

More than you would expect: Gains in Employability in Student Partners in a Pedagogical Consultancy Partnership Program

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Abstract

A link between Students as Partners (SaP) activities and the development of employability attributes has often been noted. Still, it has seldom been a key focus of investigation, especially regarding pedagogical consultancy practices, a mode of SaP that is not only proliferating rapidly but is more challenging and therefore holds more transformative potential. This article reports on specific employability attributes developed by eight Student Partners serving as Pedagogical Consultants in a partnership program at Lingnan University Hong Kong, and how their partnership experiences contributed to the formation of these employability attributes. The Student Partners (SPs) first completed a comparative survey on graduate and foundational employability attributes. This was followed by an open-ended question on other employability attributes they perceived the program had helped them develop. To probe SPs written answers further, in-depth interviews were held, recorded and transcribed, then analysed thematically. In relation to employability beyond the given graduate attributes, responses could be placed under three general themes, each with several sub-themes: (1) Relationship-oriented skills and attributes; (2) Workplace-related skills and attitudes; and (3) Future career options/directions, a knowledge-related category. This latter category reveals an unexpected aspect of the transformative impact of the Pedagogic Partnership practice on the participants.

Introduction

The concept and practice of SaP has come to the fore in recent years and has been said to be one of the most essential concerns for higher education in this century. It appears as a critical concept influencing and connecting many areas of teaching, learning and research (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014). It covers a wide range of activities in which students and staff engage in partnership together for various educational purposes, and where students often take on roles that have traditionally been considered as belonging to the realm of teachers. Consequently, staff-student partnership has been defined as a *“collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, though not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision making, implementation, investigation or analysis.”* (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014, pp. 6-7)

Healey, Flint and Harrington's (2014) conceptual model places partnership activities in four general, overlapping categories: Learning, teaching, and assessment; subject-based research and inquiry; curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; and Scholarship of teaching and learning. Of these, the curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy activities have been proliferating most rapidly over the past decade (Mercer-Mapstone, *et al.* 2017;

Cook-Sather, Gauthier, and Foster, 2020). These are also considered the “*more transformatory SaP teaching and learning methods ... [which] involve approaches that challenge assumptions and beliefs in a deep sense.*” (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016, p. 8) This article is concerned with one such pedagogic consultancy partnership program in Lingnan University Hong Kong, specifically investigating resultant gains in employability among the student partners. It was found that the program fostered sustainable change in its SPs in terms of development of a range of employability skills that they felt confident they could apply to their future employment.

Employability

How is employability defined? In the SaP literature, employability and graduate attributes are often paired for discussion (e.g. Bovill et al., 2016, Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell, 2016; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2016; Mercer-Marpstone et al., 2017). After all, graduate attributes (GAs) aim to capture a measurable, representative but limited set of generic skills and attitudes that will act as a foundation and aid students’ transition into the workforce or on into higher education (Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell, 2016). However, employability skills do not stop with the institution’s GA list. Yorke (2006) defines employability as “*a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.*” (p. 8)

Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell’s (2016) research conceptualised employability to include GAs as a subset, where “graduate attributes, psychological literacy and skills confidence form[ed] an employability skills factor.” (p. 26) More recently, Fagan et al., (2020) report on a definition that, albeit written for post-graduate students, provides an extensive umbrella: “confidence and competency in skills that will benefit a student’s future career.” (p. 2) This would incorporate generic or specific graduate attributes and much more beyond and would seem to capture the essence of employability most succinctly.

There is no lack of alternative lists of employability skills in the employability literature. But how can we define a list of generic skills as a starting point for the purposes of this employability research? Moreover, what kind of qualities are employers themselves looking for? The Guardian newspaper published an article (Benedictus, 2013), reporting on a large-scale study of more than 500,000 job advertisements from diverse fields. This lists and clarifies the ten terms most frequently used in job advertisements, and has been used as a template in developing resources to improve employability among students in a UK university (Hack, 2015). The list is reproduced below in Table 1, with a brief paraphrase of the author’s description of each item’s meaning(s). Each attribute has been coded for convenience (EA means ‘Employability Attribute’). Note that items 4, 6 and 9 describe qualifications and experience rather than employability attributes per se. This leaves seven key employability terms, although some of these branch out to incorporate several other attributes. These EAs will be referred back to later in this article.

