

More than you would expect: Development of Graduate Attributes in Student Partners in a Pedagogical Consultancy Partnership Program

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Abstract

Graduate attributes are an under-represented field of study in the SaP literature generally and in pedagogic consultancy specifically. This paper reports on a comparative study that reveals gains in graduate attributes by Student Partners serving as Pedagogical Consultants in Lingnan University Hong Kong. A total of eight Student Partners (SPs) were asked to rate their own perceptions of the extent to which the Partnership Program, compared to their regular courses, had contributed to the development of each of Lingnan University's graduate attributes (GAs). To illuminate the quantitative data, in-depth focus group interviews with the SPs were held, which were recorded and transcribed, then analysed thematically. The eight Student Partners not only judged the Program to help them further develop a range of GAs, but also that on the whole it was doing this more effectively than their regular courses, especially in the areas of Skills and Attitudes (as opposed to Content Knowledge). The interview data further unveil how the partnership practices worked to build different aspects of GAs differently, complementing SPs' regular coursework. SPs' comments show their increased awareness of the attributes and how they were learning to apply them back to their own lives as students, in their everyday lives, and potentially in their future workplaces.

Introduction

Students as Partners (SaP) *"is a concept and practice whose time has come."* (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2016, p. 9) It has gained much currency in recent years and its diverse forms are now well-represented in the literature (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Mercer-Mapstone, 2017). In broad terms, SaP is based on the premise that students have unique experience and insights into teaching and learning which faculty can learn from; together they can make teaching and learning more engaging and effective for the classroom students (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014). In practice, SaP involves staff and students in partnership learning communities working together towards agreed-upon educational purposes related to teaching, learning or research (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2016). More specifically, in Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felton's (2014, pp. 6-7) words, a staff-student partnership is 'a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis.' Both parties need to be prepared to step outside their traditional teacher-student roles to become both teachers and learners (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014, Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2019). This process may not always be straight-forward or comfortable for the participants but generally proves beneficial to both parties (Bovill *et al.*, 2016), and has transformative potential in unexpected ways (Cook-Sather, 2014; Goldsmith *et al.*, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone, 2017).

Research articles

One of the more challenging forms that SaP practices can take, is the pedagogical partnership, such as in established pedagogical consultancy programs, often called Student Consultant Programs (such as in Pounder, Ho and Groves., 2016; Goldsmith *et al.*, 2017). This is one of the SaP practices spreading more quickly around parts of the world (Mercer-Mapstone *et al.*, 2017; Cook-Sather *et al.*, 2020). This article reports on research explicitly conducted on gains in graduate attributes among the Student Partners in the one such pedagogical partnership Program in Lingnan University Hong Kong (LUHK).

Benefits to Student Partners of pedagogical consultancy work

The benefits to both student and staff partners of pedagogical consultancy partnerships have been well-documented in the literature (Healey *et al.*, 2014, Marquis, Black and Healey, 2017). Academically speaking, capacities are enlarged through such partnerships, resulting in a greater metacognitive awareness and improvement of learning and teaching habits, ownership of and motivation for the educational process (Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014) on behalf of both teachers and students. In particular, students gain a broader understanding of the educational process (Cook-Sather, 2011), and become more profound and more engaged learners, more confident and responsible students, who display greater agency not just within the classroom but also beyond it (Cook-Sather and Alter, 2011; Jarvis, Dickerson and Stockwell, 2013; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Cook-Sather, 2015). They become more aware of and committed to serving their local academic community (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014).

Graduate attributes, SaP and pedagogic consultancy

Outcomes-based graduate attributes have also come into focus globally in recent decades (Biggs and Tang, 2011, Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016). Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016 (p. 13) quote a definition:

*“Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution and consequently shape the contribution they can make to their profession and society. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future (Bowden *et al.*, 2000; cited in Barrie, 2007).”*

As graduate attributes prepare students academically and for their future lives as professionals and members of society, attainment of these is crucial. Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell (2016) report that the UK Quality Assurance Agency has provided ‘Graduate quality descriptors’ which are relatively generic and on the whole, the expected outcomes for undergraduates of all programs are similar. In Hong Kong, although each university writes its ideal graduate attributes, the expected outcomes are comparable between institutions. No doubt, to a greater or lesser degree, a similar situation exists worldwide.

