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Exploring the Development of Pedagogical Partnerships in Asian Contexts

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EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS IN ASIAN CONTEXTS

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Overarching, subtle, and also very concrete challenges face those who strive to develop pedagogical partnerships in Asian contexts. An example of an overarching challenge is the established hierarchies and modes of engaging that participants in Asian contexts navigate. A more subtle challenge is that reasons for choosing to engage in partnership work may not be what they seem. And a very concrete challenge is that there are no equivalents in Urdu to the terms, and thus the premises, that underlie pedagogical partnership. The authors of the essays in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education* explore these and other sources of challenge—and possibility. These explorations are particularly important because the vast majority of pedagogical partnership practice unfolds within "Western" contexts (Bindra, Easwaran, Firasta, et al., 2018; Pounder, Ho, & Groves, 2016; Kaur, Awang-Hashim, & Kaur, 2018) and there is need for insight into and guidance for developing partnership work in "Eastern" contexts.

An emerging body of scholarship explicitly considers what it might mean and take to work in or toward partnership in particular national, cultural, or institutional milieu in Asian contexts (Chng, 2019; Dai, Matthews, & Liang, 2023; Kaur, 2020; Seow, 2019; Sim, 2019; Tanaka, 2022; Toh & Chng, 2022; Vikhnevich, Gao, & Jiang, et al., 2022). As numerous scholars have pointed out, while cultural norms in these contexts may not be conducive to Western notions of partnership (Ansari, 2021; Iftikhar, 2021; Felten et al., 2019; Kaur & Yong Bing, 2020; Liang & Matthews, 2021, 2022; Moorhouse & Oh, 2019; Waqar & Asad, 2020), the work of developing partnership practice can be pursued through processes of "perpetual translation" of terms and selves (Cook-Sather, 2018). Such translation can include examining assumptions about the meanings of words used in relation to partnership and practices, exploring the cultural-historical understanding behind the constructs those words refer to in different contexts, and mapping partnership practices and relationships they signal (Cook-Sather, Ho, Kaur, et al., forthcoming).

Each of the six essays included in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education* explores what developing partnership approaches in a particular Asian context looks like and the challenges and possibilities involved. The first essay focuses on developing partnership practices in Chinese universities; the next three essays explore a variety of partnership approaches in different institutions in Singapore; and the final pair of essays feature the partnership experiences at a university in Pakistan.

In "REFLECTING ON THE INFLUENCE OF INVOLUTION TO THE SHAPING OF PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES," Yifei Liang, PhD Candidate, University of Queensland, writes as "an outsider looking in" on pedagogical partnerships in Chinese universities. He explores what he sees as a doctoral candidate at the University of Queensland in Australia when he studies conceptions of pedagogical partnership in Chinese universities. In particular, Liang explores the phenomenon of "involution," *neijuan* in Chinese, or forced

engagement—a peer-to-peer, not student-faculty, dynamic but one with significant implications for partnership practice in Chinese universities.

Three contributors write in the context of Singapore. In **"PARTNERSHIP IN THE AGE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE,"** Emmanuel Tan, Assistant Dean of Student Wellbeing, Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Nanyang Technological University, writes in the context of the burgeoning, and the potential threats, of AI. Tan sees reasons for optimism that generative AI might improve partnership, and he reflects in his essay on how we might harness the power of partnership to support students in navigating this era of generative AI. Specifically, he notes that "the essential principles of partnership—students and colleagues engaging in meaningful ways that enact mutual respect and reciprocal relationships—can help us navigate the road ahead."

In **"ACADEMIC COACHING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSFERABLE SKILLS THROUGH WORK-BASED LEARNING IN A SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY,"** Chee Ming Ong, Lead Educational Developer, Singapore Institute of Technology, reflects on how, as an educational developer who had opportunities to work with both academic and workplace supervisors of students on work attachment, he might explore the question of how students could better develop their transferable skills when they are completing an internship or a university work attachment. Ong focuses on the use of academic coaching as a tool for partnership with students as part of the Singapore Institute of Technology's work-based learning program.

And in **"WORKING WITH STUDENTS, LEARNING FROM STUDENTS THROUGH A SPECIAL PROGRAMME IN SCIENCE AT NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE,"** Linda Sellou, Faculty of Science, Ryan Seow (Chemistry major, Class of 2024), Kellie Shu Hui Wong (Life Sciences major, Class of 2023), and Kellisa Jia Lin Goh (Life Sciences major, Class of 2023), all of the Special Programme in Science at the National University of Singapore), share their experiences of and thoughts about student-educator partnership on various fronts, from the perspective of both the educator partner and student partners. They offer details of their various partnerships and also insights gained through that partnership work.

Finally, two contributors write in the context of Pakistan. In **"CHALLENGES IN PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP FOCUSED ON AN URDU LANGUAGE COURSE,"** Aneeqa Khalid, Research Assistant, Lahore University of Management Sciences, describes the challenges of developing a partnership focused on working with an Urdu language instructor in redesigning a language course and how she tried to overcome those challenges. Khalid shares the work she and her faculty partner had to do on two levels: findings ways to translate and understand the principles of partnership practice, such as "collaboration" and "safe space," which do not have direct equivalents in Urdu; and findings ways to enact their partnership through these principles.

And in **"WEARING TWO DIFFERENT HATS IN PARTNERSHIP WORK – STUDENT PARTNER AND A RESEARCHER AT LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES,"** Arslan Abdullah, Education Specialist-Academic Programmes, Syed Ahsan Ali and Syed Maratib Ali School of Education, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), reflects on two different kinds of challenge: being a student partner in his partnership program and then taking on a research

role in an impact evaluation of pedagogical partnership programs at LUMS. Abdullah both explores the challenges and shares strategies he developed to navigate them.

These authors offer glimpses into particular challenges and approaches to managing those challenges that they developed in their respective contexts. While the ways they conceptualized and enacted these approaches are context specific, the principles underlying the approaches have lessons for anyone working to enact partnership. All partnership work requires "perpetual translation" of terms and selves (Cook-Sather, 2018), examination of assumptions about the meanings of words used in relation to partnership concepts and practices, exploration of the cultural-historical understanding behind the constructs those words refer to in different contexts, and mappings of partnership practices and the relationships they signal (Cook-Sather et al., forthcoming). These essays contribute to the expanding conversation about what these forms of translation look and feel like.

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