EA1	<i>Organised</i> : having a good work ethic
EA2	<i>Communication skills</i> : includes presentation skills, social skills, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills and adaptability in working with different people
EA3	<i>Motivated</i> : having initiative and the ability to work independently
EA4	<i>Qualified</i> : having learnt the theory and being able to apply it in a job role
EA5	<i>Flexible</i> : being prepared to do any kind of high-level or mundane job, even outside one's level of competence
EA6	<i>Degree</i>
EA7	<i>Commitment</i> : being prepared to work extra hours when necessary, and to be committed to the position past the short-term
EA8	<i>Passionate</i> : really caring about the position they are applying for
EA9	<i>Track record</i> : showing evidence of previous similar work
EA10	<i>Innovative</i> : being a problem-solver, able to deal with difficult challenges

Table 1: Top ten things employers are looking for (and what they really mean) (Benedictus, 2013)

SaP and the benefits of pedagogical consultancy

Staff-student partnerships bring many benefits to higher education, offering the possibility for sometimes unanticipated transformative learning experiences and gains (Cook-Sather, 2014; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Goldsmith *et al.*, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone, 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to realise that partnership practice is relational, “*essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself.*” (Healey, Flint and Harrington, p. 12) Matthews (2017) explains why this is so, that it is “*through ongoing dialogue [that] participants build the human relationships essential to engagement in learning and teaching.*” (p. 4) In other words, if we can create an environment of mutual respect and trust that fosters the building of these reciprocal relationships, desirable outcomes will grow organically from the partnerships themselves.

A large number of beneficial outcomes have already been noted for SPs; given the focus of this article, the summary here will centre on benefits for students involved in pedagogic consultancy. Students serving as pedagogical consultants become better and more responsible students themselves, reflective learners with metacognitive awareness of their learning who take ownership of their education (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Cook-Sather and Luz, 2015; Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell, 2016). They are more confident, motivated and engaged, with enhanced awareness of and sense of belonging to the academic community around them (Cook-Sather, 2011; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014). Positive shifts in identity have been noted (Pounder, Ho and Groves, 2016; Mercer-Mapstone, 2017), while Curran’s (2017) research revealed personal development in several dimensions. Within the wider academic community, partnership programs spawn learning communities embracing both staff and students, which in themselves have many benefits (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Lewis, 2017).

Some specific outcomes that have been recorded, such as refining of communication skills, the ability to see from multiple perspectives, and attainment of a broader worldview (Cook-Sather, 2011, 2014), touch on the development of graduate attributes. Overall, the heightened awareness gained by student consultants affords them greater agency, not just within the partnership or the institution, but also beyond it and on into their future work lives (Cook-Sather, 2011; Cook-Sather and Alter, 2011; Jarvis, Dickerson and Stockwell, 2013;

Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Cook-Sather, 2015). This leads back to the topic of employability attributes.

Employability and SaP

In the SaP literature, it is generally maintained that there is a link between partnership practices and the development of employability attributes in SPs (Jarvis, Dickerson and Stockwell, 2013; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Bovill *et al.*, 2015; Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2016; Curran, 2017). However, in reference to the UK, Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell (2016) asserted that this belief is mainly based on anecdotal evidence or small-scale studies focusing on student engagement and that follow-up studies investigating the sustainability of this impact on graduates in the workplace were missing. Mercer-Marpstone *et al.*'s (2017) systematic, international literature review of SaP articles published from 2011 to 2015 sheds further light on this. This states that 21 studies had listed "*Raised awareness of graduate attributes or employability skills or career development*" (p. 11) as one of SaP engagement's positive outcomes. However, most of these studies did not explicitly address the development of employability skills among the partners, and lists of specific skills are not commonly given.

Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell (2016)'s study is significant in this regard. They undertook a large-scale research study among Psychology students from two UK universities, using a new approach to compare the impact of SaP methodologies versus traditional teaching methods on a range of learning measures and outcomes. While their research showed that SaP practices did impact on employability, statistical analysis showed this to be relatively small. However, they acknowledge their study only dealt with 'softer' SaP activities embedded in the formal curriculum. To test the long-term impact, a second study with alumni was completed. This confirmed that the graduates still considered their SaP experiences to be valuable and helpful to their employment.

Some studies have since specified particular employability attributes developed through SaP work. Aiming at enhancing graduate employability, Lewis' (2017) case study of medical students serving in challenging extracurricular and comprehensive partnership roles concludes explicitly that they "*develop[ed] a wide range of employability skills including team-working; data capture, analysis, and interpretation; communication skills; time and project management; problem-solving; and resilience.*" (p. 4-5) Oputa and Cross (2021) report on a UK program that explored the ability of collaboration between staff and BAME students to enhance students' employability. Students themselves identified outcomes related to career development, including gains in self-management, career management, communication (particularly tone and style), administration skills, self-motivation, commitment, resilience and a more pro-active attitude.

An 'exploratory' study by Dickerson, Jarvis and Stockwell (2016) in a UK university involved students from various disciplines. After a collaborative staff-student project designed to enhance educational practice, six students' reflections and other documents were analysed. Similarly, its aim to enable students to "*identify, enhance, evidence and evaluate their employability skills*" (p. 254) seems to have been met. Summarising the words of the students, staff-student collaboration "*promotes professional integrity and provides*

opportunities to develop the skills of communication, independent and team working, problem solving, creativity, digital literacy, numeracy and self-management.” (p. 256)

These studies reveal different clusters of EAs emerging, some generic, but others depending on the form of SaP adopted, the activities involved, and the discipline. Nevertheless, as it appears that no studies on pedagogical consultancy have focussed on employability, the particular impact of this mode of SaP remains to be seen. We now turn to the Lingnan University program.

The Lingnan University Faculty-Student Partnership Program

The Faculty-Student Partnership Program (FSPP) at Lingnan University Hong Kong was founded in 2014¹ with just three SPs. It is designed to enable teachers to continuously fine-tune their teaching for improved student engagement and learning outcomes, through receiving ongoing feedback from the unique perspective of a classroom student. Each semester, each trained student consultant (SPs) is paired with a Faculty member (FPs) from a different academic field, who has volunteered for the FSPP. SPs are paid a small stipend and work on an ongoing basis, while most FPs only join the Program for one semester; consequently, partnerships change each semester, enabling SPs to continually refine their skills. Each new partnership starts with an initial meeting to discuss both goals and classroom issues; these may evolve as the semester progresses. Throughout the semester, SPs conduct regular class observations and write reflective reports, which are then discussed together with their FPS in confidential weekly meetings. In this safe and respectful space, teachers are encouraged to reflect on and adapt their teaching practices and philosophy. Student Partners meet regularly as a group with Program Co-ordinators for ongoing mentoring, sharing of experiences and problem solving. For further details of SPs' roles and the program setting, 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 eight SPs whose service spanned some point during this period participated in the study. They represent a mix of nationalities and native and non-native English speakers, and on average had served at least three semesters each as SPs. A qualitative methodology seemed to be the most appropriate approach, given that SaP is a new field of inquiry, and is concerned with the development of relationships and processes, rather than specific outcomes (Matthews *et al.*, 2017, Mercer-Mapstone *et al.*, 2017).

