

Research Summary: Investigating International Experiences of Student-Faculty/Staff Partnerships in Teaching and Learning (Phase Two)

Research Questions & Study Rationale

Student-faculty partnership in higher education is a transformative pedagogical practice, and in recent years it has become more widespread. In a mutually respectful, reciprocal partnership process, students, staff, and wider university communities are actively engaged and all stand to benefit (Healey et al., 2014, p.12). However, practicing genuine partnership can be a difficult process, as many scholars have pointed out (Allin, 2014; Matthews, in press). After the 2016 Summer Institute (SI), three of this study's investigators examined participant experiences, specifically asking how they viewed and experienced partnership and how the SI supported their partnership work (Marquis, Black, & Healey, 2017). This follow-up study, conducted approximately 9 months after the SI, aimed primarily to understand the event's long-term effect on partnership practice. It also investigated how participant experiences and perceptions had changed or stayed constant. The research was guided by two main questions:

- (1) How do participants perceive and experience partnership within the SI and beyond?
- (2) To what extent do participants understand the SI as supporting their developing partnership work and capacities?

Methodology

Two students and a staff member worked together to design and conduct this study, collaborating with two additional staff members and one student at a distance. Data were gathered by the student researchers, through one-on-one interviews in person or via Skype (10 participants; 2 students, 8 staff). Following data collection, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis, and analyzed using constant comparison (Merriam, 2009).

Key Findings

Experiences of partnership

The benefits of partnership that participants articulated were similar to those described in the first phase of the study. Central benefits included the following:

- Enhanced work as a result of diverse perspectives
- Development of agency
- Increased employability for students
- Development of communication and interpersonal skills

Challenges named by participants, which also repeated and extended ideas from phase one of the study, included:

- Institutional barriers to implementing partnership
- Access and inclusion
- The language surrounding partnership
- Lack of time and funding

Experiences after the SI

In the first phase of this research, participants suggested some ways in which the SI helped them navigate challenges of partnership. A crucial finding in this second phase of the research is that the following benefits persisted for participants after the SI:

- A sense of community
- New idea generation
- Practical project support
- Seeing a model of partnership in action

Participants also shared some successes and challenges they encountered when engaging in partnership work after the SI. The SI was reported to support ongoing partnership work in the following ways:

- Providing practical project support for implementing partnership on home campuses
- Allowing deepened and extended partnership work at own institutions
- Generating new ideas for future possibilities and their implementation
- Facilitating networking and creating connections

On the other hand, some post-SI challenges included:

- Lack of institutional support
- Lack of funding
- Loss of momentum to move forward with partnership activities after the SI

Next Steps and More Information

A manuscript that describes the research in greater detail has been prepared and submitted for publication. Results have also been presented at the 2017 Connecting Higher Education conference, and will be shared again at the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) conference in October 2017. As well, the researchers are in the process of developing an online platform that aims to sustain and develop networks and motivation following the SI.

References

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- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014). *Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Marquis, E., Black, C., & Healey, M. (2017). Responding to the challenges of student-staff partnership: Reflections of participants at an international summer institute. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(6), 720-735.
- Matthews, K.E. (in press). Five propositions for genuine 'students as partners' practice. *International Journal of Students as Partners*, 1(2).