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Student Partnership and Peer-Led Learning: Applying the Ketso Method in Public Health Education

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pedagogical impact of partnership work through implementing Ketso workshops in a Master of Public Health program. The research explores the experiences of facilitators and alums who return to co-lead interactive sessions focused on developing systematic review protocols. By engaging these past students in peer-led workshops, the project aims to understand how their role as facilitators contributes to their academic growth, skill development, and professional identity. Using a qualitative, thematic analysis of focus group data, the study captures insights into how peer partnership enhances critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills. The workshops provided were to ensure a collaborative learning environment was developed for the participants to build their confidence and share their ideas on their research. Thus, fostering an inclusive and empowering environment for the students. Whereby they can learn from the previous cohort, the student partners. Findings indicate that student-led sessions strengthen peer learning and promote facilitator growth in confidence, leadership, and reflective practice. The study supports the value of peer partnerships as an effective pedagogical strategy in higher education. By analysing the student partners' experience, it was established that they gained transferable skills, such as time management, problem solving, and felt they were able to support fellow students with their Ketso research project. These skills will then be beneficial for their future career. Overall, the study demonstrated that the student partners were adaptable to the student needs, demonstrating professionalism.

Keywords: Ketso; Student Partnership; Workshops; Public Health; Student Partners

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have been adopting pedagogical strategies to support effective knowledge acquisition and academic skill development of international postgraduate students[1, 2]. Studies have highlighted specific challenges that international postgraduate students face, including variable English language proficiency levels and adaptation to academic environments[2]. HEIs contemporary focus on student experience, peered with acquisition of complex conceptual skills, and employability-ready graduates, offers an opportunity for exploration of creative pedagogical strategies with international postgraduate students[3]. Peer participation in learning with this student group has shown a range of benefits[4–6]. Recognition of international postgraduate students as reciprocal co-learners validates their intrinsic resources, such as social capital and professional background[2].

1.1. Postgraduate International Students as Partners

Lowe and El Hakim[3] have documented the various forms of student engagement in higher education outcomes. Although the educational literature has variously referred to the participation of peers in teaching and learning, including terms such as student-led, peer teaching, peer to peer, and reciprocal learning, its pedagogical value has been well established[5, 7]. Systematic literature reviews on the value of peer teaching in health profession education have highlighted the effectiveness of peer teaching methods in improving procedural skills[7]. Suyo-Vega et al.[8] see peer involvement not only as an innovative pedagogical practice but also as a student-centric teaching strategy. Peer teaching pedagogies can be tailored to student needs and cater to a range of learning styles[2]. Pillay[2] emphasises the powerful contribution of the socio-educational environment in teaching and engaging international students. Other authors have pointed out that strategies such as peer teaching involve a range of dimensions that contribute to student well-being and attainment[9].

In the last decade, critical reviews of the literature have explored the participation of students as partners in teaching in higher education[8, 9]. Stigmar considers the complexity of teaching and learning context, problematising direct causation related to academic attainment or deeper learning to isolated strategies such as SaP. However, these SaP strategies have shown a range of benefits within the University context, ranging from improved critical thinking of all parties, improved sense of academic autonomy, motivation, as well as most explicit professional transferable communication and collaboration skills[9].

Students as partners also challenge traditional power differentials in HEIs[10]. Peer teaching in its various forms promotes agency, sense of belonging, and defies hierarchical barriers. Various authors have pointed out that postgraduate research projects require integrating a complex range of academic skills. Issues with conceptualisation of projects as well as thesis writing have been described by postgraduate international students as key factors for success[1]. International postgraduate students with their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds have a professional trajectory that situates them well for conceptual understanding. However, pedagogical needs for some students with Non-English-Speaking backgrounds (NESBs) involve adaptations accounting not only for a reinforced confidence in completion of the task but also for variable proficiency in the language.

