

School-University Coalitions for Reality-Based Instruction

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Structurally and instructionally sound partnerships between the university and the public schools can only come about through a commitment to reality-based teaching and learning.

PUBLIC education has been characterized by critical descriptions of university training (as perceived by public school personnel) and disappointing performance by teachers and administrators (as perceived by university personnel). Much of this evolved because each entity (the school and the university) attempted to function autonomously from the other. Furthermore, the transition from university training to reality-based classroom instruction has always been difficult for the teacher and frustrating for the university staff.

We believe the *cooperation* between the two entities rather than imposition of philosophies and practices of one on the other can be a more productive effort than what has been traditionally the case. Are cooperatively-designed school-university programs new? To what extent has such an idea been implemented by other disciplines and professions?

Why is this a necessity for improved teaching and learning in the coming decades?

Historical Precedent

Among the earliest records of such cooperative effort is the 1906 Engineering program at the University of Cincinnati. This program was based on the fact that much of engineering skill can only be developed through on-the-job experience (Heerman, 1973). Today cooperative engineering programs exceed 200 in the United States (Wilson, 1971). From that time, many areas, notably business and industrial education, as well as the professions of religion, law, and medicine have utilized the "clinical approach" to preparing practitioners. Community colleges all over the country (like New York's La Guardia Community College which in 1972 had more than 500 students in some form of cooperative program) have attempted to extend the emphasis of training

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for greater alignment with the realities of job performance requirements (Heerman, 1973).

School-University Coalitions for Teaching

Despite the fact that other disciplines and professions employed the cooperative approach for many years, the teacher-preparation efforts across the country took very limited advantage of such practices. One of the earliest examples of teacher-intern programs known was that of Temple University in 1955 (Harwood, 1972). More recently, the Ford Foundation-funded Internship at the University of Chicago developed the cadres (teaching teams) for practical experience in Chicago schools (Schwartz, 1972).

A coalition between public schools and universities preparing teachers requires new ways of thinking about curriculum, curriculum development, and about instructional management. It is unfortunate that the structure of American education has not re-ordered itself so that each participant sees itself as being capable of benefiting from the experience and creativity of the other. Nevertheless, the coalitions and cooperative efforts now under way indicate that much productive learning could result in public school classrooms because of the *reality dimension* of such cooperation. There is no substitute for day-to-day exposure of the teacher-candidate to the spontaneous behavior and learning styles of public school children. While we support the fine work being done by teacher education institutions, we also recognize that its theoretical flavor preceding student teaching often fails to provide the depth of orientation necessary for teaching in today's world.

School-university partnerships may take many forms: observations, internships, exchange programs, staff development retreats, and enrichment projects as well as research efforts designed for teacher growth. While these focus on specific professional development efforts for improved instruction in classrooms, there are also other dimensions

of the partnership/coalition, such as the voluntary parent programs, tutoring programs, teacher-aid programs, as well as future teacher activities by high school students and lower-division (freshman-sophomore) university students.

Part of the design to ease the transition from university preparation to productive teacher performance in the classroom is also a response to the constant attack on both public schools and universities by the American citizenry for accountability related to programmatic productivity as well as expenditure of local and federal funds. Such accountability, with both negative and positive aspects, may well be the thrust for greater numbers and variations of school-university coalitions—not in defense of present practices as much as in a joint effort to give the best instructional and curricular services to all segments of the American population.

Some Models of Partnership/Coalition

Some of the various models for partnership have had difficulty because of the different governing policies of the entities (Boards of Education and Governing Boards of Universities—Regents, Trustees, etc.). Others have had difficulty because the principal organizers had not established workable solutions to the many decision-making tasks surrounding such coalitions. Our emphasis is to suggest that such partnerships now come under serious study for expansion and renewal because of the times in which we live and because of the necessity for shared decision making (parity). All persons involved in a process want some responsibility for helping to reach decisions affecting their lives and especially their career development.

