



Followers, customers, or partners? Comparing conceptualisations of students as partners in Australian, Mainland Chinese, and Hong Kong universities

Yifei Liang¹ · Kun Dai² · Kelly E. Matthews³

Accepted: 18 March 2024
© The Author(s) 2024

Abstract

Engaging students as partners (SaP) is an approach promoting meaningful pedagogical relationships in higher education. Scholars have called for more culturally situated research on SaP that compares Anglophone countries with other contexts. In response, we conducted an exploratory qualitative study by interviewing 36 undergraduate students from Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. Adopting the relational lens of SaP, the interviews focused on conceptualisations of pedagogical partnership, specifically learner–teacher identities and power dynamics. Through comparative and reflexive thematic analysis, we found that understandings of partnership in different contexts were influenced by broader cultural differences. The findings showed that the perception of SaP in Australia was consistent with the prevailing Western discourse, but the notion of SaP was adapted and re-shaped in Mainland China, and in Hong Kong, there were diverse interpretations of it. This study contributes to new understandings of the influence of specific sociocultural and policy variations in SaP practises through culturally situated and comparative research using theorisations of perpetual translation. We argue for future research to contribute collective insights and nuanced, diverse understandings that expand SaP as an approach to global scholarship.

Keywords Students as partners · Higher education · Identity · Australia · Mainland China · Hong Kong

✉ Kun Dai
kundai@cuhk.edu.hk

Yifei Liang
y.liang@uq.net.au

Kelly E. Matthews
k.matthews1@uq.edu.au

¹ School of Education, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

² Department of Educational Administration and Policy, Faculty of Education, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

³ Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Introduction

Over the last few decades, there has been a growing focus on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in the global higher education (HE) community. Researchers have focused on effective student engagement in curricula and pedagogy, demonstrating meaningful learner–teacher relationships as a key factor in fostering student learning, engagement, and a sense of belonging (Felten & Lambert, 2020). Engaging students as partners (SaP) in teaching and learning, which recognises students’ contribution to shaping educational practises, is gaining specific attention (Cook-Sather & Matthews, 2021). Many SaP studies draw on Cook-Sather et al.’s (2014) work to define the learner–teacher partnership as ‘a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision making, implementation, or analysis’ (pp. 6–7). Healey et al. (2014) further highlighted the importance of SaP as a means of promoting collaborative interactions between students and teachers for meaningful student engagement in HE. They proposed multiple forms of partnership—including co-teaching, co-researching, co-creating, and co-designing—to engage students in quality assurance and enhancement processes of HE.

In this article, we draw on the relational and critical theorisations of SaP that call into question assumed learner–teacher identities and power dynamics in HE (Bovill, 2020; Matthews et al., 2018). There are growing scholarly calls to understand SaP as a context-dependent practise (Healey & Healey, 2018) and a socially just pedagogy (Munear-Pelton et al., 2022), including cross-cultural SaP practises (Zhang et al., 2022). We respond to the calls for understanding the cultural context of SaP beyond the dominant scholarly focus on Western or Anglophone practises (Cook-Sather et al., *in press*). In doing so, we advance the development of SaP as a globally inclusive scholarship. In particular, the topic of the learner–teacher relationship as a precursor to SaP is now emerging in the Asia–Pacific region, with research in Mainland China and Hong Kong signalling important cultural variations in the understanding and practise of SaP (Dai et al., 2024; Liang & Matthews, 2021a, b).

This study investigates understandings of SaP—identifying the perceptions among university students, which are influenced by the sociocultural and policy contexts in Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. The findings suggest that perceptions are both convergent and divergent across contexts. There was a uniformity of understanding that SaP involves a change in learner–teacher relationships (convergence). However, the understandings then diverged in how those relationships changed through pedagogical partnerships reflecting the cultural context of students in the different countries. Our study advances collective understanding of SaP as a global praxis by naming and recognising what we refer to as ‘qualitative cultural variation’ or the quality (as opposed to quantity) of understandings influencing students’ perceptions of SaP shaped by their cultural context. In doing so, we offer new avenues for culturally understanding and practising the original Anglophone idea of SaP in the growing arena of relationship-rich education. We begin by situating our study within an overview of SaP theorisations, practises, and HE systems in the three contexts.

Engaging students as partners: a relational pedagogy in higher education

Over the last decade, engaging students as partners in teaching and learning has been receiving increasing attention in global HE systems (Healey et al., 2014). The scholarly consensus is that the ethos of SaP is fundamentally about building meaningful

relationships between students and teachers by creating opportunities for them to work together in pedagogical practises (Bovill, 2020; Cook-Sather et al., 2014). SaP is thus positioned as a relational pedagogy that focuses on shifting the traditional learner–teacher identities and power dynamics in learner–teacher relationships (Dwyer, 2018; Matthews et al., 2018). SaP is a contested concept—different choices of terminology, approaches to theory development, and variations in practical design reflect that there are various interpretations and understandings of partnerships (Cook-Sather et al., 2018). In this study, we explore perceptions of SaP in three differing cultural contexts through focusing on the learner–teacher pedagogical relationships and interactions shaped by what previous studies, such as Dai et al. (2024) and Matthews and Dollinger (2023), describe as the transformation of the traditional identities of learners and teachers.