In the first phase of the study, each SP was asked to complete a form in which they rated their perceptions of the extent to which the program had contributed to the development of each of Lingnan University's ten 'Ideal Graduate Attributes' in comparison with their regular courses, using Likert-style ten-point scales. At the end of the survey form, SPs were given

¹ The program was originally begun under the name of the 'Student Consultant Program' but for practical reasons, later changed its name to the Faculty-Student Partnership Program (FSPP).

an open-ended question which asked them to list and comment on any other employability attributes they had developed through the program.

The survey was followed by in-depth interviews with the SPs. Though the interviews were initially planned as focus groups, COVID-19 restrictions, and other practical considerations meant these interviews ended up being a combination of focus groups and detailed individual interviews; however the group and individual interviews were conducted and processed in the same way. SPs were questioned on why and how the FSPP had helped them develop each named attribute, and on how these may be applicable to their lives, including in their future employment. The survey forms were collated; the interviews were recorded and transcribed, then analysed thematically. The initial analysis of the open-ended question on employability was undertaken by one of the authors, and was informed by Grounded Theory, where the concepts and subsequent categorisations arise from the data itself (Holton, 2009). Specific themes were identified first either as given or described by the SPs themselves², then the data was re-examined; finally the themes were found to naturally fall into three overarching categories, as confirmed by both of the authors.

Findings

The data was so comprehensive that the findings are reported in two phases. The first stage of investigation into development of Lingnan University's graduate attributes, has been covered in detail in Groves and Hiradhar (2022). This present article focuses on the second part, namely other employability traits developed among the serving SPs. However, as the latter builds on the former, and bearing in mind that graduate attributes are foundational employability traits, it is necessary for a brief summary of the findings regarding graduate attributes to be provided here also.

Graduate Attributes

In brief, it was found that the partnership program was more effective than regular courses in developing the university's graduate attributes, especially in the areas of skills and attitudes (as opposed to content and IT knowledge), where the FSPP rated an average of 1.14 points higher than the regular courses. Furthermore, the qualitative data revealed that pedagogic partnership practice built different aspects of GAs in ways that were complementary to and more challenging than regular coursework, and that the students were aware of how these were potentially helpful for their lives and future career development. These aspects, and where they match with the EAs in Figure 1, are as follows:

Skills:

- interpersonal communication ability; (EA2)
- strong analytic competence and a capacity for independent critical thinking;
- creative and sound problem-solving and planning capabilities. (EA10)

² Some employability attributes were given labels by the students. In some cases, e.g. the 'Emotional Intelligence' example given later in this paper, the students described an attribute they had developed but did not know how to label it; the authors have provided appropriate terms in such cases.

Attitudes:

- commitment to involvement in and service to the community; (EA7)
- an international outlook and an ability to understand problems from various cultural perspectives;
- tolerance, integrity, civility and a sense of personal responsibility when interacting with others (EA2)

Consequently, these attributes are not addressed in the employability findings below. More details of the research concerning graduate attributes, along with a full list of the institution's GAs, can be found in Groves and Hiradhar, (2022).

Employability Attributes

The SPs' self-generated responses concerning employability were surprisingly rich. Three major categories of themes emerged.

1) Relationship-oriented skills/attitudes

Pedagogical partnership practice at Lingnan University is an ongoing process centring around a series of dynamic relationships over time, between student and staff partners, with program co-ordinators, and between the SPs themselves. Consequently, it should be no surprise that the SPs talked more about how they developed various interpersonal relationship skills than other attributes.

Social skills / Adaptability in working with different people

Quotes from two SPs explain how interaction with their FPs over time led greater adaptability in terms of social and communication skills, something which will help in their future work lives. Another SP emphasised 'relationship management'.

SP3: "You acquire a skill of ... positioning yourself around the different people. So, you can see how to approach different people with different careers. So, I think it's kind of a nice skill to apply to your future work because you're going to have so many people around you and they are all going to be different and you're going to have or readjust the way you communicate or the way you present yourself and just help regardless of the way it goes ... I think every professor wants a different approach and you just have to be as helpful as possible and as long as you get it done well, I think if you go with that mind-set to your workplace you're going to have more chances to blend in faster with the staff."

