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Developing student-staff partnership communities

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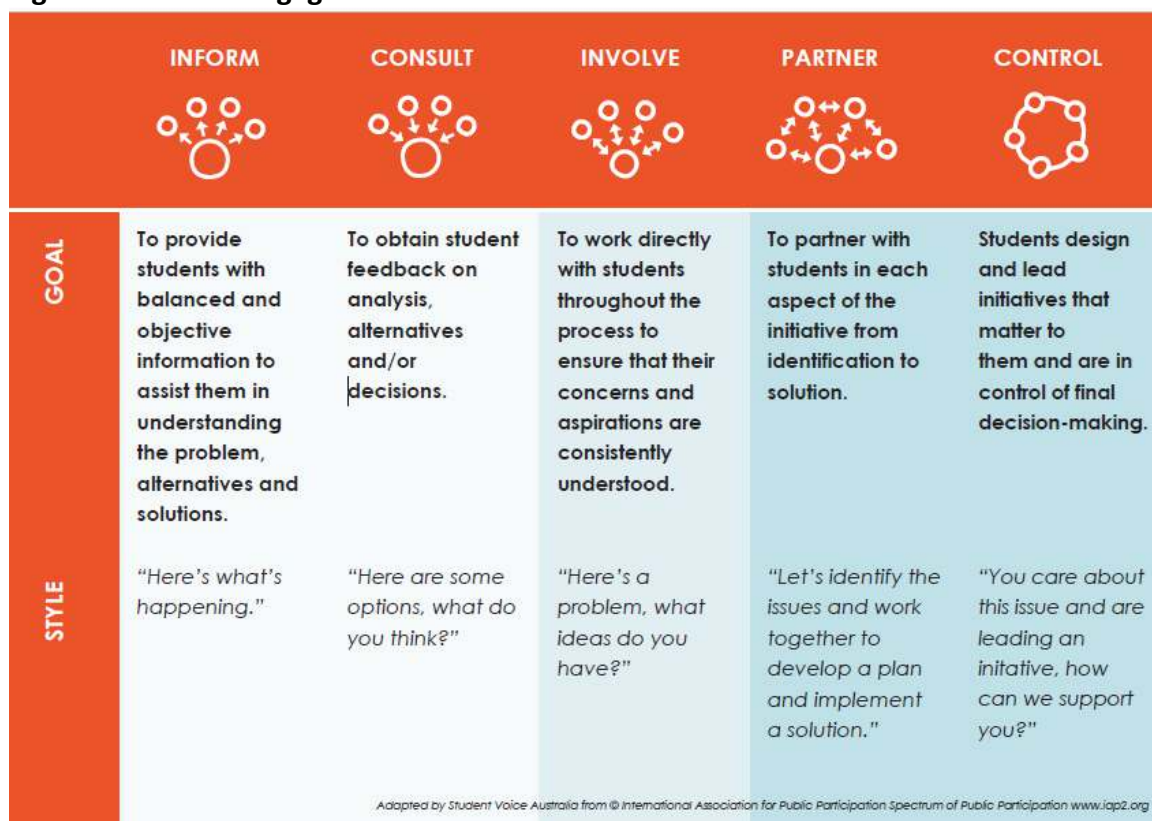
“Universities need to move towards creating inclusive scholarly knowledge-building communities. ... The notion of inclusive scholarly knowledge-building communities invites us to consider new ideas about who the scholars are in universities and how they might work in partnership.” (Brew 2007, 4)

Structure

- A. Unpacking the nature of student-staff partnerships
- B. Values underpinning student-staff partnerships
- C. Partnership core considerations
- D. Dimensions of students as partners
- E. Action planning

