

School-University Partnerships: Collaborative Effort for School Renewal and the Education of Educators

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How do you bring about the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators? One possible solution is offered by John I Goodlad, a nationally recognized educator and author of a revolutionary book in school reform, called *A Place Called School*. Goodlad believes in bringing schools and universities together in a symbiotic relationship which refers to unlike organisms (or institutions) joined intimately in mutually beneficial relationships. Such a partnership requires three minimum conditions: (1) dissimilarity between or among the partners, (2) mutual satisfaction of self-interests and (3) sufficient selflessness on the part of each member to assure the satisfaction of self-interests on the part of all members. Goodlad identifies that the first of these conditions is clearly present while the others must be created and may require resolve, commitment, planning, creativity, leadership, sacrifice, and endurance.

In 1980 the Southern California partnership was created, followed by the establishment of the Brigham Young University and Puget Sound partnerships in 1984. Eventually the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) was created and currently involves school/university partnerships in 14 states, including Hawai'i. These partnerships enter into long-term agreements to work closely with one another as equal partners for purposes of addressing long-standing, tough problem areas in which both sets of institutions have a stake. Partnerships operate on the premise that significant changes will not take place unless universities and schools change together. The purpose of each partnership is to create a climate of mutual respect and trust so that schools and universities can work together to address the "hard rock" problems which have seemed so intractable in the past.

Hawai'i School/University Partnership

The Hawai'i School/University Partnership (HS/UP)

joined the NNER in October, 1986. The three educational institutions committed to this effort are the Hawai'i State Department of Education (DOE), the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (COE-UHM) and the Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate (KS/BE). Although these institutions had prior working agreements, HS/UP offered the first opportunity to formalize their collaboration as equal partners.

Hawai'i is unique in that it is the only state that has a statewide unified school district with one state superintendent and a single higher education system where UHM serves as the major university of the state. Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate is the only private school involved in any of the partnerships in the national network. Other distinguishing features include the Islands' multicultural setting, the strong presence of private schools, and the willingness of these educational institutions to experiment.

The common thread which brought members of the Hawai'i Partnership together was the interest in addressing the needs of the educationally disadvantaged student — especially those considered to be at-risk. The DOE is seeking strategies to promote school success and prevent at-risk behaviors for all students. The University has an interest in working with the DOE's school renewal efforts as well as preparing educators for school renewal. In its commitment to address the needs of native Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian students throughout the state, KS/BE is also involved in various efforts to reduce the number of students identified as educationally at-risk.

All of these shared problems — and shared visions — led to the mission of the HS/UP which is to solve collaboratively the major problems related to the education of school-age youth in Hawai'i, giving special attention to the educationally disadvantaged who may include at-risk and/or minority students. The HS/UP also supports the national agenda of the simultaneous renewal of school and the education of educators. Areas to be addressed by the partnership include:

- Programs and teacher training models to address the needs of at-risk and minority children;
- Teacher education and certification;
- School-based staff development programs for instructional improvement;
- Site-level school improvement where both teacher training programs and practices in the schools change simultaneously;
- Improvement and coordination of data collected in solving educational problems;
- Integration of the very best in current knowledge, research and theory, and educational practice; and
- Other areas identified by mutual agreement.

Task Forces

To carry out the mission and goals of the NNER, the HS/UP established four task forces to address issues related to school success strategies for at-risk prevention and mainstreaming, teacher education, principal preparation, and exemplary school sites for the preparation of educators and school renewal.

School Success. The school success task force represents a long-term effort to strengthen the individual school's capacity to meet the special needs of at-risk students. Major features of the project include:

- Support for the school as the unit of change;
- Use of community education as a process of networking to strengthen the coordination of resources to assist project schools in responding more effectively to the at-risk population;
- Application of a "cooperative action research" strategy to improve the delivery of services to the at-risk or potentially at-risk, and
- Integration of elements from a number of established and experimental programs to create a critical mass of mutually supportive program features substantial enough to reduce the at-risk problem.

