

Engaging students and staff in inclusive partnerships in global learning before, during and beyond COVID- 19



Wendy Green, PhD
HERDSA Webinar, 14th May 2020.

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Engaging students as partners in global learning



An Australian Learning & Teaching Fellowship aimed:

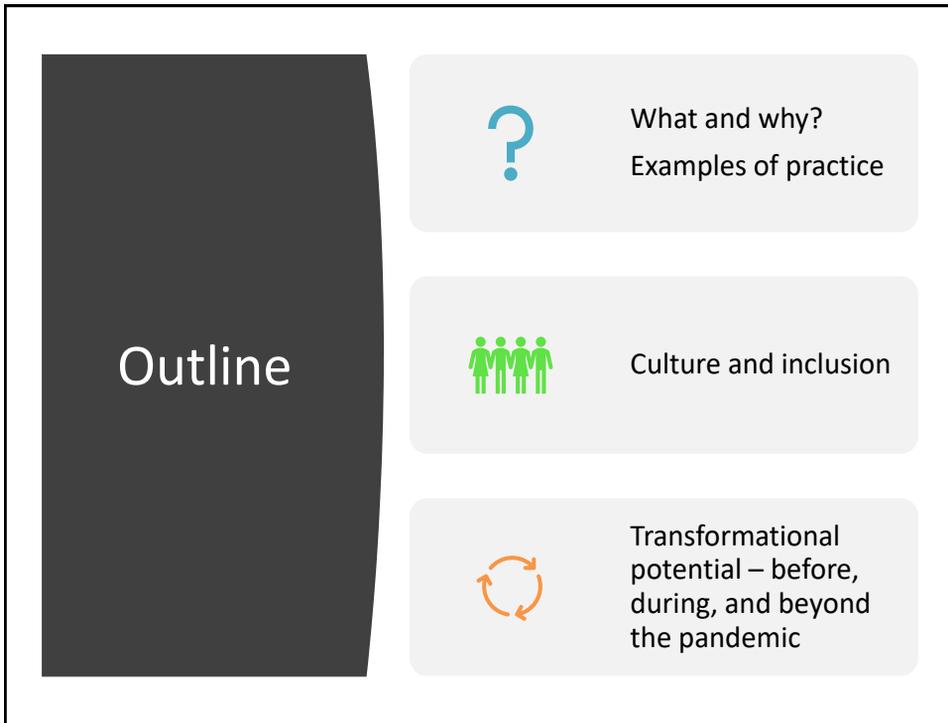
*To inspire, support and share innovative approaches to
student (and staff) engagement in global learning*

❖ 13 partnership projects in 4 Australian universities
(UTAS, UQ, USyd, LaTrobe): Jan 2017-Dec 2018



Engaging students as partners in
global learning

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'Students as partners' (SaP)

Is a **process** through which all participants have the **opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways**, to the conceptualisation, decision-making, and practice of teaching, learning and assessment

Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felton 2014, 6-7




Engaging students as partners in
global learning

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Global learning



- ... is a **critical analysis of and an engagement with** complex, interdependent global systems and legacies ... and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability.
- **Through global learning**, [we]
- 1) **become informed**, open-minded, responsible people attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences,
- 2) seek to understand **how [our] actions affect** both local and global communities,
- 3) **address** the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably.

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Lost opportunities

Students from diverse backgrounds can bring unique insights, but there is typically a failure *'to translate their presence into the exceptionally valuable and hitherto unappreciated educational resource it could be'*

Mestenhauser, 2012



Limited meaningful interaction between local & international students in many universities

Arkoudis, 2014; Merola, Coelen & Hofman, 2019; Sawir, 2013

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'Complex connectivity' implies 'proximity'
(Tomlinson, 2000)
Global connectedness impacts on all of us - differently.

'The problems that globalization and automation create for working-class Americans are real, deep, and seemingly intractable. Rather than face those difficulties and uncertainties ... Fear leads to aggressive "othering" strategies rather than to useful analysis'.

Nussbaum (2018) *The Monarchy of Fear: A philosopher looks at our political crisis*

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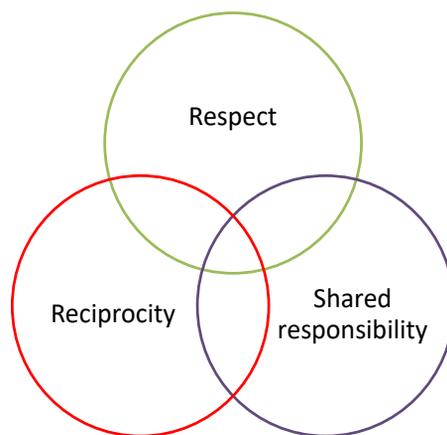
The current pandemic, 'illustrates exactly why we need ... students who understand global phenomena, can see xenophobic and culture-bound reactions for what they are, and are prepared to work with colleagues around the world to address global crises' ([Robin Helms](#)).