SaP is a value-based practise. Cook-Sather et al. (2014) asserted the significance of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in partnership practises. In the discussion of SaP as an approach to aid quality assurance and enhancement of HE teaching and learning, Healey et al. (2014) emphasised values shared by all participants in teaching and learning that foster SaP practises—namely, ‘authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, challenge, community, and responsibility’ (pp. 14–15). Owing to the enactment of specific values and principles, SaP practises can occur in multiple ways. Over the last decade, SaP practises have been widely implemented as both pedagogical interactions and extra-curricular activities and programmes in the global HE sector, as evidenced by a systematic review of SaP research over 5 years (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) and publications in the *International Journal for Students as Partners* and *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*. Collaborative and reciprocal partnerships between learners and teachers have been shown to have a range of beneficial outcomes for both parties, including enhanced teaching and learning engagement and outcomes (Lubicz-Nawrocka and Bovill, 2023), improved self-awareness in terms of shifting identities and changing power dynamics in learner–teacher relationships, and the transformation of educational culture within university communities (Matthews et al., 2019).

The concept of SaP is context-dependent and culturally informed (Cook-Sather et al., *in press*). Yet, the SaP literature is largely influenced by a Western-centric value system. Marquis et al. (2017) noted that this situation risks universalising SaP interpretations and practises, which may mask cultural variations in SaP. Scholars (e.g. Green, 2019) have called for extending SaP conceptions in the Global South, non-Anglophone, and cross-cultural contexts. Developing SaP as a globally inclusive scholarship involves the illumination of ‘cultural-historical understandings behind the constructs ... [what] words refer to in different contexts’ (Cook-Sather et al., *in press*, p. 47).

Responding to these calls, researchers have explored SaP in Asian universities with a consensus view that such practises face specific cultural and contextual challenges in Asia that resonate with some, but otherwise differ significantly from, challenges reported in Anglo-American–British cultural contexts (e.g. Dai et al., 2024; Liang, 2023; Liang & Matthews, 2021a; Sim, 2019; Tanaka, 2022; Toh & Chng, 2022). For our research responding to these calls, we conducted a comparative qualitative study utilising interviews with 36 undergraduate students from Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong.

Overview of Australian, Mainland Chinese, and Hong Kong higher education contexts

Australia is an immigrant nation with prevailing Anglo-Saxon-Celtic cultural influences (Kalantzis & Cope, 2020). Responding to global economic forces in the 1980s, Australian policy embraced neoliberalism to encourage market competition (Zajda, 2020), and the country has since sought to navigate the entanglement of the free market economy, democratic principles, equity values, and individual freedom, while espousing an ongoing commitment to multiculturalism (Hong, 2020).

Social equity and marketisation are thus crucial tensions shaping Australian HE (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011). On the one hand, with the continuous emphasis on social equity, Australian HE policy has transformed, expanding and diversifying student participation in HE by focusing on teaching and learning quality enhancement, assurance, and scholarship (Krause, 2020). This includes an emphasis on student engagement, implicitly or explicitly embedded in a democratic discourse in tension with market forces (Zajda, 2020). On the other hand, neoliberal market forces have increased the capitalistic function of universities, fostering the notion of students as customers. Thus, university teaching and learning has become a driver for economic development, highlighting individualism (Stahl, 2022).

Unlike the Australian context, the Mainland Chinese HE system has experienced a shift in focus from quantitative to qualitative reforms. Since the mid-1990s, the HE system in Mainland China has undergone significant changes and expansion. The number of universities has increased rapidly, and the size of the HE system has grown significantly in the last few decades (Guo et al., 2022; Yin, 2020). However, this rapid growth has come at a cost. The decline in quality of undergraduate education has become a major concern for Mainland Chinese universities (Yin et al., 2014). Against this backdrop, and in response to the globalisation and internationalisation of HE, the Chinese government has, since the early 2000s, gradually shifted the focus of HE development and reform from scaling up to quality assurance and enhancement (Yin, 2020). In this process, student engagement and meaningful learner–teacher interactions have come to be regarded as important indicators for assessing undergraduate students' learning experiences and enhancing HE quality (Sargent & Xiao, 2018).

From a sociocultural perspective, Confucian heritage culture (CHC) is commonly regarded as one of the most influential cultures in China that is embedded in diverse Chinese traditions and customs (Liang & Matthews, 2023a). The placement of family and society before the individual self (Tan, 2013) or the notion of 'privilege the larger or public sphere over the smaller sphere' (Marginson & Yang, 2020, p. 36), which is promoted by Confucian norms and values, has fostered the collectivist orientation of Chinese society (Tang et al., 2021). This explains why Mainland Chinese HE is being constructed as a common good for society, characterised by top-down policy drivers and supervision (Marginson & Yang, 2020) and 'decentralised centralisation' (Wang, 2010).

Hong Kong, a former British colony, has a different sociocultural and educational context compared to Mainland China. Hong Kong HE has also undergone significant development over the last decades, driven by a rich cultural heritage and robust educational policies. In terms of policy, as with the Mainland Chinese HE system, the demand for quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning has been raised in Hong Kong in response to HE massification and internationalisation (Mok & Chan, 2016). Since the establishment of the Quality Assurance Committee in 2007, institutional policies in

Hong Kong have been transformed and they now emphasise student engagement and learner–teacher interactions as focus areas in the auditing processes (Chan, 2017).

Since Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, its HE system has reflected a fusion of Chinese and Western cultural influences. On the one hand, the historical ties between Hong Kong and the UK have had a lasting impact on academic traditions, curriculum design, and pedagogy, such as bilingual teaching and learning, in Hong Kong universities (Cheng et al., 2016). Further, driven by globalisation, neo-liberalisation, and marketisation, liberty and creativity are emphasised and fostered by the culture of academic excellence enshrined in individualism (Mok & Xiong, 2022). On the other hand, society and education in Hong Kong are profoundly impacted by Chinese sociocultural ideology, specifically the collectivist relational orientation emphasised by the CHC (Marginson, 2011). Therefore, as Dai et al., (2024, p. 4) suggested, 'Hong Kong is becoming an in-between space that has a hybridised sociocultural context', and the values and norms brought about by multiple cultures significantly influence educational practises and learner–teacher relationships in Hong Kong universities.