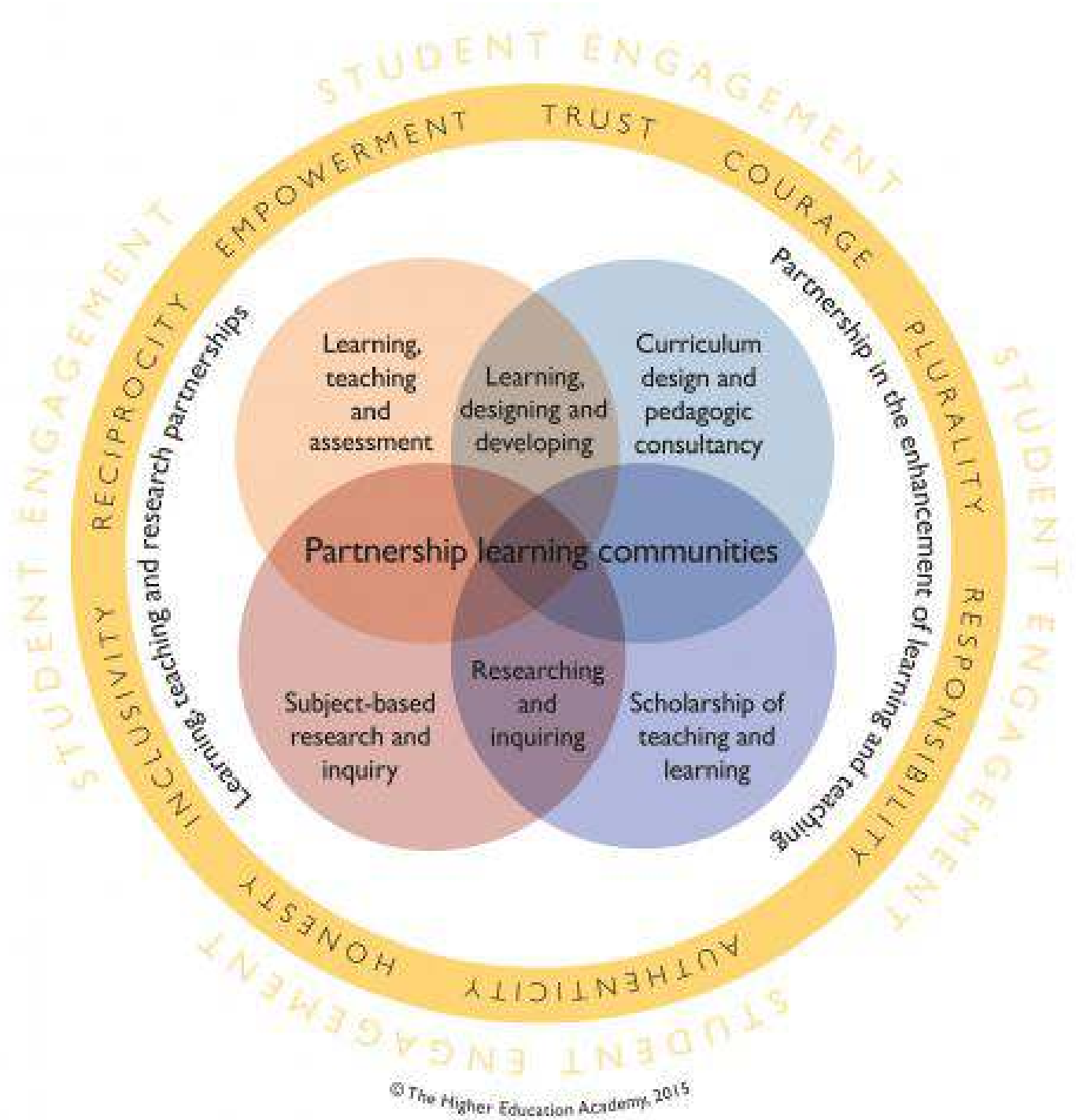
Unpacking the nature of student-staff partnerships