1.2. Ketso Mindmapping and Knowledge Gap

The use of mind mapping for idea generation and structured thinking has been recently surveyed in health sciences and acknowledged its considerable value as a teaching resource[11]. The current research has employed the "Ketso tool kit" as a pedagogical tool mapping strategy to support peer teaching. Ketso resource has been used in idea generation and strategy mapping as a participatory research tool in community-based research[12]. Ketso kit has been described as "a hands-on kit that enables people to think and work together better" (www.ketso.com/learn-about-ketso) and "workshop in a bag"[13, 14]. There is paucity in the literature, however, in the use of mind mapping tools such as Ketso alongside other pedagogical strategies to facilitate creative thinking, switching from language to language, within a peer-learning environment. The current research offers insight into a combined knowledge gap, as on the one hand, it explores the value that peer-to-peer teaching for the development of critical thinking in research skill development of postgraduate international students. On the other hand, the present study uses Ketso, an innovative hands-on tool for idea generation within the enriching social environment[15],

of peer collaboration, where students become open to being resources for learning from one another.

2. Materials and Methods

For this research study, a qualitative exploratory research design was used to investigate the experiences of the students and faculty leading Ketso sessions within a Master of Public Health (MPH) course. The students enlisted in this project were graduates of the same course and had previously attended Ketso workshops. The Ketso workshops were provided to students currently studying their dissertation module as part of their MPH. More specifically, the Ketso tool was used as a method to encourage students to generate ideas and collaborate, to assist in developing a systematic review. Tippett[15] explains that Ketso is an opportunity for individuals to learn from one another. Alongside this, Bates[13] suggests that Ketso is a valuable tool for obtaining feedback or sourcing information, playing a key role in this project. The graduates had the opportunity to share their knowledge and provide recommendations to current students. As noted by Tippett[15], it creates a learning experience, whereby decisions can be made and therefore individuals can plan actions. Bates[13] explains that for their project, they used Ketso as a brainstorming idea, which is echoed in this research.

At Birmingham City University, Ketso has been integrated into the dissertation preparation workshops for the MPH. Whereby MPH students are invited to attend a workshop to structure and refine their research proposal for their systematic review as part of their dissertation. The role of the graduate students was to provide support as facilitators within these sessions. This included guiding new students in applying to Ketso and supporting their development of a systematic review. Ultimately, graduate students could challenge the ideas of the new students, thus guiding them in the right direction.

Adopting a partnership with the graduate students was a vital stage of the project, wherein they demonstrated a level of ownership in the success of the students' progression. Healey et al.[16] noted that, over recent years, student active engagement, where they play an active role, has become emphasised to enhance their learning experience further. With this project, the key aim was to assess the impact on graduate students' experiences, specifically to determine whether participating and supporting students had benefited them. Students as partners is an approach many universities adopt to create and enhance curriculum[16, 17]. As noted by Dunne and Owen[17], the importance of providing the students with the space to explore opportunities is key, which this Ketso project provided.

This research aimed to evaluate the experiences of the graduate facilitators leading the Ketso sessions for the MPH students and explore how facilitating peer-led sessions enhances the academic skills of facilitators, particularly in research, communication, and critical thinking. Furthermore, the goal is to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the Ketso method in supporting the creation of systematic review questions and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Finally, identifying key challenges and benefits reported by student facilitators when working with peers in the Ketso sessions is a fundamental goal. Developing this project through a partnership lens provided an opportunity to collaborate with students to assess the impact of Ketso, prompting them to engage in their own learning experience[16]. The student recruited ten graduate facilitators from the previous cohort, who had participated in Ketso when completing their dissertations. They were invited to participate and co-lead Ketso-based workshops for the current MPH students. The recruitment process was initiated directly through the dissertation module Moodle page, where students had to meet specific criteria to participate. The graduate facilitators are willing to take part in a focus group discussion or individual discussions to provide feedback on their experience and support one of the Ketso sessions offered to the September 2024 dissertation students of the MPH. A breakdown of the recruitment process and role is shown in **Table 1**:

Table 1. Graduate Facilitator Recruitment and Roles.

