so effectively at

different stages of the project life cycle on a Likert Scale of 1 to 4. As shown in Figure 1, participants felt increasingly more confident with their own capacity to contribute over the course of the semester.

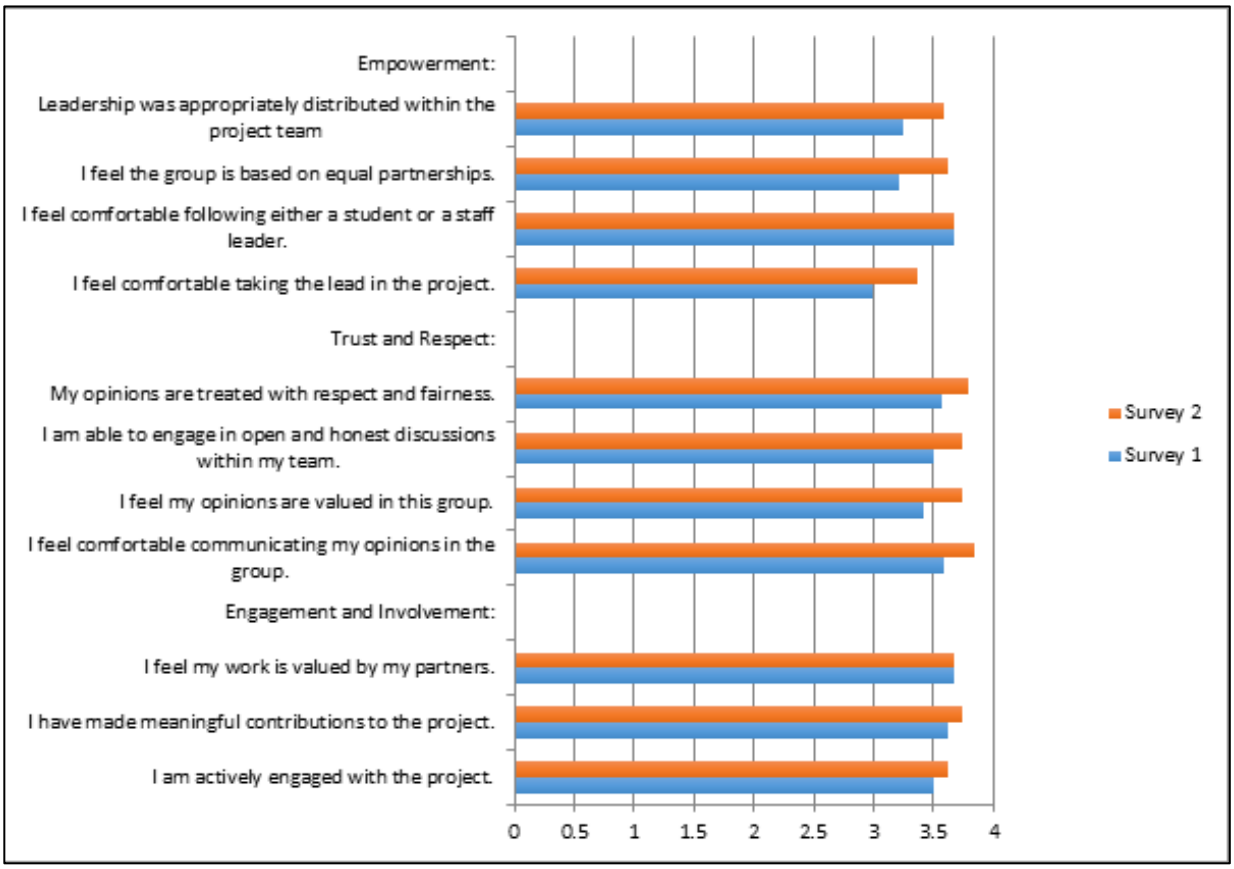
Figure 1: Ability to contribute to SaP



When asked how their preconceived expectations of SaP had changed, the key themes that emerged indicated that it was an enactment of the values of partnership, as outlined by Healey et al. (2014) that created this shift. Responses reflected the values of authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, challenge, community, and responsibility, suggesting these values could be used as a framework to structure future surveys.

Participants were similarly asked to rate their experience of working in partnership during and after completion of their projects. Measures used related to a sense of empowerment, trust/respect, and engagement/involvement. While the average response was positive in all measures, with most participants agreeing that their experience was positive, there was again an improvement over the life cycle of the projects (Figure 2). In the final survey, all participants were satisfied with their overall experience, with an average rating of 3.58 out of 4 achieved.

Figure 2: Positive experiences of working in partnership



A limited number of participants noted that instead of an authentic partnership, the dynamic in their teams was based more on an expert-assistant dynamic, as has been noted elsewhere, with staff retaining the power and students unwilling to challenge their authority (Ahmad et al., 2017; Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017; Lowe et al., 2017; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, these comments were mainly in response to the first survey and were attributed to the focus being on the end-product and what the academic needed done, rather than on the process of working in partnership. While this sentiment of power imbalance was echoed in the feedback from the second survey, overall it was much more positive than the first, with participants commenting on the increasing socialisation aspects of their projects and pride in the quality of their project outcomes—again reflecting a direct attribution to the values of partnership for the shift in perceptions. The implication of this finding for professional development requirements for SaP is the need to highlight a life cycle approach that focuses on relational values.

Allied with this understanding was the need to establish an actual program titled Students as Partners to act as a centralised space from which to establish, recruit, and coordinate future SaP projects. Respondents envisaged this program to be linked with mentoring and other support programs, resources, and services—and thus the broader UQ community—in much the same way as described by Shaw et al. (2017). In general, respondents

wanted greater project integration, including mandatory communication and meetings between pilots of a similar type, or associated within the same discipline or faculty. This was linked to the desire for participation in a community of practice in several responses. Although respondents typically see this as a whole-of-institution program, they also commented on the need to pave the way for projects within the faculties to increase awareness of SaP. Respondents see SaP as procedural rather than outcome-oriented and, most importantly, embodying the ethos of partnership. Respondents typically produced this vision in association with ways to effectively up-scale the SaP program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evidence presented in this case study, the following recommendations are made for future implementation of SaP in large higher education institutions:

1. Allow sufficient time for teams to form as a partnership prior to commencing work on project outputs.
2. Allow sufficient time frames and resourcing for projects.
3. Include out-of-semester time for projects to facilitate increased student participation.
4. Make time commitments and project expectations explicit at time of advertising projects.
5. Communicate better with schools and faculties involved in projects regarding expectations.
6. Consider a life cycle approach to project implementation and professional development.

CONCLUSIONS

This case study, in itself a SaP project, evaluated a series of pilot projects to inform the strategic directions for scaling up SaP as a whole-of-institution program. A key challenge for participants was the short time frame available to develop genuine partnerships and achieve multiple required outputs. This overshadowed commonly experienced power imbalances described elsewhere (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), potentially explained by both the pilot nature and involvement of predominantly experienced staff in SaP projects. Challenges associated with the practical components of embedding SaP within a whole-of-institution program included adequate central support systems, clear project expectations, and incentive schemes that meet the needs of both staff and students.

Another finding was the measurable shift in perceptions of participants regarding their efficacy to participate in SaP initiatives. Our results suggest a direct correlation with the enactment of values of partnership, as outlined by Healey et al. (2014), which warrants further research.

We received approval from our Human Research Ethics Committee (#2017001378) for our study.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Leanne Coombe *is the Academic Lead for Curriculum Support and Innovation for the Faculty of Medicine at The University of Queensland. Her research over the last five years, which draws on mixed-methods but prioritises qualitative approaches, has involved leading a national research team as principal investigator, focusing on models of curriculum integration of Indigenous health competencies.*

Jasmine Huang *is completing her BA Honours in psychology and has experience in applying both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Her previous projects involve developing evaluation tools for the Boeing Livewell Collaborative Studio in researching the needs of middle-aged passengers, data analysis, and delivering prototypes that have been patented.*

Stuart Russell *is a final-year undergraduate student undertaking an extended major in anthropology. He brings experience working in interdisciplinary student-staff partnerships analysing qualitative data around academic leaders' conceptions of SaP. Stuart has also completed research using ethnographic and mixed-method approaches in both urban and remote settings.*

Karen Sheppard *has worked on a number of large-scale national research projects investigating the contemporary Bachelor of Arts degree program. She has been responsible for the participant recruitment, obtaining consent, data collection, and data analysis as well as the evaluation of the quality of research at The University of Queensland.*

Hassan Khosravi *undertakes research into personalising education and translating traditional on-campus learning into authentic flexible learning in vibrant digital environments that better suit the needs and expectations of a digitally minded generation. He employs exemplary techniques to design, implement, validate, and deliver solutions that use the digital footprints of learners.*

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CASE STUDY

Therapaws: A Partnership Between Students, Staff, and Therapy Dogs on a University Campus

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ABSTRACT

Partnering with students in action research and asking them how and why they would like to work with staff and other students to improve campus culture and student wellbeing is the cornerstone of this case study. Investment in student mental health and wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a priority in higher education, with novel approaches such as dog therapy programs being introduced in universities around the world. This case study highlights a project where staff and students partner to co-design, co-implement, and co-investigate a mental health and wellbeing program that combines dog therapy with students-as-partners principles. The student-led dog therapy program (Therapaws) provides a practical, evidence-based example of how the principles of SaP can be employed to create an effective intervention into student mental health and wellbeing. This multi-authored case study is also an example of a collaborative writing process—a true partnership.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, dog therapy, student wellbeing, student mental health

This case study responds to the need for evidence-based, co-authored research on the impact of Students as Partners (SaP), which has been identified as a key priority in higher education (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Existing SaP research and the principles of SaP demonstrate that SaP positively impacts students' confidence, engagement, and sense of shared responsibility and community (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). The project centred on campus visits by specialist therapy dogs (and their handlers), peer-to-peer conversations about wellbeing, and campus support services. From start to finish, our team of staff (one academic and two professional) and six undergraduate student researchers have co-investigated the impact of dog therapy on our student volunteers

and student participants. Additionally, this case study provides practical insights into student-student partnerships, which have been identified as another key priority for further research since student-student partnerships are the second most common partnership structure employed in practice, and yet are underexplored in research (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). To that end, student-student partnerships are a key pillar of how the Therapaws program is designed to impact students by increasing knowledge of mental health, wellbeing and student support services.

ISSUE

Mental health and anxiety significantly affect university students in comparison to the general population, and are associated with decreased retention and academic performance. A World Health Organization survey of university students across 21 countries found an average of 20.3% of university students had long-term psychological illnesses (Auerbach et al., 2016). Only 16.4% of those university students with long-term psychological illnesses received mental health care, and a link to attrition was found (Auerbach et al., 2016). Within Australia, a cross-institutional survey of psychological distress found that 83.9% of university students reported elevated distress levels, which was significantly higher than the 29% level of incidence found in the general Australian population (Stallman, 2010). Students with elevated distress levels were found to have more days away from their studies and a lower grade point average (Stallman, 2010). Similarly, stress, depression, and anxiety levels in Australian university students have been found to be higher than the Australian general population; for example, Lovell, Nash, Sharman, and Lane (2015) found mild or higher stress levels in 26.5% of university students, mild or higher depression levels in 21.8% of students, and mild or higher anxiety levels in 28.5% of students. Robotham and Julian (2006) identify a number of unique stressors that affect university students compared to the general population: examination stress, financial pressures, transition to university, and study-related stress. Stigma and lack of knowledge about student support services have been identified as significant barriers to accessing the psychological support that universities provide (Holland, 2016; Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008). There is a need for additional student wellbeing support that breaches these gaps by targeting these unique stressors and barriers. One of the key findings in Veness' (2016) Churchill Fellowship report, *The Wicked Problem of University Student Mental Health,* is that students must be part of the solution, with student representatives as key partners in the development of policies and intervention strategies.

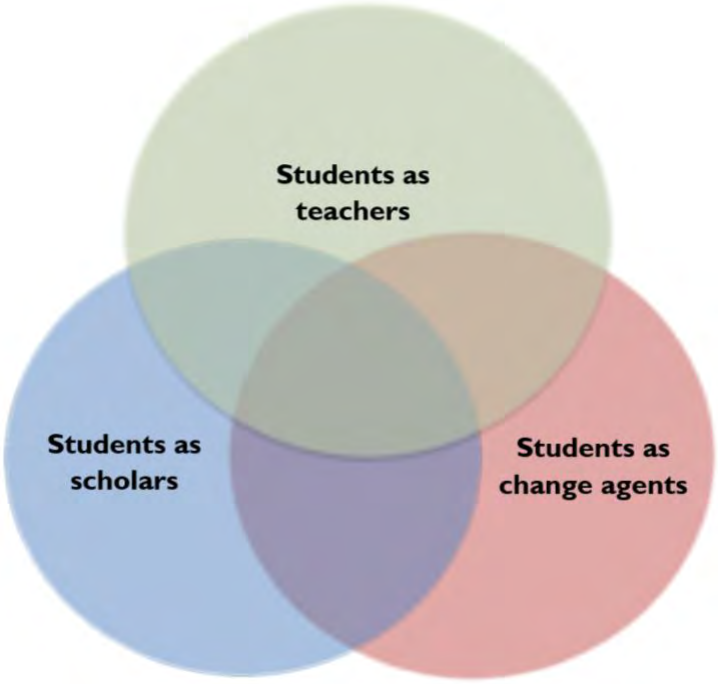
STRATEGY

Dog therapy provides a relatively stigma-free, low-cost, engaging mental health intervention, which is supported by an emerging body of research that suggests efficacy in reducing stress (Daltry & Mehr, 2015; S. McDonald, E. McDonald, & Roberts, 2017; Muckle & Lasikiewicz, 2017; Ward-Griffin et al., 2018). Therapaws pairs dog therapy with the principles of SaP to amplify the impact of the program on student wellbeing by targeting these unique student stressors and barriers. Student-staff partnerships are critical, with a particular value placed on the ability of students to know what kind of program would best engage their peers,

what specific stressors students are facing, what information students do not have, and how to communicate that information in a student-friendly manner. Professional and academic staff members provide the expertise, time commitment, and resources needed to organise large-scale, complex programs and ensure student partners receive training and mentoring to build upon their existing skills. Student-student partnerships are also critical, with student volunteers functioning as visible, peer ambassadors for positive mental health through conversation with student participants as part of the dog therapy program.

In designing the project, the latest scholarship on students-as-partners is primarily based on Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) model and the work coming out of McMaster University. Given that this project is extracurricular, we employed a simplified students-as-partners model, as conceptualised by Healey, Bovill, and Jenkins (2015) and illustrated below in Figure 1, rather than one of the more complex partnership models that currently inform the curriculum. The group felt these models did not adequately cater to an extracurricular project that is aligned with the attainment of overall graduate qualities related to leadership and influence rather than classroom teaching. In terms of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and SaP principles, there is the potential, we believe, to re-examine the current suite of SaP conceptual models to better incorporate small-scale extracurriculum projects that are so often part of a SaP program (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

Figure 1: Students as partners



Source: Healey, Bovill, & Jenkins (2015, p. 142).

Simply stated, we were committed to the principles of students as teachers (student to student primarily but also student to staff), students as scholars (based on the SaP model,

engaging around student wellbeing and the possible benefits of dog therapies), and students as change agents (affecting campus culture). Given that the academic lead's disciplinary background is literary and rhetorical studies, the work of Ede and Lunsford (1990) on the collaborative writing process is also embedded in the project's approach to writing and research as an iterative process that involves trust, reciprocity, honesty, courage, and responsibility (all principles and values of partnerships espoused by Healey, Flint, and Harrington, 2014).

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Within this framework, students and staff co-designed four key program aims, which guided us throughout our partnership. Therapaws aimed to:

1. contribute to a healthy learning environment for students by reducing stress through dog therapy;
2. facilitate peer-to-peer messages regarding mental health and wellbeing and connect students with information such as counselling and psychological services, disability services, peer mentoring, student representation, and academic advice services;
3. increase student engagement with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and contribute to creating a sense of identity and community; and
4. create opportunities for students to act as change agents in the university and gain graduate qualities relevant to their personal, professional, and academic futures.

PROGRAM CO-DESIGN, CO-IMPLEMENTATION, AND CO-INVESTIGATION

Our partnership began with Healthy Sydney University, an institution-wide strategy at the University of Sydney that enabled the co-creation of Therapaws by providing seed funding for new staff-student health and wellbeing initiatives. In mid-2016, staff sent a call-out to our students, asking for expressions of interest to work with us on a SaP project. Interested students attended a group planning meeting with staff to brainstorm ideas for initiatives. Dog therapy was suggested as a potential project; the idea excited the group and was backed up by research as an effective means of reducing stress. An undergraduate student signed on as the student lead to apply for the grant, and 13 additional students signed up for general volunteering. An academic staff member agreed to sponsor the project and act as the academic lead.