There are signs in the literature that SaP practices contribute to the development of graduate attributes. Many of the reported beneficial outcomes of pedagogical partnership practices in particular overlap with specific graduate attributes, e.g. being able to see from multiple perspectives (Cook-Sather, 2014; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Pounder, Ho and Groves, 2016), an enhanced sense of responsibility

Research articles

(Cook-Sather, 2010), improved critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills (Cook-Sather and Alter, 2011; Vandysheva, 2021). In addition, Mercer-Mapstone *et al*'s 2017 systematic literature review of SaP articles published from 2011 to 2015 showed that 21 studies had listed 'Raised awareness of graduate attributes or employability skills or career development' as positive outcomes of SaP engagement. However, a scan of the titles in their selective bibliography reveals that the development of graduate attributes had not explicitly been targeted for research by any of those authors, for pedagogic consultancy partnership work or any other kind of SaP engagement.

In this regard, Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell's 2016 study is illuminating. It points out that there is a minimal evidence base for the belief that engaging students as partners is beneficial to developing graduate attributes, at least in the UK. This belief relies mainly on anecdotal accounts and small-scale studies in the broader area of student engagement. Therefore, the authors conducted a large-scale questionnaire study of UK Psychology students whose undergraduate degrees had exposed them to various SaP pedagogies. They concluded that 'student-as-partners experiences have a small but direct, measurable impact on subject-specific and general graduate attributes' (p. 7). This impact seems to have been sustained after graduation, as a second part of the study with alumni in the workplace confirmed that they still considered their partnership experiences valuable and effective in terms of their educational outcomes, in comparison with their more traditional learning experiences. However, the authors acknowledged that their study only covered SaP practices embedded within the formal curriculum and did not include the 'more transformatory SaP teaching and learning methods ... [which] involve approaches that challenge assumptions and beliefs in a deep sense' (p 8). This includes the area of 'Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy,' according to Healey, Flint and Harrington's (2014) classification of four overlapping types of partnership activities.

A study by Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell in 2016 used one institution's graduate attributes as themes to analyse six students' reflections and other documents to gain feedback on a collaborative partnership approach aimed at evaluating aspects of learning and teaching at a UK university. While they classify their research as 'exploratory', the results point to a relationship between the partnership approach and the development of graduate attributes and employability. However, once again it appears that pedagogic consultancy was not specifically adopted as a partnership approach.

It seems that to date, graduate attributes are an under-represented field of study in SaP literature. There is also a paucity of comparative studies conducted contrasting the effectiveness of students' undergraduate degree programs with that of SaP programs concerning the development of specific graduate attributes. This present study contributes to the literature by investigating these issues.

The LUHK Faculty Student Partnership Program (FSPP)

In the Lingnan University Hong Kong Program under investigation in this study, students trained as consultants are paired with Faculty partners, usually from outside their major, who are interested in gaining a student perspective on their classes. Each partnership usually lasts one semester. Student Partners provide feedback to their Faculty Partners through weekly class observation and reflective report writing, which becomes the basis for dialogue

and discussion in their regular post-observation meetings. Goals, classroom issues and specific observation foci are discussed in an initial partnership meeting and these may develop or change as the semester and the partnership progresses. In a safe and supportive space, the ongoing interaction encourages the Faculty Partner to reflect on their teaching practices and philosophy. It enables them to continue to adapt their teaching practice and the classroom environment for improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Program Co-ordinators hold regular meetings with the SPs for ongoing training, monitoring, sharing and trouble-shooting. The SPs are paid a small stipend for their work. For further details, see also Pounder, Ho and Groves, 2016 and Groves et al, 2021.

Methodology

The period of this study spans three semesters, from January 2019 through to May 2020. The original Program had begun in 2014 with three local students training to serve as consultants (Pounder, Ho and Groves, 2016); by the stage of this research, the Program had expanded both internationally and numerically; there was a mix of native and non-native English speakers, and nationalities, local and international. A total of eight Student Partners (SPs) whose service spanned some point during this period took part in the study, on average having served at least three semesters each.