Figure 1. Student engagement continuum



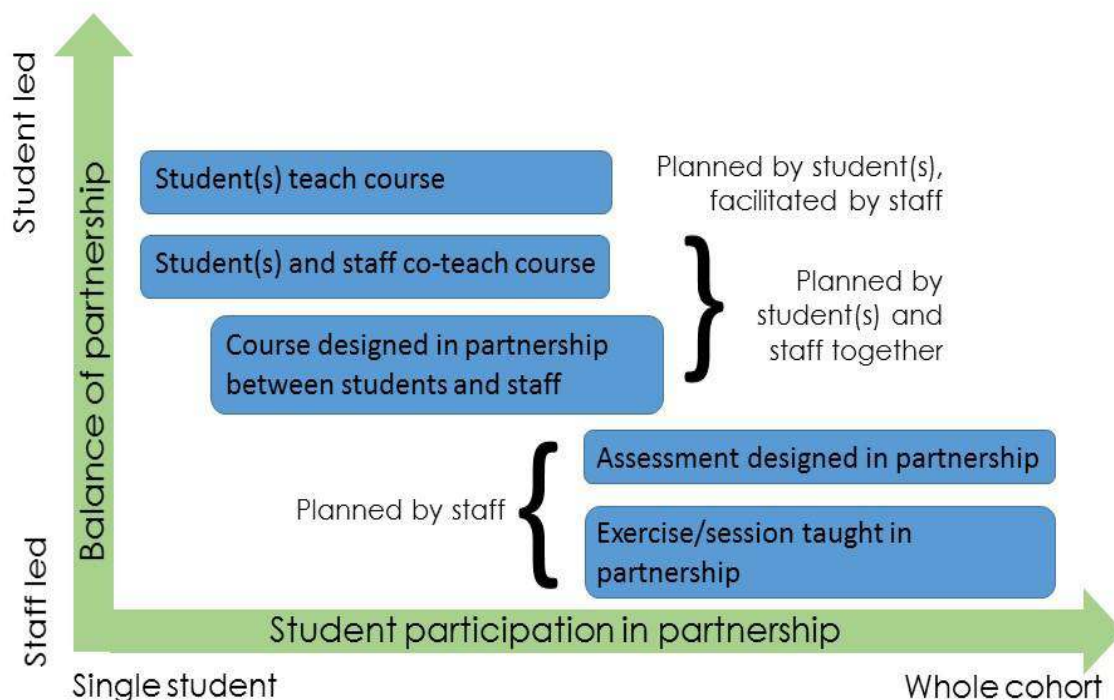
Source: Student Voice Australia

Figure 2. Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education: An overview model



Source: Higher Education Academy (2015) Based on: Healey, M., Flint, A. and Harrington, K. (2014) *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: Higher Education Academy p.25. <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher-education>

Figure 3: Student-staff partnerships in designing, teaching and assessing the curriculum



Source: Healey, R. L. (2019)

Values underpinning student-staff partnerships

Table 1: Partnership values

Drawing on the literature on successful partnership and engaged student learning, core values which underpin successful partnership in learning and teaching are suggested. The relative importance of each of these values may vary in different contexts, and there may be additional values you want to include for your partnerships:

Authenticity: the rationale for all parties to invest in partnership is meaningful and credible.	Honesty: all parties are honest about what they can contribute to partnership and about where the boundaries of partnership lie.	Inclusivity: there is equality of opportunity and any barriers (structural or cultural) that prevent engagement are challenged.
Reciprocity: all parties have an interest in, and stand to benefit from, working and/or learning in partnership.	Empowerment: power is distributed appropriately and ways of working and learning promote healthy power dynamics.	Trust: all parties take time to get to know one-another and can be confident they will be treated with respect and fairness.
Courage: all parties are encouraged to critique and challenge practices, structures and approaches that undermine partnership, and are enabled to take risks to develop new ways of working and learning.	Plurality: all parties recognise and value the unique talents, perspectives and experiences that individuals contribute to partnership.	Responsibility: all parties share collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership, and individual responsibility for the contribution they make.

Source: Higher Education Academy (2015)

Partnership core considerations

Table 2. Partnership core considerations

Partnership core considerations are informed by partnership values and should be reflected as part of undertaking effective students as partners activities. upon as part of undertaking effective students as partners activities.

1: Assumptions and expectations: Partnership can be practiced in a range of ways depending upon the aim of the engagement, the time available, and the contextual constraints. There is no 'perfect' partnership no matter how experienced the partners may be. Consider the different assumptions and expectations of all parties and work towards a common understanding of what to expect within your partnership.

2: Power relations and hierarchy: Higher education identities, learning and teaching relationships, and individual motivations to participate in a partnership are all entwined with power relations and hierarchies. Power differentials may not be overcome entirely, but we can discuss ways in which all parties might 'push back' against them.

3: Diversity and inclusivity: There is no single student experience, individual experiences are influenced by their contexts, e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, class, etc. we can potentially learn most from those students who are marginalised because they are often the students we hear from least. Consider how to embed flexibility into your partnership practices to enable students from diverse backgrounds to engage (e.g. working arrangements and sharing of views).

4: Emotions, attitudes, and behaviours: Partnerships are fundamentally about relationships; as such they are emotive experiences. Like all relationships, vulnerabilities may be laid bare and there is the potential for conflict. Consider how partners will manage both the positive and negative emotions that may emerge through the course of a partnership and plan approaches to addressing conflict.

5: Time and commitment: The timeframe of a partnership activity may be limited by external factors such as budgetary constraints (e.g. funding amount and/or completion required within the financial year) or the timetable (e.g. length of session and/or nature of room). But most commonly time is a factor in terms of what people feel able to give. Typically, people find time for things they believe to be important, consider the variable amounts of time all parties can commit to the partnership to enable the goals that are important to them to be achieved.