Staff and students worked together to co-design the program, write the grant application, and trial the idea with a one-off Therapaws session in late 2016. The trial was successful and a AUD$2,500 Healthy Sydney University grant was awarded to scale up the program in 2017. Three more students joined the student lead on the core student leadership team who would take on a high level of responsibility for the program co-design, serve as peer leaders among the wider student volunteer team, and work closely with staff to conduct research on the impact of the program. Although we were enormously grateful to receive the funding, the grant was relatively modest and so all funds were used to pay the dog owners for their time, with students volunteering their time. Ethics approval was granted in early 2017, and five Therapaws sessions were held throughout the year. The program primarily worked through three key

activities: planning meetings, undertaking Therapaws sessions, and completing the research project. We attribute the success of these three key activities and the wider program to the principles of SaP (with its emphasis on shared responsibility, ownership, and decision making), the use of dialogue for building relationships and sharing power, and the use of partnership as a process where all participants stand to gain from learning and working together (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Matthews, 2017).

Regular, small group planning meetings involved the student volunteer team, student leadership team, and staff. In these meetings, we discussed ideas and made decisions about how the program and individual therapy sessions would be designed, and marketing and advertising. In the trial stage leading up to our first session, we met weekly to make larger-scale decisions about what the program should look like. In the implementation stage, we met once in the fortnight leading up to each session to reflect on the previous session, discuss what we wanted to improve next time, identify a theme for each session based on student needs at that time in semester, plan the information on mental health and wellbeing that would be included in the conversations and information handout, plan marketing and communications, and allocate specific responsibilities to prepare at home for each session and for the actual sessions.

Therapaws sessions lasted 90 minutes, with two hours allocated beforehand for volunteer briefing and set-up, and one hour afterwards for pack-down and reflection. Student volunteers first met for a briefing conducted by staff and the student leadership team, which involved reviewing the run sheet for the day, reviewing the health and wellbeing handout, and undergoing training on talking to students about health and wellbeing. Students and staff then began setting up each session in an outdoor location with high visibility and foot traffic, as well as facilitating the arrival of the therapy dogs and handlers from our not-for-profit partner, Delta Society Australia, a leading national provider of dog therapy. Delta Society Australia provided trained therapy dogs and handlers and technical expertise on animal welfare and stress-reduction through dog therapy.

Sessions were organised around two key activities. First, five handlers and therapy dogs spread out over a large lawn, with five to 10 students in a group sitting around the therapy dogs and patting them. Students were free to drop in and out or stay the whole session. Second, members of our student volunteer team engaged student participants in conversations about mental health, wellbeing and student support, and gave them copies of the health and wellbeing handout to take home and read. The majority of student volunteers were engaged in these peer-to-peer conversations, with approximately five more producing content for social media, managing our health and wellbeing wall (an interactive canvas where students were encouraged to write positive messages to each other), managing fundraising bake sales, taking photos, and producing videos. Our student leadership team provided peer leadership roles, primarily supporting other students to engage in peer-to-peer conversations, produce engaging social media content and videos, troubleshoot problems, and even engage in peer-to-peer conversations themselves. Academic and professional staff from the faculty and wider university also attended to engage students in conversation, support the student volunteers, and organise logistics. Following the sessions, students and staff returned to the office where

students completed an optional post-session volunteer survey and students and staff reflected on the successes and challenges of each session over afternoon tea.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Research project (students as scholars, researchers, and change agents)

Essentially, we were conducting two streams of research. The first, and the one that was of most interest to students, was to ascertain whether Therapaws had had a positive impact on student wellbeing. Our first three program aims related to the impact of Therapaws on the mental health of the student participants who attended each session. These aims were primarily measured through quantitative data collected in our online student health and wellbeing survey, distributed to students who attended via social media. In addition to this survey, we measured the impact on student participants through attendance data, social media data, and analysis of the written content of our health and wellbeing wall from each session. Quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the claim that sessions had a positive impact. For example, 97% of student participants reported feeling less stressed after attending a Therapaws session and students left positive messages for each other (for example, “don’t be afraid to seek help! You deserve to feel better and love yourself”).

The second research piece—potentially of more interest to staff and definitely more important for readers of this case study—was whether the project had been successful in terms of SaP. To that end, in addition to their roles in the planning meetings and Therapaws sessions, the student leadership team partnered with staff to co-investigate the impact of the Therapaws program on the student volunteers and the students who participated in sessions. This related to our fourth key program aim, which was to give students the opportunity to act as change agents in the university and gain graduate skills and experience. Central to student learning at the University of Sydney is that a Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences graduate should be effective in exercising professional and social responsibility and making a positive contribution to society, in addition to having applied disciplinary expertise, confidence, personal resilience, and broad critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills (“Graduate Qualities,” 2018). We analysed the impact of Therapaws on our student partners with reference to this framework through two student volunteer surveys, which students completed before (n = 33) and after volunteering at each session (n = 63). This group of student leaders—already identified as empowered and capable—consistently self-perceived their skills and abilities as high, with no statistically significant quantitative difference observed between the before and after responses. However, we believe our qualitative data provide evidence on the impact of SaP on the volunteers —by creating opportunities for students to act as change agents, the students can become engaged, socially responsible citizens who can make a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of their peers. The students also benefited from the program through skill development. The skills the students most commonly identified were communication skills (84%), confidence, teamwork, and interpersonal skills (71%), and critical thinking, organisational, and planning skills (28%). One student identified having “better

communication skills, organisational skills, experience in seeing how events are managed and the structure required to [make] them a success."

CHALLENGES

Happily, we believe we managed to avoid many of the challenges discussed in the SaP literature (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, despite the success of the project as both a partnership program and a mental health and wellbeing initiative, Therapaws is what Healey and Jenkins (2009) would classify as an elite model—a one-off, small-scale project made possible by a seed funding grant and hence not sustainable (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). As already noted, the dog handlers were compensated for their time but students were not, and non-payment of students has been raised as an issue for students who cannot afford to volunteer their time and labour (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Moreover, it proved to be an expensive program to run in terms of the staff time required to work collaboratively with the undergraduate students in organising and managing the dog therapy sessions as well as conducting research and working on the writing process. These latter tasks included ethics approvals, survey design, data interpretation, crafting conference papers, and preparing this case study. As has been noted in the SaP literature, time constraints and the pressure to publish also factor into such partnerships (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

The benefits are clear but they do come at a price. Dedicated grant money or sponsorship would be required to continue with this SaP project or it would need to be redesigned as a project-based unit of study and embedded in the curriculum. This embedded approach is clearly favoured by Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) and other SaP scholars, as the benefits can be shared by more students (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, as student partnerships are being increasingly mainstreamed as part of our institution's curriculum transformation process, this case study signals the end of the project for the time being. We are hopeful that other dog therapy or student-led wellness initiatives will flourish at our institution in the near future. Alternatively, a low- or no-cost alternative worth investigating at other institutions might include *bring your dog to campus days* (much like many workplaces now facilitate) or other forms of SaP collaboration that do not involve dog therapy (such as student involvement in curriculum reform).

CONCLUSION

Our case study provides a practical, evidence-based example of how the principles of SaP can be applied to create an engaging and effective intervention into student mental health and wellbeing. It offers an insight into the benefits of student-student partnerships, an area that has been identified as under-researched in the SaP literature. We believe there are four key significant results that suggest Therapaws as a model for future SaP programs targeting student wellbeing. First, the high levels of student engagement are a testament to the student-staff and student-student partnerships that underpin Therapaws. Second, student-student partnerships were successful in increasing student knowledge about student support services. Third, student-student partnerships through social media were a particularly valuable way to engage students in conversations about mental health. Finally, Therapaws successfully created

opportunities for students to act as change agents, with 91% of student volunteers believing they had made a positive impact on student mental health and wellbeing. Based on these results, we recommend that future dog therapy programs or similar mental health and wellbeing programs incorporate the principles of SaP as a model of good practice. SaP amplifies the impact of university-based dog therapy programs beyond the stress reduction effects of dog therapy itself. Moreover, as with any SaP initiative, it is the process of engagement, not the product or outcome, that is just as important in this case study.

This research has been approved by the University of Sydney Research Ethics Committee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledge the generosity of Healthy Sydney University for the original seed funding, the wonderful dog handlers from the Delta Society Australia, and the support of our Dean, Professor Annamarie Jagose.

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CASE STUDY

Genuine Students as Partners: How a Teaching Assistant Consultant Program put Students as Partners into Practice

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ABSTRACT

In this case study, a graduate student and staff member show how an institution wide program, aimed at enhancing learning and teaching in higher education, exemplifies Matthews's (2017) "Five Propositions for Genuine Students as Partners Practice" at the department level. To do so, we describe the five propositions in relation to the Teaching Assistant Consultant (TAC) program that positions a graduate student leader in each department to support new Teaching Assistants (TAs). Through comparison, we look at how the program is inclusive, exhibits strong power-sharing capabilities through continual reflection and conversation, is ethical, and is strongly transformative.

KEYWORDS

inclusive, transformative, Teaching Assistant Consultant, partnership, biology

In this case study, we explore how a peer-mentor discipline-specific program, called the Teaching Assistant Consultant (TAC) program at the University of Victoria, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, intersects with Matthews's five propositions for genuine Students as Partners (SaP) practice (2017). The propositions are: fostering inclusive partnerships, nurturing power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection, accepting partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes, engaging in ethical partnerships, and enacting partnership for transformation. Matthews (2017) proposed the propositions as a heuristic to initiate dialogue when designing students-as-partners programs. Despite the TAC program being designed prior to her heuristic, this case study investigates how the TAC program in a biology department maps onto her propositions and, subsequently, what changes need to be implemented to better represent the five propositions. Each of these propositions will be described below in relation to the TAC program in biology.

TAC PROGRAM

Established in 2009, the TAC program positions experienced teaching assistants (TAs/graduate students) in academic departments to provide mentorship and guidance for all new TAs. TACs assist TAs in their teaching development through discipline-specific programming, teaching observations, one-on-one consultations, and referrals to appropriate campus resources. The goal is to enhance the educational experience of students, TAs, and those in the department. The TAC program pilot began with 17 departments and is now in every department with TAs—a total of 28 departments with one TAC per department. This means that all 700 TAs (approximately) each term have a peer mentor to help them with their teaching duties. The establishment of the TAC program provided the opportunity to develop a new role on campus that traversed boundaries by being a cross-disciplinary initiative (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) that fostered new perspectives about learning and teaching in higher education.

The underlying model used when designing the program was a community of practice (CoP) approach, which is about bringing together a community of people who share a similar interest (Wenger, 1998). This model was chosen because research has shown that graduate students who are well integrated into their departments are more successful and continue in higher education (Bellows, 2008). More importantly, a CoP model provides an understanding on how a shared approach to problem-solving mimics scholarly practice through inquiry, collaboration, and dissemination. To model CoP, the TAC program (managed by Cynthia) begins with instruction (one-week intensive) about mentoring, designing a department program, and conducting teaching observations. Additionally, TACs receive ongoing support from the program manager in the form of email or face-to-face communication; feedback on program learning outcomes, evaluation and instructional strategies; and consultation about issues that surface for TACs. Finally, TACs meet monthly as a group to share ideas, discuss issues and support each other. TACs are encouraged to mimic this model at the department level. Feedback from TAs who were part of the 2009–10 research pilot project consistently commended the TAC program for bringing TAs together to discuss and share their experiences and ideas, and for being a forum in which TAs can critically engage in an effort to support students' learning. With this approach, TACs are able to enhance colleagues' graduate student experience by providing support and a community—all features of a CoP. Through these mechanisms, the program exemplifies a process of equality from conceptualization to evaluation, which are important features of partnerships (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014).

Peer mentoring is sometimes referred to as informal mentoring (Cunningham & Hillier, 2013). Peers greatly influence a TA's development as an instructor, but the information provided by peers may not be the best and could compound problems (Gardner & Jones, 2011; Nyquist & Sprague, 1998). To address this problem, the TAC program made the common informal experience of most TAs into a formal program with an informed and reliable mentor (Jungels, Brown, Stombler, & Yasumoto, 2014). Besides being informed, peers make excellent mentors for individuals new to a role due to having much in common (Cosnefroy & Buhot, 2013; Cunningham & Hillier, 2013). TACs are experienced TAs within the same department that are familiar with the department culture, requirements, and duties associated with the TA role

(for an example, see Bubbar, Dimopoulos, Korpan, & Wild, 2017). Due to these factors, TAs can easily relate to TACs because TACs have recently been a new TA.

Our case study focuses on the University of Victoria's biology department's TAC program, which has one TAC (Gerry) for approximately 40 TAs each year. Despite literature acknowledging the importance of guiding biology TAs with inquiry-based teaching, developing their teacher identities towards a more learning-centred approach (Gormally, 2016), and the effectiveness of teaching observations with guided reflective discourse (Miller, Brickman, & Oliver, 2014), biology did not join the TAC program until the fall of 2015.

Upon reading Matthews's propositions, the heuristic resonated with us and sparked an interest in seeing how the TAC program in biology exemplified the principles underlying students as genuine partners and exploring what changes could be made to better adhere to the principles. Therefore, to examine the TAC program in biology in relation to the propositions, we now describe SaP and Matthews's propositions. We explain challenges and issues encountered, as well as successes and incidents that proved to enrich the continuing development of the program.

PROPOSITIONS FOR STUDENTS AS GENUINE PARTNERS

SaP has been defined as "a metaphor for university education that challenges traditional assumptions about the identities of, and relationships between, learners and teachers" (Matthews, 2017, p. 1). This means that there is a respectful and meaningful learning relationship between staff or faculty and students working together on improving aspects of learning and teaching in higher education. This definition positions SaP as being about equitable collaboration and balanced reciprocity (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014) between *all* members involved (Matthews, 2016, emphasis in original). Matthews (2017) suggests that the following propositions provide a guiding heuristic that is not prescriptive but meant to initiate dialogue to expand SaP in higher education.

Fostering inclusive partnerships

The first proposition asks us to consider who engages in SaP and how that partnership is rendered. These questions are to ensure that partnership relationships do not consist only of select groups. Matthews (2017) states that the aim is to design students-as-partners programs that include students from all backgrounds engaged in a shared learning partnership because through fostering inclusion, students feel valued and acknowledged for who they are.

The opportunity for a student to initiate a program in a department is a rare occurrence. However, graduate students notice when there is discrepancy in support, and in more than one instance, have advocated for a TAC program in their department. This was the case when I (Gerry) approached the Senior Lab Instructors (SLIs) in biology. I had heard about the program, attended TAC-led workshops in the chemistry department, and strongly believed that biology TAs needed this support to help them feel valued and respected as teaching members in the department. The lack of mentorship for TAs is still a significant issue and dependent on many departmental factors (Aydin & Hanuscin, 2013; Smollin & Arluke, 2014; Vahey, Witkowsky,

Rehling, & Saifah, 2010), but more significant is that most do not receive any pedagogical support when they take on the TA role (Green, 2010; Nyquist & Sprague, 1998).

The lack of pedagogical support was clearly understood by the SLIs, who are in charge of the lab portions of courses and are the teaching supervisors of TAs. Concerned about TA support and enhancing professional development but lacking time and resources, SLIs welcomed my suggestion of a TAC program in biology. From the beginning, I partnered with the chair, SLIs, and TAs to foster an inclusive teaching culture within the department.

Nurturing power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection

In the second proposition, Matthews states how SaP partnerships aim to be equitable so that partners can share their perspectives and experiences confidently to nurture power sharing. The TAC program aims to be equitable by acknowledging the expertise that TACs bring to their role, entering into a partnership with each TAC to support them in their development and rendering of the discipline-specific program. The framework that the program manager provides is about fostering the skills that TACs can use in their role. During the one-week intensive instruction, TACs engage in role-plays, scenarios, and modelling that encourage dialogue and reflective practice (Little & Palmer, 2012). These foundational experiences give TACs the tools to nurture power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection with TAs, staff, and faculty in their department.

I fostered the same power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection in the biology department. In particular, realizing the effectiveness of guided self-reflection, I incorporated mandatory teaching observations, which has resulted in an attitudinal shift, with TAs becoming more reflective of their teaching practice and striving to improve to benefit student learning. Additionally, through a discipline-specific workshop, which ties together literature and biology-specific applications or examples, TAs are introduced to the concept of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). One particular topic addressed in this workshop is classroom assessment techniques (CATs) (Angelo & Cross, 1993). CATs are quick end-of-class post-assessments that inform the instructor if learning outcomes for the lesson were met but, more importantly, help build community and foster a more nurturing partnership between students and TAs. This was confirmed through a TAC-initiated survey administered to TAs, who commented that their students appreciated the CAT—the "muddiest point"—because it demonstrated that their TA took time to address their concerns and clear up issues. This example illustrates Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) argument that learning, teaching, and assessment are areas where students and staff can engage as partners and where all voices can be considered equally.