The above overview shows the overlaps and differences of policies and cultures in Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. Notably, Mainland China and Hong Kong policies emphasise HE quality by increasing student engagement and learner–teacher interactions. This explains the growing body of SaP research on the shaping of relational pedagogical partnerships in Mainland Chinese universities (e.g. Dai & Matthews, 2023; Dai et al., 2021; François et al., 2016; Liang et al., 2020; Sturman et al., 2018) and Hong Kong universities (e.g. Dai et al., 2024; Ho, 2017; Zou et al., 2023) in recent years. Although SaP is not a specific policy term, it is an approach increasingly adopted by academics and/or supported in local institutions as a means of achieving the broader HE quality policy agendas in Mainland China (Liang & Matthews, 2021a) and Hong Kong (Dai et al., 2024). Nonetheless, it is unclear how the conceptualisations of SaP vary across the three socio-cultural contexts according to lived experiences of such partnerships. Understanding the potential points of similarity and difference is essential as they will contribute to realising the 'perpetual translation' (Cook-Sather, 2018) of SaP in a specific HE context that culturally enriches the interpretation and naming of SaP.

This study investigates undergraduate students' understanding of learner–teacher pedagogical partnerships within three universities in Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. Guided by the research question—*How does context in Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong influence students' understanding of SaP?*—we offer insights for culturally understanding and practising the original Anglophone idea of SaP in the growing arena of relationship-rich education.

Methodology

An exploratory qualitative study was conducted to understand students' SaP experiences and perceptions, which are influenced and shaped by different sociocultural constructs. As qualitative researchers, we embrace the social constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2012) and focus on exploring individual university students' subjective voices and engagement based on their lived experiences of teaching and learning (Merriam, 2009). This method allows the emergence of creative and novel perspectives through flexible and broad insights provided by individuals (Kember & Ginns, 2012).

Participants and contexts

Employing a purposeful sampling approach (Creswell, 2012), we recruited 36 local undergraduate students from three large research-intensive universities (12 from each institution) in Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong, to share their perceptions. We chose these three universities because it was evident that SaP practises were implemented in some of their teaching and learning processes. The student participants in this study were between 19 and 23 years old, and they were studying undergraduate programmes in multiple disciplines, such as Education, Business, Finance, Arts, Science, Social Science, and Engineering.

Data collection

Ethical approval was obtained from the first author's university, and all volunteer participants signed informed consent forms. A one-hour semi-structured online interview was conducted with each participant. The participants were interviewed using questions that explored their perceptions both of explicitly named SaP practises and partnership-like learner–teacher interactions that were not named SaP. As Matthews et al. (2017) suggested, the latter reaches beyond a limited understanding of SaP, even in Australian universities. Guided by the interview questions, participants were invited to reflect on learner–teacher identities and power dynamics in learner–teacher interactions.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed manually. Interviews were conducted in English or Chinese, depending on the student's preference. All Mainland Chinese participants and most Hong Kong participants selected Chinese language (Mandarin) interviews, while all Australian participants preferred English. The Chinese language interviews were transcribed in Chinese and then translated into English. As suggested by Regmi et al. (2010), two bilingual qualitative researchers in Education were invited to cross-check the translations. The English interviews were transcribed in English. All transcriptions were shared with participants to confirm their accuracy. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect privacy.

Data analysis

To ensure the consistency and reliability of the analysis, two authors analysed the interview data using NVivo 12 through a six-stage reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021). After the authors familiarised themselves with the data, all transcribed content was coded and analysed semantically and latently, and the initial codes were revised within an iterative process. In a reflexive approach, the emerging potential themes were modified and finalised to present the relationships with data in the way that was most meaningful.

Findings

The analysis found that students from the three contexts expressed both converging and diverging understandings of SaP. The analysis resulted in three main themes: (1) Australia: matching the Western concept of SaP; (2) Mainland China: highlighting the cultural adaptation of SaP; and (3) Hong Kong: reflecting the diverse possibilities of SaP. Each theme included a sub-theme related to how students perceive learner–teacher identities and power differences in partnerships or partnership-like learner–teacher interactions. Notably,

although the perceptions of SaP in all three contexts indicated the ethos of SaP as questioning and transforming traditionally taken-for-granted learner–teacher relationships (convergence), students in different contexts discussed varying ways of understanding the breaking of traditional learner–teacher relationships by engaging in learner–teacher partnerships (divergence). The following sections present the students’ perceptions in detail.

Australia: matching the Western concept of SaP

The analysis shows that the Australian university participants’ perceptions reflect the interpretations and conceptualisations of SaP in the broad literature (e.g. Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014; Matthews et al., 2018). Perceiving SaP as a way of questioning traditional learner–teacher relationships, many students (e.g. Ann, Daniel, Laura, and Jonathan) saw SaP as a way to bring about creative pedagogical relationships and mutual knowledge exchange. For example, Daniel, who was studying Education, stated the following:

I think SaP breaks the traditional learner–teacher relationship so that our [students’] voice can have the chance to play the role as much as possible in the teaching and learning process. For example, our suggestions for teachers’ teaching according to our demands are more likely to be accepted. In doing so, not only can students learn what they want, but teachers can also understand students better and practically learn how to improve their teaching methods and skills.

Daniel’s reflection indicates that SaP practises could effectively improve the quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, some students (e.g. Alex, Bonnie, Laura, and Matt) perceive the ethos of SaP as an approach to transforming their institutional cultures, as Laura, who was studying Science, shared:

The implementation of SaP practice fosters cultural change within disciplines and the university towards more genuine and meaningful ways that focus on cultivating both students’ and teachers’ self-awareness and responsibility.