Aspect	Description
Number of facilitators	10 graduate students
Recruitment method	Invitation via Moodle (dissertation module)
Eligibility criteria	Previous participation in Ketso during dissertation
Roles	Facilitation, peer support, challenging ideas, and providing feedback

It was essential to recognise that the process by which participants may express their experiences and partake may vary in the Ketso sessions. As students may not have the opportunity to contribute equally, their experience should still be reflected upon[18]. Furthermore, by adopting Healey et al.'s[16] methods, it was essential to avoid being too prescriptive on the expected outcome, but to adopt an open-ended approach, allowing students to process and express their experience of the project. The facilitators were asked questions to reflect on their knowledge and whether the engagement had impacted their academic outcomes or resulted in them acquiring skills that could benefit their future employment. Reflecting on their experience provides a deeper learning experience, as explained by McCulloch[19]. The Ketso facilitator role required students to attend a pre-session, which provided them with a breakdown of the overview tool and how it could be used to support others when developing a systematic review. In the Ketso sessions, participants were required to help students in developing their ideas, fostering group discussions, and refining their concepts, with a primary focus on the inclusion and exclusion criteria of systematic reviews. Ketso was used as the foundation tool for this project, as it allows an extension for the students to discuss. As Alabbasi and Stelma[20] explain, the Ketso is based on the tree metaphor, whereby each leaf can tell its own story and build into one another.

Data were collected through individual discussions and focus groups, where students shared their experiences through semi-structured discussions. Using a focus group dynamic can encourage and empower others to share their experiences[21]. They were invited to comment on their experiences of facilitating the benefits and skill development they felt they had, alongside any challenges they had experienced. This was in conjunction with their perception of the effectiveness of Ketso in supporting the development of a systematic review for a dissertation. Sourcing feedback from the students provided insight into areas that needed further development for future Ketso sessions.

The Birmingham City University Faculty Academic Ethics Committee provided ethical approval. All information regarding participation in this study will be strictly confidential and securely managed in accordance with the law outlined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. Notes from the focus groups will not identify individuals. Participants will not be identifiable in any report, as participation is anonymous. During data collection, participants will be/were informed about the purpose of the study, the type of data being collected, and how their information would be used. Confidential information shared during discussions was treated with the utmost sensitivity, ensuring it was not disclosed beyond the research team. All information will be stored on the BCU OneDrive.

Each participant received a detailed information sheet at least two weeks before the data collection, outlining the study purpose, potential risks, and benefits. As well as information on the right to withdraw. It was important during the focus groups to ensure that the potential power dynamics were also recognised. The student partners were graduates, and voluntary participation was adopted, thus ensuring that no academic consequences were imposed. Informed consent was obtained before participation, whereby written consent was not feasible; verbal consent was recorded with the participants' permission. Additionally, participation was voluntary. There was no obligation to take part in the project. As the students had completed their course already, there was no impact on their academic outcomes. Following the completion of the project, the research team provided each participant with a small token gift as an expression of appreciation for their time and contribution to the project. This was a post-participant gesture, with data collection and analysis having already concluded. Consequently, this did not impact or influence the participants' decision to participate in the project or affect their responses, avoiding the risk of coercion.

3. Results

This research aimed to evaluate the experiences of the students who participated in student-led Ketso workshops. By analysing their experiences, the aim was to determine whether there had been any influence or impact on their academic and personal development. Furthermore, we explored whether students perceived the Ketso tool as a practical support for developing the MPH dissertation systematic review. Participants shared their experiences through focus groups and discussions. Each participant had previously attended a Ketso workshop when completing their dissertation, allowing them to further expand on their reflection. By analysing

the feedback through a thematic analysis, four key themes were discovered. These themes included leadership growth, peer learning experience, building on confidence, and the perceived effectiveness of the Ketso tool. As shown in **Table 2**, these are the key themes that were identified during the evaluation of the project.