Accepting partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes

A continual process of dialogue that acknowledges potential emotions involved in strengthening the "power-sharing learning relationship" (Matthews, 2017, p. 5) is the third proposition. Monthly TAC meetings provide a forum for continual dialogue about the TAC role. These meetings provide a safe place to share failures, problems, and charged encounters that occur for TACs with TAs, staff, and faculty. TACs recognize that not all individuals with whom

they are interacting at the departmental level adhere to the principles underlying the TAC program, which has resulted in many emotional encounters. In these instances, TACs consult with the TAC program manager. Furthermore, TACs navigate difficulties that TAs encounter with students and course supervisors, which can result in negative outcomes, such as lack of confidence, motivation, and learning (for a full list of possible negative outcomes, see Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 13). The TAC intensive instruction week aims to prepare TACs for these types of encounters.

As learning is a partnership, the knowledge that TAs acquire from the TAC helps foster a stronger partnership, which opens up dialogue between the TAs and the TAC, allowing the TAC to guide TAs towards a more learning-centred approach in their classrooms. This has been accomplished through workshops that I present and in post-teaching observation meetings. TAs receive instruction on how to encourage students to take more control over their own learning and education, and to allow students the chance to explore. Just as it is important for TAs to remove the hierarchy between themselves and students, it is also important to maintain a nurturing partnership between TAs and the TAC; devoid of hierarchy, the result is a more power-sharing approach to learning and instruction. The biology TAC program helps create a safe space for TAs to express concerns and try out new teaching strategies, and it promotes the ability of TAs to challenge the TAC.

A positive unexpected outcome in the biology TAC program is the influx of veteran TAs (TAs who have been teaching for at least one year) asking me for continued support via teaching observations. Teaching and learning is a process, and the TAC program helps to foster a collective approach to both. Teaching can be emotional and the TAC program in biology has opened up the dialogue between TAs and the TAC about teaching and learning, thus promoting the power-sharing relationship.

Engaging in ethical partnerships

The fourth proposition highlights how ethical guidelines (such as values and conduct) should govern partnerships. Matthews (2017) states that ethical SaP practices have three components. First, reciprocity dictates that power sharing is between all involved, implying that all contribute their expertise in making decisions and setting goals for a SaP project. Matthews states how this is essential to ensure that students are not pressured to succumb to institutional needs. Second, “mutualistic partnerships” (Matthews, 2017, p. 5) need to be beneficial to all involved but need to be about positive work with no intention to harm anyone or any situation. Third, SaP is about the broader impact of the work and not just for the individuals involved (Matthews, 2017).

The structure of the TAC program encourages TACs to collaborate and contribute their expertise to the program to promote positive support within the department for all involved. This occurs through department-specific workshops and through guidance from the TAC program manager. However, there is freedom to create a program that is particularly relevant to each TAC’s respective department. For example, in biology, I establish the program learning outcomes and evaluation methods that are specific to departmental needs and facilitate a

workshop that not only introduces TAs to lesson planning but also provides prompts and guides using biology-specific examples.

During the intensive instruction week, TACs are introduced to the ground rules governing a safe space, respecting other people's opinions, and learning how to respectfully disagree. These same principles are incorporated in the very first workshop I put on for biology TAs, which introduces respectful and ethical partnerships between the TAC and the TA, but also between TAs and their students.

Enacting partnership for transformation

The last proposition is about the transformative power associated with individual agency. "Practitioners of SaP are first and foremost transforming their own realities by engaging in an alternative form of education within the traditional structures of universities" (Matthews, 2017, p. 6).

The TAC program is transformative for TACs. By taking on this role in the department and interacting with an institutionally sanctioned program, TACs hold a position within the university that bridges central programs with departmental needs. The professional development experienced by TACs is intensive, expansive, and positively affects their commitment to enhancing teaching and learning in higher education by recognizing their agency to enact change. Through this broader understanding, TACs are well positioned to challenge existing structures in the future.

Overall, the TAC program has been instrumental in initiating change not only for the biology department and its members, but also for me. The skills I have learned through the TAC program instruction and execution are applicable to many of my other roles. I have established strong time management skills and enhanced my peer support and mentorship skills while also becoming more self-reflective. My creative skills have been enhanced due to the abundance of different workshops I have offered throughout the years, and the uniqueness I try to maintain year to year even though some key workshops are repeated annually. I have also felt the impact of the TAC program through the communication and connections I now foster among many of the TAs, staff, and faculty members within the department.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We began with investigating if the TAC program in biology models the propositions put forward by Matthews (2017) and exemplifies the principles underlying students as genuine partners. As described above, the TAC program in biology does exemplify Matthews's (2017) five propositions. However, the program could be strengthened to adhere better to them.

I specifically designed the TAC program in biology with strong ethics in mind, but the program as a whole could benefit from a greater focus on TAs practising and engaging, and less on overall theory. By this, I mean that rather than having workshops focused on understanding the theory behind CATs, perhaps I could provide a handout that outlines the significance of CATs, followed by a brief discussion, and then use the remaining workshop time to allow the TAs to practise different CATs and converse with their peers and the TAC as they are going through the process. It is sometimes mentioned by TAs that something reads well on paper or

in a PowerPoint, but the actual application is difficult in a biology lab. Focusing the TAs more on specific information that is crucial to understand for implementation, coupled with time to practise and facilitate the use of CATs (or other teaching tactics), would greatly benefit the TAs. In doing so, the TAC program in biology would be strengthening the ethical partnership between the TAs and the TAC.

In general, the TAC program in biology does adhere to Matthews's (2017) five propositions for SaP, and enacting partnership for transformation is a strength of the biology TAC program. Not only have I noticed the transformative effects of having a TAC program in biology, but the TAs themselves are commenting to each other, to the SLIs, and even to their students about pedagogical approaches they have learned or different teaching tactics they are interested in trying. The cultural shift in the biology department has been very strong, and every year there are more advocates for teaching and learning support, and for doing better for our students.

Mercer-Mapstone et al.'s (2017) article lists negative and positive outcomes for students that can result from partnership. There is evidence that the TAC program achieves most of the positive outcomes. For example, through program evaluation, TAs in the biology department have increased student engagement, motivation, and ownership for learning, positively shifted power dynamics between TAs and students, TAs and SLIs, and have an overall increase in their meta-cognitive learning. Additionally, the TAC program, built on principles of collaboration and community of practice (Korpan, 2010), has always aimed to foster graduate students' capacity to act (agency) and professional development, and acknowledges the significant contributions they make to the university teaching environment. SaP provides a framework to take the program further in developing students as genuine partners. Finally, co-writing this article exemplified balanced reciprocity through an equal exchange of ideas as we shared insights, collaboratively wrote, and reflected on the propositions together.

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CASE STUDY

Building Souls and CVs in a Student-Run Podcasting Course

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ABSTRACT

This case study discusses an experiential learning course comprising a 12-episode podcast series dedicated to transformative learning in higher education. The three-credit course, which was designed by two student leaders (station managers at the university radio station) in collaboration with a faculty collaborator, was informed by the 10 design principles of authentic learning. The central premise of the podcast series hinged on two key questions: What are the ideal conditions where students build their souls as they build their CVs?; What are the conditions for transformative learning whereby students reflect on their learning experience as collaborators with their professors and with one another? The case study offers recommendations to students, faculty, and educational developers who might integrate this model into their own practices.

KEYWORDS

authentic learning, podcasts, innovative pedagogy, transformative learning, student engagement, experiential learning, student partnerships

When do students realize they are building their souls in addition to building their CVs? This question inspired an experiential learning course where students produced a podcast series with 12 episodes dedicated to exploring the conditions that enhance transformative learning in higher education. The three-credit course was designed and implemented by two student leaders (station managers at the student-run university radio station, called Toast Radio) in collaboration with a faculty member at Bishop's University, a small, primarily undergraduate institution with a focus on delivering a liberal education. The course organizers used 10 design principles of authentic learning (Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves, 2003) in order to

build a podcast series that took its central premise from the following questions: What are the ideal conditions where students build their souls as they build their CVs?; What are the conditions for transformative learning with a particular focus on how students reflect on their learning experience as collaborators with their professors and with one another?

The three-credit course was offered over a 12-week winter semester and had an enrolment of 15 undergraduate students from a diverse range of programs, including English, film and media studies, creative writing, journalism, education, sociology, sports studies, and business. All the students enrolled in the course were in their second year or higher, and 20% were international exchange students (from the USA and the UK). Three teams of five students each identified four professors who were particularly effective in facilitating conditions of transformative learning by soliciting feedback via a student survey, interviewing their peers, and examining professors' engagement as educational leaders (from a pool of 125 full-time, tenure-stream faculty and 60 contract faculty). The professors' research and teaching interests were noted, and students who had experience with these professors as educational leaders and transformative educators were interviewed for their perspectives. From this research, the teams designed questions, recorded interviews, and edited each podcast for a high-quality final product. Students in the course were also involved in designing logos, branding the podcast series, developing a communication strategy to launch the podcast, and organizing a public podcast launch.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Context and rationale

The initial idea for a student-led podcast series emerged from an informal conversation among students about adding new programming to Toast Radio. With so many radio stations going off air, on to XM or online, broadcast journalism is changing rapidly, the station managers recognized the importance of growing Toast Radio in fresh and accessible ways.

The design of a three-credit podcast course was made possible through a series of conditions within the institutional context: namely, a primarily undergraduate, liberal education institution with rich extracurricular programming, an abundance of academic and experiential learning activities, supportive faculty, and high levels of faculty-student interactions.[1] The student leaders identified a full-time, tenured professor to act as faculty champion. This professor was selected for her reputation as a collaborator who was open to students with creative and divergent ideas and had experience creating authentic learning scenarios for undergraduate students.

The faculty champion and the two student leaders designed a three-credit broadcast journalism course for the winter term. Each assumed roles based on their expertise and interests. The faculty champion assumed the role as the course facilitator and was responsible for course administration, timetable, and syllabus design. One student leader acted as student coordinator, conducting extensive research into podcasts, and leading class modules on interviewing techniques and how to research interviewees. The second student leader took on the role as technical director, responsible for technical aspects of the course such as researching broadcasting equipment, equipment training, and troubleshooting. The three collaborators met extensively in advance of the course to design the syllabus based on the

principles of authentic learning, develop reflective exercises and resources to build effective group dynamics, and ensure that assessment aligned with the course competencies.

Students as Partners: Literature overview

Since this was an entirely new model of course design for the team members, the course facilitator, student coordinator, and technical director reviewed the literature on the students-as-partners (SaP) learning model. We were particularly interested in challenging the *students-as-consumers* model in favour of a more holistic and collaborative model that highlights the shared responsibility of students and teachers in the learning endeavour (Mathews et al., 2018). SaP repositions the traditional hierarchy of teacher-learner, where student contribution is not only valued but implemented (Mathews et al., 2018; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Student partnerships increase levels of student engagement, provide students with an increased sense of leadership and a responsibility for one's learning, and increase motivation around the learning process for both students and instructors (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Cook-Sather & Abbot, 2016; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). Furthermore, research on student-staff partnerships highlights personal development for both students and staff, in concert with an enhancement of the learning climate (Curran, 2017). While a large portion of SaP literature reports positive outcomes, the positive reporting bias evident in academic research must be noted (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). The "repositioning of the roles of students and staff in the learning endeavour" differentiates *students-as-partners* from simple student engagement or student involvement in initiatives (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Changing the traditional professor-student, assessor-assessed, teacher-learner dichotomy was an integral part of the course design and implementation. What is so unusual about this course was that students were involved from the outset in its creation and played a central role in the design of the syllabus and assessment methods, as well as the facilitation of modules, podcast pitches, and critical reflection assignments.

Student coordinators also participated in the course as students, which reinforced efforts to upend traditional hierarchies in the classroom. The role and power of professor was not simply shifted to students; rather, student leaders facilitated discussions while still participating fully in the learning experience. This case study therefore differs significantly from other students-as-partners models where students provide pedagogical feedback or design and influence course modules after participating in a course (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Marie & McGowan, 2017). While several SaP initiatives involve students in the creation of course modules or curriculum design, little attention is paid to the outcomes of students participating in and influencing the modules during and after their creation (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018; Marie & McGowan, 2017; Bergmark & Westman, 2016).

Design considerations

Authentic learning is an active learning model that has a significant impact on student learning outcomes (Diamond, Middleton, & Mather, 2011; Lombardi, 2007; Rule, 2006; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996; Bransford, Vye, Kinzer, & Risko, 1990). Authentic learning environments "help students become actively engaged in the learning process, rather than passive receptors of content knowledge" (Burke, 2009, p. 10). Herrington, Oliver, and Reeves (2003) assert that authentic learning "encourages and supports learners in their development

of skills in self-regulation and self-learning" (p. 68). Furthermore, authentic learning can enhance the transfer of deep and lifelong learning (Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves, 2003; Barab & Landa, 1997). Reeves, Herrington, and Oliver (2002) outline 10 design principles that can generate authentic learning environments in "Authentic Activities and Online Learning." The coursework in ENG 454: Broadcast Journalism was formulated around authentic learning design principles (Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves, 2003) and augmented with Marie and McGowan's (2017) conclusions on partnership values and sustainability. From the outset, the students and the course facilitator were committed to the idea of a collaborative partnership. In the first class, students reflected on their individual strengths and weaknesses using writing prompts (e.g., "write a reflection on your individual strengths, areas that are challenging, and areas you would like to develop over the course of your project"). Students were then organized into groups based on their self-identified skill sets: for example, students who identified strengths in editing and weaknesses in organization and time management were matched with students who were not as skilled in editing but self-identified as having excellent time management skills. Groups benefited from interdisciplinary perspectives as every effort was made to place students from different faculties in each group.

The podcast series was designed around the following guiding vision, as stated in the course syllabus:

> At Bishop's University, we strive to build souls as much as we build CVs. We showcase transformative learning via faculty-student partnerships, both in the classroom and beyond. This podcast series will ask: What transforms us? What builds our souls? What do the authentic faculty-student collaborations have in common? Why does this model flourish at Bishop's? We take as our central premise that the best professors are the ones who model humility, failure, resilience, and—ultimately—their own humanity.

Podcast teams were encouraged to explore their own interpretation of this guiding vision to design, research, record, and publish their podcasts. To produce podcasts that adhered to the guiding vision, each group had to collaborate closely. This sustained investigation that lasted 12 weeks required students to engage with multiple sources and perspectives in order to compile the amount of research on the interviewee (e.g., their field of study, teaching interests, engagement in scholarly activities outside the classroom). Students were asked to reflect on the process of podcast creation every three weeks in both team and self-reflection journals. Each group developed their own interpretation of the guiding vision using a unique podcast style that reflected their group dynamic and work ethos. Despite these differences in final products, each podcast met the guidelines established by the class and successfully achieved course objectives.

One of the main concerns with group work is accountability and self-regulation (Karau & Williams, 1993; Latané, Harkins, & Williams, 1979). Social loafing "is the reduction in motivation and effort when individuals work collectively compared with when they work individually or co-actively" (Karau & Williams, 1993, p. 681). To combat these potential challenges, the first two weeks of course time devoted significant class discussion to group dynamics, self-regulation, and course expectations. Furthermore, all students signed commitment contracts, with each group developing its own guidelines and expectations—thus establishing a shared sense of

accountability. Groups met once per week outside of the classroom and recording sessions to discuss group and individual goals, assign tasks, and plan, research, and formulate interview questions. We also had a conflict management plan in place: if there was a disagreement or a group member felt that they were not being treated fairly, the group discussed the commitment contract and conflicts were resolved quickly and collegially.

Drawing on literature that highlights the importance of involving students in assessment to enhance learning, the assessment system for the course used peer review and formative feedback as the primary modes of assessment (Fluckiger et al., 2010; Giles et al., 2004). Students were asked to reflect on the following example questions: How do we assess podcasts using a framework comparable to the industry standard? How do we accommodate students who may be uncomfortable with one or more aspects of the course requirements?

Students assessed themselves and their peers on course involvement. The self and team assessments encompassed both quantitative questions that measured students' perceptions of their learning experience and qualitative reflection. Creating an assessment model to evaluate the podcasts was more challenging because the rubric had to measure academic rigour and industry relevance while recognizing that maximizing student accomplishment is best done through focusing on learning rather than assigning grades (Fluckiger et al., 2010). The rubric was tested extensively among the three course facilitators as well as among the students. The final rubric identified several areas to assess, including content, broadcasting/interviewing, editing. Each student assessed the podcasts produced by the other teams and provided both a numerical grade and written feedback. Recognizing that feedback is ineffective if given solely at the end of the learning cycle, students submitted two podcasts in February and two podcasts in March, with feedback provided promptly by the other students on how to improve (Fluckiger et al., 2010). Students were encouraged to ask questions and receive help. The end result of this formative assessment process was a stronger product than if there had been with only a summative assessment. Students were then given time to refine their four podcasts and submit finished ones to Youtube.