Moreover, several students (e.g. Louis and Sophie) perceived SaP as an antidote to the neoliberal notion of students as consumers. Sophie, who studied Business, indicated that partnerships have challenged the passive engagement and learning experiences that emerged from students seeing themselves as consumers.

Students and teachers as equally pedagogical partners

By perceiving SaP as a way of questioning and transforming traditional learner–teacher relationships and the consumer model brought by neoliberal approaches, many participants perceived themselves as co-creators, co-teachers, and co-learners with teachers to contribute to the course pedagogically. Ted, who was studying Finance and Economics, described this as follows:

The shaping of pedagogical partnerships provides students with opportunities to contribute to curriculum design and delivery. I feel that I am no longer just a student but another teacher in charge of the course. When the course coordinator adopted my suggestions, I felt excited and nervous about whether the teaching and learning

process could be carried out more effectively, because I was worried about whether I would be able to make a satisfactory contribution.

Meanwhile, in partnerships, students' perceptions of their teachers' identities also make a dramatic difference. Instead of the rigid hierarchy in the traditional teaching and learning model, Leo, who studied Computer Science, shared the following:

The teacher showed the students the feeling of being a collaborator and help seeker. Her own thoughts and opinions became less important and dominant, and [she] focused more on our expertise.

These experiences indicate that the students enjoyed an increased sense of responsibility and agency in their teaching and learning processes. This resonates with the partnership values of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014; Matthews et al., 2018). Furthermore, we found evidence of a shift in the traditional learner–teacher power relations but not an erasure of power dynamics. A student of Business, Alex, shared her feelings:

Although we were empowered to engage in some activities that we had never experienced before, such as engaging in some decision-making processes, I feel that this has a limited scope. It is more like teachers giving us the maximum power to exercise in the allowed matters.

Mainland China: highlighting cultural adaptation of SaP

Mainland Chinese participants' perceptions of SaP highlight both the importance and adaptation of pedagogical partnerships. As mentioned earlier, one of the perceptions of Mainland Chinese students is about questioning traditional learner–teacher relationships. As with findings regarding Australian university students' perceptions, some students (e.g. Liu, Sun, and Zhou) felt that SaP is a way of changing the functions of students and teachers in their pedagogical relationships, as it enables them to understand each other better. However, other students (e.g. Guan, Han, Tian, and Wang) perceived SaP as a way of transforming traditional learner–teacher relationships into 'familyships'—relationships between students and teachers based on mutual care and support. These experiences indicate that the collective cultural environment may support SaP practises in the Chinese context, although Confucian cultural scripts are contested (Liang & Matthews, 2023a). Students' active engagement in teaching and learning activities was fostered as the teaching and learning environment became harmonious and warm. For example, Tian, studying in Education, described her feelings about engaging in SaP practise:

When we were studying a course that aims to achieve the goal of co-creation of lessons, in the second half of the term, I felt that both students and teachers were not simply implementing the practices according to the designed process, but as more like a kind of mutual care and support between friends. Specifically, because this teacher was old, I felt that she was more like a selfless and considerate mother who tried her best to accommodate our preferences. This also made us want to spare no effort to contribute to the course.

In contrast to those who saw SaP as questioning traditional learner–teacher relationships, some students (e.g. Deng, Gao, and Xu) perceived SaP as a tool merely for meeting the current institutional policy requirements. These students did not provide positive

feedback; instead, they expressed a dislike of top-down policy-driven teaching and learning. Gao, who was studying Arts, reflected:

Because our university requires teachers to pay more attention to student engagement and learner–teacher interactions in daily teaching and learning, many teachers in our major have introduced SaP practices to comply with policy requirements. While these practices have been implemented, they only appear to scratch the surface. Teachers just want to complete them as soon as possible to meet the evaluation criteria and don't care about the difference these practices can make.

Therefore, some students believed that, for institutional reasons, they did not gain genuine experiences of SaP learner–teacher interactions and practises. However, they proposed constructive suggestions. They thought that successfully implementing SaP, a Western concept, in the context of Chinese universities requires continuous adaptation and testing. For example, Gao indicated that:

As a pedagogical concept from a context that emphasises individualism, it [SaP practice] cannot be easily and directly implemented in the relational Chinese society, which emphasises collectivism. We can learn from its rationale, but the specific forms and content must be determined according to our shared values, beliefs, and policy orientation. In addition, this requires the strong support of relevant research in the Chinese context.

Students as helpers following the lead of teachers

Although many Mainland Chinese participants experienced SaP practises and learner–teacher interactions, they felt they did not truly represent the image of student partners as described in Western universities. Instead, they understood themselves as helpers and collaborators who followed and completed teachers' requirements. For example, Liu, who was studying Science, reflected:

When teachers involve us in SaP practices, we can literally be perceived as pedagogical partners because we are indeed collaborating with teachers to complete some work together. However, we will only engage in the work assigned to us by teachers. The learner–teacher relationship has indeed been changed within a limited scope, but it remains limited within this scope. For us, it was like maintaining relationships with teachers in different ways depending on the situation. So, technically, we [the students] are both collaborators and followers.

Therefore, alongside the perceived identities of students as collaborators and followers, the teacher's identity in the partnerships was still largely perceived as that of leader by most Mainland Chinese participants. For example, even in the evolved 'familyships' between students and teachers, Wang, studying in Arts, still emphasised the significance of teacher leadership:

At present, teachers still have the initiative to control the entire teaching and learning process. If you want these SaP practices to be effectively and meaningfully implemented, I think they need the leadership of teachers. Within this, I think a teacher's attitude is a very crucial factor in leading to change. Students may not want to sincerely engage in activities if teachers appear to be pursuing their own interests.

