

**Partner Up!:**  
**Inclusive participation at the Hague University of Applied Sciences**  
**Netherlands**

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#### DESCRIPTION

Partner Up! was a two-year project launched in 2022 involving students, teachers, and researchers across four different programs of the Hague University of Applied Sciences. The primary goal was to **democratise the governance structure** at university, **redefine the power dynamics**, and strive for a **more just and equitable institution**, also by creating **pedagogical partnerships**. Each subproject included three to four students working one day per week and two to three teachers contributing half a day per week.

Among the initiatives:

- In the **Nursing program**, students created “**Brave spaces**” to discuss **discrimination and abuses** they faced during their internships, as well as the lack of action from teachers in addressing these issues, and to **develop action plans**.

Despite initial changes in management and resistance from teachers, students and teachers successfully worked together in pedagogical partnerships. Student participation in safe spaces increased, thanks also to the efforts of raising awareness in the classes, and sessions were held with the inclusion office.

- In the **Dermaclinician program**, the focus was on developing a **skin-inclusive curriculum and promoting inclusive language**. It took time for the predominantly white teachers to understand the implications of an inclusive curriculum and redesigning the first-year curriculum took an entire year.

#### REFLECTIONS

- To implement the activity, pedagogical partnerships were created between students and teachers, **positioning students as change agents** in improving the curriculum and fostering a stronger sense of belonging. These partnerships re-position students' role and create an **equity-based relationship with teachers and university staff members**. Building such partnerships **takes time** as all parts must **adapt to their new roles**. Initially, for example, students were less vocal than teachers, but by the end of first year, they increasingly began taking more initiative.
- The project provided valuable experiences in building **inclusive curricula** and promoting **informal ways for participation**. A challenge was **ensuring diversity in student recruitment**, focusing on **inclusivity** rather than engaging only vocal or extroverted students.