Critical reflection

Learning in university is often framed as preparation for employment and the job market post-graduation. However, the reverse is less likely in liberal education universities and it is rare that professional industries inform classroom learning outside of trade degrees and vocational schools. The technical director (a third-year undergraduate student) had experience in the professional radio industry and this in-house expertise added a dimension of practicality and real-world relevance with industry-standard quality assessment.

The student coordinator occupied both student and lecturer roles. As learner-teacher, the student coordinator tried to create a power dynamic that was based on mutual respect, equality, and collegiality rather than hierarchy. She accomplished this by positioning herself as a collaborator who was learning alongside her classmates, not as an expert in podcast design. The student coordinator reflects,

> By occupying this position […] I developed insight into the role of the professor in the classroom and the amount of work outside of the classroom that goes into planning a lecture, encouraging participation, and keeping the class on track. This has deepened

my perspective on the role of professor and the lengths they go to maintain an engaged class, and to ensure that the students have all of the tools that they need in order to succeed.

Every effort was made to be inclusive, collegial, and adaptive to the needs of the group (Corbett, 1980).

The course facilitator worked with the student leaders as a resource for pedagogical design, as logistical support when challenges during course implementation presented themselves, and as a mentor for bolstering students' confidence and offering encouragement and strategies for managing inevitable obstacles (e.g., scheduling interviews, coordinating deadlines, technical issues, brainstorming interview questions). As part of the course agenda was to make student partnerships more visible on campus, the course facilitator booked course meetings and sessions in the large university boardroom usually occupied by the Senate, Board of Governors, and Faculty Council. By working in spaces usually occupied by administration, students were encouraged to think of themselves as equal partners in the creation and maintenance of an institution of higher learning.

We encountered a number of challenges. Student aptitude varied, which was reflected in inconsistent sound quality and podcast editing. In terms of student engagement, students did not always adhere to deadlines (e.g., providing peer feedback, submitting podcasts on time). Despite (or because of) the fact that we dispensed with the role of the professor as an authority figure who determines late assignment consequences, all podcasts were produced by the end of term and launched successfully. According to the qualitative data—peer and team assessments and end-of-term group reflections—the strengths of the course were the experiential learning design and inquiry-based learning built into the authentic learning principles. The course encouraged sustained collaboration in meaningful ways to produce a final product in collaboration with team members while still promoting individual accountability and avoiding "social loafing." When asked to reflect on their experience in their final reports, students felt they were in control of their learning—they were active and engaged as opposed to having "a passive listening role through lecture-based courses." Students also felt that the course design successfully simulated a real-world working environment. To create successful podcasts, the students expressed the need to collaborate with kindness and diplomacy, participate in meaningful discussions, and adopt and implement different viewpoints in order to complete their tasks. By participating in this course, students not only learned the basics of podcast production but also how to be resilient in the face of failure. The self-assessment process encouraged students to talk about their failures, receive positive and productive feedback, reassess their methodology, and then refine their podcasts before final submission.

To conclude, four key factors were necessary to turn this from an idea into an academically rigorous credit course:

1) Purpose: We believed that this was an important intervention to ensure the sustainability and relevance of the student-run radio station.
2) Passion: We were committed enough to devote countless hours to this project and students were inspired to engage in this project in meaningful ways.
3) Mentorship: A faculty sponsor, mentor, and champion were essential in the process to design and implement an academically rigorous course.

4) Empowerment: It is essential that a liberal education institution encourage and empower students to go above and beyond in their learning in order to cultivate change in their environments.

NOTES

[1] Bishop's University has traditionally and consistently ranked high in external measurements of teaching excellence. For example, in 2016, *Maclean's* ranked the university 1st for "quality of instructors," "residence living," and "student satisfaction;" 2nd for "professors who know your name" and "extracurricular activities;" and 5th for "obtaining employment skills" (Schwartz, 2016). *The Globe and Mail*'s (2016) university report card ranked the university above average for "overall student experience." *The Huffington Post* (2017) ranked the university 1st in the country for "sports and recreation" and "extracurricular activities" and 2nd in the country for "best food." The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSSE) in 2015 placed the university in the top 10% of universities in North America in the following categories: collaborative learning, higher order learning, student-faculty interaction, supportive environment, and quality of interaction.

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CASE STUDY

Student Reviewers of Teaching Practice: Reflections on the Design and Experience of Participants

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ABSTRACT

This case study focuses on the benefits and challenges of students and staff working in partnership to review virtual learning environments as part of a wider review of an academic course. The paper considers how it enables a more rounded view of the course to be gained and how students identified possible enhancements to online sites in their own departments from the experience. Most issues raised by students related to the organization of the sites, with differences between students and staff in both the approach they thought should be taken to this and the importance placed upon it. These different perspectives make dialogue and respect very important in this area of student-staff partnership.

KEYWORDS

student consultants, virtual learning environments, peer observation, partnership, dialogue

This case study considers the role that student consultants can play in reviewing online material. The reviews discussed were carried out as part of a broader review of the staff members' teaching practice at a large research-intensive university. There are an increasing number of examples of student consultancy in practice, with schemes at universities such as Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, USA (Cook-Sather, 2014; Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011; Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015), Edinburgh Napier University, UK (Huxham et al., 2017), University of

Lincoln, UK (Crawford, 2012), Roehampton, UK (Peat, 2011), McMaster University, Canada (https://mi.mcmaster.ca/student-consultant-partnerships-with-faculty/), and Trinity University, USA (https://inside.trinity.edu/collaborative/programs-and-events/tigers-partners).

These schemes vary in terms of the length of the collaboration, from semester-long at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges to one-off observations at the University of Lincoln. The schemes also involve different aspects, from observing classroom teaching to helping to collect and analyse student feedback. Here we discuss our experience of students reviewing teaching practice at University College London (UCL). In this scheme, participating staff were observed for three hours' worth of classroom teaching, and students reviewed the layout and organisation of a virtual learning environment (VLE)—in this case, Moodle, an online learning management system that allows educators to create private interactive websites for the courses they teach—and an assignment brief. While in similar schemes, such as that of Edinburgh Napier University, the students were also asked to review material on Moodle (Huxham et al., 2017); there is little discussion of this in the literature. In this case study, we focus on the VLE aspect, considering the benefits of its inclusion in a student consultancy scheme as well as the issues it raised.

The review of a VLE was considered important in light of the Horizon report, which identified that blended learning is increasingly gaining traction in the higher education sector (New Media Consortium, 2017). The report notes that blended learning, when done well, can enable ways of learning that do not occur on campus, allowing for more personalised approaches. However, implementation of blended learning is likely to be hindered by a lack of understanding of students' expectations and skill levels with technology. For example, recent studies suggest that students' ability to use technology may not be as great as commonly assumed (Bennett & Maton, 2010).

THE SCHEME

The aim of the scheme was to provide a continuing professional development opportunity for *both* staff and students, with all participants gaining a greater insight into how students learn, enabling them to enhance their teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, students also gained insights into how staff approach their teaching and design of online materials.

Three principles inform the design: the first was that the observations should occur over a period of time and look at a range of practices. The argument by Gosling (2002) that we need to widen our definition of what is covered by peer observation of teaching made sense in a scheme designed to enhance the student learning experience. The digital infrastructure supporting a course is an important part of the learning experience. It is also a part that is often seen as less open to student partnership development work, as giving students editing rights can raise confidentiality issues. In this case, however, confidentiality was not an issue since the students were solely reviewing the sites from a student point of view (i.e., without editing rights). This meant that while the students were not working in partnership to directly enact change, they were working in partnership with the staff to explore the effectiveness of the teaching practices.

This focus on partnership led to the second principle of the scheme, which was that the staff and student partners should all reflect on the element under review (classroom teaching, assignment brief, Moodle site) by conversing with one another. This emphasis on dialogue is in line with more recent work on peer observation schemes, which suggests that feedback on its own does not lead to improvement. The discussion of what the students and staff thought of the observed practice and why they thought it was more or less effective is essential because it enables critical reflection, exploration, and critique of the reasoning behind practice. Where this scheme differs is in believing that there is benefit to be gained from undertaking this dialogue with a focus on student experiences of practice as opposed to pedagogical theories of effective practice (Hendry & Dean, 2002; Byrne, Brown, & Challon, 2010; Peel, 2005). As students discuss a staff member's practice directly with them, power dynamics would come into play and could affect what the students feel able to discuss. To address this, we aimed to pair students with staff from a different department but similar discipline, so that the staff would not, for instance, be marking the students' work (see Huxham et al., 2017; Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011). In line with the literature (Peat, 2011), this should also make it more natural to discuss teaching approaches rather than content. One of the unintended benefits of students coming from a different department was that they gained examples of good practice that they could take back to their own departments—this was particularly the case for the VLE observations.

The third principle was that the student participants should provide a student perspective, rather than a pedagogical one. A key benefit of working with students is that they have recent experience of what it is like to learn at university and can inform staff how their learning and that of their peers are affected by different factors (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). In her capacity as director of the scheme, Jenny Marie (JM) provided a training workshop for the student reviewers to develop their observation skills and ability to facilitate reflective conversations, but they were not trained in pedagogy or good digital education design (see Huxham et al., 2017). During the workshop, students were given the opportunity to undertake a practice observation of a Moodle site, with the agreement of the Moodle course's owner, and to identify the main points they would want to discuss with him.

Participation in the scheme was entirely voluntary. All staff who applied were either given a place or, if they did not have classroom teaching that term, were guaranteed a place the following year. Students were selected on the basis of how far along in their degree they were and whether they were a good disciplinary match for the staff participants. If this information was insufficient to make a choice between students, selection was random. Priority was given to final-year students because they would not get the opportunity to participate again and were considered to have a lot of recent student experience upon which to draw.

REFLECTIONS ON TRAINING STUDENTS TO OBSERVE A VLE

When I (JM) facilitated the training workshop, I noticed three things regarding the VLE observation. First, the students provided comments on the course: some said that the course looked like it was well structured and interesting; others said that the amount of information was overwhelming and made them think that the course would be difficult or boring. At the

end of the pilot year, student feedback led me to design observation templates for the scheme (the one for the VLE is provided in Appendix A) and from this experience, to include prompts around their learning or impression of the course.

Second, the students commented on the difficulty of navigating the Moodle course being reviewed. When I discussed this matter with the course leader, he explained that the layout on Moodle is designed to tackle a particular challenge within the course. This demonstrates the importance of dialogue and that contextual information can enhance observation. It has, thus, been hard to pinpoint when is the best time for the VLE observation to occur. Should it be at the beginning to enhance understanding of how it may shape student expectations, later when the reviewers better understand its relationship to the course, or is there sufficient benefit in each that it should be done at both the beginning of the review and again later on?

The third thing worthy of note is that the device used to access the VLE matters. During the training, the only internet-enabled device that many of the students had on them was their mobile phone. Their view of the Moodle course was very different to that of those using laptops or tablets and they were far more likely to be critical of a course that required a lot of scrolling. A number of students asked me which device they should use, to which the answer invariably was, "Which device do students use to access VLEs?" It could be argued that I should have asked, "Which device would students like to use to access VLEs?" However, we probably have to accept that VLEs are not designed to be viewed on mobile devices.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Melissa

My partnership was unique and unexpected as the lecturer I was paired with used British Sign Language (BSL) as his primary language. Due to the communication barrier, the VLE platform was implemented heavily since it bridged the verbal versus non-verbal communication gap. The platform was readily accepted by the students of the course, and enabled classroom discussions to be taken beyond lecture hours. My partner clearly cared about his students and their opinions, which was shown by how prompt his responses were to emails and the discussion questions posted online. Moodle was organized in such a way that all questions outside the classroom could be found on the platform, and any other questions that could not be answered from what was already online could be answered punctually by the lecturer himself. In this case, the VLE contributed towards more inclusive and effective communication.

Joe

The member of staff I observed used the VLE to facilitate flipped lectures, whereby resources are provided to students prior to the face-to-face teaching component to enable them to learn content before the classroom sessions, thus freeing up time within the classroom for interactive activities. Research has shown that students and staff enjoy the flipped lecture style, but students often want more structure to help ground this unfamiliar learning technique (Wanner & Palmer, 2015). Online resources are indispensable to the flipped lecture, but reviewing the staff member's use of the VLE showed me that structuring an effective flipped

classroom is time-consuming. The resources for the flipped lecture were extensive and varied, including tools such as online quizzes, Lecture Casts from the previous year, as well as the occasional Dropbox folder for students to upload mini-assignments. Each of these activities had to be scheduled and reported to the students, as many of the online quizzes had deadlines for completion. Most importantly, the flipped lectures were consistent. They ran every week and the activities were discussed in every classroom session. Rather than being a refreshing diversion from the normal lecture format, they became part and parcel of the learning experience. The VLE was also used to help facilitate group work; it did not just contain instructions but also links to other virtual platforms (Skype and Google Hangouts) where group work could be done remotely. The VLE also included a discussion space for each group. Prior to this, I had only ever used the VLE as a clumsy repository for resources. My staff member showed me that group work was something that could be nurtured through the VLE, rather than something students are expected to do. As a teaching assistant, I am glad I was able to observe how the activities were communicated to the students and how they were received in the physical sessions.

Manuela

It was clear to me that my staff partner had put a good amount of effort into the VLE for the course. Although the site was straightforward, it helped to go through it with him so I could understand the rationale behind each element. My staff partner had organised the site so that there was a clear progression, which helped students know what to expect from the sessions and prepare their material in advance, especially as the classroom was a very interactive space in which they were asked to contribute a lot. The Moodle page's games section was specially designed to enable students to practise what they had learned in class while at the same time have fun. Being able to see who was playing gave the lecturer insight into the different ways the students were engaging with the course.

Commentary

Melissa and Joe's reflections show how the experience of the classroom and VLE are intertwined. It is not just a matter that students can tell a lot about the course from the VLE, but that it may not be possible to properly understand the classroom without also considering how the VLE enables students to prepare for the classroom or how the VLE supports student learning beyond the classroom.

Manuela's reflections focus in part on layout, which was one of the major issues for students with the sites that they reviewed. Other student partners reported that they had gained a better understanding of where to find materials on other Moodle sites. One said that after realising his staff partner had laid the site out like a book—he had expected it to be laid out as a web page—he was now much better at finding resources on other sites. Another student surmised that perhaps staff members make the layout sequential because they write a lot but students really want to see things at a glance, without having to scroll down.

Melissa and Joe's experiences of learning how Moodle sites could be effectively utilised was common among the student participants. One staff member reported that her student had

noticed simple organisational things, such as the video of the lecture being on the Moodle site, and had taken that back to her department as recommended good practice. Another student participant was added as a tutor to the Moodle site. They noted how many tools were available, which contrasted sharply with their experience of Moodle sites being repositories for PDFs. They suggested to their department that the postgraduate teaching assistants be asked to use these tools to enhance the sites. It is not yet clear if this will be followed up, but the suggestion also recognises the lack of time that most lecturers have to dedicate to this aspect of their teaching.

STAFF PERSPECTIVES

Below we provide the perspectives of two staff members who participated with different student partners from those whose reflections are provided above.

Jesper

The questions my reviewer asked following the observations forced me to explain my rationales, and this process made me realise that certain areas were not as clear as I had thought. This led to concrete changes in how the sessions were structured and to a layout revision for the VLE. While the resources available on the VLE were seen as relevant and important, the layout meant that all the sessions and resources were presented as one long list, and though divided into sections, was not very user-friendly. Liaising with the learning technology team, we decided to change the Moodle format to collapsed topics. This allows the user to quickly gain an overview of the course, which is increasingly important as more and more students view online resources on smaller screens such as tablets or phones. Another suggestion concerned the PowerPoint slides, which were already made available on the VLE. I had planned to improve the presentations by deleting the hidden slides and reducing the number of references on specific slides, replacing these with a final list of references. The review, however, showed that these aspects were seen as valuable by students, who used the slides to revise and catch up, particularly when they began preparing their final assignment. The hidden slides were considered useful extra material and the references on specific slides made it easier for students to locate the material they needed. I therefore decided to keep both of these elements.

Jenny

One of the challenges I faced was that I was not the module lead for the course that was being reviewed and therefore did not have editing rights for the VLE. This made the discussions about the VLE frustrating and uncomfortable. My reviewer had a good eye for detail and spotted a range of minor mistakes on the VLE, which I did not have the power to correct. I found it frustrating to get such useful feedback and to only be able to pass them on to the module leader, with no guarantee that they would be acted upon. This also made me reflect on my role and responsibilities teaching the course. I had viewed my responsibility as ensuring that I was prepared for the classroom sessions and knowing what the students had to do on the VLE between sessions, so that I could signal this to them. I had not considered it my responsibility to

review the site and to ensure that it was up to my standards. I probably would not change this approach because I have to prioritise my work load. Although I am not responsible for the site, I am more aware of how its quality affects the experience of students in my classroom.