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As a metaphor, the term 'students as partners' is not easily defined

Matthews, 2017



SaP is a values-based practice

Cook-Sather, Bovill, Felton, 2014

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Example 1. Partnership in business disciplines

- At beginning of each semester, lecturers call for students to work with them in partnership voluntarily
- Each lecturer works with ~ 5 student partners
- Student partners engage with their fellow students weekly and at meet with their lecturer regularly to provide feedback, make suggestions, discuss what can/cannot be changed

[Schonell & Adams \(2019\)](#)



Biggest challenge? Ensuring partners represent class diversity

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Example 2. Three-Way Partnership, Occupational therapy

[Fortune et al \(2019\)](#)

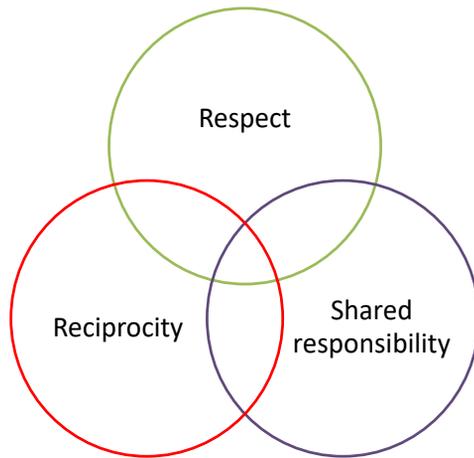
- International community health workers/leaders and Australian teams of students & academics partner in project-based learning internship in India and Vietnam to benefit these communities
- Capstone course in B. Occupational Therapy

Biggest challenge? Stepping out of student role/ adjusting to more agentic role as 'partners'



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SaP is a values-based, relational practice



Cook-Sather, Bovill, Felton, 2014

All SaP projects will look different and involve different actors

Bovill, 2017

Who partners, in what ways?

Matthews 2017

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**Creating
(culturally)
inclusive
partnerships**



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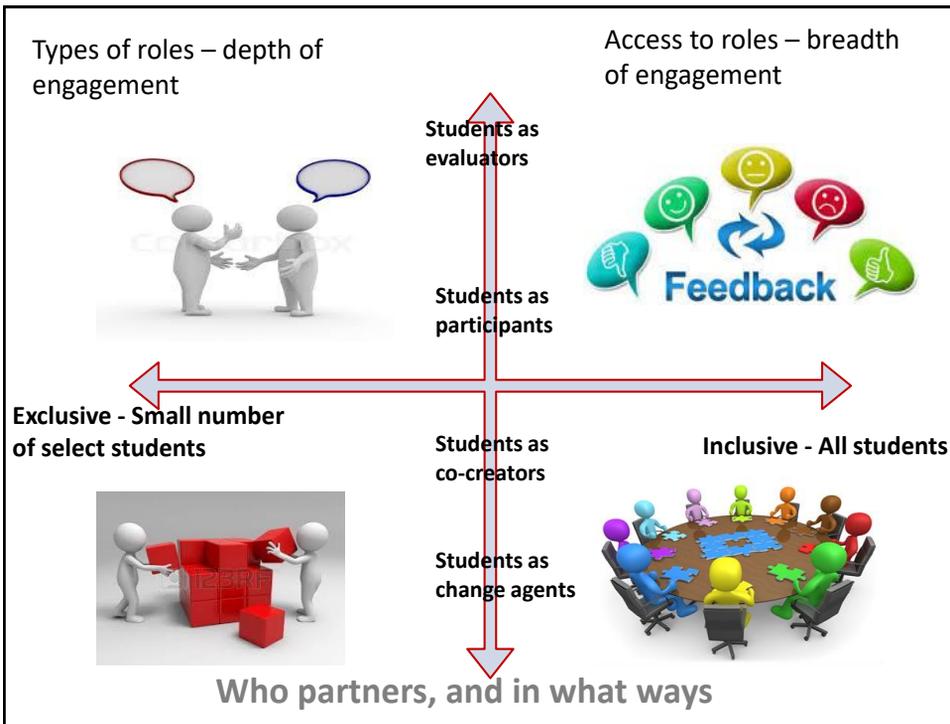


Who actually participates?

1. Mostly small scale (1-5 students)
2. Risks 'prioritizing voices that are already privileged and engaged'

Systematic literature review of students as partners in higher education. Mercer-Mapstone et al (2017).

