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> *In a true partnership each party contributes to the partnership and receives benefit from it. Partnership equity models that draw on social science, business, and community development theory can help partners understand their commitments and evaluate the results.*

Establishing and Evaluating Equitable Partnerships

James E. McLean and Bruce A. Behringer

Abstract

In this paper, the authors present two models for establishing and evaluating partnerships. They also provide a working definition of a partnership, propose strategies for identifying resources for starting and maintaining partnerships, and provide several methods for evaluating them. Their purpose is to increase understanding of the dynamics of building stronger, more equity-based partnerships. Models recommended are the Give-Get and Double Rainbow.

Introduction

It is customary to label most cooperative ventures as partnerships. But a true partnership is one in which each party contributes (or gives) to the partnership and receives (or gets) benefits from it. Behringer and McLean (2002) described this requirement in detail. King, Williams, Howard, Proffitt, Belcher, and McLean (2004) illustrated an application of it in a group of community projects. The model, which can explain many of the key elements of a partnership, evolved from early program efforts to describe both university and rural community expectations and contributions at East Tennessee State University. A planning grid from the ETSU Health Professions Education Program was used to explain curricular change and community benefits that occur simultaneously through joint project activities. Its matrix form provides a simple visual depiction on a single page. The grid (see Figure 1) was adopted as a required part of the small grant application packet to document partnership planning.

The Give-Get Model draws upon social psychology, business practice, and community development theories to assist in program and community partnership development. To be effective, partnerships require extensive involvement by both parties. This involvement both recognizes and legitimizes the process and an organizational framework created for that involvement. In the "Ladder of Citizen Participation," Arnstein (1969) framed community participation from experiences with the Office of Economic Opportunity, defining partnerships and their operational differences within a continuum of manipulation-empowerment and emphasizing institutional beliefs and values to create positive symbiotic relationships with their surrounding community. In DePree's *Leadership Is An Art* (1989), meaningful, challenging, and inclusive approaches to organizational development and leadership

PARTNER	GIVES	GETS
UNIVERSITY	University Contributions	University Benefits
SCHOOL	School Contributions	School Benefits

Figure 1. The Give-Get Model

were explored that underscored the importance of valuing participation, inter-organizational relationships, and the resulting contributions. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) described an approach to viewing communities in light of the assets they can contribute toward change, not just the social problems that they confront. The ethic of community partnerships, as formulated by the Kellogg Foundation (Richards, 1996), extended this approach to increase the perception of value in community as a contributor, not just as a site, for higher education through community-based and interdisciplinary experiential learning.

The Give-Get Grid developed at ETSU extended these approaches by valuing community-identified issues and opportunities (needs, problems) as contributions to the educational process and as benefits to faculty and students as real world educational opportunities. Adopting a community issue or opportunity often meant bringing together disciplines and departments not accustomed to working together, resulting in new configurations and renewed faculty involvement with communities.

Collaborative planning is necessary to complete the Give-Get Grid as part of the small grant program. This approach was based on social exchange theory and negotiations practice. Blau (1964) identified social exchange as a process of tapping social and work networks to define common interests. Each partner needed to define its interests (Fisher and Ury, 1991) and identify why it sought to engage in a project, thus defining its expectations ("gets"). While access to a Kellogg grant stimulated interest, the programs soon took on a life of their own. As negotiations proceeded, each party identified additional potential resources that they could contribute and the value to them of the other partner's contributions. For example, the university valued old community stories as a resource in the development of a theatrical production that highlighted the potential value of the "gives" by rural residents. Likewise, community residents saw the presence of university students in their towns as a potential encouragement for rural students to consider post-secondary education. These examples of direct and spillover elements exemplify how one party's "gives" begin to match the other party's "gets." Over time, the Give-Get Grid Model helped all to understand the need theory of negotiation (Nierenberg, 1981) based upon common interests rather than the traditional "win-lose" approaches that characterize many town-gown relationships. By emphasizing contributions as well as benefits to each partner, the model proves superior to traditional "win-win" thinking (Covey, 1989).

It is easily seen how this model can be extended to the school-university partnership. First, it can provide a framework for defining the partnership and clarify to both partners what they can expect to contribute to the partnership and how they can expect to benefit. Second, it can provide the framework for evaluating the partnership in both formative and summative ways.

Figure 2 provides a very simple illustration of the Give-Get Grid Model applied to a university-school partnership. While it only provides summary information, an actual Give-Get chart would provide the information in much more detail. A good illustration of this can be found in King et al. (2004, pp. 80-81). Figure 2 does illustrate how the Give-Get Grid Model is an excellent planning tool for developing a university-school partnership by allowing each partner to know what it will contribute to and receive from the partnership. While the Give-Get Grid Model was developed originally as a planning tool, it can also provide the basis for evaluating the partnership.