Hong Kong: reflecting the diverse interpretations of SaP

The perceptions of SaP from Hong Kong university participants showed some similarities with both the perceptions of students from Australia and from Mainland China, reflecting the influence of hybrid cultural values and norms in the Hong Kong HE context (Dai et al., 2024) while also exhibiting some differences that demonstrate the diversity of interpretations of SaP. In seeing SaP as a way of questioning traditional learner–teacher relationships, Hong Kong participants had two ways of explaining this perception. On the one hand, some students (e.g. Chan, Fong, and Lo) described SaP as creating spaces for mutual learning among students and teachers. This aligns with students’ perceptions in both Australian and Mainland Chinese universities. However, other students (e.g. Ching, Hong, Leung, and Tsui) explained this perception only from the perspective of evolved one-way learner–teacher relationships that could benefit them personally. Tsui, who was studying Arts, described this based on his experience as a teaching assistant:

I was lucky to be invited by a teacher to take up a teaching assistant position this semester. In the process of helping teachers with teaching and preparing teaching materials, I felt that I gained deeper insights into the course content. It also improved my collaboration skills.

Unlike the Australian and Mainland Chinese students, more than half the Hong Kong participants saw SaP as an essential means of safeguarding the rights and interests of students. For example, Lai said:

When we engaged in SaP practices, I felt that students’ interests were being protected. These interests are not only about learning what should be taught but also about whether our preferences are treated with equal respect and attention.

Moreover, like the Mainland Chinese students, some Hong Kong students saw SaP as an important pathway for achieving institutional policy reform. However, unlike the Mainland Chinese students, the Hong Kong students also expressed the desire that the implementation of SaP practises would change the university’s culture, which is consistent with the views of the Australian university students.

Students as different customers partnering with teachers

The perceived identity changes in learner–teacher partnerships among Hong Kong participants reflected both Australian and Mainland Chinese understandings. The most frequently mentioned learner–teacher identity mode was one in which teachers still played a leading role in pedagogical activities, with students following teachers’ instructions to a certain extent, which highlights teacher domination in the teaching and learning environment of Hong Kong. This is similar to the experience of Mainland Chinese students. Nonetheless, many Hong Kong participants also demonstrated a strong sense of being customers in SaP practises, albeit without the motive of transforming the customer model that we found in students at the Australian university. Specifically, the Hong Kong participants had two different understandings of being customers. Many students noted that, as payers of tuition fees, they should be enabled to acquire as much knowledge and as many skills as possible. This type of student regarded SaP as a benefit to students, as mentioned above. For example, Ching, who was studying Social Science, said:

Students, as customers of higher education, deserve high-quality and responsible education. Teachers involve students in some teaching and curricular activities, which is one way of achieving that, as those activities can enhance our learning experience at the university. At the same time, this also allows us to acquire broader knowledge and skills not covered in the textbooks.

Another, smaller, group of students considered the customer identity differently. They believed that, because students are customers of the university, they have the right to engage in the decision-making processes associated with teaching and learning, and they believed that both students and teachers could benefit from such partnerships. For example, Chan, who was studying Engineering, said the following:

Since we are paying to the teaching and learning process, we should reasonably have the right to make selections and decisions, such as the design and delivery of curriculum, the choice of knowledge to learn, and the forms of assessment. Overall, our [tuition] fees must ensure that we gain the desired experience.

Discussion

This study explored the views of undergraduate students on SaP in three different HE contexts: Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong. The aim was to advance the collective understanding of SaP as a global practise by identifying and recognising converging and diverging perceptions, which we refer to as qualitative cultural variations. The study found that students expressed convergent views on the intention of SaP to change learner–teacher relationships, but diverged in how and why those relationships changed, which illuminated context-dependent understandings of students as followers, customers, and partners. The three groups of participants acknowledged that SaP involved questioning taken-for-granted learner–teacher roles and relationships, which aligns with existing SaP theories (Matthews et al., 2018). However, diverging underlying logic shaped their views of why students and teachers might engage in SaP practises. Mainland Chinese participants emphasised the shaping of ‘familyship’ beyond pedagogical learner–teacher relationships, while Hong Kong participants focused more on individual benefits and interests. Australian students largely held well-documented conceptions of SaP, which is unsurprising, given that most SaP literature research has been conducted with students from Anglo-American–British contexts. Overall, the study showed that SaP is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and qualitative cultural variation plays a significant role in how it is perceived and practised.

The emergence of scholarship on SaP practises in Mainland China and Hong Kong allows for expanding global discourse as more practise-based research is published from Asia (see Liang, 2023; Sim, 2019; Sturman et al., 2018; Tanaka, 2022; Toh & Chng, 2022). One risk of country and cultural comparisons (particularly ones of either side of an ‘east/west’ dividing line) is essentialising or suggesting an evaluative judgement about a ‘right way’ to engage in SaP. To mitigate this risk, we draw on Cook-Sather’s (2018) notion of *perpetual translation* to examine the changes in understandings and relationships that SaP work can bring about. According to Cook-Sather (2018), perpetual translation entails an examination of ‘assumptions about the meanings of words, the cultural historical understanding behind the constructs, the practises and relationships they signal, and the possibilities for transformation that perpetual translation affords’ (p. 5) that is ‘necessary for

this work of communicating across differences [of] identity, culture, position, and power' (p. 5). The underlying principles of SaP used in defining this work as a relational pedagogy between students and teachers in HE have different resonances and dissonances with cultural scripts in each context we studied. These cultural scripts can be used to 'anchor' the innovation of pedagogical partnership (Cook-Sather, 2022)—to connect what is perceived as new (a different way for teachers and students to understand and interact with one another) to what is considered familiar (the cultural script particular to the context). Both perpetual translation and this practise of anchoring can support necessary cultural variations as well as transformations in both theories and practises of SaP work. Thus, we draw on perpetual translation as a process for critical reflection done collectively through scholarship (see Cook-Sather et al., *in press*) and in dialogic SaP practises.