Likewise, such coalitions sometimes require changes in the traditional class structure for both universities and public schools. One approach used is the Internship Model (basically used by the National Teacher Corps Project) in which a prospective teacher spends as much as two years in actual classroom settings before being eligible for certifi-



In the Teacher Aide Model, the prospective teacher spends a minimum of one-half day per week through the junior year in work experiences. These are designed to help him/her become more familiar with the responsibilities of teaching as well as with the behavioral patterns of today's children.

cation. This model requires the intern to work daily with experienced teachers as well as university professors whose responsibilities include on-site demonstration teaching with children.

Another approach is that of the Concurrent Experiences Model in which the prospective teacher spends a minimum of four to six weeks in schools and communities each year during the four years of collegiate studies.

Still another approach is the basic Teacher Aide Model in which prospective teachers must spend a minimum of one-half day per week throughout the junior year in work experiences. These are designed to help him/her become more familiar with the responsibilities of teaching as well as with the behavioral patterns of today's children.

All internships, however, must be jointly developed so that the combined roles of schools and universities become clear to all involved. However, the most powerful entity of the entire cooperative effort is the *community* in which such cooperatives exist. In America, we have always said that the schools belong to the people (community) and when universities join programmatic partnerships with the schools, then the universities become jointly responsible for development.

Likewise, the public schools become jointly responsible for the quality of the prospective teacher who emerges from such a cooperative experience.

Another approach, commonly known as the Fifth Year Model, involves an extended internship after the candidate earns the initial degree and permits him/her to have the internship experience that will also provide opportunities to study toward advanced degrees and/or certification.

The Fifth Year Model

One such partnership presently in the developmental stage is known as the *Kansas State-Kansas City Fifth Year Program*. It is a program in which new college graduates interested primarily in urban teaching can get that experience under the guidance of an experienced urban teacher, an experienced university clinical professor, and with the many dimensions of the urban community contributing to such partnership. This program was developed through the cooperation of the Kansas City, Kansas, public schools, and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University. The university thus seeks to extend the professional experiences for its recent graduates.

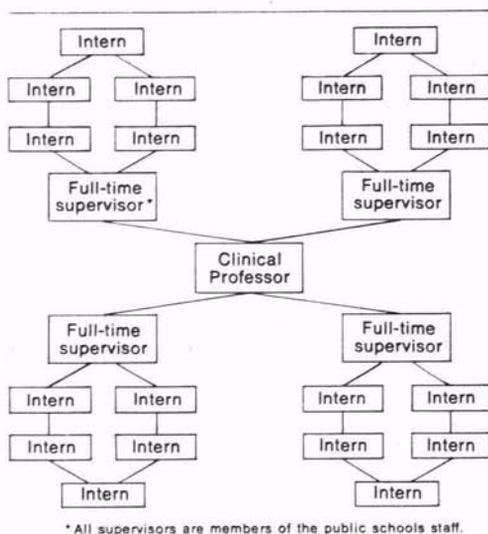


Figure 1. KSU-KC Fifth Year Internship Design

Likewise a person with teaching credentials can enter the program and assume the duties of a first-year teacher but with the understanding that close supervision will be available at all times and that on-site courses and experiences (seminars, parent involvement

sessions, urban community orientation) will be continuing dimensions of his/her internship exposure. Further, each Fifth Year Intern receives an adjusted salary which provides for the extended supervisory and demonstration services made available through the internship. Organization of the Fifth Year KSU-KC Program, similar to the University of Oregon Partnership with Public Schools including Portland, appears in Figure 1.

In conclusion, we believe that various kinds of structurally and instructionally-sound partnerships can only improve public education in the United States. None of this can be realized however, without strong commitment to reality-based teaching and learning by both the university and the public schools. Only when teachers and administrators can see such commitment on the part of all parties affected will a trust relationship emerge. The realities of the decade of the 70's demand a kind of trust which can only result from partnerships built on integrity, on expanded professorial roles, and on the ability of all persons involved to empathize with the limitations and opportunities of the others. Schools and universities cannot afford to decline the challenge.

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