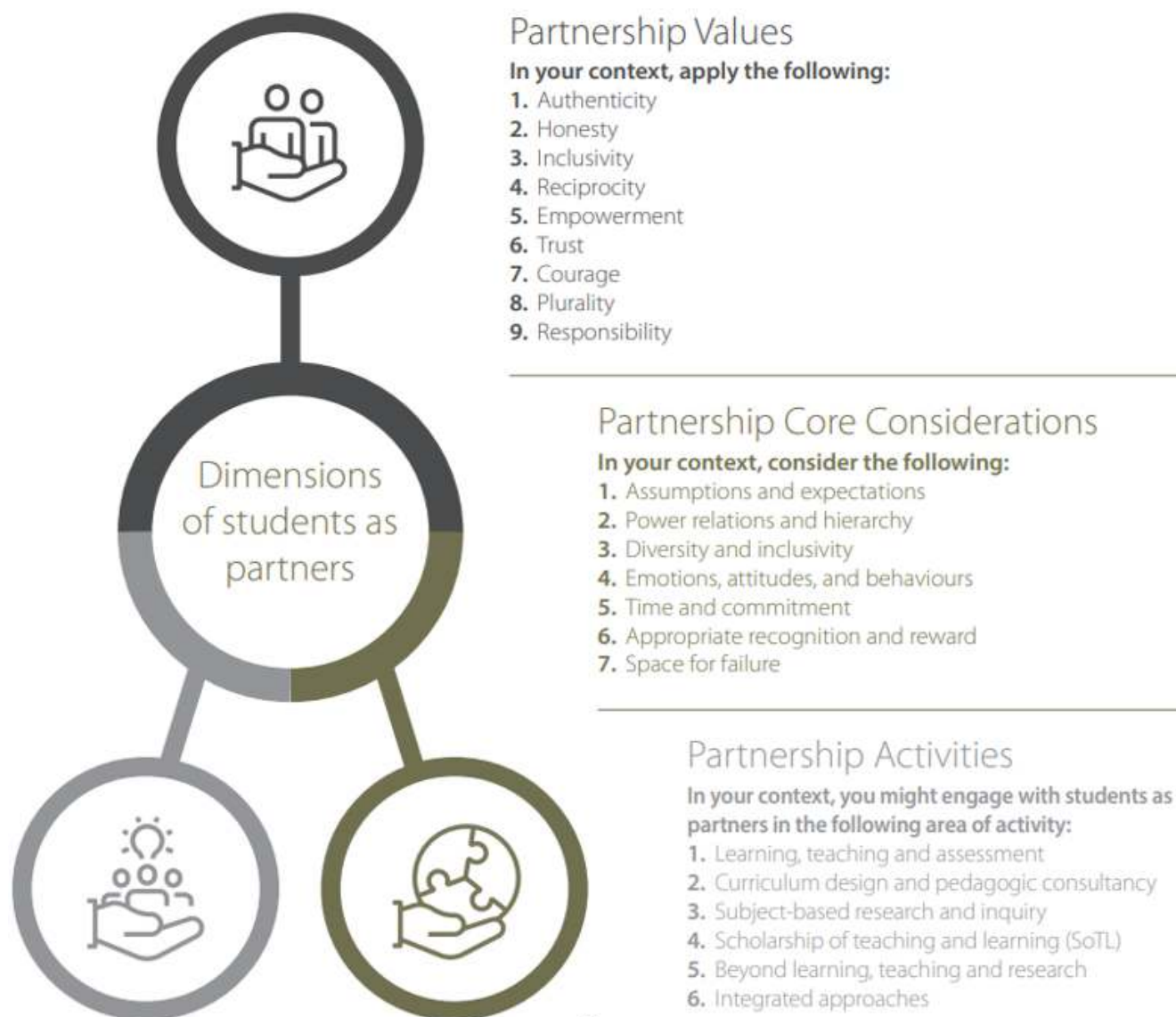
6: Appropriate recognition and reward: Partnership can occur at many different scales, from an in-class activity with a whole cohort, to a single student working on an extended project for several months. Students may be compensated for their time through small incentives (e.g. vouchers), academic credit (e.g. Work Based Learning), volunteering recognition (e.g. Higher Education Achievement Report), or remuneration (e.g. UniJob). Consider what can reasonably be achieved in relation to the compensation resource available and scale the partnership activity accordingly.

7: Spaces for failure: Working in partnership is challenging, it requires courage and risk taking. All parties need to feel safe to try new things and not be fearful of the consequences should things not go to plan. Consider what 'failure' might mean within your partnership and how to make space to support one another should you not achieve your desired outcomes.

Source: Healey, R. L. (in press)

Dimensions of students as partners

Figure 4 Dimensions of students as partners



Source: Healey, R. L. (in press)

For references, conceptual frameworks and over 200 mini case studies see:

Healey, M. (2023) *Students as partners and change agents: A selected bibliography*.

www.healeyheconsultants.co.uk/resources.

Healey, M. & Healey, R. L. (2023) *Students as partners and change agents in learning and teaching in higher education*. www.healeyheconsultants.co.uk/resources.