We propose that the strong collectivist notion of 'familyship'—which is derived from a Chinese CHC cultural tradition of hierarchical relationships between parents and children—can anchor SaP and serve as a foundation for SaP approaches in Mainland China. This foundation can be translated through SaP into mutual benefits for both teachers and students, thereby allowing the dynamic evolution of sociocultural practises. We draw on perpetual translation, as Cook-Sather et al. (*in press*) argue, as a dialogic process where partnership participants translate and are translated by partnership principles in their particular contexts. While Anglophone values and norms tend towards individualism, many SaP scholars are challenging this in Anglo-American–British contexts, as a more collective premise is offered by the ethos of SaP (Liang & Matthews, 2023b). This premise echoes the collectivist social relationships in China, and thus there is the potential for 'familyship' and SaP to inform and be informed by each other. Research exploring learner–teacher relationships in Chinese universities found 'a family dynamic with the hierarchy and tradition that come with familial relationships' where the Chinese norm of *Guanxi* (meaning close connections between people to gain mutual benefits) fosters 'family ties' between students and teachers (Dai et al., 2021, p. 11). The relational dynamics of 'familyship' assert a hierarchical logic that affects the identities of and power dynamics between engaging members. This cultural logic explains why participants from Mainland China perceived themselves as helpers and/or followers in SaP practises while also recognising that SaP questions and shifts traditional learner–teacher interactions.

Through the comparison across contexts, our findings show how Mainland Chinese students make sense of their identities and power dynamics in Chinese learner–teacher partnerships influenced by the notions of the 'larger or public sphere' and the 'smaller sphere' (Marginson & Yang, 2020, p. 36) in collectivist Chinese society. However, as Liang (2023) reflected, growing individualism among Mainland Chinese university students may lead to increased utilitarianism in learner–teacher relationships, resulting in a shift away from collectivism and partnership principles of reciprocity and mutuality in HE. When culturally situated and practised without cross-cultural judgement, the critically reflective process of engaging in SaP can yield a new understanding of the relational dynamics between students and teachers in HE. Such dynamics are shaped by pedagogical orientations and socio-political forces influencing national policies, often in a conflicting manner, and therefore necessitate perpetual translation. In Mainland China's HE system, the concept of mutual benefits for students and teachers through the ethos of SaP is manifested in the form of 'familyship'. This relational dynamic is shaped by the intersection of the pedagogical orientation of increasing student engagement and learner–teacher interactions, the policy characteristics of 'decentralised centralisation', and the collectivist society.

In comparison, participants in the Hong Kong context expressed a mixture of Western, Mainland Chinese, and neoliberal influences, which was evident in the desire for SaP to maximise personal benefits while also following teacher instructions. According to Dai

et al. (2024), Confucian values and norms have significantly shaped learner–teacher relationships in Hong Kong universities, where *Dao*, or ways of showing respect, manifest in intergenerational deference. This is evident in the Hong Kong participants' preference that teachers take on the leadership in SaP practises. Despite this, they held notions of self-responsibility in SaP practises, which emerged as a strong sense of individualism resembling the positionality of a customer. Unlike the perception we found among Australian participants of SaP as a strategy combating the 'students as customers' discourse (Matthews et al., 2018), Hong Kong participants embraced SaP as a rich experience and a right that students as customers can leverage for their personal benefit and gain.

These examples demonstrate how student participation can be understood and practised in a way that respects the leadership of teachers while also acknowledging the rights of students. This process of understanding and practising reflects a perpetual translation (Cook-Sather, 2018) in Hong Kong in relation to both Confucian values and current notions of individualism. Using perpetual translation as an analytic lens to understand cultural variation across 'three non-Western contexts' (Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Pakistan) from the perspective of academic developers, Cook-Sather et al. (in press, p. 60) argued:

Established associations, historical and current contexts, and possibilities will always influence terms and selves. But, instead of seeing these as (only) barriers to partnership, we can understand them as opportunities to revisit, dig deeper into, and learn from established roles and practises.

Resisting static categorisation, we argue for dynamic and evolving conceptions of SaP that allow for cultural variations to honour unique cultures and contexts. Critical reflective theorisations of perpetual translation pave the way for a dynamic orientation of SaP with practise and policy implications.

Conclusion

This study explored local undergraduate students' perceptions of SaP in Australia, Mainland China, and Hong Kong to further advance the collective understanding of SaP as a global praxis by identifying and recognising qualitative cultural variation. Through comparative and reflexive thematic analysis using the relational lens of SaP, we demonstrate the ways in which differing sociocultural and policy contexts shape the converging, then diverging, understandings of students as followers, customers, and partners. We echo scholarly calls for culturally situated and comparative research on SaP. Theorisations using the notion of perpetual translation provide a critical reflexivity that mediates risks of making essentialising or comparative judgements in cross-cultural analyses of pedagogical partnership practises.