Building Partnerships

While the Give-Get Grid Model is an excellent planning tool, planners also will find it instructive to consult the Double Rainbow Model (see Figure 3). Any university-school partnership should be based upon the belief that the part-

PARTNER	PARTNER	PARTNER
UNIVERSITY	• Pedagogical expertise • Subject content expertise • In-kind material support • Professional development • Partial support of coordinator	• Clinical experience site • Research laboratory • Help faculty stay current • Additional class space
SCHOOL	• School coordination • Access to students • Access to teachers • Classroom space • Partial support of coordinator	• Access to pedagogical expertise • Access to content expertise • Teacher development • Increased student achievement

Figure 2. Illustration (partial) of Give–Get Grid Model for University–School

nership can provide mutually beneficial relationships between higher education and the school. While the Give-Get Grid Model is a method for identifying the benefits and contributions of each partner, it is also very important that both partners understand the specific audiences and stakeholders of the partnership. This would include all parties that might be affected by the partnership. This concept can be elaborated using the Double Rainbow Model. This model recognizes that each partner in negotiations is not monolithic but instead includes complex social and work networks. Based upon the Units of Solution Theory (Steuart, 1993), benefits of partnership projects could be defined to include individuals, families, groups, and community beneficiaries to each partner. This approach created the mirror image displayed as concentric layers in the community and university that provides an illustration of the various beneficiaries of the partnership in a hierarchical fashion. This depiction of the constituencies in each partnership displayed in a hierarchical fashion is called the Double Rainbow Model. It can be used as a technique to determine the impacts of a partnership on both partners as well as a tool to identify environmental influences of the partnership. Figure 3 provides an illustration of this for a university-school partnership.

The primary beneficiaries at the university were university students preparing to become teachers, as the partnership would provide them with a clinical site to develop their teaching skills. For the school, their students would be the ultimate beneficiaries of the partnership as
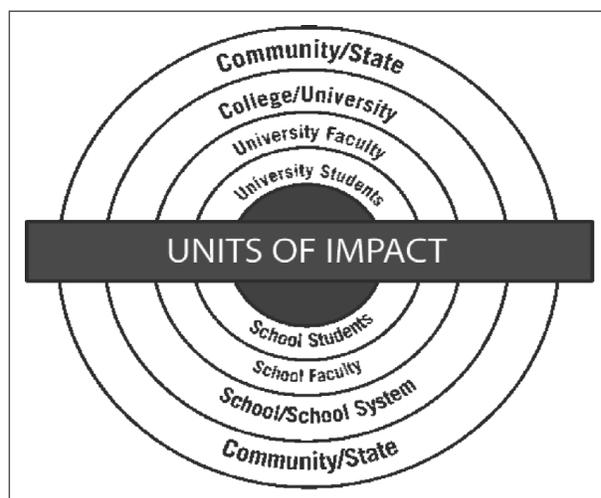

Figure 3. Double Rainbow Model

it would result in their improved achievement. The next level of impact would be on the university faculty who would benefit by having access to a teaching and research laboratory and the school faculty who would have access to expertise and support of university faculty including the latest best-practice research. The next level of impact would be the college and university and the school and school system. These institutions would benefit from improved efficiency and the ability to draw on each other's expertise. It is interesting that in a university-school partnership of this type, the next level of impact would be the same for both the university and school – the community and state.

From the university's perspective, the community and state would benefit by the increased exposure and the ability to graduate better prepared teachers. From the schools' perspective, the community and state would benefit from

the improved achievement of their students. Discussions using the Double Rainbow Model also enabled partners to identify unintended consequences of projects. The model can be particularly helpful in identifying potential sources of information useful in evaluation.

Identifying the benefits and contributions as well as the stakeholders of a partnership does not ensure its success. King et al. (2004) identified a number of practices that improve the likelihood that a partnership will be successful. Below is a list of some of these practices that could focus on university-school partnerships:

1. More than anything else, partnerships thrive on personal connections. The personal relationships that develop between university and school probably have more impact on the continuation of a partnership than any other factor.

2. The traditional flow of information from university to school needs to become bidirectional. That is, university faculty must accept that the partnership is a two-way street with their gaining from the practical situation they would find in a school.

3. Full participation by both partners in the planning and implementation is crucial to a successful partnership. Buy-in depends on both partners providing input to the planning and implementation of the partnership.

4. The personal connections noted in Item 1 are built by working together on all phases of the partnership.

5. Even if both parties participate in developing the Give-Get Grid and the Double Rainbow models, unexpected outcomes will result from the partnership. That is, both parties will end up giving more and getting more than they identified in the planning stage. The relationship must be strong to deal with these unintended consequences.

6. Partnerships can learn from each other. That is, if there are partnerships between the university and more than one school, there are advantages to sharing those benefits.

7. The longer a partnership operates the more benefits will come from it.

8. Successful partnerships will breed successful partnerships. A successful partnership between two parties in one area will often result in partnerships to solve problems in other areas. Additional partners may also become involved and contribute.

