An introduction to this special issue of the Journal of Educational Initiative, Partnership and Change

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This journal issue comprises 15 articles which share timely insights into measures that can enhance student-centred success. Through the active collaboration and partnership work between the staff and student groups described there is a clear tangible shift to improving student engagement across a wide range of disciplines. As a guest editorial team we are extremely proud to have supported this issue and to showcase the remarkable work taking place across the higher and further education sectors. This issue draws on many presentations given at the Change Agent's Network (CAN) conference that was hosted online by Keele University in 2021. Indeed the title 'Adapting to Change: Student-Centred Success' is drawn from the conference.

Staff student partnership was central to the conference and to this Issue. The *Student Directors* scheme at Keele provided a unique opportunity for students to shape the direction and mission of both and as guest editors we have ensured that the student voice is at the centre of the articles. The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the educational sector where higher and further education institutions had to drastically change their working practices and pivot, almost overnight to remote teaching and assessment, and working in partnership. As students, we appreciate how proactive and responsive measures have been deployed by institutions to mediate logistical and wellbeing concerns. Digital technologies have been embraced to facilitate the process of active learning and digital wellbeing. We believe that despite the significant adversities faced during this time many exciting developments have been introduced that will improve the sustainability of education delivery mechanisms for the future. We are all learning how to adapting to the new ways in which our world works. When lockdown started we had to rapidly adapt to the digital. The repeated mantra 'you're on mute' went along with figuring out how to 'share screens'. Yet despite all of this, the connection between staff and students appears to be as strong as described in the articles in this issue.

Case Studies

The importance of partnership is emphasised by Lydia Halls in a pilot project which took place at LSE. The case study explores the motivations for the development of the Student Education Panel and the impact that this had on the learning community at that institution. Halls notes the significance of using co-creation rather than consultation in order to ensure all participants are given equal voice. It is also important to highlight that the pilot owed a degree of success to the fact that it was championed by senior leaders at the institution.

Nerys Defis, Alison Glover, Carys Jennings, Sarah Stewart, Rachel Wallis, Ben Craggs, Ceris Hay, Beth Linton, Thomas Powell, and Amanda Williams consider the digital aspects of teaching practices from the perspective of student teachers using video technology to support micro-teaching. Their case study reflects on both this micro-teaching as well as student-led workshops during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how these can further the skills

development of student teachers. A peer-led approach was used here to encourage collaboration and innovation between participants. Video recordings of the teaching sessions provided space for those involved to reflect and generate feedback on how they can improve. Although this is a time consuming approach, the wealth of insight it provided proved extremely useful.

Madeleine Adamson, Yong June Hong and Yi Thong Tay from University College London reflect on progress made around student participation in the planning and delivery of academic conferences. Focusing on the TeachECONference2021 from June 2021, student partners offer valuable insight on their involvement and the skills they have developed as a result. Harnessing students' knowledge is shown to be an important factor in determining the success of online conferences and the article offers suggestions for how further collaboration can be facilitated between students and staff.

Social isolation has become a growing concern amongst both students and staff in the higher education sector. A student-led community-centered approach to supporting doctoral researchers forms the basis of Kiu Sum's article. The PhD society mentioned in this case study aims to reinforce connectivity and digital wellbeing through collaborative activities, whilst at the same time tackling the harm caused by financial constraints, time pressures, and mental health issues. The article also considers the impact of the pandemic on academic progression amongst doctoral researchers, and shows how the divided working arrangements and limited social interactions many people experienced during the pandemic can be countered through online symposia, wellbeing support and career development events. Kiu Sum also contributes a compelling book review for *The Power of Partnership: Students, Staff, and Faculty Revolutionising Higher Education*, edited by Lucy Mercer-Mapstone and Sophia Abbot.

Helena Beeson considers the process of adapting learning and teaching to a more increase collaboration-focused and less-didactic approach amongst students and facilitators. The example from the University of Northampton focuses on involving students in the creation of interactive video content for groupwork practices. The resulting online radio play provides a framework to consider aspects of both educational content creation and how to gain greater student ownership of the sessions. The autonomy the students were given here aided the identification of measures to improve clarity and flexibility within their tasks. The article provides several insightful observations which will be of interest of both practitioners and students and suggest ways in which this approach could be applied to other contexts.

Substantive investigation has been conducted by Maria Xypaki and Ayse Gur Geden into the experiences of mature students attempting to create a more inclusive curriculum through the Community Engaged Learning Ambassadors Project. This article provides a focus on how student ambassadors developed their skills in relation to future aspirations, and how the project, as an iterative process, can be further refined. One of the main aspects for improvement would be to increase representation and diversity within the project, something which would further develop the value of student empowerment.