In order to evaluate how well the Student Partners' involvement in the Program led to their development of Lingnan's 'Ideal Graduate Attributes', at the end of the relevant period, each Student Partner was asked to complete a form in which they rated their own perceptions of the extent to which the FSPP had contributed to the development of each attribute. For comparison purposes, they were also asked whether and to what extent they perceived their regular courses had helped develop each attribute. At the end of the survey form, SPs were also asked in two open-ended questions to comment on any other attributes they developed through the Program, including employability; however employability is covered in another paper (Hiradhar and Groves, 2022). In order to illuminate the quantitative data, the survey was followed up by in-depth interviews with the SPs, which were recorded and transcribed, then analysed thematically. Originally planned as focus groups, COVID-19 restrictions and other practical considerations meant these ended up being a combination of focus groups and detailed individual interviews. The quantitative and qualitative data are combined for reporting in this paper.

Lingnan's Ideal Graduate Attributes

LUHK (2021) lists ten 'Ideal Graduate Attributes', in three groups: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes, as below, numbered for convenience.

Knowledge:

1. strong oral and written language competence in both English and Cantonese¹
2. a secure grounding in their chosen academic field(s) and an awareness of possible cross-disciplinary applications
3. proficiency in information technology

¹ As the Medium of Instruction of the university is English and the Program was conducted in English, the SPs rated this Attribute in relation to English only.

Skills:

4. excellent interpersonal communication ability
5. strong analytic competence and a capacity for independent critical thinking
6. creative and sound problem-solving and planning capabilities

Attitudes:

7. commitment to involvement in and service to the community
8. an international outlook and an ability to understand problems from various cultural perspectives
9. tolerance, integrity, civility and a sense of personal responsibility when interacting with others
10. a desire for life-long learning

Findings

The overall results of the quantitative data can be seen in the two figures below. Rating was on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree. The table shows the average scores (Table 1), and are all in the positive range (6-10). The SPs judged both the FSPP and regular courses to be developing their graduate attributes. However, it can clearly be seen that the students rated the FSPP more effective than their regular courses in developing nearly all of the attributes, mainly Attributes 4-9 (Skills and most of the Attitudes).

Initially it was considered to leave out the first set of knowledge-related GAs (#1-#3) from this study, as they did not seem to relate to the skills needed for student consultancy work directly. The Program already required a certain level of English language proficiency (GA1) for students to be able to serve as SPs; it did not aim at improving content knowledge (GA2) nor proficiency in IT (GA3). However, for the sake of completeness and in case of any unexpected outcomes, these were included in the questionnaire. The results were surprisingly positive, although as expected and as shown in Table 1, the scores for this group of attributes were lower overall. Therefore, in the final columns, two different averages have been calculated – Average A which sums up all the GAs (1-10), and Average B that takes the two more relevant groupings into consideration - Skills and Attitudes (GAs 4-10). In both scenarios, the average scores for the Program were over 8, approximately one point higher than for regular courses. The most significant scores and differences are highlighted in the table.

Research articles

Graduate Attribute #	Knowledge			Skills			Attitudes				Average A	Average B
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1-10	4-10
for FSPP	8.13	7.88	6.5	8.5	8.5	8.63	8.13	8.25	8.5	7.25	8.03	8.25
for Regular Courses	7.75	7.13	7.38	7	7.38	7.13	6.63	7.25	7.13	7.25	7.2	7.11
Difference in ratings	0.38	0.75	-0.88	1.5	1.12	1.5	1.5	1	1.37	0	0.82	1.14

Table 1: Graduate Attributes ratings for FSPP compared with regular courses, including averages

The chart below (Figure 1) further illuminates in visual form the Student Partners' perceptions that the Partnership Program had an equal or greater ability to help them develop nearly all of the graduate attributes in comparison with their regular coursework, the only exception unsurprisingly being #3 (proficiency in information technology).