9. Communication and personal interaction overcome barriers. This takes us back to the first item. The success of a partnership depends upon open communication and personal interaction.

While the two models that have been presented and the operating principles help to build and maintain a partnership, the process is not without its challenges.

Challenges in Partnership Formation

The two models described above represent tools that were used in planning and initiating a number of collaborative community-university partnership projects. The models also became helpful in formative and summative evaluation of the overall program. Community and faculty partners identified several thematic challenges in the partnering process that were both defined and facilitated when using the models.

• Community-based learning challenged faculty members to modify teaching and learning methods for course-based learning objectives. This change was a required educational contribution to the partnership, and it enabled greater graduates' satisfaction with their educational preparation, especially in self-confidence, public speaking, and the ability to design and implement community-based nutrition programs (Marks, Nelson, Burnham, Coates, Duncan, Lowe, Lowery, and Seier, 2004).

• Faculty members were challenged to prove the academic rigor of community-based learning. Because assignments were no longer an academic exercise but rather were founded on meeting real needs of community members, student performance was

evaluated by peers and community members as well as by professors. Academic peers unfamiliar with community-based learning questioned educational outcomes.

• Community members reported "attitude is all-important." Rural communities watch for real demonstrations of sustained interest. This occurred when faculty interest reached beyond the prescribed project activities. As one leader said, "I knew things had changed when … the relationship went beyond sharing their ice cream cone (Kellogg grant monies) to really discussing hard issues that we in communities have to deal with daily" (King et al., pp. 78-79).

• Both community and university partners tended to underestimate project contributions ("gives") and benefits ("gets"). The authors compared the Give-Get Grids submitted by a sample of projects in their applications for resources with post-project Give-Get Grids and found that the average number of University "gives" increased from 4.3 to 6.8 and University "gets" from 5.0 to 6.9. Community "gives" remained similar at 5.0 and 4.8 but community "gets" increased from 4.8 to 7.3. While this was not a difficulty but rather a pleasant surprise for those partners who did engage in projects, the underestimation represents a potential barrier for others who may consider participation.

• Community leaders found introducing university involvement in their issues only made sense as an equal partnership. University contributions enabled reframing local issues in new ways and the partnership enabled the community to address issues that it could not accomplish by itself. The partnership became a way to involve the whole community in a project (Proffitt, 2000, March).

Evaluating Partnerships

Once partnerships have been established, they will not last unless it can be shown that they are successful. Thus, an effective evaluation process is important. Evaluation has two primary functions. First, an effective evaluation provides timely information to improve a partnership as it is being implemented. Second, evaluation can document the success of a partnership.

The evaluation of the partnership can draw heavily from the Give-Get and Double Rainbow models described in this paper. In fact, these models can form the basis of the evaluation of the partnerships. However, the evaluation must include other criteria. In the age of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, one very important criterion is equity. Is the partnership equitable not only to both partners, but also to all stakeholders of both partners? It is easy to see how the Give-Get Model can be used to identify the inputs and outcomes important to the partnership. It is also easy to see how the Double Rainbow Model can be used to identify the various stakeholders in the partnership. Another problem is to determine what criteria would be used to evaluate equity. Equity, like partnership, has many definitions. We recommend the definition developed by Lawrence Lezotte in the 1970s. An illustration and description can be found in Lezotte, 1984.

His essential contribution is that achieving equity requires more than merely equal access. Specifically, Lezotte suggests that you must have equal access, participation, and outcomes to achieve equity. That is, entry into any program must be equitable. This can be evaluated by examining the levels of participation in the program by various subgroups. Finally, the various subgroups must demonstrate equal outcomes. This concept was written into federal law with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Lezotte's concept of equity has been applied in a number of situations. It was the basis of an equity evaluation study (Brookover and McLean, 1983) of Mobile County, Alabama, schools commissioned by a federal court (also described in a conference paper by McLean, Davis, and Brookover, 1983). Davis, McLean, Brookover, and Davis (1986) applied this definition to an evaluation of digital equity for students at the dawn of the digital age.

Summary

This research presents two models for defining and implementing university-school partnerships as well as a number of suggestions for making these partnerships successful. In addition, a set of criteria are provided for evaluating partnerships. The Give-Get Grid is an excellent model for two prospective partners to negotiate

a partnership. The Double Rainbow model provides a systematic method for determining what individuals and groups a project will impact for both partners and how these stakeholders relate. Preliminary applications of the models suggest that they can facilitate both the implementation of the model and help in the evaluation. For example, these models can be used to determine the expected outcomes of a partnership and the constituency groups or stakeholders that it might impact. Finally, the equity of a partnership can be assessed by considering the participants' access to the program, varying rates of participation by subgroups, and the outcomes by subgroup. While the results presented here are preliminary, the models have the potential to help move engagement scholarship to a new level.

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