Commentary

Jesper reports both making changes and not making planned changes as a result of the review. In general, staff reported making few changes as a result of the observations of the VLE. However, some talked about the validation it provided for their current practice. For example, one staff member received feedback that it was nice for students to see their actual tutor on video, rather than something taken from YouTube.

While they may have made few changes, staff members commented on the importance of students observing all three aspects: classroom, VLE, and assignment brief. This helped them understand if the students could see how the three were meant to relate to each other.

Jenny's reflections suggest that the purpose of reviewing the VLE needs to be clearly established when the staff member does not have responsibility or editing rights for the site. For example, the VLE review may be necessary to provide context to the classroom sessions and it can provide easy access to resources such as the learning outcomes for sessions being reviewed.

CONCLUSION

The inclusion of the VLE element in the student reviewers scheme enabled the staff/student pairs to consider how well different aspects of the course were aligned. Observations of the classroom environment were enriched by the VLE component. VLE observations were useful for understanding the preparation that students were expected to do (particularly for flipped classrooms) and how discussions were extended beyond the classroom. This may make it a valuable part of the scheme, even where the staff member does not have editing rights. However, in this context the purpose of the review needs to be carefully considered.

Reviewing the VLE did not compensate for classroom observations. Feedback from students following the pilot was that three hours of classroom observation did not give sufficient insight into the course; thus, we have increased this element to six hours this academic year. However, it did provide orientation for the classroom observations in that the students had easy access to the module's handbook and intended learning outcomes. It enabled them to consider the work students were undertaking between sessions and to see the course as an integrated whole.

Technology is an area where staff and students appear to have quite different approaches. The review of a VLE is thus likely to bring up wider differences in perspective and perhaps the risk of more misunderstandings. Our impression is that many staff saw issues of layout as minor, whereas it was a major issue for students who could not find the resources they were after quickly. Some of the causes of this may be differences in the approach that lecturers take to organising materials online, to the approach that students expect them to take. Once they understood how staff members approach organising sites, student participants

found that they could more easily find resources on other Moodle sites. The differences in approach and the different value placed on various aspects of VLEs mean that dialogue, listening, and respecting each other's views are very important when reviewing them.

The observation of VLEs appears to have led to few changes to the sites observed. However, students took the good practice they had observed on VLEs and their increased awareness of what was possible back to their own departments. It would therefore be helpful to ensure that there are effective mechanisms for supporting this in future schemes of this type.

Permission for publication was received from Melissa's staff partner due to the risk of him being identified from his use of BSL as his primary language. The feedback of participants who informed the commentary sections was collected under the Arena Centre's ethics clearance, project ID 4507/001.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Jesper Hansen *leads UCL Arena One, a developmental pathway for postgraduate students who teach, and teaches introductory linguistics in UCL Scandinavian Studies. He has worked with students on a number of projects since joining UCL in 2010. His research interests are on educational development, particularly relating to early-career academics.*

Melissa Hazen *is an Audiologist at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada. She participated in the student reviewers scheme while a postgraduate student at UCL's Ear Institute. Melissa also served as the student representative for her department and the Faculty of Brain Sciences during her studies.*

Manuela Irarrázabal Elliott *is a final-year PhD student in the Greek and Latin department. She has experience teaching as a lecturer in her home country and as a teaching assistant at UCL. She has also been a student fellow at the UCL Arena Centre for Research-based Education.*

Jenny Marie *directs UCL ChangeMakers, which supports students and staff to work in partnership to enhance the student learning experience at UCL. The student reviewers scheme forms one of the initiative's three strands. Jenny also oversees the pedagogic support that the Arena Centre delivers directly to departments and faculties.*

Giacomo Piccoli *is a postgraduate student in economics. He took part in the scheme while an undergraduate. He is interested in collaborating with members of staff to enhance the learning experience of his peers in the department, which welcomes more than 300 new undergraduates each year.*

Joe Thorogood *is an Assistant Lecturer in Human Geography. He took part in the student reviewers scheme twice while a PhD student in UCL's geography department. His pedagogic*

interests include the role of post-graduate teaching assistants, staff-student partnership and research-based education.

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CASE STUDY

Promoting Diversity Through Developing a Sense of Community

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores how a students-as-partners approach is helping students in the Graphic Communication programme at the University of Reading gain experience of community through a curriculum design project. The "I am, we are … different by design" project began as a partnership initiative aimed at identifying strategies to extend students' experience of diversity in the curriculum. Drawing on a mid-project evaluation, the case study presented here explores student partners' perceptions of achievements and challenges, including developing a sense of community and the impact on career development. It also highlights how supporting opportunities for visibility and recognition throughout a project may contribute to sustaining a culture of reciprocity in partnership.

KEY WORDS

curriculum development, diversity, graphic design, inclusion, reciprocity, students as partners

INTRODUCTION

"I am, we are … different by design" is an extracurricular Students as Partners (SaP) project in the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading (UK). Curriculum design and pedagogy is a less established area of SaP (Healey et al., 2016). However, as this case study explores, SaP's principle of reciprocity may enable it to make a particular contribution to embedding diversity and inclusion within Teaching & Learning (T&L) (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

Matthews (2017, p. 3) argues that reflection is essential for SaP to realise its transformative potential and create space to "reimagine expertise." Accordingly, mid-project interviews were conducted with the student partners to help sustain the achievement of SaP values (Higher Education Academy, 2015) and facilitate dialogue and reflection.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Rationale

Diversity and inclusion is a cornerstone of the University of Reading's new curriculum framework and an ongoing T&L priority of the department. This is particularly important in the field of graphic communication, which has a dominant Western historical canon and feeds a disproportionately white design industry (Dawood, 2017). Our department has a reputation for world-leading research and postgraduate study in multi-script typeface design. However, taking into account increasing cohort sizes, we need to consider new strategies to effectively extend diversity in our undergraduate programme.

Inspired by Bovill and Bulley (2011) and Dunne and Zandstra (2011) to extend students' agency in curriculum design and building on previous partnership activities (Moys et al., 2018; Loveland et al., 2016), I initiated a SaP project to co-design a new module on design and diversity. My hope was that this approach would ensure the module embodied an ethos of inclusion through building a stronger "sense of relationship" (Bovill et al., 2011, p. 6). SaP is a "way of doing things" (Healey et al. 2017, p. 7) that opens up possibilities beyond our initial motivations. Accordingly, I anticipated that the project could grow in scope and believed it was important to allow this to happen from the outset so that the students could feel a true sense of agency and reciprocity (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017).

Participants

BA Graphic Communication students from all three years of undergraduate study were invited to be part of a team exploring diversity and design. Eight students initially volunteered (one chose not to engage beyond the autumn term, leaving at least two students from each year of study). Another student joined the team later in the academic year.

My observation is that the team had a higher proportion of women and 'black, Asian, and minority ethnicity'[1] participants than the typical demographic profile of our BA Graphic Communication cohorts. This profile is different to that of previous engagement activities in our department and many reported SaP projects (Matthews, 2017). This may suggest that the participants considered the project theme to be of personal and social relevance.

Aims and operations

In the autumn term, the team jointly conceived the project aims and developed a successful funding application to the university's Partnerships in Learning and Teaching scheme. The project name—"I am, we are … different by design"—reflects how our team seeks to encourage exploration of a greater range of individual, cultural, and international inspiration in design projects. Our goals included identifying strategies to develop diversity in the curriculum and create a greater sense of community, as well as more concrete objectives such as developing the new module and designing an awareness campaign. The explicit emphasis on community was a student-identified priority and foregrounds how important it is to jointly consider curricula and learning environments. This highlights how partnership helps to value students' day-to-day lived experiences.

[1] These demographic categories may not necessarily align with how individuals choose to identify.

Students' work on the campaign was credited as part of a professional practice module in which students undertake "real jobs" for clients. The rest of the project was considered extracurricular, with students' time counting towards a university-wide recognition scheme.

We began with a series of brainstorming and planning meetings. Two students were appointed as project leaders and worked with me to draft the team's ideas and objectives for the funding application. Once funding was secured, the team met weekly throughout most of the year, with additional meetings to support particular activities. We used Trello (a project management app), email, and social media to communicate between meetings.

Activities

The team discussed ideas for the new module and engaged with other students to evaluate these ideas. They were surprised at how challenging it was to get other students to participate in surveys. The students felt that any design project work undertaken as part of the module should have the potential for real impact and decided to call the module "Design for Change." We worked together to write a module description that identified the aims of the module, its learning outcomes, and key content, as well as the T&L and assessment methods. The module design allows students to initially explore a broad range of diversity, inclusion, and social responsibility issues and then work independently on a project of their choice.

This is the first time students in our department have been directly involved in writing a module description. As anticipated, they were unaccustomed to translating their rich ideas into the precise, formal detail required by a module description template. In the questionnaire response, one student noted the particular challenge in "thinking of deliverables and processes that would encourage people who haven't thought about diversity in design to consider taking the module." We negotiated how to manage this challenge, with responsibility for translating their ideas assumed by me, followed by the entire group reviewing and editing the module description. The module has been approved and commenced in October 2018.

The team explored a variety of ideas for their campaign and decided to produce a zine to "showcase diversity in the creative fields." Interviews were conducted with students (from all three departments in the School of Arts and Communication Design), alumni, and other professionals for the zine. The zine was largely produced after the mid-project evaluation and was distributed to students at the start of the new academic year. The team hopes it will inspire other students to consider diversity and inclusion issues more consciously.

Alongside the module design and zine, the team also:

- identified and presented a set of diversity-focused strategies to the department's Student-Staff Liaison Committee for implementation;
- created a diversity wall display in the department;
- engaged with applicants visiting the department as part of the admissions process;
- ordered new books for the library;
- identified potential guest speakers; and
- attended industry events.

Building on the success of these initiatives, our team was invited to present our project as an example of partnership-in-action at the annual Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) T&L Showcase.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

The seven initial students participated in mid-project interviews. Following approval from the university's Research Ethics Committee, the interviews were conducted individually by email to allow each participant to provide a considered, reflective response.

The interview questions explored participants' motivations for participating in the project, their perspectives of the most rewarding and challenging aspects, and whether they would encourage other students to become involved in partnership projects (given the time commitment). The students were also asked to reflect on whether the project influenced their experience of community and their career development. Although both aspects are benefits of partnership (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Higher Education Academy, 2015), they were evaluated because (1) developing a sense of community was an explicit goal that the student partners had proposed and (2) previous partnership initiatives in the department had apparent benefits for the students' professional development (Loveland et al., 2016).

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Motivations

Participants' articulated motivations for joining the project revealed a clear desire to have "impact and [make] a difference in the world of design" and within the department. Participants also said they wished to extend their own cultural experiences through interacting with other students, gain experience beyond their academic program, and enhance their employability and project/time management skills. One participant—who was writing a dissertation about diversity in graphic design—said she "thought the project would be a rewarding extension of that, where I would get the opportunity to help start the conversation and instigate change."

Individuals also expressed a range of personal motivations for joining the project, reflecting on their experiences of cultural diversity before and during their university studies and their aspirations for bringing about change. For example, one student wrote:

> Although I'm half Ghanaian, I grew up in rural Somerset where diversity and education about diversity doesn't really occur let alone in the creative fields. This project has given me the opportunity to explore various aspects of diversity in design with like-minded people across the entire degree programme.

Another student said she had experienced a greater lack of cultural diversity at university than she was accustomed to from her own upbringing and was "passionate" about wanting to help "future students avoid" having a similar experience.

Career development

As anticipated, many responses highlighted how the project is helping participants develop essential transferable skills, including leadership, organisational, and teamwork skills.

These skills (e.g., "making decisions and doing things instead of just bouncing around ideas," finding solutions to "work around" the "limitations out of our control," developing time management skills to juggle the project with existing commitments, and "learning to work collaboratively") were declared as particular challenges that the project had engaged them in. Interestingly, team dynamics, idea generation, and project management skills were also noted as some of the most rewarding aspects of the project. For example, participants described team meetings and "strategizing and setting tasks to find new ways to make every meeting and discussion better" and then turning these decisions into actions as "extremely worthwhile."

In addition to the anticipated career development benefits, participants described how the project allowed them to "be creative" and "positively" inspired them to explore diversity and "different styles of design" in their own work. They also highlighted that the project is helping them consider the role of graphic communication and its relationship with audiences, build "good future connections," and meet people who are doing "real jobs" with an international focus.

Furthermore, participants elaborated that the project is empowering them to "re-evaluate" or clarify their career aspirations in a variety of ways. The project seems to have helped at least three individuals either develop a more international focus to their career or "cement" an existing goal to volunteer or work abroad. For example, one student said:

> Through the research phase of this project … I've come to appreciate the range of people from around the world who are pioneers of the profession in their nations and cultures. As an international student, the project has broadened my scope of career ideas and I hope to be able to one day take my skills back to my home country of Fiji to help encourage the pursuit of design there.

Participants also highlighted both career (e.g., "learn new skills," "gaining experience outside the curriculum for future careers") and personal development (e.g., "a great way to develop yourself as a person," "growing into an adult mind-set with professionalism") benefits when explaining why they would encourage other students to become involved in partnership initiatives.

Community and dissemination

Participants were unanimous about encouraging participation in partnership activities. Some students indicated that an extracurricular project might not be appropriate for students who struggle to manage their academic workload. Interestingly, others suggested that having an extracurricular project could help students prioritise their time better and improve motivation. In this respect, it seemed that the "sense of community created through collaborative work" was having a very positive effect on individuals' "experience of the course" and that feeling motivated about the project improved their overall time management skills. Similar outcomes have been reported for other SaP projects, despite the time commitment often being underestimated (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

Their articulated reasons for encouraging other students to be involved in partnership also reinforced the themes emerging from individual motivations. For example, they valued

being part of "a good cause with a good message," "the feeling of being a part of a project that is inspiring that sense of community," and working with students from other years.

Responses to the question about what they have found to be most rewarding reinforced the importance of working with others and receiving encouragement from the university. This included, for example, being awarded funding ("because it meant that other people outside of our group believed in our vision") and being invited to present "who we are, why we do it, what we're doing, and what we plan for the future" to wider audiences. Participants also highlighted dissemination activities (especially the diversity wall display and zine) and the increased interaction with other students in relation to these activities as particularly rewarding:

> The most rewarding part about this project has been the awareness and interest from other students within our department. From the project wall we curated, I've had several colleagues come up to ask me about the project and the work we are doing, showing interest in the artists, visual cultures, and movements that we've highlighted and expressing their excitement in seeing and learning about diverse designers and work they had never heard about or seen before. Being able to highlight diversity and seeing that awareness spread has been the most rewarding.

Participants also highlighted the benefits of teamwork, meeting new people, sharing ideas, or learning new things from each other and working together to "encourage research and a new wave of knowledge." One participant emphasised how rewarding it was to know "that every individual in the room has their own voice and they identify with their confidence to voice their opinions in that very room and beyond," how this experience builds "skills" and "passion" that "expands to other avenues," and how "feeling the confidence in the project to move towards those avenues makes it that much rewarding."

The responses also suggest that getting other people to participate in this project or "acknowledge the potential it holds" to "make a sure difference on how we both 'choose to design' and 'reflect on design' and … give attention to the underlying statements of 'diversity'" has been a particular challenge for the team. Part of this challenge, the students reflected, is about "coming to the realisation that we can't change this diversity issue overnight." Nevertheless, "definitely!" was the emphatic reply of many of our team members to the question about whether being involved in the project has changed their experience of community. For example, one participant said:

> Since joining the project it has been clear that around the department the sense of community has been taken more seriously as we are all driven to promote this notion and get as many people involved and aware as we can.

Others commented on how important the opportunity to collaborate with students from other years—and who may have different cultural backgrounds—has been. They said that the project is enabling them to feel part of a community whose members share the same interests—particularly, a passion for promoting diversity—and "make genuine friendships" across years.

Some team members said that the project has created a "stronger sense of community" for them at a personal level or reduced feelings of "isolation." One student noted: "As the project has developed, so has the way I have encountered the interaction of graphic communication and the community among it; they both go hand in hand and make for the best combination."

CONCLUSION

Feedback from RUSU and university colleagues indicates that the RUSU presentation was extremely "well-received." The team recently met with school colleagues to discuss how we can extend our "very inspiring" initiatives across all three departments next year, evaluate the project, and encourage more students to become involved in partnership projects. We hope to produce the zine as an ongoing, school-wide initiative to showcase and inspire diversity in creative practice. A presentation for the autumn term is planned to inspire new participants to join our team.

We originally planned this case study for an internal resource to inspire student and staff partnerships at the University of Reading and contribute to embedding diversity and inclusion in our curricula. During the course of writing the article, I realised that the evaluation had highlighted three important aspects of partnership. The first is the range of professional and transferable skills that SaP projects enable students to develop. The second is the essential role of a sense of community in enhancing learning and developing confidence and personal effectiveness. These benefits are well-documented in the SaP literature (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, the third—the importance of embedding opportunities for recognition within partnership projects—is perhaps less recognised.

