Exploring Attitudes and Intentions that Foster Student-Staff Partnership Work

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What might an exploration of attitudes and intentions teach us that we do not already know about the potentially transformative work of student-staff partnership? The last fifteen years have seen the rapid expansion of partnership work around the globe, which has inspired publication of typologies of student-faculty (student-academic staff) partnership (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, et al., 2016; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016; Bovill, 2019), guides for developing pedagogical partnership projects and programs (Cook-Sather, Bahti, & Ntem, 2019), and frameworks for pursuing equity and justice through pedagogical partnership (de Bie, Marquis, Cook-Sather, et al., 2021). These and other scholarly publications emphasise the importance of mindsets that foster productive partnership (Cook-Sather, Gauthier, & Foster, 2020), identify generative partnership principles and practices (Cates, Madigan, & Reitenauer, 2018; Matthews, 2017), and highlight both positive and problematic outcomes of partnership work (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Despite this plethora of resources and explorations, Amrita felt, as a scholar of psychology, that there was in this growing body of literature a dearth of analyses specifically focused on the attitudes and intentions that foster student-staff partnership work—at least there was a dearth of discussions that named attitudes and intentions as such. Specific concepts or constructs provide frames that make things visible and meaningful in ways that other constructs do not (Matthews, Cook-Sather, Acai, et al., 2019). Such is the case for attitudes and intentions, two related constructs from psychology.

At first we thought we would write a single article about the attitudes and intentions that staff bring to pedagogical partnership. We planned to draw on Amrita's deep disciplinary expertise and on Alison's long history facilitating and analysing pedagogical partnership work to explore the ways in which 'attitude' and 'intention' reveal how emotions (affect) and thinking/mental processes (cognition) are strong predictors of behaviours or outcomes that participants in partnership aim to enact and achieve. We did that (see our article in this issue), but as we talked with colleagues about attitudes and intentions, we were met with enthusiastic expressions of agreement that this was an under-researched area, and Simon Walker extended an invitation to us to curate a special issue on the topic for *The Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*. This is that special issue, and it includes 18 articles, case studies, opinion pieces, reflective essays, and creative compositions that address attitudes and intentions in partnership work unfolding across Aotearoa/New Zealand, China, several universities in England, Japan, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, and different regions of the United States.

Each contribution to this special issue offers a unique analysis at the intersection of context, participants, and focus of exploration. We open this collection with our own article, which focuses on the attitudes of epistemic confidence in students and of open-mindedness to students' knowledge and contributions, links those attitudes to the intention to co-create educational experiences with students, and offers three strategies through which staff can

nurture these attitudes and this intention. Moving from this article that inspired this collection, we turn to the rich contributions that surface numerous themes under the umbrella of attitudes and intentions. Below we name just a few themes as starting points for reading these contributions.

One theme is *the process of clarifying and enacting partnership attitudes and intentions through co-authored—partnership—explorations*. These explorations, undertaken across several institutions in England and the United States and a university in Singapore, both illustrate and analyse the growth and thriving partnership can nurture, captured in terms such as 'blossomed', which Tracie Addy and Maria Jose Salmeron Mendez use in their reflective essay exploring the ways in which attitudes and intentions premised on learner-oriented mindsets manifest in openness, investment in student agency, flexibility, sponsorship, and advocacy. These authors not only emphasise but also enact learning through dialogue, as Tai Chong Toh and Huang Hoon Chng do their reflective essay structured as a dialogue between the two of them focused on the possibilities of developing attitudes and intentions conducive to partnership in Singapore. Refusing 'gendered norms and patriarchal values', Samantha Silberstein and Marissa Hamilton illustrate and call for embracing and enacting pedagogical love in their co-authored reflective essay. And finally, in their poetic conversation, Suanne Gibson and her co-authors articulate a conviction that the personal is political and an intention to form partnerships as an embodiment of solidarity among those with a range of disabilities in higher education contexts in England. The energising arguments for and modelling of attitudes and intentions conducive to flourishing offer much to consider in regards to how partnership work can affirm participants' humanity as well as inform practice.

Another theme in several contributions is *the particular ways in which the affective and the relational inform attitudes and intentions*. Certainly present in all the contributions in one way or another, this theme is the focus of analysis in Diana Gregory's reflective essay, which showcases the foundational cognitive and emotional processes of students and staff within art and design curriculum in the southern United States, where trust, risk, responsibility, empowerment, and reciprocity impacted the implementation of a new online degree. This theme is also explicit in Catherine McConnell's article, in which she explores the role of intra, inter-, and extra-personal emotion in partnership work at a university in the south of England. In her reflective essay, Laura Blackburn, with Sivaramkumar Shanmugam, explores affect, agency, cognition, and values in developing a student-staff relationship and how these inform attitudes, norms, intentions, and resulting behaviour at a university in Scotland. In their article, Svetlana Vikhnevich and student partners describe aspirations of students in a university in China to engage in student-faculty partnerships for academic and personal development, to establish relatedness, and to achieve meaningful accomplishments within and outside of academics. And Yoko Mori draws in her opinion piece on her experience as a Japanese student studying in Aotearoa/New Zealand to explore how the attitude and intention of collegiality manifest as care can enrich student-teacher relationships.