Several school success strategies are being piloted at schools in the DOE's Windward and Leeward districts of O'ahu. The James B Castle High School, in an effort to reduce the trauma and difficulties students have in

making the transition from intermediate to high school, is piloting a program using a "school-within-a-school" concept. This restructured group called the "Gold Core" includes 130 randomly selected freshmen assigned to four teachers. Through this restructuring, teachers are afforded the opportunity to plan and work together as a team to personalize the program for a common core of students. Several innovative and research-based approaches such as heterogeneous grouping of students, cooperative learning techniques, and coordinated curriculum planning are incorporated into the program.

At Kahalu'u Elementary School, an at-risk prevention model has been incorporated as part of the school's guidance program. This model was developed through the cooperative efforts of teachers and staff of the KS/BE Alternative Education Program and Kahalu'u Elementary School. The program is designed to enhance positive self-esteem and build social skills in such areas as teamwork, cooperation, and communication.

A subcommittee of the school success task force was formed to identify strategies especially supportive of those students who may be educationally at-risk. Its purpose is to recommend that these identified elements be incorporated into the current and proposed teacher education programs.

Teacher Pre-Service Education. The College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa is a member of the Holmes Group, a national organization which has committed its efforts to address the professionalization of teaching and is committed to the reform of public education. A committee was given the task to redesign the teacher education program at COE-UHM. The overall purpose of this new teacher education program is to educate teachers for their emerging professional roles as agents of educational renewal in Hawai'i's public schools. The general design of the program is based upon four major principles that recognize the new roles emerging for teachers:

- Professional learning should take place in the context of thinking and acting as a teacher;
- To become independent professionals, students should be actively involved in and responsible for their own learning;
- In learning to work collaboratively in schools, students should learn about teaching in collaboration with one another and with practicing professionals; and
- To develop a thoughtful and self-critical attitude toward professional practice, students should routinely evaluate and be evaluated for their learning and performance (*HS/UP Task Force Report, 1988*).

Highlights of the recommendations include: recruitment and retention of quality candidates, including representation from minority groups; trained mentor teachers; reassessment of current course offerings with recommendations for integrated courses and case studies; a semester internship with compensation; a master of science in teaching degree upon completion of the program, and fulltime participation over a requisite two-year period. In its first year, this program will be piloted with a small cohort of students who meet the admissions criteria for both the graduate school and the program (i.e., baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university, academic background appropriate for the level and subject of proposed certification).

Another effort in teacher education is the Pre-Service Education for Teachers of Minorities (PEToM) project which addresses the continuing need for teachers who are motivated and competent to teach educationally at-risk minority students. This program is a two-year alternative teacher education program developed by COE-UHM and KS/BE to educate elementary school teachers for special competency in teaching educationally at-risk minority students. The main purpose of PEToM is to recruit and train teachers specifically to work at school sites where there is a high enrollment of the target population.

Principal Preparation. A report of recommendations from the task force on leadership preparation for Hawai'i's schools gave impetus to the Cohort Training Program currently being developed for implementation in Fall 1990. Highlights of the proposed master's program include a one-year internship, integrated case studies and seminars, and a collaboration of school-site personnel and university faculty.

Exemplary Sites for the Education of Educators and School Renewal. The fourth task force was established to develop criteria in the selection of exemplary field sites for the preparation of teachers and principals and for school renewal. This task force report advocated change in regards to various aspects of the field experiences for teachers and principals. At least 24 school sites dedicated to professional development are required to meet the needs of the current and proposed programs in Hawai'i's teacher education program.

Growing Pains

As in any new venture, there are growing pains as well as varying degrees of successes. One of the major problems facing partnership activities between school districts and colleges of education and/or universities is the high rate

of turnover in administrative personnel within both organizations. As an example, in Hawai'i, only two of the original members of the HS/UP executive board remain. This brings about the concern for continued institutional commitment and resources. Public schools are experiencing a period in their history when turnover will exceed 50 percent of both administrators and teachers. Colleges of education, depending on their location, are also experiencing the same rate of turnover due to a rapid expansion period during the 1960s, followed by a long period of stagnation. This means that both organizations throughout the country will be bringing in new administrators and decision makers — and these people will be coming into partnerships previously established with goals, objectives, and financial commitments. The issue to be addressed by all partnerships is quite simply how do we keep them going and how do we prevent the turnover from having a negative impact on what has already been accomplished? For example, how do we prevent administrator turnover from interfering with mutually agreed upon objectives and goals that are being addressed by partnership task forces and activities.