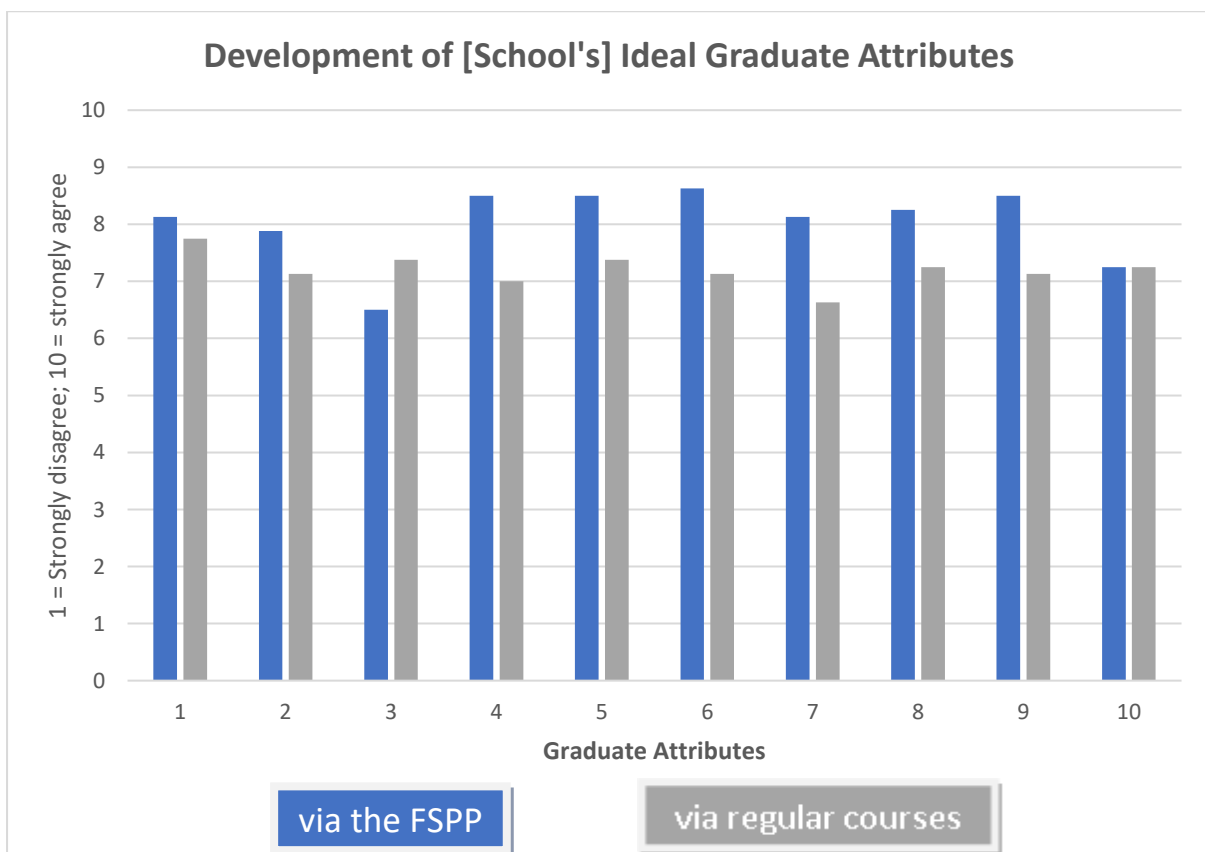


Figure 1: Chart of Graduate Attributes ratings for FSPP compared with regular courses

While the quantitative analysis reveals some essential differences in the extent of development of the GAs, the qualitative interview data revealed important differences in the aspects and how each attribute developed and was applied by the SPs, both inside and outside their SP roles. The following summarises the main points recurring in the data for each set of GAs, along with relevant comments from various Student Partners.

Knowledge: Attributes #1-#3

Although differences in scores for this set of GA data are not as significant as for the other sets, there were still some unanticipated and illuminating findings.