This study contributes to the existing SaP literature in two important ways. First, we provide insights into the conceptualisation of pedagogical partnership in the three contexts, especially Mainland China and Hong Kong, to enrich interpretations of SaP and go beyond the prevailing Western and Anglophone discourse. Second, we provide an example of recognising qualitative cultural variation in SaP conceptions and practises to guide future culturally situated research beyond Anglophone contexts. Rather than essentialising culture, we acknowledge the role of cultural variation in understanding and practising partnerships. We advocate expanding comparative research on pedagogically oriented partnership practises that contribute culturally nuanced insights to advance global scholarship.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Bovill, C. (2020). *Co-creating learning and teaching: Towards relational pedagogy in higher education*. Critical Publishing.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Chan, C. K. Y. (2017). Professional development and quality assurance in teaching and learning for Hong Kong higher education. In G. A. Postiglione & J. Jung (Eds.), *The changing academic profession in Hong Kong* (pp. 109–123). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-56791-4_6
- Cheng, Y. C., Cheung, A. C. K., & Ng, S. W. (2016). Internationalisation of higher education: The case of Hong Kong. *Springer*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-667-6>
- Cook-Sather, A. (2018). Perpetual translation: Conveying the languages and practices of student voice and pedagogical partnership across differences of identity, culture, position, and power. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, 11(3), 1–7. <https://td.journals.psu.edu/td/article/view/122>.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2022). The necessary ‘anchoring innovation’ of pedagogical partnership. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 6(2), 8–11. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v6i2.5180>
- Cook-Sather, A., & Matthews, K. E. (2021). Pedagogical partnership: Engaging with students as co-creators of curriculum, assessment and knowledge. In L. Hunt & D. Chalmers (Eds.), *University teaching in focus: A learning-centred approach* (pp. 243–259). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003008330>
- Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in teaching and learning: A guide for faculty*. Jossey-Bass.
- Cook-Sather, A., Matthews, K. E., Ntem, A., & Leathwick, S. (2018). What we talk about when we talk about students as partners. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v2i2.3790>
- Cook-Sather, A., Ho, L., Kaur, A., & Tamim, T. (in press). Translating pedagogical partnership in/to academic staff development in the globe south. In N. Chitanand, & S. Rathilal (Eds.), *Academic staff development: Disruptions, complexities, change*. African Sun Media.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson. <http://repository.unmas.ac.id/medias/journal/EBK-00121.pdf>
- Dai, K., & Matthews, K. E. (2023). ‘Students as partners rather than follower but ...’: Understanding academics’ conceptions of changing learner-teacher relationships in Chinese higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(6), 1362–1376. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2135690>
- Dai, K., Matthews, K. E., & Liang, Y. (2024). ‘I wish to participate but...’: Investigating students’ perceptions of student-staff pedagogical partnerships at a Hong Kong university. *High Education*, 87(3), 779–793. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01035-7>
- Dai, K., Matthews, K. E., & Shen, W. (2021). ‘It is difficult for students to contribute’: Investigating possibilities for pedagogical partnerships in Chinese universities. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.2015752>
- Dwyer, A. (2018). Towards the formation of genuine partnership spaces. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(1), 11–15. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v2i1.3503>

- Felten, P., & Lambert, L. M. (2020). *Relationship-rich education: How human connections drive success in college*. Johns Hopkins University Press. <https://press.jhu.edu/books/title/12146/relationship-rich-education>.
- François, C., Gilardi, F., Halim, D., Hirzel, T., & Tan, K. C. (2016). Engaging and empowering student representatives as agents of change at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China. *Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching*, 9(13), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.21100/compass.v9i13.345>
- Green, W. (2019). Stretching the cultural-linguistic boundaries of 'students as partners.' *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 3(1), 84–88. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v3i1.3791>
- Guo, F., Gao, X., Yang, J., & Shi, J. (2022). CCSS and student engagement in China: From an academic concept to institutional practices and policy implications. In H. Coates, X. Gao, F. Guo, & J. Shi (Eds.), *Global student engagement: Policy insights and international research perspectives* (pp. 27–42). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003254096-5>
- Healey, M., & Healey, R. (2018). 'It depends': Exploring the context-dependent nature of students as partners practices and policies. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 2(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v2i1.3472>
- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. Higher Education Academy.
- Ho, E. (2017). Small steps towards an ethos of partnership in a Hong Kong university: Lessons from a focus group on 'homework.' *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(2), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v1i2.3198>
- Hong, M. (2020). A comparative study of the internationalization of higher education policy in Australia and China (2008–2015). *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(4), 768–779. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1553154>
- Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2020). Multiculturalism and education policy. In G. Bottomley (Ed.), *Ethnicity, class and gender in Australia* (pp. 82–79). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003115540>
- Kember, D., & Ginns, P. (2012). *Evaluating teaching and learning: A practical handbook for colleges, universities and the scholarship of teaching*. Routledge.
- Krause, K. (2020). Scholarship and supercomplexity: Policy implications. In L. Ling & P. Ling (Eds.), *Emerging methods and paradigms in scholarship and education research* (pp. 263–282). USA: IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1001-8.ch015>
- Liang, Y. (2023). Reflecting on the influence of involution to the shaping of pedagogical partnerships in Chinese universities. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, 39(1), 1–5. <https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss39/2>.
- Liang, Y., & Matthews, K. E. (2021a). Students as partners practices and theorisations in Asia: A scoping review. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(3), 552–566. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1773771>
- Liang, Y., & Matthews, K. E. (2021b). Students as partners in China: Investigating the potentials and possibilities for growing practices across universities. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 5(2), 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v5i2.4767>
- Liang, Y., & Matthews, K. E. (2023a). Are Confucian educational values a barrier to engaging students as partners in Chinese universities? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(6), 1453–1466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2138276>
- Liang, Y., Dai, K., & Matthews, K. E. (2020). Students as partners: A new ethos for the transformation of teacher and student identities in Chinese higher education. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 9(2), 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22125868-12340124>
- Liang, Y., & Matthews, K. E. (2023b). 'Teachers are just the ones who learned *Dao* before students': Exploring influences of culture on pedagogical partnership in Chinese universities. *Oxford Review of Education*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2023.2236933>
- Lubicz-Nawrocka, T., & Bovill, C. (2023). Do students experience transformation through co-creating curriculum in higher education? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 28(7), 1744–1760. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1928060>
- Marginson, S., & Yang, L. (2020). *The role of higher education in generating 'public' and 'common' goods: A comparison of Sinic and Anglo-American political cultures*. Centre for Global Higher Education Working Paper No. 52. Retrieved from <https://www.researchcghge.org/perch/resources/publications/working-paper-52.pdf>
- Marginson, S. (2011). Imagining the global. In R. King, S. Marginson, & R. Naidoo (Eds.), *Handbook on globalization and higher education* (pp. 10–39). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9780857936233>