Table 2. Key Themes Identified.

Theme	Sub-Themes/Skills Developed	Key Outcomes	Illustrative Quotes
1. Leadership Growth	–Communication (active listening, simplifying complex ideas) – Delegation and guidance –Time management (balancing attendees within 2-hour sessions) –Adaptive leadership (recognising learning differences, managing overstimulation)	–Stronger leadership identity –Better mentoring skills –Improved employability (conflict management, collaboration)	"Assist others in reaching similar objectives… communicate effectively." "My leadership growth was greatly developed by the Ketso project, as it taught me how to be in control, collaborate well with different teams, and adjust to challenges."
2. Peer Learning Experience	– Reciprocal knowledge exchange (sharing dissertation topics, public health insights) – Exposure to varied perspectives – Reinforcement of own learning through teaching others – Critical thinking and problem-solving	– Stronger academic community – Encouraged open communication – Step-by-step support using Ketso visual aids – Increased motivation for both attendees and facilitators	"Encouraged open communication and critical thinking." "Breaking down systematic reviews into 'practical step-by-step guidance' reinforced my own dissertation success."
3. Building Confidence	– Public speaking and facilitation skills – Self-expression (overcoming communication anxiety) – Recognition of own expertise – Trust-building in peer environment	– Heightened confidence and empowerment – Increased employability through transferable skills – Observed confidence gains in peers as well	"The experience was empowering… my voice was heard." "Peer learning can improve self-confidence and reduce anxiety over time."
4. Perceived Effectiveness of the Ketso Tool	– Visual, hands-on approach (colour-coded leaves, tree metaphor) – Memorable "visual imprints" (photos reused in dissertation writing) – Encouraged creativity and dialogue – Adaptability to diverse learning styles	– Ketso is seen as highly effective for systematic review planning – Strengthened group cohesion and inclusivity – Created transferable learning strategies for future work	"I learnt to adapt my approach to individual learning styles, which enhanced my ability to guide peers through challenges, encourage independent and critical thinking, offer clear direction and constructive feedback, and manage group or one-on-one sessions"

3.1. Leadership Growth

Student partners noted that they felt they had further developed several skills, including delegation and communication. The role required them to have discussions to establish the most effective way to support the attendees. Furthermore, it encouraged them to consider various forms of communication that could assist students. As noted by one student when asked about their experience, "assist others in reaching similar objectives…. communicate effectively". Thus, demonstrating the thought process of considering how to mentor the attendees and creating an inclusive space. It was important that the attendees of the Ketso sessions did not feel overwhelmed or overpowered by the students leading the session. One facilitator explained that she thought her "communication and active listening skills" had improved, as she had to work with students and try to simplify the complex dissertation requirements in accessible language for diverse learners. This was primarily because the key concept of the Ketso session was to create an environment in which students could share their dissertation ideas and build their inclusion and exclusion criteria. Therefore, a two-way conversation

was necessary, rather than the student facilitator leading the discussion.

Management of time was another essential skill further developed during these sessions. In terms of the project itself, implementation was over a short period, but the Ketso sessions were two hours long, with up to 20 attendees. Therefore, facilitators needed to adapt to the situation and consider how to manage their time effectively. As such, they needed to avoid solely focusing on one individual but ensure all attendees felt they were engaged and supported.

Noted by one facilitator was that different learning preferences needed to be accounted for, "complex academic expectations into practical steps". Thus, recognising the need for adaptive leadership to facilitate diverse learning experiences. Although the Ketso offers a hands-on approach, this can be over-simulating for some students; therefore, it recognises the importance of considering adaptability for attendees' needs, demonstrating effective leadership. "My leadership growth was greatly developed by the Ketso project, as it taught me how to be in control, collaborate well with different teams, and adjust to challenges. By actively participating, I improved my ability to communicate effectively, delegate work, and assist others in reaching similar objectives". Research from Harrison and Barlow [21] explained that peer mentoring programs can assist individuals in learning how to build their leadership skills and cope with conflict. Individuals felt pride in partaking in the project, and as noted by Harrison and Barlow [21], it prompts self-growth, fostering the development of leadership skills, which could further enhance their employability.