Research Articles

Simon Varwell takes Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation and reimagines it as a framework for how institutions might reorient their decision making processes during the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the example of shared emergency planning spaces illustrates how student engagement can be of crucial importance in uncertain times and that partnership is the key element needed for transformation and emergency planning in these moments. Focusing on decision making in the higher education sector, this article balances several arguments in order to propose two useful adaptations of Arnstein's original model.

Aisling Tierney, Chloe Reed, Rhona Wilkinson, Jonny Barnes and Sama Zou'bi showcase the impact of their multidisciplinary student-led research journal at the University of Bristol. The journal worked particularly well remotely as an extra-curricular and curriculum-complimentary activity, and this is attributed to the resilience and flexibility offered by the digital environment. Further detail is provided around how the tasks were structured and also how students were supported during the editing phase of the journal. Useful insight provided by the students involved included an emphasis on the importance of collaboration and communication, with respondents noting that their shared passion for research encouraged the development of fruitful partnerships. This in turn enabled participants to improve their ability to reflect critically on their work and wider subject area. Another key benefit highlighted in this article is the opportunity provided for creating interdisciplinary encounters.

The development of employability attributes is an important aspect of why students participate in staff-student partnerships. Preet Hiradhar and Julie Groves make this focus of their first article, examining three fundamental elements of employability that relate to relationship building, workplace aptitude and future career knowledge. It is particularly interesting to note the advantages for students of being exposed to different disciplines during their time at university. We also learn how partnership experiences provided insights into decisions regarding students' careers, such as whether to continue in academia or not. Alongside employability, Hiradhar and Groves contribute a second article which explores how staff-student partnerships compliment students' regular coursework in enabling them to develop different graduate attributes. In-depth interviews with students help to bring out the full extent to which the partnerships help to develop skills which will serve them well both now and in the future.

Online office hours became a feature of the Covid-19 pandemic for many in higher education, and here Morgan Fairless and Sara Luxmore contribute a compelling case study on the practical changes that this necessitated. By examining student research opportunities, this study identifies clear examples of the potential improvement of educational provisions in response to a shift towards digital interfaces. A key insight is how socio-economic factors affect students' ability to attend office hours and to utilise them as a resource. The interview analysis conducted here reflects on what is considered a successful outcome for office hours, and where effort should be focused to broaden access.

The switch to online teaching and learning has been one of the most fundamental pedagogical challenges of the pandemic. Zi Jian Lau, Marine-Oceane Verdez-Scholler, Teofanijia Trajanovska and Wright Jacob reflect on students' participation, levels of engagement, and classroom interaction, comparing several facets of online and face-to-face

learning environments on the Integrated Medical Science programme at University College London. They note the differing levels of interactivity of task-based educational structures and the importance of two-way webcams in maintaining student focus. The article concludes by offering recommendations for more equitable access to online learning environments.

University sports clubs also had to adapt to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Maria Moxey, Hazel Brown, and Keith Parry identify several areas in which members of sports clubs demonstrated resilience and helped to support each other during these difficult times. As part of this, formalised training is to promote mental wellbeing across is discussed, as are the ways in which staff-student partnerships help to provide a sense connectedness. Readers will be interested in how sports club membership can encourage a sense of belonging as part of the student journey, and how altruistic behaviour between teammates proved vital to assist those struggling with isolation.

Decolonisation was a key theme of the previous issue of this journal (Vol. 7, No.1: Enriching BAME staff-student partnerships in higher education) and this is something that is often led by students, rather than staff. Rebecca Turner and India Ellis report on a student-led internship at the University of Plymouth, which attempted to expand the institution's engagement with students involved in decolonisation and to promote decolonisation activities more generally.

This editorial highlights the considerable impact of 'Student-Centred Success' in further education with staff-student partnerships. Encouraging students to be a part of this will provide them with the collaborative, professional and teamwork skills they need to progress in the future. Though the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges to people around the world, it has also provided opportunities in education to closely examine the benefits of a digital way of working. During this period of reimagining and realignment we are confident that these articles will provide inspiration for those interested in how radical approaches to different styles of educational engagement can enhance the student journey. We would encourage you to draw upon the scholarship and experiences outlined throughout this issue. Regardless of your role, we are confident that you will be invigorated by the opportunities presented throughout this introduction and encourage you to read in more depth the full findings of these articles and how these solutions can be applied across institutions and disciplines. The CAN community continues to promote change and student partnerships, despite the challenges of the everyday. We hope you enjoy this issue of the journal.