SP2: "My partnerships have been very different and required different social abilities to convey needed information to my partner. This has taught me how to think more on my feet and acknowledge just how unique each situation can be."

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Professional Communication skills

Communication skills was a repeated theme in the data. Quotes from three SPs here show some development of professional communication skills. They can use nuanced language and adapt their way of expressing themselves to connect and adroitly engage with colleagues at different levels and in professional contexts, as shown in the comments below.

SP2: "Being a student partner definitely taught me how to talk to professionals in a professional setting, and not in the student/teacher dynamic. This is definitely valuable work experience that gave me a small preview of what to expect after graduation."

SP4: "I am able to find common grounds with people who are in higher position than me, formulate my ideas in a more concise and proper way, to find individual approaches to different types of people."

SP7: "I think my hedging game went up, that's for sure ... I think it's going to be useful in the future, in my professional field: how to criticise, how to give feedback, how to talk to someone who actually holds a higher rank than I do, so it was very very useful for me."

Diplomacy / Negotiation skills

Similar to the previous skill, SP6 describes a common situation in a partnership where reaching an agreement is necessary, an important skill in the work setting.

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 maybe a simple solution that works for everyone ... and how to present it, because it can be just like criticism so it has to be a suggestion."

Trust building ability

Several SPs expressed how important it was to come to a place of mutual trust with an FP, and how they approached that aim. The general consensus was that it took around three sessions with an FP to determine what and how they could communicate with them. Again, this has obvious applications to the workplace setting. Two SPs' elaborations are reproduced here.

SP5: "A lot of professors have different personalities and they may have different preferences. So when you are in a lecture you may write comments on different thoughts and things but you don't know whether your faculty partner will accept it or not. So thus, for the first few sections you have to be very careful about it. But there is around like two or three sections after that you then start to be more comfortable when talking and communicating."

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SP4: "Being ... a good Student Partner means you have to find the key to your professor, so you have to try your best to communicate with them on a level that they understand. And also find a way to get their trust, understand what they're interested in."

Emotional intelligence

Because SPs are paid for their service, this makes it akin to a form of committed employment (EA7), and the SPs are therefore potentially more able to develop specific employability attributes that will transfer to their future careers. SPs' remarks illustrated they were well aware of the significance of this and that it had made them more responsible, mature, confident and better prepared for the demands of the workplace.

Being organised / Time Management

Being organised was the top employability attribute in the Guardian list, and time management is a fundamental skill that could be subsumed under this. The FSPP made time and punctuality demands on SPs that everyday university life does not. SPs had to tighten up their time management skills and be more organised to balance competing demands, as shown in the quote from SP8 below. SP4 mentioned multi-tasking, while SP2 noted needing to manage multiple interests. SP1's quote below shows how she tackled these issues.

SP8: "The programme has indeed helped me in terms of time management. Since being a student partner requires extra time and efforts during the semester, unavoidable time clashes occurred, and I had to plan my time wisely and efficiently to balance different aspects of life."

SP1: "This program is a job, so I take it more seriously. So ... I have to be more organised with this thing. So I try to have more planning on this, it's actually helped me to be more organised in that way ... I think my biggest advice would be ... being able to manage the expectations. Expectations from yourself and expectations from your partners and the program itself because you need to manage your priorities sometimes. It's basically knowing your priorities and making a schedule for it."

Work Ethic / the ability to work independently

A work ethic is also listed in EA1 as a fundamental element of being organised. Even though the program involves a lot of social interaction, it also requires the ability to work independently (EA3). SP1's observation below about developing a better work ethic also encapsulates the ability to work independently, and she mentioned this explicitly later in the interview. Several SPs made comments similar to this:

SP1: "It's also an employment for me, working for this program and I have to take responsibility and I have to commit to my own work, to deliver on time ... so it definitely helps me with my work ethic, a key attribute for any organisation and hence increasing my employability."