1. *GA1: strong oral and written language competence in both English and Cantonese*
Average FSPP score = 8.13 Average Course score = 7.75 Difference = 0.38

The official medium of instruction at LUHK is English, and as the FSPP was conducted in English, the students rated this attribute in relation to English proficiency only. Scores were relatively high and similar between the two modes although the Program was rated slightly higher. Nearly all the SPs, both local and international, were non-native English speakers. However, the international students were more used to communicating in English, while FPs were also a mix of local and international staff. The SPs, especially the locals, explained how the Program gave them more opportunities to practice oral English skills they had previously been taught using different functions (such as inquiring, persuading, critiquing, complimenting, etc) in real-life settings. SPs also needed to write observation and reflective reports with summaries, which were detailed in some respects; concise in others. This stretched their vocabulary and grammar as well as their ability to organise discourse. In contrast, their courses generally required more formal academic writing and presentation skills. SP5 below tells why this Program was beneficial for speaking skills, while SP3 talks about how it improved writing.

SP5 (a local student): "I am not an [native] English speaker and that's why the Program helped me a lot more than [some other] SPs ... I had to use English everyday with professors and during the meeting [with Program Leaders and other SPs] and also the weekly meeting [with my Faculty Partner]."

SP3: "You have to choose the right words and ,... you're writing a lot at first and it's not necessarily as organised, so when you have to trim it down, you kind of see how to be more effective about the sentence structure and I think it's very useful."

2. *GA2: a secure grounding in their chosen academic field(s) and an awareness of possible cross-disciplinary applications*
Average FSPP score = 7.88 Average Course score = 7.13 Difference = 0.75

Again, the SPs' scores here for the Program were unexpectedly high but comments reveal that they reflect the second part of this attribute – cross-disciplinary applications. As SPs were paired with Faculty members from a different discipline, the SPs had many chances to attend cross-disciplinary classes that they would otherwise not have had access to. This added to their general education and broadened their horizons, as one SP put it. It equipped them with extra knowledge, and prompted them to consider related applications, as SP1 has expressed below.

Research articles

SP1: "We will go and sit in other classes. And, when we were sitting there, we were still absorbing the information so that it's definitely across our own field. ... For example, I have sat through some marketing classes and there were some practical applications being taught in the class which now I can apply in my professional mind if I am asked to."

3. *GA3: proficiency in information technology*

Average FSPP score = 6.5 Average Course score = 7.38 Difference = 0.88

Regarding this attribute, most SPs put a neutral 5 or 6 for the Program, which was expected. The program does not aim at improving specific IT skills. However, it requires a foundation of computer skills, and SPs who served as Student Helpers administratively learnt additional computer skills outside their regular coursework, as illustrated in the excerpt below. Some SPs also helped their FPs search for and use technical tools and engaging online apps during the final online semester. If the study had continued longer during the pandemic, there is the possibility that this score may have increased.

SP2: "[As a] student helper I've had to use so many new programs and I never thought I would use, and I had to change the way I use both Google and Word. Whereas for my academic study ... it's still very text based."

Skills: Attributes #4-#6

The difference in scores for each of the three Skills is notable ranging from 1.12 to 1.5. In the large majority of cases, individual SPs rated the Program as having significantly more impact than their regular courses, due to the specific demands of their SP role.

4. *GA4: excellent interpersonal communication ability*

Average FSPP score = 8.5 Average Course score = 7 Difference = 1.5

Whereas attribute #1 was more about general language proficiency, #4 is more about language appropriacy, and the 1.5 difference in average scores here is significant. The kind of communication skills honed up in the FSPP were different than those required in courses. In the FSPP, students learned how to talk and write to a professional, a person in a higher position, in a diplomatic, tactful way, as needed in a real-life work setting, especially when giving constructive criticism or advice. They had to learn to be flexible with different Faculty Partners. When presenting or sharing ideas in the SP meetings, they communicated on a level and with a tone that would be appropriate for each different situation. One SP noted discretion was needed to know when not to add something into a report, but to introduce it orally in a face-to-face meeting. SP4's comment is very representative of the SPs' answers generally.

SP4: "Using a different language for this program or just grouping my thoughts differently had helped me to be more professional. I realised the differences between professors, supervisors and my fellow classmates, and I can communicate on a level that will be appropriate and relevant in that situation."

