**Components of Reciprocal and Mutually Beneficial Community-University Partnerships in Education –
A Literature Review**

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This is a summary of a literature review of models of "reciprocal and mutually beneficial" community-university partnership in education. We defined reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnerships as *those in which the university and community partners were actively engaged in planning, design, implementation and evaluation, and in which both community and university had a vested interest in collaboration*. These partnerships were characterized by shared decision-making and shared resources and all partners had allocated roles and responsibilities. We also looked for models with advisory boards that had identified roles for community partners.

We used the on-line library catalogue of the University of British Columbia to databases of education, health, medical, social science, humanities, business and economic journals or reports. We found 76 articles that described models and projects in education. We excluded articles that (i) described service learning in which the university had the dominant role, (ii) did not delineate reciprocal processes, and (iii) did not include advisory boards. The resultant 16 articles, to varying degrees, described the reciprocity of the partnership, the mutual benefits and the roles and activities of partners. The following notes summarize what these articles said about finding partners, partnership goals, advisory boards, communication, community involvement, leadership, roles and responsibility, and sustainability.

Finding and selecting partners
- Community relationships became part of the normal work of faculty; academics joined the advisory boards of community organizations.[4]
- Priority was given to partnership with organizations that were already involved in education.[16]
- The university created an informational hotline for the community.[14]
- Community organizations initiated the partnership by approaching the university, e.g., to establish health fairs.[9]

Common to these reports was: once the partners were selected and identified, they determined the criteria and principles for subsequent working together.

Goal of partnership
- A shared mission was emphasized in which all stakeholders from the community and university discussed and negotiated their objectives for the partnership project, e.g., "care" as a goal shared by both university and community.[4]
- Choosing of objectives was flexible, as they might change during the course of the project.[16]

- Several objectives were selected and partnership activities were aligned in a way that these objectives were met along the way or one overarching objective was selected and the other objectives were prioritized.[15]
- Objectives of the project were chosen to meet the interests of each of the stakeholders.

Advisory boards

Three types of advisory boards were created in partnership projects:
- Separate "community" advisory boards with decision making powers in the partnership;
- Advisory boards that brought together representatives from both community and university;
- Partnerships in which faculty members joined the advisory boards of the community organizations.

Community was engaged in the following ways:
- Identifying community needs in training and technology; influencing the path of partnership including university's activities; reviewing and approving project reports and materials before publication; creating access and outreach to community members;[1]
- Influencing policy, developing resources and piloting programs;[10]
- Planning programs, recruiting students; making funding decisions;[5]
- Providing cultural insight.[8]

Open communication, through
- Frequent meetings and sometimes even scheduled weekly meetings;
- Listservs and continual outreach;[16]
- Workshops on open communication and skills for collaborative team work;[7]
- Informing other partners when meeting with one partner; reciprocal leadership roles; writing and presentations about the project; and communication about curriculum changes.[4]

Leadership and implementation issues
- A community co-chair helped to reduce the power imbalance.
- Community co-chairs were involved in defining competencies, recruiting and monitoring students and changing policies.[16]
- A paradigm shift occurred in which academics relinquished their power and "expert" position and blended their disciplinary knowledge into a collective knowledge created in multi-disciplinary teams.[1]
- The traditional "command-and-control" model was replaced by a "boundary-less" and "network" organization, characterized by collaborative leadership, team work, and shared resources and knowledge.[7]

Roles and responsibilities
- Assignment of roles was based on personal interest, background, and expertise of each person (appealing to expertise, personal interest and intrinsic motivations of people in assuming roles).
- Roles allowed for boundary spanning.

Other logistics

- Each partnership project established their own unique auxiliary means for communications based on the needs of partnership, e.g., multimedia or web-based applications.
- A neutral and safe space was created, in which the partners could efficiently assume and enact their responsibilities.[1]
- Continuous community engagement: early engagement involved identifying the needs of the community and aligning the partnership practices based on those needs.

Sustainability

- Partnerships, depending on their goals, might contain long- or short-term relationships.
- Sustainability was a combined outcome of many of the criteria above (i.e., shared mission, equal power and contribution, flexible goals, open communication, community in advisory boards).
- Sustainability was characterized by diversity of partners, identification of the unique expertise of each, the empowerment of partners by collaboration and the project could grow without the original creators.[13]
- Sustainability was enhanced by communication via a variety of methods; acquisition of new partners when faced with attrition; the sharing of resources, commitment and support by all partners; secure funding and agreed process for allocating funds.[16]
- Extension occurred in two ways: extending one project to several others and extending the geographical outreach of the partnership.
- Sustainability was a vision from the beginning.

Conclusion

A number of issues need to be considered in planning such partnerships. The composition of the university and the community is important; a mechanism should be in place to identify and illustrate the assets and skills that are held by each. The course offerings and curricula may need to change to suit the timeline and needs of community partners. Both community and university partners need lots of support, dialogue, and preparation to step outside their usual boundaries and into a new sphere. Education that shows why all this matters should be provided to help both university and community realize the importance of these engagements and know how they can each contribute to this vision.

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