The ways in which we have supported the visibility of this project from its inception—through university funding, display space, engagement with departmental visitors, and presentations to wider university T&L communities—seem to have been particularly empowering for our team. These activities have helped create a culture of reciprocity that is the cornerstone of effective partnerships. Further to providing recognition for our team, these activities engaged our team with a broader range of beneficiaries, resulting in the project having a wider impact. This engagement helped extend our decision-making, reflection, and evaluation beyond subjective or short-term measures.

Perhaps more importantly, students' experience of community grew. In particular, presenting at the RUSU showcase went beyond giving students an experience of acting as ambassadors for the department to helping them feel part of a broader university T&L community that values the student experience. Preparing the presentation gave the team a chance to reflect and engage with "why it matters for themselves and higher education more broadly" (Matthews, 2017, p. 4). Delivering the presentation gave our team the opportunity to demonstrate and experience the value of "their capital and its unique contribution" (Matthews, 2017, p. 3).

Successful partnerships are often showcased after the fact—perhaps because partnerships are associated with "risk" (Healey et al., 2014, p. 17). Dissemination is also time-consuming and can add to staff and student workloads, particularly as many SaP projects are extracurricular (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, supporting the visibility of the team's work as the project evolved seemed to give the students an empowering sense of 'voice,' while

ensuring that reflection about the wider impact of the project was embedded throughout our decision-making. In this respect, it seems that SaP values such as reciprocity and equality can be nurtured by creating opportunities for visibility and recognition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded as part of the University of Reading Partnerships in Learning and Teaching scheme. Thank you to the individuals who took part in the interviews for this study: Ziana Azariah, Fay Biggs, Lily Brown, Camara Dick, Malaika Johnson, Seniz Husseyin, and Martha Macri.

Students participated in the interviews undertaken for this case study following appropriate University of Reading procedures for ethical research.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

Dr Jeanne-Louise Moys *is a lecturer in the University of Reading's Department of Typography & Graphic Communication and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Her research encompasses design pedagogy and partnership alongside user-centred design research into inclusive design and the role of typographic differentiation in everyday communication.*

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REFLECTIVE PIECE

Sailing Through a Storm: The Importance of Dialogue in Student Partnerships

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INTRODUCTION

In late 2016, we—Damir Mitric and Pam Delly—were tasked by the Director of Learning and Teaching at La Trobe University (LTU) in Australia with designing a new operational model for the Peer Learning Adviser (PLA) program, which had traditionally offered one-on-one, peer-to-peer support through a centrally located drop-in service. The new model conceptualized student learning as the *what* of academic development work and staff learning as the *how*. In this system, academic developers supported student learning by supporting academics as they engaged in practice.

Research indicated that LTU cohorts did not exhibit help-seeking behaviours, so the principal change involved embedding PLA support in curriculum through design and instructional effort. It also involved challenging and transforming the institutional culture and understanding of the role of students in the learning process—particularly in relation to systems that encourage students to engage with each other. To redesign and deliver the PLA program in 2017, Damir and Pam partnered with co-authors Kirsty Macfarlane and Jarah Dennison, who were LTU students and Peer Learning Leaders (PLL). PLLs managed the daily operations of the PLAs and provided academic support for students, while PLAs were solely responsible for providing academic support. We believed that such a partnership had the potential to challenge previous conceptualizations of the program.

The following is our collective attempt—staff- and student-centric, both in terms of outcomes and reporting—to unpack the complexities of our collaborative endeavour in 2017. We juxtapose our respective experiences of navigating the "normative hierarchical university paradigm" (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 18) to present a more collaborative and balanced discussion of our partnership. We reflect on our "way of doing things" (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, p. 12) so that the partnership process is more visible, particularly in relation to the challenges and negative outcomes.

An ethos of reciprocity (Matthews, 2017) influenced our thinking and practice, and we were acutely aware of the complexities involved in real-life exchanges between staff and

students. We discussed power openly throughout our collaboration, and here we speak about its function as equal co-authors of our empirical story. We are frank about the challenges that we faced and do not shy away from discussing failures, as well as lessons learned. We hope that this will help others to critically analyse and reflect on their own practice and, in the process, fully explore the transformative power of student partnerships for individuals and their institutions.

THE CROSSING

Damir Mitric and Pam Delly

Cook-Sather's (2014) work on partnership as a threshold concept in academic development—both troublesome and transformative—heavily influenced our redesigned PLA program. As academic developers, we saw an opportunity to transform curriculum into a creative space where fellow academics and students could reimagine the teaching and learning process and question their respective roles in it. To achieve this, we invited subject coordinators to embed the PLA service (through PLA-led workshops) in their teaching cycle, contrary to previous norms of practice. Faculty academics, academic developers, and current students collaborated to find the best way to embed peer-to-peer support into the curriculum—essentially performing a small-scale curriculum review and redesign. Once we agreed how to strategically integrate PLA support into the syllabus, PLAs delivered weekly subject-specific workshops. This significantly challenged the previous patriarchal understanding of students' roles in teaching and learning.

These transformations proved to be troublesome for some academic colleagues in our central unit—particularly those with an Academic Language and Learning (ALL) background, who struggled to make sense of their new hybridized identities (Percy, 2014). Previous dominant academic discourses at our university framed the PLAs as young, inexperienced, and vulnerable individuals in need of ongoing support and protection. In practice, this meant that PLAs performed specific and limited tasks under supervision of academic staff who protected both the quality of the service as well as students' wellbeing. For staff with an ALL background (whose expertise and student-centred work focused on developing academic literacies), PLA's excursion into the curriculum was "counter intuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value" (Meyer & Land, 2006, p. 4). It challenged their long-held epistemological assumptions and practices grounded in the necessity of one-on-one student support.

While our new student partnership model introduced the possibility of new ways of working in contemporary higher education, it was also more problematic than we had anticipated. The new model challenged the traditional role of students in higher education, leading some colleagues to feel threatened. Perhaps the most difficult part of this process was realizing they felt betrayed, as they saw us as complicit in one of the many neoliberal attacks on the nature and organization of higher education. In this interpretation, students were perceived as being exploited as cheap labour, replacing the role of academics.

While we felt confident that our attempt to shift the nature of our relationship with the PLAs was both timely and appropriate—that it would be productively disruptive—we understood our colleagues' critique of the neoliberal university. We were fully aware of the effects massification, marketization, and managerialism have had on our practices and

identities. We realized that the policy drivers shaping higher education today were inescapable. However, we also believed that we could subvert these dominant discourses. While we couldn't escape the matrix of the fully-fledged corporate university, we could use its own systems and logic to resist it. In using a business model to frame our partnership, we utilized the language of the dominant discourse in order to subvert it. Subversion, for us, meant staying competitive with the expanding synchronous, online, tutoring services in order to protect our colleagues' jobs.

We do not subscribe to the business approach to education, but we learned to stay relevant by reporting on the impact of our program in language that senior management understood. This language was statistical and reported service and financial cost efficiencies. We agree with Matthews (2017) that, because of their dialogic nature, student partnerships provide a "counter-narrative to current neoliberal agendas" (p. 1), but we also note that in practice the story is more complicated. Student partnerships open a Pandora's box of what it means to be an academic in the 21st century, forcing us to ask difficult questions about our identity, epistemology, and ontology. We use the metaphor in a positive sense and do not shy away from difficult questions, such as, "How complicit are we in the system we openly criticize?" This is why the idea of partnership as a threshold concept was appealing, and we are grateful for our colleagues' critique, which forced us to expand our perspective.

Kirsty Macfarlane and Jarah Dennison

In the past, our primary responsibility was to liaise with PLAs, and to monitor the day-to-day running of the program—creating rosters, managing pay, and organizing the end-of-year function. The principal change in 2017 was our increased engagement with how the whole program operated, including budgets, training, managing and supervising staff, triaging support, as well as implementing new initiatives, such as workshops. The workshops that became part of the PLA program significantly increased our level of responsibility: not only were we responsible for organizing workshops and selecting appropriate PLAs to facilitate them, we were involved in discussions about workshop topics and scheduling. We also assisted in developing workshop content, and liaised with university staff.

This increased responsibility, particularly our involvement in curriculum and pedagogical decisions for workshops, pushed us outside our areas of expertise, leading to questions about our place within the university. We were neither students nor academic staff, but stranded somewhere between. Working outside our areas of expertise forced us to adapt quickly and find ways to complete tasks to a high standard. While we initially considered ourselves underqualified, compared to the academic staff who had previously completed these tasks, we personally felt capable of completing them.

Even minor mistakes, such as missing an email, engendered a sense of regret that we had let down those who had entrusted us with so much responsibility, thus reinforcing how much risk the coordinators were taking by giving us this responsibility. There were checks and balances in place to address this risk, including regular contact with the program coordinator, but we were nevertheless conscious of the significant risks involved. This put us in a high-stakes position where, although we were students, the decisions we made had significant ramifications for many others. While we quickly lost any conception of ourselves as students—

we did not see ourselves as peers to the students we supported—neither did we view ourselves as academic staff. Undoubtedly, this position of trust and the high expectations placed on us drove us to be more professional. The responsibility pushed us to exceed our own expectations. It made us realize how much we actually had to offer to the university in terms of our experiences and expertise.

ROUGH WATERS

Kirsty Macfarlane and Jarah Dennison

Our first task, to recruit PLAs, proved to be the most challenging, even though we had done this in the past. We were instructed to nearly triple the intake of PLAs, even though Pam and Damir had told us that the program budget had been cut by $100,000. We expressed concern that we would end up with too many PLAs and would not be able to offer them sufficient hours; in the past, PLAs had been guaranteed minimum hours and the flexibility of setting their own hours in order to balance their studies with their jobs.

This decision led to a key challenge in 2017. Our concerns proved valid, as feedback from PLAs indicated they wanted more hours. We also lost access to one of our most experienced PLAs, who took another position to cover the financial impact of her reduced roster. New PLAs were getting less experience each week, so it took longer to develop their confidence and competence.

Although we were part of a hierarchy and did not have final decision-making power, this initial experience led to tension and concerns that our views were not taken seriously. At the time we questioned whether, despite our experience with the PLA program, our status as students reduced the level of trust the leadership team had in our experience and abilities.

Damir Mitric and Pam Delly

Increasing the numbers of PLAs was imperative to meeting two institutional goals: achieving greater efficiencies, and extending the program's reach in order to prove the value of the service and ensure future funding. More PLAs would enable us to extend the program and reach more students. This was important, as the previous year's goals had not been achieved to the satisfaction of management, so our budget had been significantly reduced. Inviting our PLLs into financial discussions about the program, including recruitment, meant giving them agency in the process. As such, and to our surprise at the time, we experienced significant resistance on the issue of recruitment numbers. We understood that our directive seemed counterintuitive to Kirsty and Jarah, given their lack of experience in navigating competing strategic imperatives to achieve institutional goals, which is why we actively engaged them in a dialogue.

We were also genuinely surprised when, during the writing of this paper, Kirsty and Jarah raised this particular point as one of the main problems they experienced in 2017. While we were very sensitive to their concerns at the time, we were always explicit about the power dynamics in higher education and their influence on the decision-making process. This too was part of what we conceptualized to be a professional development opportunity for them. While the point of the partnership was to ensure that multiple perspectives, experiences, and expertise were voiced and heard, there was no escaping the reality of a highly structured and

hierarchical chain of command. We felt it was important that they learn how their roles fit into the bigger picture, just as we understood our own roles within this hierarchy.

Hearing and reading their reflections on our decision to expand the numbers—particularly their feeling of managing the consequences of our decision—revealed that such partnerships can be at odds with the bureaucratic and corporate structures present in many universities today. This is exactly why we should engage in them. Their disruptive power forced us to reflect on our own role in a highly bureaucratized and managerial environment. Perhaps we could not escape the reality of the corporatized university, just as we could not ignore traditional ideas of teaching and learning, but we could subvert them by engaging our students as partners. In this case, simply pausing to reflect on both our treatment of each other as colleagues and the structures themselves, heavily influenced the nature of this process.

We did undervalue Kirsty and Jarah's experience and expertise by not allowing their views to influence our final decision; however, we overlooked the advice of our colleagues, rather than our students. Therefore, we were not submitting to the long-standing patriarchal model, which we were trying to change, but to strategic imperatives that had been imposed on the program. Exploring how those imperatives influence our professional everyday life and our interaction with each other has been a valuable exercise, made possible by our close partnership with Kirsty and Jarah.

Kirsty Macfarlane and Jarah Dennison

Another contested issue in 2017 was whether PLLs should be given additional access to data, and in what form. From a PLL perspective, lack of access was frustrating. For most of the year, we did not have direct access to the data collected during PLA consultations. PLAs often asked us questions that relied on us having this access, and as leaders, we sometimes felt caught in the middle. As mediators between PLAs and academic staff, we could not always satisfy the demands of both sides. Of course, we understood the hesitation; the data were confidential and privacy concerns were paramount. While we understood why we were not given access, it was of little help practically. Eventually some access was granted, proving invaluable to the management of the program by allowing greater efficiencies and effectiveness. Gaining increased access to data also improved the quality of our relationship with the leadership team, as it indicated the growing trust between us and Damir and Pam.

Damir Mitric and Pam Delly

Issues of trust and respect are highly complex and lie at the heart of successful working partnerships. Data management was an ongoing issue in our partnership, so it was not surprising to us that it emerged in Kirsty and Jarah's reflection. While we eventually made the decision to grant full access, we found this decision "troublesome, transformative, [and] irreversible" (Cook-Sather, 2014, p. 187).

To align our program with the university's strategic and business goals, we implemented much more rigorous data collection. While the PLLs were given the responsibility of collecting the data from the students who used the program, we had decided early in the partnership that Kirsty and Jarah should not have access to those data. Their requests for access became a focal point of discussions within the Learning and Teaching team, and we faced many challenges

from our colleagues about the appropriateness of granting access to students. Clearly, some colleagues still considered the PLLs to be students, rather than colleagues. We were fully aware that the PLLs needed access to the data to do their jobs properly, but were constrained by systemic issues around data collection, confidentiality, and complications with the data platform. As such, we believed that plunging our junior colleagues into a discussion around bureaucracy and power seemed unproductive.

During our protracted discussions with other colleagues, we endeavoured to maintain an open dialogue with Kirsty and Jarah so that they were aware of the bigger-picture issues we were encountering. Our challenge, too, was how to confront a persistent culture amongst some of our colleagues that not only seemed to undervalue the professionalism of our PLLs, but also appeared to question the trust we had in them. While we felt confident in Kirsty and Jarah's professionalism and trustworthiness, it was also vital that we did not dismiss the concerns of our colleagues, which would have challenged the trust and respect already established in those collegial relationships. The protracted discussions eventually led to the agreement to allow Kirsty and Jarah access, but consensus took us most of the year.

LANDING

Navigating the rough waters of our nascent partnership has enabled us to develop a working relationship that is strong, honest, and respectful. This has been achieved by maintaining an open dialogue throughout the year in which all views could be shared, heard, and acknowledged. As with any partnership, disagreement and conflict are inevitable, and sometimes decisions are made that do not reflect a consensus. At times, this occurs because there is also no escaping the strategic imperatives that underpin a collegial partnership. However, it has been rewarding to navigate those imperatives and make decisions based on continuous and open dialogue. We will continue to face challenges as the partnership evolves, particularly as we gradually try to transform institutional culture and attitudes toward students-as-partners. Based on our experiences of student partnership in 2017, this transformation seems much more achievable now, as we move into 2018 with a relationship that is firmly grounded in open, honest, and respectful dialogue.

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REFLECTIVE PIECE

Growing into Pedagogical Partnerships Over Time and Across Disciplines: My Experience as a Non-STEM Student Consultant in STEM Courses

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INTRODUCTION

"I don't know anything about chemistry," I thought, as I read an email informing me that my first placement as a student consultant with the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) Program would be in an organic chemistry lab. I was a political science major. What could possibly qualify me to work with a STEM professor?

Following that first placement, I was partnered with an interim faculty member who was teaching an introductory statistics class for non-majors. My third and final partnership was with a physics professor who taught an entry-level course for aspiring majors and pre-med students.

In this essay, I consider my role as a student consultant across these three partnerships. Each placement challenged me to adapt to new and unfamiliar subjects, different classroom cultures, and a variety of goals and intentions for the partnership. All three partnerships proved to be valuable opportunities for personal growth and development in my practice as a consultant, and together they convinced me that my non-STEM identity was an asset to my faculty partners and our work together.