5. *GA5: strong analytic competence and a capacity for independent critical thinking*

Average FSPP score = 8.5 Average Course score = 7.38 Difference = 1.12

Research articles

The Program average score for this attribute was relatively high. The comment was made that in regular classes, you are given much of the information you need; as an SP it is largely up to you to make judgments yourself. Compared with the normal classroom situation, they needed to apply this skill more practically than academically in the program. They had to observe the classroom critically, analyse different scenarios and consider different approaches in order to provide constructive feedback, then consider how to communicate that to their FP and later on in the SPs meetings. The following comment shows how this skill was being developed and applied in other areas of SPs' lives.

SP7: "I've learned to constructively criticise my own actions and methods as well, not only the FPs I've been working with. I think looking at yourself and your actions from an objective point of view is a necessary skill that is crucial not only for employability but daily life as well."

6. GA6: creative and sound problem-solving and planning capabilities
Average FSPP score = 8.63 Average Course score = 7.13 Difference = 1.5

The role of the SP is more focused on problem solving than a regular students' role, which is reflected in the difference of 1.5 between scores. They are not just responsible for solving problems, but for finding the problems in the first place. The SPs job is to notice any room for improvement ("What can be done better?"), or any unanticipated problems occurring in the classroom, reflect on those and come up with creative and practical solutions to discuss with their FP that will work in that particular setting. More creativity came from experience in working with FPs and SPs from different backgrounds as no two settings were ever the same. SP6's comments below why their SP work developed this attribute; while SP7 reflects how it had become a habit of mind and applied in other areas of life.

SP6: "I think I can compromise [with my Faculty Partner] because you have to even if you think that something is not working you can't just say 'Oh, I don't like it', you have to present it in the subtle form. You have to understand it from their perspective, because they can't just change the way they are. So you have to find a simple solution that works for everyone."

SP7: "I've noticed myself, even with a customer service or whenever I go somewhere, now I'm kind of used to critiquing. There are thoughts that automatically pop up in my head and I'm like, 'What can they do better?'"

Attitudes: Attributes #7-#10

Except for a desire for life-long learning, the SPs judged each GA attitude to be more effectively developed through the Program than through their regular courses. As several SPs commented, being an SP is an actual job, requiring more planning, a deeper commitment and a more professional outlook compared to the role of being a student.

7. GA7: commitment to involvement in and service to the community
Average FSPP score = 8.13 Average Course score = 6.63 Difference = 1.5

Research articles

Serving the Lingnan Community through the Program strengthened the SPs awareness of and commitment to serving the community in general considerably more than their regular classes did. They saw how their contributions were having a positive effect. It prepared them practically and transformed their attitudes towards being involved in their community once they graduate. As one SP observed, solely being a student does not strengthen your resolve to improve the environment around you. SP4's quote is very insightful.

SP4: "For me it has really empowered me to know you can contribute to the community with small things ... and you don't have to think about it like 'Oh, I'm going to go and change the world' but you can go to your workplace or your local community and just even if you're putting something small, or like even you think that it's not that meaningful, but it still can have an impact."

8. *GA8: an international outlook and an ability to understand problems from various cultural perspectives*

Average FSPP score = 8.25 Average Course score = 7.25 Difference = 1

According to one SP, their regular classes were more focussed on 'knowledge and academic things'. This program allowed them to look at things from different perspectives that were not accessible to them before. As an observant Student Partner, they also had to consider their FP's perspective and the perspective of the classroom students. Additionally, as both the FPs and team of SPs were multicultural, there were a lot of cultural dynamics involved. Both local and non-locals benefitted from having to work more closely together. One local student (SP5) commented that she learned about cultural differences even during Program social times. As SP7 expresses it, they had to learn more about talking to people of different cultural backgrounds and gained a more open-minded, international outlook.

SP7 [an international student]: "For me it was actually the best part of the program because I really enjoy spending time with people from all around the world. I had professors from UK, US, Mainland China and Hong Kong, so I've got quite a number to compare and for international outlook and ability to understand problems from various cultural perspectives. For example, I've realised how to approach each nationality because they are very very different ... I think it's going to be useful in the future since I plan to stay and work in Hong Kong so it actually might be a good thing to know."