3.2. Peer Learning Experience

As the attendees and the facilitators are all students, it was noted that the Ketso workshop provided a positive peer learning experience. Whereby they could share experiences and learn from one another. This was because attendees were able to present their dissertation topics to the facilitators, sharing new insights into public health topics. Meanwhile, facilitators were able to share their experience, further incorporating a positive learning experience into the workshop. Ketso workshops were designed to prompt discussion, allowing open dialogue, which was reflected on, not just about delivering seminars," but about creating spaces where students "can truly influence real change" in learning practices. This gave facilitators exposure to varied academic perspectives and topic areas. It was noted that the workshops "encouraged open communication and critical thinking," particularly in analysing diverse opinions on topic areas, prompting open dialogue.

The approach of using Ketso workshops was praised for providing "practical step-by-step guidance using Ketso visual aids to carry out a systematic review", showcasing the benefits it has for developing systematic reviews. Furthermore, it helps to build and encourage students' independent problem-solving skills. As noted by one facilitator who supported postgraduate students using Ketso visual aids to break down the systematic review process into "practical step-by-step guidance." This not only clarified dissertation requirements for others but also reinforced her own understanding and dissertation success. Meanwhile, another described how helping others "navigate through their queries" simultaneously strengthened her own problem-solving capabilities. Noted by one facilitator, that attending the sessions allowed them to understand "different people's opinions and assisted in training her to be able to identify "areas that needed improvement".

There has been a shift in the employability focus in education, with social engagement, time management, and communication being a focal point [22, 23]. As explained by Hinchliffe and Jolly [24] and Willocks and Rouse [25], employers expect graduates to be able to effectively plan their time, which individuals learned during the peer learning experience. As noted, by students who explained they needed to balance their time, navigating the queries. With the project sessions running for two hours, individuals needed to factor in how long they could spend with each attendee. Rawson and Rhodes's [26] research stated that individuals felt more motivated to participate, as they felt their knowledge and experiences were considered. This was noted by the student facilitators in their project. It prompted connection, allowing them to share tips and knowledge with other students.

3.3. Building on Confidence

A notable theme identified by facilitators was the ability to further build on their own confidence. Whereby individuals felt the experience to be empowering, and that they were able to "speak up and continue to call for collaboration-centred practice". This was most notable in the way their

voices were heard and in adaptations made by the project leaders, such as the timing and process of the Ketso sessions. Noted by one facilitator was that academics "made changes to framing group work, incorporating student feedback, and building learning environments to draw out contributions by all voices." Peer-learning can be an effective tool to improve student self-confidence and the quality of their future learning experiences[27]. As Reddy[28] explains, self-confidence prompts individuals to ask questions, engage in discussions, and overall contributions demonstrate a positive and optimistic view on their own abilities.

In light of this, Willocks and Rouse[25] explains that the benefit of heightened confidence can impact employability. Furthermore, Willocks and Rouse[25] explains that additional development in confidence can assist in reinforcement of action learning, impacting their ability to be an effective manager or leader in healthcare. Rawson and Rhodes[26] explain that leadership and confidence are welcome outcomes of peer learning, thus, sourcing transferable skills. It was noted by the student facilitators that it was not only their confidence being built, but they also witnessed the attendees' confidence build as they further understood their own research topics. This provided facilitators with a sense of achievement. As the peer learning process involved an element of trust, it could further improve self-confidence[28]. Part of the role included problem-solving, expressing themselves, and further overcoming any communication anxiety or fears experienced. Using Ketso allows the activity to be further broken down, which students felt assisted in their participation. As they did not feel overwhelmed with the task. As explained by Blegur et al.[27], the physical environment of the peer-learning experience is important, ensuring support and materials are at hand. Overall, it was reported that students benefited from the peer-learning experience, whereby they felt a sense of shared responsibility and Blegur et al.[27] explains that students will feel a sense of openness whereby input is received, building their overall confidence. As their anxiety reduces over time, it encourages further open discussion. By providing students with the space to express themselves and share their experiences of partaking in the Ketso, it allowed them to further develop their self-confidence. As explained by Blegur et al.[27], it is an opportunity for them to convey their ideas, and togetherness. Additionally, engaging in a peer-learning environment with mentors can create a high sense of caring and motivation, restoring self-confidence, prompting them to feel encouraged to share their ideas and thoughts[27, 28].