ADJUSTING TO AN UNFAMILIAR LEARNING SPACE

At the beginning of my first partnership, I struggled to adapt to the unpredictable nature of the lab. Because most of my knowledge about classroom pedagogy was limited to discussion-heavy, professor-centric spaces in the social sciences, I had to identify possible points for pedagogical growth within a largely independent, project-based environment, while accounting for the entirely unfamiliar vocabulary and content of organic chemistry. I took careful, time-stamped notes of my faculty partner's movements and exchanges, occasionally making observations about her questioning style or method of explanation; furthermore, I kept track of which working groups collaborated with her, in order to measure the consistency of professor interaction and attention throughout the duration of the lab. After exploring various approaches, I realized that the richest opportunity for my involvement was in observing the brief, ubiquitous teaching conversations between my partner and the students, as well as

directly troubleshooting more macro aspects of the course with my professor, such as the involvement of teaching assistants, grading practices, and course organization. These topics led to fruitful conversations and proved to be points of interest for both me and my partner.

I was fortunate to have a skilled, ambitious, and reflective faculty partner who approached our conversations with enthusiasm; she went to great lengths to effect change in her class, which allowed me to grow in my capacity as a consultant and overcome many of my initial misgivings. My partner was deeply engaged with our work together and she fostered a strong culture of collaboration in our partnership from the outset. She carefully read through my notes and recorded her own reactions before our meetings to ensure that we had a starting point and a structure for our conversations. Our discussions ranged from the minutia of the course, to a college's role in supporting students, to the challenges of being first-year faculty, to personal stories. Through the encouragement and affirmation that we gave one another, I discovered that my perspective as a non-STEM student enhanced my observational powers, allowed me to draw suggestions from a broad array of pedagogical concepts, and enabled me to convey the viewpoint of a novice in the subject area.

The doubt I felt at the start of the semester forced me to adapt and expand what I understood to be my role in the partnership. My lack of confidence in the value of my own contributions had narrowed my perspective, limiting the scope of what I felt I could do as a consultant. With the constant support, respect, and advice of my peers in the SaLT Program, I was able to push past these doubts and trust that the partnership would evolve and lead us to meaningful insights, without me trying to steer it in the direction I believed it should go.

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF STUDENT CONSULTANT

At the start of my first partnership, I observed that my partner was an excellent professor and that her students appreciated her, but believed there was nothing of substance I could offer. Stuck in my own assumptions about the importance of content knowledge in a pedagogical partnership, I did not yet realize what I could offer from outside the discipline. My faculty partner, on the other hand, had no doubts about my value as an observer and collaborator. When asked what was most beneficial about working with me as a student consultant, she shared this insight:

> Teaching a subject for the first time is very much akin to conducting an experiment: you simply have to try new things and approaches and observe what works and what doesn't. Having an extra pair of eyes in the laboratory made the observation process much easier—especially since, with many things going on in the lab, it is often difficult to make notes on how students respond to the teaching approach while at the same time answering their questions, troubleshooting their issues and making sure experiments are conducted safely. It was, therefore, a great asset to have a student partner keep notes and read them to me in the calmer environment of my office. I was surprised at how many things you noted that I simply didn't catch and how detailed your notes were. It definitely boosted my confidence as a first-time teacher of the organic chemistry laboratory and was a great source of feedback regarding what practices work with the students. When I taught the course again, I felt very confident

about my ability to lead the class and it manifested into an extremely positive learning environment.

In the early weeks of our partnership, I worried that if I did not have substantive observations to discuss in our meetings, I had failed my faculty partner. I had a narrow idea of what was useful, and it took me time to realize that consulting did not mean I had to have "answers" or incite change. In reading her reflections on our partnership now, I have a deeper understanding of how my observations and supportive presence bolstered her self-assurance as an educator.

My first partnership was instrumental in building my self-confidence as a consultant. It was reassuring to know that what felt like superficial notes to me were valuable records to my partner. She appreciated being able look back on detailed descriptions of her teaching and reflect on what fit with her intentions for the course and what required fine-tuning. Once I accepted that consulting meant I could take on a variety of roles within a partnership—that I was not a failure if I operated differently than more seasoned consultants—I fell into a comfortable supporting role. It was rewarding to listen to my partner share her concerns about the class and the department, and to affirm her practice. She was a strong professor, meticulous in her planning and responsive in her instruction. We had wonderful conversations about teaching and learning, and we supported each other in building self-assurance. My apprehensions about working with a STEM professor dissipated as I realized that we could discuss pedagogy entirely apart from the specific content of the class, which was something I felt far more prepared to explore. It was a positive, constructive way to grow into my role as a consultant and recognize the value of my presence and perspective.

COMING TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE VALUE OF MY PERSPECTIVE

My first partnership allowed me to walk into my second placement with confidence. It was a lecture-style class with time for discussion, which was both a comfortable environment for me and a context that lent itself easily to observation and adjustment. I identified strongly with the students in the class, who were predominantly humanities and social science majors taking math for distributional credit. Like them, I had sat in those same seats, wondering how basic STEM concepts were relevant to my education and goals. I knew what it felt like to simply want a required credit. I knew how frustrating it could be to make a connection to the social sciences and have it be brushed aside. Having been in these students' shoes, I had a valuable perspective that informed my feedback throughout my second partnership. With the identities of these learners in mind, my partner and I worked to build space into the course for deeper discussion, attempted to place concepts and examples into a relevant context, and strived to provide a clear structure for academic success.

My partner was new to teaching and therefore open to brainstorming and testing classroom practices. She placed a great deal of trust in my observations and ideas, which helped us to build a strong, creative partnership in which I felt able to take more initiative. While my first partnership helped me to grow into my role, my second was an exciting opportunity to develop greater depth of pedagogical knowledge, take risks, and advance my practice as an observer and collaborator. Where before I had struggled to make meaningful

observations, I was now challenged to refine a multitude of feedback into a few digestible, salient points. My partner and I tackled a broad array of issues, making a concerted effort to incorporate new practices into the course without throwing students off track. We discussed strategies for encouraging more balanced participation, responding to difficult questions, curbing instructional tangents, creating opportunities for discussion in a large STEM course, engaging non-STEM students, making materials relevant and accessible, and setting clear objectives around course content. My partner's desire to grow as an educator created space for me to critically observe her class, voice ideas, and bring in my own learning as a student and aspiring teacher. Her willingness to engage in and learn from the partnership made me feel like a necessary and active participant in the development of the course.

When asked about the benefits of having a consultant, my partner described the value of consistent support, encouragement, and pedagogical exploration:

> Some teaching practices take repeated practice to improve, for example, clarity of presentation, time management, and having an observer regularly allows me to keep working on those aspects—having a partner throughout the semester kept me on top of things. Without a student partner, I find it easy to get fatigued in the middle of the semester and to be satisfied with just covering the material without designing the most pedagogically beneficial lesson. Weekly meetings with my student partner kept my spirit up about designing the best lesson plans I could.

As a consultant, I had the opportunity to see how our ideas played out in real time, and we tried to encourage consistent student feedback. This partnership increased my capacity as an advisor, sharpened my ability to prioritize changes in the classroom, and affirmed the value of my perspective as a non-STEM student. By exploring a range of pedagogical challenges and solutions, this partnership expanded my comfort and confidence with an array of consulting responsibilities. This opportunity for growth gave me valuable experience, increased adaptability, and a further developed skill set as I moved toward my final partnership with the SaLT Program.

DRAWING ON EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPING A HIGHLY FOCUSED PARTNERSHIP

My third partnership was more focused than those before it. My faculty partner had previous experience with the SaLT Program, and had specifically requested the help of a student consultant. My partner was confident in his teaching, reflective about pedagogical practices, and interested in pursuing a deeper analysis of the course structure and student experience. He had clear goals for what he wanted us to accomplish from the beginning, which made my role more specific than it had been in previous partnerships. In addition to my perspective as a student, I now had the experience of a consultant. I entered my third partnership feeling capable; I trusted myself and I knew that my contribution was valued. Recognizing the productive success of my second partnership, I felt equipped to offer meaningful ideas and had confidence in my consulting voice.

My faculty partner was teaching an introductory physics lecture popular with pre-med students and those considering majoring in the department. He had structured the course

thoughtfully and wanted to experiment with specific practices around student engagement and assessments, as well as explore why students had taken the class and what they hoped to gain from it. We devised a system for gathering consistent, pointed feedback from students in order to address course issues in real time. Our goal was to reimagine how to teach an introductory STEM class with sensitivity to students' learning needs and consideration for the type of thinking they would be asked to do in higher-level courses. We received rich, informative feedback and developed a number of innovative solutions to students' challenges.

My perspective as a non-STEM student was particularly salient in this partnership because we were actively trying to revolutionize the standard structure of introductory STEM lectures. We wanted to design a course that appealed to novices, engaged students who were there solely for credit, invited participants to think critically and develop metacognitive awareness, and provided relevant context for the content covered. As a physics novice myself, I was able to recognize effective learning aides, explanations, and activities. Some students struggled with the transition from the standard rules and operations of most math and science courses to employing more creative problem-solving, which I understood. I identified with those students who took the course for a specific requirement and wanted clear expectations and precise instruction. I had collected an archive of pedagogical techniques that had been effective in my non-STEM courses, as well as the STEM courses for which I had been a consultant. My experience allowed me to formulate pointed questions about specific aspects of the course, troubleshoot challenges, and propose creative solutions.

When asked what was most beneficial about working with a student partner outside of his discipline, my partner shared this comment:

> There was a set of eyes on me and my classroom atmosphere that was not concentrating on trying to learn the material, but focusing on aspects that are separate from the material, but nevertheless crucial to a successful class. My manner of delivery, the way I address students, the wording I use to describe things; all elements that don't often receive enough attention, but could contribute immensely, or detract severely, from the quality of my presentation. Having a student partner gave me insights into teaching that are almost impossible to be gathered in any other way. A student in my discipline, or even a similar discipline, might more easily become engaged in the material, rather than remaining aloof, and able to see the classroom dynamics from a distance.

In this last partnership, I strengthened my ability to fine-tune pedagogical practices according to feedback and desired outcomes, and I developed a heightened capacity for determining what required immediate adjustment and what could be incorporated into future plans for the course. Instilled with confidence from my first two partnerships, I was free to expand my skills as an effective collaborator, analyst, and problem-solver.

CONCLUSION

An important thread that connects my three partnerships is the value of my perspective as a non-STEM student in the realm of STEM consulting. While at first I felt out of my element, I

discovered that observing teaching techniques, understanding student reactions and needs, and offering constructive feedback did not require an understanding of the discipline. In fact, my lack of familiarity with the subjects allowed me to focus on the clarity of my partners' instructional styles and highlight disciplinary norms that may have been challenging to new students. I did not know how a chemistry lab or a physics course was typically structured, so it was safe for me to question everything. Additionally, my three faculty partners each expressed interest in moving beyond the *modus operandi* of hard science courses, and my experiences in differently formatted classes became valuable fodder for pedagogical suggestions.

Within each partnership, we considered the importance of critical thinking, open-ended questioning, discussion, and context for material. The professors wanted students to connect science and math to the larger world. They wanted to encourage deeper thinking and understanding, not surface-level recitation of concepts. Exploring pedagogical methods that supported this form of learning did not require me to comprehend the material; rather, I considered the type of questions being asked, how students were solving problems, and what opportunities existed for meaningful participation. Furthermore, I identified with many of the students in my placement courses, especially those who were non-STEM students themselves. I shared my interpretation of students' motivations and learning needs with my partners and helped them to establish practices that considered these factors while achieving their own goals for the class. Despite coming from a different discipline, my own student experience was highly relevant and informed much of my work with the SaLT Program. My lack of STEM expertise was no impediment to my success as a consultant, and it was often an asset.

As a consultant, leaving the comfort zone of familiar subjects supported me in transcending my own deficit assumptions about my expertise and abilities. My faculty partners appreciated the insights and creative solutions that were made possible through our collaboration as we revisited our preconceptions about STEM courses: their apparent rigidity, opacity, and stressful rigor. We strived to broaden the use of critical thinking and discussion in traditionally lecture-dominated environments. We explored different styles of questioning and assessment. We invited consistent student feedback on course adjustments and ventured to make content more relevant and accessible. Our partnerships expanded pedagogical boundaries and considered the impact on the student experience of every modification. Ultimately, my disciplinary differences with my partners made for rich, supportive, and innovative collaborations and exciting educational insights.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

Natasha Daviduke is a recent graduate of Haverford College. She was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a minor in Education, and the distinction of magna cum laude with departmental honors. During her time at Haverford, she worked as a student consultant in a pedagogical partnership program.

REFLECTIVE PIECE

Co-Researching Co-Creation of the Curriculum: Reflections on Arts-Based Methods in Education and Connections to Health Care Co-Production

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Learning through experience is an important, creative, and fulfilling way to apply theory to practice. In this essay, we explore our experiences of co-researching how students and staff conceptualise co-creation of the curriculum. We each have multi-faceted roles in higher education as we study, work, and contribute to formal student representation processes. At the time of this project, I (Tanya) was working at the Edinburgh University Students' Association, supporting student representation, and I (Hermina) was a first-year student representative from the School of Health in Social Science. It was through a University of Edinburgh Innovative Initiative Grant project related to Tanya's PhD research (focusing on co-creation of the curriculum) that we began to work together closely.

We are both passionate about becoming involved in collaborative initiatives that improve the student experience and the wider university community. We were interested in exploring how our individual experiences as co-researchers could bridge boundaries between the traditional roles of postgraduate and undergraduate students, staff and students, and researchers and participants. Our aim was to blur the lines between these roles by working collaboratively with students-as-partners, facilitating open dialogue about best practices in learning and teaching, and redistributing power to create new synergies. Below, we focus on these topics and the little-explored connections between our academic disciplines in which co-creation of higher education curricula and co-production of health care are each beginning to play important roles. We reflect on our experiences of engaging in collaborative research using deliberative-democratic and arts-based methods, and we aim to provide an informative account of our experiences while drawing new connections.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Our research project aimed to better understand students' and staff members' views about effective teaching and student engagement to achieve their aims in higher education,

and whether co-creation of the curriculum could advance these aims. We have drawn on the work of Bovill et al. (2016), who state that "co-creation of learning and teaching occurs when staff and students work collaboratively with one another to create components of curricula and/or pedagogical approaches" (p. 196). We see student-centred learning, autonomous learning, and student engagement as established, foundational aspects of co-creation of the curriculum. However, co-creation of the curriculum is distinct because we agree with Cook-Sather et al. (2014) that it promotes different attitudes and ways of working with students-as-partners in learning and teaching.

To try co-creating an aspect of my PhD research by putting these attitudes and collaborative ways of working into practice, I (Tanya) involved two paid, undergraduate students to work as research partners on one aspect of my PhD data collection and analysis. I had already explored the benefits and challenges of partnership work for student and staff co-creation practitioners (for example, see Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017; 2018) and now wanted to learn about the views of non-practitioners while engaging student partners. I designed and led two focus group discussions with student representatives who had not been involved in formal co-creation of curriculum projects, and I (Hermina) responded to the open call to become a paid, undergraduate student co-researcher.

The undergraduate co-researcher role involved co-analysing the qualitative data from two student focus groups and co-leading two subsequent focus groups with staff members. We took turns leading the discussions. We concluded with the undergraduate co-researchers presenting our initial co-analysis of the student focus group data and leading a discussion with the staff about their impressions or questions. This helped staff learn more about undergraduate student views regarding effective teaching, student engagement, and co-creation of the curriculum since many of them had not previously discussed these topics with students. Therefore, in practice, our collaborative project meant developing a partnership as co-researchers by having an open dialogue, constructively exploring joint analysis of the data, and learning from different perspectives.

We used several methods that further reinforced our partnership work. Co-inquiry proved beneficial and relevant to co-creation since using deliberative democratic methods "involves key stakeholders in the study, promotes dialogue with and among researchers, and enhances deliberation about research findings" (House, 2012, p. 451). Another important aspect of our research was using arts-based methods to help participants articulate their views about how undergraduate students engage with learning and teaching, and to understand their aims in higher education. Eisner (1997) suggests that arts-based methods "open up new ways of seeing and saying" (p. 4); similarly, we felt these methods helped participants articulate their perspectives while using images as metaphors.

JOINT REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

There were many benefits from our collaborative work, but there were also challenges. We each found it difficult to balance the time this project required with our many other obligations including studies, paid work, and extracurricular activities. It was also challenging to work fully in partnership when some things had been decided already to initiate the project,

including the research questions, project focus, and amount of time undergraduate co-researchers would be paid. Another challenge was staying focused on the research questions when the data presented many additional themes that we would have liked to explore more, such as responsibilities for student engagement and the perceived imbalance due to research often overshadowing teaching.

For the undergraduate co-researchers, it was the first time they were involved in a research project. We reflected on the valuable experience they gained, which is elaborated on below. We saw ourselves as co-creating the qualitative data with participants because we recognised our positionality and our own interests in student engagement. However, it was sometimes difficult to not unduly influence staff focus group discussions in areas about which we are passionate. We often would have liked to contribute perspectives earlier but refrained until the end, when we allowed ourselves to have a more open conversation with participants after presenting the summary of themes arising from the student focus groups. Some staff seemed surprised when we shared that many student participants strongly emphasised the importance of staff responding to student feedback. We were a bit surprised that they were surprised, but this led to good discussions! In our student representation roles, we often highlight the best practice of the *feedback loop* by staff respecting and responding to feedback to let students know the outcomes of their contributions, but some staff members had not previously considered the significance of following up with students to discuss how their feedback had been valued.