9. *GA9: tolerance, integrity, civility and a sense of personal responsibility when interacting with others*

Average FSPP score = 8.5 Average Course score = 7.13 Difference = 1.37

Because the SPs had to make observations and give reports regularly, it developed a greater sense of personal responsibility. They also had to be tolerant of others' approaches and opinions and sensitive in the ways they interacted with their FPs. As each partnership is different, each requires different interactive approaches. SP7's comment below shows why they judged the Program to be more effective in developing this attribute than their regular coursework.

Research articles

SP7: "In this program you have a sense of integrity and responsibility because you realise you have certain expectations that you have to meet ... In this case, you realise you're the only person who is involved actually observing reflecting and then delivering that information to that person. So, you feel more responsible since you're the only person observing it so you try to be as objective and as helpful as possible. I think a sense of responsibility was essential."

10. GA10: a desire for life-long learning

Average FSPP score = 7.25 Average Course score = 7.25 Difference = 0

Scores varied more widely between SPs for this attribute than for any other attribute. Although most agreed that the Program increased their desire for learning outside their majors and continuing with this after graduation, only half judged the Program to be more effective than their own courses in doing this. One SP explained that although the Program had exposed her to new knowledge and gave her a desire to learn more about other topics, there were elective courses she could take to learn more in-depth to satisfy her curiosity. It is interesting to note that the Program stimulated SPs' interest in different ways and areas, often related to their partnership roles, for example, to learn more about leadership, how partnership principles can be applied in the workplace, or the process of education. The quote below gives another example of a relevant area of life-long learning that the Program stimulated interest in.

SP7: "The desire for lifelong learning is about learning more about interacting with other people. Sometimes you see look at your mistakes and be like I could have done here better, or I could have explained this better. Actually, it kind of motivated me to read books on how to talk to people in different settings so I have a desire for a lifelong learning but it's more about understanding, communicating and delivering my ideas and my stance to other people."

Conclusion

In summary, the eight Student Partners not only judged their partnership experience to have helped them further develop a range of graduate attributes, but also that on the whole it was doing this more effectively than their regular courses. This has confirmed prior research which shows that faculty-student partnership has a deeper effect on engagement and learning gains for the Student Partners than traditional classroom learning activities. The qualitative data further reveals how this kind of partnership practice worked to build different aspects of GAs in ways that complement regular coursework. More significantly, SPs' comments show their increased awareness of the attributes and how they were learning to apply these, not just back into their own lives as students, but also in their everyday lives and, therefore, potentially in their future workplaces.

The clear gains shown in this study may be because the Program represents one of the more potentially transformative types of SaP work. By its very nature, this type of pedagogic partnership practice represents not just a short-term project, but an ongoing activity that mimics a real-life job, requiring commitment and flexibility. As no two teachers, students, teaching situations or partnership dynamics are the same, each semester throws up new challenges and opportunities as new Faculty Partners are recruited and new partnerships

are formed, negotiated and enacted. Student Partners have the chance to continually hone their skills every semester with different FPs and through the regular SP meetings with the Program Co-ordinators.

It is noted that to date, the studies on graduate attributes, including this one, rely on self-reported data. The Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell (2016) study is reassuring in this regard, in that the alumni's perceptions lined up with the undergraduates' in agreement with the value-added nature of their SaP experiences. It is also acknowledged that our study involves a relatively small number of students. This reflects the reality that sustainable SaP practices, especially those operating outside the formal curriculum, are to date most commonly small-scale (Mercer-Mapstone *et al.*, 2017, Cook-Sather, Gauthier and Foster, 2020). In the context of investigating engagement in SaP practices, Curran (2017) echoed Kahu's (2013) advice that in-depth qualitative methodologies should be employed with smaller groups to bring to the surface not just what attributes are being developed, but how and why this is happening.

This was certainly the case with this study. Using graduate attributes as key themes for investigation has proved fruitful, as has the comparative approach. However, this study has taken a different approach to previous studies. Instead of finding themes or details from general qualitative data, it started with the theme of graduate attributes and deliberately elicited SPs thoughts and evaluations. This approach threw up some unexpected results and became the inspiration for the title of this paper. In the words of one of the SPs about her partnership experience, "*I think in general it gives you a lot more than you would expect.*"

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