3.4. Perceived Effectiveness of the Ketso Tool

During the focus group discussions, it was noted that the Ketso element of the 'hands-on' component was beneficial, with the trees making ideas memorable and easy to follow. Many students reported referring back to a photo they took of the Ketso for their dissertations. Therefore, further findings indicate that the project plays a significant role in helping students develop their systematic review skills. One stated, "Visual imprints stay for longer… green is good to go, yellow is inclusion, brown is exclusion." Healthcare Improvement Scotland[29] explains that the Ketso can be used as an effective visual tool, which helps encourage dialogue and develop creative solutions together. Thus, it is a beneficial tool to use in a peer learning environment. Furthermore, Healthcare Improvement Scotland[29] explains the concept of building a tree, with the branches representing different themes, with a central topic, enabling group thinking to take place. Using a colour-coded approach, through the leaves, allowed students to separate their ideas.

"I learnt to adapt my approach to individual learning styles, which enhanced my ability to guide peers through challenges, encourage independent and critical thinking, offer clear direction and constructive feedback, and manage group or one-on-one sessions". The concept of Ketso is a notion of mind-mapping but with a physical element, whereby individuals are given space to generate new ideas[30]. The following quotes from student partners demonstrate the benefit of the Ketso sessions. "The project was not just about delivering workshops; it was about creating a space where students can truly influence real change and develop professionally and personally through authentic partnership." "Overall, participating in the project not only reinforced my commitment to collaborative learning and academic excellence, but also prepared me to support, lead, and positively influence in future academic or workplace environments."

It was important to consider the feedback from the students, ensuring that the learning environment was further developed and allowing all opinions and thoughts to be considered. "Staff respondents also reported that they

made changes to framing group work, incorporating student feedback, and building learning environments to draw out contributions from all voices." Thus, demonstrating that an inclusive learning environment was created by responding and adjusting strategies in real time, enhancing the overall experience.

4. Discussion

The results demonstrated that the graduates who participated as student partners found the process beneficial for them. Assisting in facilitating the sessions and providing feedback on their experiences allowed them to feel they were contributing to the success of future students. Furthermore, it was noted that the students felt their voices were being heard, whereby their recommendations were taken into consideration. One recommendation put forward was the significance of the timing of the provision of the Ketso workshops and that they should be offered in previous modules. Thus allowing information building to be facilitated at an earlier stage. As noted by the student partners, offering multiple supportive sessions would be beneficial. However, a key consideration of academic availability needed to be factored in.

Using a partnership approach, it provided the opportunity for staff and students to work together to foster an engaging environment for other students [16]. Thus, it creates a sense of community between graduates and staff. It is essential to recognise tensions that can arise when developing a partnership project with students, such as motivation and engagement. As noted by Healey et al. [16], honesty and exploring the possibilities as a joint professional partnership must be integral to the partnership, ensuring that individuals understand the level of commitment and requirements. Dunne and Owen [17] explains that it is essential to display active listening, whereby students feel their voices are being heard and feedback taken on board. Furthermore, students should feel an active collaborator and co-producer [17], which was demonstrated within this Ketso partnership project. This was achieved because students knew they were able to provide suggestions, which would be adapted into future Ketso sessions.