Workplace Presentation Skills

The ability to deliver presentations would be considered an essential skill for a graduate, and it is listed specifically as an employability trait in EA2. However, the data shows that SPs came to recognise that presentations were not just formal, upfront, pre-prepared talks. They realised that their partnership work involved, in fact, frequently presenting ideas or suggestions to different people in different settings, and in different forms. Research shows this feature distinguishes oral presentations in academic settings from those in real-life workplaces in Hong Kong, where employees in internal settings often need to present key information in less than five minutes (Evans, 2013). In this way, the SPs had expanded and improved their presentation skills to add a more workplace-appropriate style to their repertoire.

Confidence

On the whole, the SPs displayed increased confidence in their skills base, particularly communicating with others, which, as SP4 and SP5 point out, will help prepare for future work requirements and challenges.

SP4: "If you go to work you're talking, going for an interview or talking to a manager. After this experience of coming in and talking to your Faculty Partner and finding common ground with them, it makes you less nervous about going and talking to someone at your future workplace, feeling less nervous, for instance, during the interview."

SP5: "This program trains me to become a skilled and capable person. Now, I am ready and confident to prepare for future challenges."

3) Future career options/directions

This is a knowledge-based category which may include items which are not, strictly speaking, attributes. These have been included however, as they are vital to career development. This category also reveals an unexpected aspect of the transformative impact of the pedagogic partnership practice on the participants. It helped some clarify their strengths and passions, exposed them to more options and work opportunities, and this heightened awareness informed and even changed their future decisions upon graduation. These are perhaps the most striking examples of how such practice can result in sustainable change and success in terms of students' personal development, enabling them to make more fitting career choices.

Expanded opportunities

These arose spontaneously out of the partnership learning community. One SP explained how this had given her exposure to a greater number of internship and work experience options (SP3 below). Another SP with ambitions to be an entrepreneur talked about how she expected her connections to be sustained and to potentially help with networking in the future (SP1 below).

SP3: “It also gives us the opportunity to look at different options that we have after graduation or how to expand on our current abilities. Some of the professors are more interconnected than we are in academic circles, so they might suggest some things for internships, or they might have some ideas what you can do during the summer or how you can be productive with this and that. So, I feel like having those conversations with the teachers and just being able to reflect as a student and someone who is going to graduate in two years, gives you [more options and a larger perspective].”

SP1: “It helps me to have built relationship with others that are meaningful and sustainable in the long run ... also connections in the professional world as well because I have professors that I have been working with. I have student consultants that I had been working with who are going to be professional in future and its sort of networking as well.”

Clarification of strengths and interests

Navigating the challenges faced in their consultant roles and mastering new skills required by the program helped some SPs discover more about their strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, having different FPs, which exposed them to different content outside of their degree courses, opened up new worlds for some. This is most evident in comments from SP4 (in the next section) and SP5:

SP5: “Through my courses, I realised that I no longer want to take any Psychology degree or Master’s any longer ... For this program, it actually helped me to realise the other aspects ... outside of my major. For example, when I’m with an FP I’ve started to think “Oh, may be [this one] is a good one”, this kind of thing ... It has helped me to realise what I don’t like and start to search for other things that I do like. And this program actually helped me to consider ‘Oh, maybe this one is better for me.’”

Clarification of future career directions

In some cases, partnership experiences informed future decisions upon graduation. Two examples stand out, where SPs found their passion through their involvement in the program. This perfectly exemplifies EA8: a passion for their (newfound) work. SP5, who related above how her partnership experience helped her realise she was no longer interested in developing a career in her chosen major, found that it deepened her interest in serving the community. Upon graduating, she volunteered for summer community service and then found a paid position serving her local community more directly, which she found very meaningful.