We each benefited from hearing other perspectives during the data collection and analysis phases. One striking example was hearing how staff described the images they chose to represent their views of current students (Figure 1), compared with their vision for graduates.

Figure 1. "Duckling"

Describing Figure 1, a staff member reflected:

> I chose the duckling to represent our students as undergraduates. They come in and, like the duckling, they are very enthusiastic, very motivated, they want to fly before they can walk, and they look for role models… I see my role as one of nurturing and supporting, wanting to recognise any dangers early, looking out for the fox in the trees waiting to poach them… It's about letting them go out to spread their wings but gathering them back in … to protect them from the foxes; it's finding that balance.

I (Tanya) recognised how this participant cares deeply about supporting students even though I felt protective of the undergraduate co-researchers who listened to these comments without having an opportunity to respond. I hoped that they did not feel patronised. Did they agree or disagree that their peers may be overambitious and perhaps not aware of the challenges of higher education? Or did they feel relieved that staff care about supporting students to "spread their wings" by giving them new opportunities for growth and helping them avert dangers that could derail their degree? As a class representative, I (Hermina) had no doubts that staff play an important part in developing a supportive culture of student engagement and that they can facilitate different practices where students can engage in shaping their learning experience. However, during the staff focus group, it was eye-opening to hear about the logistical and sometimes financial challenges that staff face in the course of helping students engage at all levels.

Throughout our project, we made connections with our disciplinary studies in education and health care. Partnerships in health care can improve outcomes for patients, just as there are many benefits for students and staff who co-create the curriculum. Often in the health care sector, the term "co-production" is used instead of "co-creation" to highlight the behaviour or intervention tool that is produced in partnership with patients to promote their buy-in and increase the potential for a positive outcome. For example, clinicians have used co-production to increase patients' understanding and decision-making power while tailoring lifestyle changes to their abilities and motivation levels (Realpe et al., 2015). For us, their work identifying 22 different co-produced health behaviours resonated with the work of Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) and Cook-Sather et al. (2014) who outline the wide range of variables and implementation methods in curriculum co-creation.

Interestingly, Aitken and Shackleton (2014) used action research with undergraduate communication design students and residential care aides to co-create behavioural change solutions. They found that a "collective creativity mindset" was important to the co-creation process, which ultimately had a positive impact on the user-centred solutions that were eventually developed (Aitken & Shackleton, 2014, p. 2). This shift in power and mindset in the health care setting appeared to promote respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility—values that Cook-Sather et al. (2014) suggest are key to successful partnerships in learning and teaching. We see strong parallels between patient/user/student-centred methods of working that facilitate shared decision-making, creative solutions, and, in some cases, transformative learning in health care and higher education.

HERMINA'S REFLECTIONS AS AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT CO-RESEARCHER

My first introduction to curriculum co-creation was participating in one of Tanya's student focus groups. I enjoyed learning about it and discussing with other participants our views of effective teaching and the different student engagement practices that enhance our learning experience. I liked that the focus group was designed to allow us to explore many aspects of co-creation and partnership, offer our insights about effective partnership practices, and identify challenges we would need to overcome to achieve partnership.

The arts-based activity was a case for reflecting on my own aims and hopes about the career path that I have chosen. The caring and nurturing side of the picture with two zebras playing (see Figure 2) appealed to my sense of an empowering and my supportive health care professional, and is well embedded in the Health Sciences and Societies programme that I study. I immediately identified with what I believe to be one of the key challenges that will broadly gain momentum in the field of health care: partnership in health and social care.

Figure 2. "Zebras in Etosha National Park, Namibia"

"Zebras in the Etosha National Park, Namibia" by Walter Voigts is licensed under CC BY 2.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zebras.jpg

Studies suggest that patients who take greater ownership of their treatment are more fully engaged and experience increased satisfaction and improved health because they contribute to minimising barriers and inequalities that can arise in the patient's professional relationships with their health care professionals (Morgan, 2008). Although our research focused on co-creation of the undergraduate curriculum, I realised that the wide range of partnership practices, which all follow basic guidelines, can encourage a collaborative approach in medical settings.

Co-creation of the curriculum with its strength in promoting and supporting student engagement has especially captured my attention. I particularly enjoyed co-leading the staff focus groups with Tanya. Engaging with university staff in a different setting provided useful

context for my role as a class representative. It allowed me to apply my hands-on experience as a co-researcher when working alongside staff and students to improve course delivery, facilitate a supportive and positive school community, and strengthen student voice.

The reflection and data analysis components of this research have been both a challenge and a highlight for me. As both a student and a class representative, I found it challenging to maintain objectivity when discussing topics that are close to my heart with staff. The many inviting topics emerging from these discussions also made it difficult at times to stay focused and steer the conversation in the right direction. However, participating in the research has given me a better sense of how to put theory into practice and enhanced my understanding of the process underpinning research, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Overall, I have gained leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. Working closely with Tanya, where we shared our reflections, insights, and experiences, has itself been a co-creation process. Co-leading two staff focus groups and co-presenting findings at a conference helped me reassess my ideas, communicate them effectively, and strengthen my presentation skills. Finally, I am proud to have been involved in this research, and it is essential that I continue to explore the benefits of co-creation in teaching and to illuminate more of these participative pedagogies.

TANYA'S REFLECTIONS AS A PhD STUDENT CO-RESEARCHER

During the initial student focus groups, I did not participate in the arts-based activity I led since my time with participants was limited. While meeting with Hermina to discuss co-writing this reflective essay, I realised that I had not shared my aims for higher education. In the spirit of partnership and reciprocity, I shared how I would choose a bird in flight (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. "Jurong Bird Park"

For me, higher education should help students develop personally and professionally as they take on new challenges in the wilderness of learning by immersing themselves in new opportunities inside and outside the classroom. Ideally, higher education is about facilitating experiences that can foster transformational learning that has the ability to surprise students and staff as they surpass expectations—in other words, letting them fly. I think that student-staff partnerships in co-creating undergraduate curricula can provide these transformational experiences that have positive outcomes for students and staff.

Since this co-research experience was one part of my PhD data collection, I recognised that I had developed the research focus, planned the research processes, obtained the funding, and was ultimately responsible for the project through reporting to my research supervisors and university funders. Although I recognised that I needed to retain ownership over those aspects of this project that are part of my PhD research, I worried that I was taking too large of a role in steering the project which I wanted to be a partnership. Therefore, it was challenging at first to give up some control to the undergraduate co-researchers. However, they often surpassed my expectations by providing outstanding contributions and, in particular, Hermina volunteering to co-write this reflective essay. I was pleasantly surprised at the new ideas I gained from this project and particularly enjoyed learning from Hermina about co-production in health care, which feels like a less radical way of working in that field than sometimes co-creation of the curriculum can feel when it challenges hierarchies in higher education.

Throughout, I reflected on terminology and the difference between student consultant and co-researcher partnership roles, since I originally referred to the student co-researcher role as a "student consultant." Bovill et al. (2016) present a model of four student roles in co-creation: consultants, co-researchers, pedagogical co-designers, and representatives. Bovill et al. (2016, p. 197-198) define the student consultant role as "sharing and discussing valuable perspectives on learning and teaching" and the student co-researcher role as "collaborating meaningfully on teaching and learning research or subject-based research with staff." During the student focus groups, I considered all participants to be consultants sharing and discussing valuable perspectives on learning and teaching that contributed to my PhD research. However, I considered Hermina a co-researcher since she shared ownership by drafting the presentation of our research findings from the student focus groups, which we shared with staff and at the Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland international conference.

Working with undergraduate co-researchers was an extremely positive experience. I was keen to see whether their analysis of the data matched mine. We generally shared similar perspectives on themes arising from the data, and it was beneficial—and validating—to discuss these. Co-researchers' contributions to the staff focus groups also changed the dynamic and led to vibrant discussions with the staff, who posed follow-up questions to the undergraduate co-researchers. Since students traditionally have less power than staff in the classroom (Cook-Sather et al., 2014), this experience let us take the lead and recognise our expertise on student perspectives. We, as undergraduate and postgraduate student co-researchers, learned from staff and vice versa, which modelled the partnership approach that we were examining. Furthermore, our joint conference presentation made me feel that I was practising what I had preached about the benefits of curriculum co-creation.

CONCLUSION

We benefited in many ways from co-researching co-creation of the curriculum by gaining leadership and teamwork skills, as well as developing empathy. It was also fun for us to work collaboratively and get to know each other better. As Hermina stated earlier, the processes of reflecting on and overcoming challenges in our partnership work have been both the hardest aspects *and* the highlights of our work together. It has been rewarding to work in partnership and share our experiences more widely at a conference and in this reflective essay. This helped us feel part of a larger community of students and staff who are interested in students-as-partners initiatives, and we also share our work because we see the potential for co-creative practices to benefit others. There are also implications for learning from the health care sector and other fields that also draw on co-creation and co-production to advance their work. Although these methods may still be relatively rare across higher education and health care, we hope to learn and adapt best practices from other sectors to inspire future partnership projects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the University of Edinburgh's Innovative Initiative Grant, which provided funding for this project.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka *is originally from Boston in the United States. She is a PhD Candidate at the Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. Her research focuses on the ways in which student engagement and co-creation of the curriculum advance students' and staff members' aims in higher education.*

Hermina Simoni *was born and raised in Albania and graduated from Tirana International School in 2016. She is now in the third year of her undergraduate studies in health sciences at the University of Edinburgh. In addition to her studies, she has been involved with student representation.*

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REVIEW

Building and Enjoying the "Big Tent" Together: A Review of ISSOTL17

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The *International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 2017 conference (ISSOTL17), cohosted by the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University, invited attendees to ponder aspirations, anxieties, adventures, and new horizons under the theme of *Reaching New Heights*. Hosting over 600 delegates in Calgary, Canada, for ISSOTL17 was no small feat, and here I share a glimpse into how student partnerships manifested in planning and holding the society's flagship event.

In the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), the "big tent" metaphor (Huber & Hutchings, 2005) describes the individuals from many disciplines and perspectives who come together to converse about teaching and learning. Engaging students as partners in SoTL is considered good practice (Felten, 2013). Inviting students to build the "big tent" alongside faculty (and staff) showcases how the society values student collaborations. Poole and Chick (2016, p. 3) argued as "we are all still trainees in our own ways", students and faculty both contribute ever-developing knowledge and skills to a collective expertise. In helping host the conference, I learned a lot from faculty, but also they often asked for my expertise—we learned together.

Broadly, partnership relies on "respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility" (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014, p. 1). Although conference planning may not impact teaching and learning practice directly, the ISSOTL conference sets the tone for how student partnerships are discussed, enacted, and perceived in the wider SoTL field.

In late 2016, I joined the ISSOTL17 program committee as a member of the society and as a student of the University of Calgary. In partnership with the conference organizers, students led and supported critical elements such as the conference commons, the program, the video-trailer, volunteers, submission reviews, and newcomer initiatives. Throughout, I never felt my contributions were perceived as *lesser-than* compared to faculty (or staff). Expectations and trust were high for everyone, and when issues arose, students and faculty tackled the situation. Together, they shared the responsibility of a challenge and collaborated as peers to overcome it.

A humbling aspect of SoTL is the winds that fill the sails of traditional academic hierarchies (e.g., full versus assistant professor, director of XYZ institute, number of publications) seemed to carry less weight at the ISSOTL conference. What mattered were reciprocal, "scholarly, engaged, inclusive, and collegial" (Chick et al., 2017, p. 14) conversations about teaching and learning that leveraged the range of expertise brought by faculty and

students. During the conference, I felt the collegiality and a mutual ethos of learning waft through ISSOTL17. At the registration desk, a student recruited experienced attendees to be ambassadors to newcomers. Student attendees were offered a "student" ribbon to wear, not to perpetuate hierarchy, but to celebrate students as "rock stars" (N. Chick, personal communication, October 2017) and to help ambassadors initiate conversations.

At the opening plenary, Gary Poole (2017) charged attendees to question who gets to be part of SoTL, and whether they engage in conversations that facilitate or hinder SoTL journeys, including work with students. Later, Rachel Foot, Alicia Crowe, Karen Tollafield, and Chad Allan (2017) shared how faculty and student collaboration empowered them to "encourage, engage, and evolve" as professionals. Chad remarked how SoTL gave him, as doctoral student, a place *to belong*.

In the closing plenary, with suitcases lining the walls and the blissful glow from an invigorating week, Helen Sword (2017) urged more "stylish" writing to make SoTL work more potent and accessible to wider audiences, and to foster better conversations. She challenged disciplinary practices, such as forbidding the use of "I" in graduate student theses, as they literally snuff out students' voices in research.

Beyond high-level nods to students were tangible efforts too. Organized and awarded by the Students and SoTL committee, an emerging scholars fund supported 25 student attendees. These efforts also included student presentation and poster awards, a dedicated students-as-partners conference track featuring 22 presentations, a student welcome session, and well-attended student interest group meetings.

I frequently hear from faculty and students that ISSOTL is their favourite conference. I think ISSOTL17 set the bar high, and the strong student presence was key in making the conference a success. As Green (2017) wrote, "ISSOTL as a whole is remarkably welcoming of students, student voice, and student participation. This is particularly palpable at the annual conference."

Finally, the best things in life keep you wanting more and ISSOTL is no different. Before the "big tent" was packed away, several students and I were already discussing ways to engage students even more at ISSOTL18. I eagerly await new conversations, shared meals, stories, presentations, posters, collaborations, hugs, and laughs as students and academics walk into the "big tent" together, once again.

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BOOK REVIEW

Empower: What Happens When Students Own Their Learning by John Spencer & A. J. Juliani

Columbia SC: Impress Books, Dave Burgess Consulting 2017 (206 pages)
ISBN: 9781946444431

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Empower. What does that mean exactly? A Google search provides many variations on the word. A commonality is the word *give*: "to give power or authority to; to enable or permit" (Empower, 2018a), and "give (someone) the authority or power to do something; make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights" (Empower, 2018b). Giving someone the authority sounds like the willingness to work alongside them, to be their partner. John Spencer and A.J. Juliani's book *Empower: What Happens When Students Own Their Learning* (2017) provides the reader with a map, various ideas, and some strategies on creating a partnership with their students.

Spencer and Juliani admittingly provide an unconventional publication. This easy-to-read book provokes naturally occurring thoughts and ideas as you go along. The authors do not claim to have the answers but encourage the reader to join the journey and collaborate with them (p. xlv-xlvii). Although they are primary teachers aiming to work side-by-side with students, I believe the book and its ideas are applicable to higher education and lifelong learning. Everything (curricula, maps, standards, etc.) relevant at all levels of teaching is discussed. Examples are included, with ideas that inspire creativity.

As primary teachers "practising what they preach," they believe that when students exercise passion for something that interests them, they will own their learning, and the true learning will happen. The first obstacle for any teacher—if I may say obstacle because we often think it's just too hard to try something new—is the need for a shift in mindset (p.xxix) from teaching students how to be compliant, to teaching them how to be empowered: a thought I am convinced most teaching professionals would agree with. "This book lays the groundwork for making this shift" (p. xxxii).

Spencer and Juliani break down, step-by-step, each shift necessary for empowering students. Consider shifting from *require* to *desire*, where a choice provides a sense of ownership. Instead of always providing the choices, shift to inspiring the possibilities by asking yourself "what decisions am I making for students that they could make for themselves?" (p. 55). They do not address the notion of creating innovators until chapter six. Not each and every student needs to be an innovator, but they do need to have the mindset and the ability to think like a self-directed learner. Spencer and Juliani are passionate about design thinking because of the ability to empower students, enabling student ownership (p. 99). Naturally, the next step

would be considering how students are assessed. Self-assessment has its challenges, but put in the correct context the authors believe that "assessment is only authentic if the students own the process" (p. 129). Next, chapter nine's shift from *failure* to *failing* explains that "as long as we let students go through the entire process, and we support them along the way as best we can, failing is not a bad thing" (p. 155). Educators can tailor the system to the student by asking, "how can this be more adjustable? What can students do to modify this to meet their own needs?" (p. 172). Finally, in chapter 11, the authors refer to the teacher as a guide to the characters in a story. It is the student's story and every project has one; the teacher, as the guide, is there to influence the storyline (p. 188). Spencer and Juliani feel that "the best stories occur when [we are] joining [the students] on the adventure, when we are embarking together and learning by each other's side" (p. 187).

The last chapter provides the reader with a map and steps to follow to get started. Spencer and Juliani have laid excellent groundwork in strategies and thought processes on creating partnerships. Now they invite the reader to give it a go. I for one have started by asking how I can make those shifts.

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