Using a peer learning approach is considered a powerful pedagogy, which benefits both students and lecturers [31]. As explained by Huijser and Kimmins [32], it can significantly enhance the learning experience of a diverse group of students. With the project focusing on international students, it provided an opportunity to build further connections with students and assist in a more interactive learning approach. Furthermore, the informal setting of the Ketso sessions provides the opportunity for all students to feel themselves/comfortable/authentic, and be able to ask questions, without fear or dismissal [33]. In addition, it offered the opportunity for individuals to further develop their knowledge and academic skills [33]. By offering a peer learning experience, it motivated attendees, as they were able to question and collaborate with their peers. Topping [34] explains that peer learning experiences can be a thoughtful approach, whereby transferable skills can be shared. Although there is a heavy demand for interaction through peer learning, it can enhance communication skills, where individuals need to question, explain, listen, and summarise [34]. These are valuable transferable skills for employment.

Overall, the offering of Ketso was praised by the facilitators. By allowing previous students to attend, offering a peer learning experience could offer an "inclusive mode of teaching. This prompts further discussion on the inclusion of alumni in future activities such as Ketso, to offer a more collaborative learning experience. As noted by Huijser and Kimmins [32], it is important to offer training and a support environment for the peer learning environment to flourish. Offering students ownership over a project, whereby they had an element of control, prompted an open dialogue. It is recognised that there are limitations with the student, due to it taking place in one institute; however, as this is a pilot study, it showcases the need for further research and the benefit of exploring the use of Ketso could have.

The integration of the student partnership with the Ketso showcased the extension of the importance of developing a student as partners framework, encouraging their knowledge in sessions. Moving forward, there is a desire to further embed this across the university and, in particular, the Master of Public Health Course. Thus, creating further evidence and recognition of the importance of engaging in a student partnership, in particular with graduates. While the findings are from a one cohort of the MPH programme at Birmingham City University, it does showcase promise that the underlying principles of peer partnership and tools

such as Ketso are effective tools to enhance student skillset. Furthermore, it demonstrates that students were interactive and engaged with the material. It demonstrates, as the pilot, that there is scope to build on this experience, using the feedback from the partnership students to establish how to make a more effective collaborative and skill-based learning experience. Furthermore, as the partnership was focusing on international students, it showcases the applicability and adaptability of the students.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the research aimed to explore the experiences of graduate students facilitating Ketso workshops for students completing their MPH. These students were invited to discuss their experiences through focus groups and individual discussions. The research has demonstrated that partaking in this project has further enhanced the students' leadership and communication skills. In addition, they felt a stronger sense of recognition of peer learning and thought they were involved in an inclusive learning experience. The qualitative response demonstrated that graduate students thought they had further enhanced their time management skills and had experienced a shared ownership of the sessions, demonstrating leadership growth.

Moving forward, using the feedback from the students, the Ketso workshops will be embedded earlier within the module, giving the students time to refine their research ideas, enhancing their knowledge of both the research methods and the dissertation modules. Following the recognition of the benefit of inclusion of alumni involvement, further engagement of structured facilitator work would be helpful. Thus, creating a cross-cohort network strengthens the sense of community and being a valuable part of the university. As well as demonstrating knowledge sharing. As this was a pilot project, further research will be conducted to establish the impact of the use of Ketso on the attendees, as well as exploring other usages of the Ketso. Gathering additional insights from colleagues and students on the Ketso project mechanisms would provide valuable and specific feedback. Future research is needed to explore and establish the cross-disciplinary and institutional application of student partnerships, to provide further insight into the approach. Thus, it is needed to further develop this and run this for future cohorts.

Author Contributions

For the research article, A.M.-M. provided the introduction and literature review for the research article. N.Q.-W. provided the methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. Both N.Q.-W. and A.M.-M. lead the research project together. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Ethics Committee board of Birmingham City University, code – 14111, and approved on 10th January 2025.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the reported results of this study are not publicly available but can be obtained by contacting authors and can be available upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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