SP4 came to Lingnan University with no intention of following an academic career, but through the program realised that she was passionate about education, and has now decided to pursue an academic career. Subsequently, she has graduated and begun to work in the field of education while pursuing a Master’s degree part-time. (For her story, see Vandyshva, 2021.) A quote from her interview is reproduced here:

SP4: "I feel like this experience and talking to professors and seeing their things that they do on a daily basis inspired me to further my education ... I feel like it [the program] can contribute, it gave me a desire to teach at some point in my life [more] than any of my classes did ... I think it's a really good program to be implemented internationally."

Discussion and Conclusion

This study reveals that a range of EAs were identified by students as having been developed through their service as consultants in the FSPP at Lingnan University Hong Kong. These EAs are subsumed under three categories: (1) Relationship-oriented skills and attitudes; (2) Workplace-related skills and attitudes; and (3) Future career options/directions, a knowledge-related category. This represents a comprehensive assortment of EAs, when added to those skills and attitudes in the institution's GA list already confirmed as being attained by the SPs (Groves and Hiradhar, 20220,. While no list can be exhaustive, significantly, this collection incorporates most of those attributes listed by the Guardian (Benedictus, 2013) as being the most commonly sought-after generic traits by employers in the UK.

The new attributes arise mainly out of three characteristics of Lingnan University's partnership program: it is relationship-based; a paid, ongoing work commitment; and functions as a learning community across different disciplines. Along with the examples in the literature given earlier, this further underscores the potential for different forms, activities and settings of SaP practices to foster different kinds of employability traits in student partners. At the same time, it reflects Cook-Sather's (2011) general observation that the more informed critical perspective gained through engagement in pedagogic consultancy results in "the building of greater confidence, capacity, and agency as learners and people," (p.8) which extends beyond the classroom.

These new categories also draw out attributes that may never be articulated in formal outcomes statements. They may not be directly assessable or measurable, e.g. social skills or emotional intelligence. Yet these are also important keys to success in work and life, and are included in the Guardian list of desirable traits. Notably, the SPs came up with these by themselves; they were not given lists of employability traits to start with, only the institution's ten GAs. Although they may not always have been able to name the attributes they were describing, they were clearly aware of how their partnership experiences had contributed to the development of these in their lives and the relevance of these to their future employment. Even when discussing gains in GAs, SPs commented on how these were preparing them for the workplace. Overall, the students valued the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience and considered the program to be equipping them with skills, knowledge and attitudes that would transfer on into their future careers and were complementary to those being cultivated through their formal degree programs.

Some limitations are noted in the study. As has been a feature in fledgling SaP initiatives to date (Mercer-Mapstone *et al.*, 2017; Cook-Sather, Gauthier and Foster, 2020), the number of participants is relatively small. However, unlike most other pedagogic partnership programs, it is set in a unique non-Western but very multicultural context. Throughout their involvement most SPs partnered with FPs of one or more different nationalities from themselves which the SPs noted required more flexibility and may have contributed to certain attributes being featured or fine-tuned more quickly. For these two reasons, in order

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to ensure our conclusions are more widely applicable, it would be helpful to see the study replicated among pedagogic partnership practices in other settings and areas of the world.

Finally, another obvious point would be to conduct another survey and/or interview with the partnership program's graduates after they have entered the workforce. For instance, Pauli, Raymond-Barker and Worrell's (2016) follow-up study also systematically tested their working alumni's positive perceptions of the long-term impact and value of their university SaP activities to their working lives; it would be fruitful for anyone undertaking similar research to follow this example.

On the whole, the results give further evidence of the power of pedagogical partnership practice to provide unexpected and transformative benefits to the participants. Perhaps the most unexpected aspect of this research was the discovery that, for two of the SPs, experiencing different teachers and disciplines shed more light on their strengths and passions, leading them to change their chosen career options completely and, subsequently, to go in different work and study directions after graduation (Vandysheva, 2021). These are perhaps the most striking examples of how such a practice can result in sustainable change and success in terms of students' personal development, leading them into more promising career choices. The statement of another SP about the partnership experience provides an apt conclusion: "I think in general it gives you a lot more than you would expect."

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