Another of the problems we have in partnerships is thinking of them as fixed entities or institutions that have lives of their own. When one thinks of a partnership as a fixed entity or organizational structure, then new people coming to the partnership may not give it the same commitment or level of support that the individuals who founded the partnership were willing to invest in terms of time, effort and money. Most administrators want to come to a new role with the option to establish their own priorities and their own objectives — and their own organizational structures to achieve those objectives. Administrators may perceive the partnership as interfering with what they want to accomplish rather than helping to facilitate it. Many partnership activities require commitments of time, effort, and money to achieve goals that may take three to five years to accomplish. This requires a long-term commitment of personnel and financial resources that new administrators may not be willing to commit, particularly when they were not the ones to establish the partnership. The problem is clearly this: Does the superintendent or dean of education want to put a partnership activity as the number one priority when he or she may not get credit for its success but may be forced to accept the blame for its failure?

Partnership As Process

One way to think of a partnership is not as a fixed entity

or organizational structure but simply as a process. If one can think of it as such, then the individuals involved are not tied to a very rigid set of objectives; instead they tie into a set of procedures that encourages interaction, sharing of ideas, and the development of mutual goals that would benefit both organizations. A process allows the new players, both in the schools and the colleges, to establish their initiatives and their own objectives. This makes the partnership much more flexible in addressing *new needs* and *changing priorities* in both organizations. By allowing the new leadership the opportunity to set their own goals and agendas, the partnership as a process can allow individuals to take credit for new programs and the success deriving from new objectives and goals. By maintaining partnerships as a process, it also allows the new leadership to reestablish old goals and makes those goals part of a new partnership agenda that reflect their thinking. Even a simple task such as reworking a statement of objectives and goals to better reflect the current philosophies of those in charge of the partnership can establish ownership in the process.

Current partnerships within the NNER have organized their activities around task forces. These task forces sometimes take on a life of their own and become ongoing, permanent activities. For example, redesigned teacher education programs become regular permanent programs that, in turn, become longterm. Although these programs are experimental in nature, they still require a major commitment from the participating institutions. These may involve developing structures, procedures, and personnel all working toward a common set of goals and objectives.

If one instead thinks of partnerships as a process that enables people with similar concerns and objectives to work together, then the rigidity of the task force notion becomes more fluid and more easily changed, modified, and adopted to new administrators as they come on board. The goal is getting organizations to commit to the process. If organizations are committed to the process of partnerships, then changes in leadership may change priorities and directions but not cooperation and mutual support. This means people can be changed in order to meet process objectives which are not tied to individuals or an individual's set of objectives and goals. This allows for more shared responsibility. This type of process model assumes that there will be turnover — and as turnover takes place there will be changes in goals, objectives, and funding priorities. If we develop the concept of shared responsibility for instituting the partnership process, this gets us away from reliance on a strong individual. At the current time, partnerships rest very heavily on the

charisma and ability of individuals who founded them. By having more shared responsibility, including the ability to change both people and goals, we then make it easier for a partnership to sustain itself past the point in time when there is 100 percent turnover in the players who initiated the partnership.

We must remember that administrators want to put resources into their programs, not programs somebody else developed, conceptualized or started. If the partnership becomes a process and allows the administrator to identify programs and goals that he or she can commit to, then that administrator is more likely to maintain the relationship and support those goals. People want their programs to succeed; they are not always supportive of other people's programs. For partnerships to survive the turnover that is bound to occur given the demographics in education, the process itself must be so successful that everybody wants a piece of the action and everybody wants to be a part of the process. If the partnership process is flexible, then people will be able to achieve their goals within the partnership framework and will not be forced to seek other mechanisms and other administrative structures that will simply reinvent the wheel.

We have managed to develop a climate of trust among many participants in partnership activities. There is also a need for us to be more careful with our interpersonal relationships which theoretically are more fragile. If one of the major players drops out or if anything is done to destroy that current fragile partnership base then we will be back to when public schools and colleges of education failed to communicate — and both set about seeking and supporting different agendas.

It is clear that this social experiment warrants a continuing commitment to address difficult educational concerns which have been with school and universities for a long time. It is also clear that in order to bring about the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators, schools and universities must change together. Although it will not be a smooth journey, each set of growing pains offers the opportunity for new growth in this collaborative effort.

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