- Marquis, E., Black, C., & Healey, M. (2017). Responding to the challenges of student-staff partnership: The reflections of participants at an international summer institute. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(6), 720–735. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1289510>
- Matthews, K. E., & Dollinger, M. (2023). Student voice in higher education: The importance of distinguishing student representation and student partnership. *High Education*, 85(3), 555–570. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00851-7>
- Matthews, K. E., Groenendijk, L. J., & Chunduri, P. (2017). We want to be more involved in student perceptions of students as partners across the degree program curriculum. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v1i2.3063>
- Matthews, K. E., Dwyer, A., Hine, L., & Turner, J. (2018). Conceptions of students as partners. *Higher Education*, 76(6), 957–971. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0257-y>
- Matthews, K. E., Cook-Sather, A., Acai, A., Dvorakova, S. L., Felten, P., Marquis, E., & Mercer-Mapstone, L. (2019). Towards theories of partnership praxis: An analysis of interpretive framing in literature on students as partners in university teaching and learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(2), 280–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1530199>
- Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S. L., Matthews, K. E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shamma, R., & Swaim, K. (2017). A systematic literature review of students as partners in higher education. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v1i1.3119>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mok, K. H., & Chan, S. (2016). After massification and response to internationalisation: Quality assurance of higher education in Taiwan and Hong Kong. In C. S. Collins, M. N. N. Lee, J. N. Hawkins, & D. E. Neubauer (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of Asia Pacific higher education* (pp. 423–438). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-48739-1_28
- Mok, K. H., & Xiong, W. (2022). Teaching and learning in Hong Kong higher education. In C. Brown & J. R. Malin (Eds.), *The Emerald handbook of evidence-informed practice in education* (pp. 275–289). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-141-62022031>
- Munevar-Pelton, I., Olsen-Neill, A., Yahlinaaw, De Wet-Billings, N., Hellemans, K., Hornsby, D., Laher, S., Mullally, M., Osman, R., & Smith, H. (2022). Editorial, Partnership in fostering socially just pedagogies. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 6(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v6i1.5129>
- Regmi, K., Naidoo, J., & Pilkington, P. (2010). Understanding the processes of translation and transliteration in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(1), 16–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691000900103>
- Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2011). Social equity and the assemblage of values in Australian higher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2010.549459>
- Sargent, T., & Xiao, Y. (2018). Teaching reform in Chinese undergraduate education. *Chinese Education & Society*, 51(4), 245–247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10611932.2018.1494414>
- Sim, J. Y. H. (2019). The ‘face’ barriers to partnership. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, 27(1), 1–4. <https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss27/4>
- Stahl, G. (2022). Self-made men: Widening participation, selfhood and first-in-family males. *Palgrave Macmillan*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07954-2_3
- Sturman, P., Zheng, Y., Peng, L., & Lamb, D. (2018). Students as partners: The development of an extensive reading programme at the Ningbo Campus of the University of Nottingham. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, 4(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.21100/jeipc.v4i1.744>
- Tan, C. (2013). For group, (f)or self: Communitarianism, Confucianism and values education in Singapore. *The Curriculum Journal*, 24(4), 478–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2012.744329>
- Tanaka, M. (2022). Attitudes and intentions of Japanese students and teachers in internal quality assurance in a Confucian-heritage culture. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, 8(2), 1–6. <https://journals.studentengagement.org.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/article/view/1118>
- Tang, A. L. L., Walker-Gleaves, C., & Rattray, J. (2021). Hong Kong Chinese university students’ conceptions of teacher care: A dialectical framework of care. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(5), 573–587. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2020.1804534>
- Toh, T. C., & Chng, H. H. (2022). The possibility of pedagogical partnership: Co-creating teaching and learning through a Singapore cultural lens. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, 8(2), 1–6. <https://journals.studentengagement.org.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/article/view/1123>
- Wang, L. (2010). Higher education governance and university autonomy in China. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 8(4), 477–495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.537942>

- Yin, H. (2020). The behavioural, psychological and socio-cultural perspectives of student engagement research: Perspective shift and its implications for improving the quality of teaching and learning in Chinese universities. *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences)*, 38(11), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.16382/j.cnki.1000-5560.2020.11.001>
- Yin, H., Lu, G., & Wang, W. (2014). Unmasking the teaching quality of higher education: Students' course experience and approaches to learning in China. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39(8), 949–970. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2014.880107>
- Zajda, J. (2020). Globalisation and neo-liberalism in higher education: Australia. In J. Zajda (Ed.), *Globalisation, ideology and neo-liberal higher education reforms* (pp. 47–57). Springer.
- Zhang, M., Matthews, K., & Liu, S. (2022). Recognising cultural capital through shared meaning-making in cross-cultural partnership practices. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 6(1), 64–80. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v6i1.4893>
- Zou, T. X. P., Susanto, J., Wahab, A. A., Hong, N., Chiu, C. S. T., & Leung, L. Y. Y. (2023). What made undergraduate research experiences significant: A collaborative critical incident analysis with student co-researchers. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(7), 1808–1823. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2157799>

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.