Wrestling with, working within and against, and challenging contextual norms is another theme that cuts across many of the contributions. Forging attitudes conducive to partnership is part of enacting intentions, but when institutional or wider societal and cultural norms seem to be in conflict with partnership attitudes and intentions, the challenges can be significant—although not insurmountable. Masahiro Tanaka articulates in his reflective essay

a strong belief in the importance of the student perspective in quality assurance and the intention of bringing efforts at a university in Japan in line with the international trend toward embracing this belief. In their article, Timothy O'Connor and his colleagues take into consideration specifics of the Russian educational system in their description and analyses of approaches to setting up student-staff partnership as an integral component of the learning community at the National University of Science and Technology MISIS. Ketevan Kupatadze and Eric Hall explore in their reflective essay what has happened and what could happen within an institutional context in the southeastern United States in which partnership values, but not practices, are embraced. Each of these contributions both offers inspiring examples and articulates what else is necessary to foster attitudes and intentions that lead to successful and sustainable partnership practices.

A specific form that wrestling with and challenging contextual norms can take is embodied in the theme of *partnership embracing attitudes and intentions focused on inclusion and equity*. Several contributors from the United Kingdom and the United States name systemic and systematic forms of exclusion and inequity, including racism and ableism, that need to be countered with attitudes and intentions informed by Critical Race Theory, decolonial and participatory research, refusal of exclusion in STEM, and centring disability. Working in different contexts in England, Melanie-Marie Haywood offers in her reflective essay the conceptual tools and approaches presented in Critical Race Theory and decolonial and participatory research to support the disruption of the status quo and promote equity and agency, and Maisha Islam argues in her opinion piece that we need to leverage critical, participatory, and decolonial approaches to mitigate the issue of equity and inclusion with regards to students' representation in student-staff partnerships. Writing in the context of a university in the southeastern United States, Aaron Piepmeier and colleagues offer a case study focused on the engagement of student partners in inclusive teaching practices and content facilitation in Exercise Science related to DEI within and outside of the classroom. In the context of the Holistic Foundry Undergraduate Engaged Learners (FUEL) program, which was conceived as an extracurricular research program centred on immersing traditionally underrepresented undergraduate students in STEM, Steffano Oyanader Sandoval and co-authors offer insight into the ways in which staff attitudes toward student autonomy, authentic student-centred learning, and affirmation of student lived experiences and knowledge in turn influence student-mentor attitudes regarding partnerships with staff. And Sara Schley and Carol Marchetti convey in their case study a sense of an ethical obligation among several staff members to centre disability identity and communication access in a university in the United States with a large percentage of deaf and hard-of-hearing students and to act on the intention of ensuring that everyone's (deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing people's) learning needs are met. The attitudes and intentions explored in these contributions are in keeping with the framework offered by de Bie and colleagues (2021) that aims to foster equity and justice through pedagogical partnership.

What all these contributions have in common is a way of naming the attitudes that foster student-staff partnership work such that underlying assumptions, beliefs, desires, aspirations, and commitments become explicit and therefore more accessible and more effective catalysts for action—more powerful guides for acting on intention. Influenced by the traditional values of a country, the socio-political norms of a more local context, and institutional and individual values, identities, and commitments, participants can have diverse and unique attitudes and intentions aimed at facilitating the development of effective student-

staff partnerships. Research demonstrates that context-specific attitudes, born of individuals' reflections and lived experiences, inspire more confidence, are more memorable, and prove decisive to those individuals, which, in turn, predicts actions better than for those individuals who doubt their intentions (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). These 18 explorations through various genres convince us that when participants build their partnership work on their stated attitudes and intentions and experience positive outcomes, they further strengthen their beliefs, aspirations, and commitments to this work.

As the consistent attention to the affective—to thriving as feeling not just thinking beings—in these contributions illustrates, the attitudes and intentions explored in this collection also have in common a commitment to affirming that participants in partnership matter. There has been a great deal of discussion of the importance of belonging in higher education, and there are important ways in which partnership work can foster belonging for both students and staff (Cook-Sather, 2020; Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Cook-Sather & Seay, 2021). However, recent critiques of belonging highlight that: non-White students report a lower sense of belonging compared to their White counterparts (Cole, Newman, & Hypolite, 2020); there are students who may not wish to, or who cannot, belong (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2022); and belonging is provided to individuals by communities rather than being something individuals can garner for themselves (Nunn, 2021). Mattering, on the other hand—"the feeling of being significant and important to other people" (Flett, Khan, & Su, 2019, p. 667)— makes space for people to be recognised and valued as individuals with distinct identities and contributions to make to the community (Scholossberg, 1989). Mattering is not dependent on fit with particular people in a particular context, and it is transferable beyond the immediate group and setting (Cook-Sather, 2022; Cook-Sather, Felten, Stewart, et al., forthcoming; Weston, Felten, & Cook-Sather, 2021). The attitudes and intentions that authors of this collection identify and explore hold promise both for the partnership work they describe and for ways of thinking and acting that extend beyond partnership.

As we hope is clear from the variety of contributions to this special issue, we as editors also embraced a particular partnership attitude and intention: the attitude that not only a diversity of people but also a diversity of forms would best capture the range of attitudes and intentions that foster student-staff partnership work. Authors are students, academic staff, and professional staff who claim a range of identities as well as positions in institutions of higher education. Linked to our attitude toward inclusion was our intention to work with all those who submitted first drafts that met the special issue criteria to support these authors in seeing their work through to publication. Including but also expanding beyond the genres typically published in *The Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, we accepted not only research articles, case studies, and opinion pieces but also reflective essays, dialogues, and poetic conversations. We believe that our—everyone's— understanding of attitudes and intentions that foster student-staff partnership will be richer for this inclusivity. We invite you as readers to consider the attitudes and intentions authors explore, where they exist or could exist in your own context, and how to build on or take them up to further the potentially transformative work of student-staff partnership.

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