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Planning for inclusion

SaP is ethical when **all are granted equality of opportunity to participate**

Bryson et al 2016

We can intentionally create inclusive spaces in two ways

- In projects with selected students - target/include under-represented groups;
- Whole cohort - recognise and address different capacities to engage; e.g., allowing for different levels of risk, scaffolding

Always ensure meaningful incentives, reward and recognition



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Cultural diversity and inclusion

'Partnership' is a cultural construct

- A "construct" in the context of culture is a set of ideas which coalesce around and are deeply rooted in significant cultural practices;
- 'partnership', teaching and learning are cultural constructs;
- may have some shared meaning across cultures while still varying significantly in many details.



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'Students' experiences of co-creating
classroom instruction with faculty': a
Malaysian case study



- 46.4% apprehensive initially
- 74.30% experienced *authentic ways of interaction among students and lecturer characterized by trust, respect, positive emotions, and inspiration.*

In engaging as partners, students responded to the *cultural dynamics that shape the learning behaviour of students in the East by ... consistently seeking assurance, agreement, and cooperation from peers and teachers, and by acknowledging instructor's presence with due respect.*

[Kaur, Awang-Hashim & Kaur \(2019\)](#)

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One reflection on culture and partnership

Although the term 'students as partners' is quite new, it seems to me that the ideas that underpin it are much older. Throughout my schooling in China ... I never thought about it because our educational system is not designed to question the authorities.

Does this mean that international – or at least Chinese - students will be reluctant to 'buy' the idea of SaP? No!

When I think back on my education in China, I realise that I was always an active participant... as a teachers' student advisor providing feedback, suggesting exercises etc... In becoming involved in SaP in Australia, I now understand that my [Chinese] school teacher was practicing an advanced teaching strategy; that is, giving students the chance to produce knowledge rather than just consume it.

Yitong (Coco) Bu, <https://blogs.utas.edu.au/engaging-students/>

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‘Breaking down the wall’

It's like - because there's always a gap... a wall between you as an international student [and] the domestic community ... Likewise lecturers ... they actually don't know what different students really [think]... But this project brought us together and we learned from each other.

[Chinese international student]



It suddenly hit me that the problems [of international students] are real, they go through so many difficulties and I didn't even realise how privileged I am. That's definitely what I'm going to do - find time to make this much better.

It makes me rethink ... how we are fairly western-centric

[Local students]
Green, 2019

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Transformative potential, pre-, during and post-pandemic



genuine partnership ... is an act of resistance to the traditional, often implicit, but accepted, hierarchical structure where staff have *power over* students. ... Practitioners are first ... transforming their own realities [and] they are part of a movement seeking to transform education more broadly.

Matthews 2017.

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Becoming a partner in global learning:

Partnership as identity work

It throws the notion of what it means to be a student or a lecturer on its head. For me, it's been a real shift – a paradigm shift. Once I was focused on the Intended Learning Outcomes and knowing the best way to get there was my job. Now I see it is a negotiated process. I see myself as a negotiator, a facilitator of affable conversations. Working in partnership has allowed me to rethink 'this is who I am' and the students to do the same.

Lecturer, Business

We are no longer students just sitting in a lecture listening to the lecturer and doing the assignments assigned to us. Lecturers have agency, students do too. We are solving problems together. It is a challenge. We need to work out how to navigate the partnership, so we don't overtake each other and so we can all contribute to our maximum capacities.

International student, Social
Science

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Some practical challenges/ possible solutions

1. SaP takes time, culturally inclusive SaP can take longer

2. Short 'student life cycle' v. pace of change in universities

3. SaP has tended to be an exclusive practice

4. SaP can be 'high stakes' - SaP outcomes are uncertain

5. Structural & legal limitations (institutional & professional policies, practices, deadlines)

1. Make time to share different cultural perspectives of concept/s; develop shared understandings

2. Design change in realistic stages, succession planning

3. Plan for, discuss inclusion; ensure meaningful recognition & reward

4. Recognise; allow for varying capacity for autonomy, risk-taking

5. Recognise value of process, develop realistic expectations & goals with students

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SaP (in global learning) through a pandemic



- Very little SaP literature refers to online partnership practices
- Relationship building through authentic dialogue is essential for SaP and global learning
- How can we 'connect with compassion' online? [Chie Adachi](#)
- Example of emerging virtual partnership [Preeti Vayada](#)
- Reflecting in Action (Schön) [Wendy Green](#)

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SaP (in global learning) into the future

SaP is an 'as if' practice; it requires us to suspend the 'what-has-been' and the 'what-is', and allow the 'what-could-be' to emerge.

Cook-Sather & Felton, 2017



Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Arundhati Roy, 2020

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Some resources

Students as Partners in Global Learning <https://www.sapgl.com>

Students as Partners in Global Learning blog <https://www.sapgl.com/blog>
(New contributions welcome. Contact Wendy Green for further details
w.j.green@utas.edu.au)

Example of 'Students as Partners' website (several universities has SaP sites)
<https://itali.uq.edu.au/about/projects/students-partners>

International Journal for Students as Partners (free open access)
<https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/ijsap/index>



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