Richard W. Clark

School-university partnerships in the National Network for Educational Renewal seek the simultaneous renewal of schools and universities. Similarities and differences in these partnerships are evident as they struggle with problems. Nevertheless, they are making progress on a wide range of critical problems, raising hopes for better schools and better education programs in the future.

School-University Partnerships in Action

Many people react to school-university partnerships the same way children react to a first pet. They are eager to have one, but negligent in its care and feeding. Like children, they discover that getting what one wants often produces more work, rather than the unqualified love that the creator of the partnership assumed would evolve from the new entity. They discover that, in exchange for the wagging tail and the drooling tongue lapping at their faces, they have modified their own living conditions in many unforeseen ways.

Five years ago, I prepared a review of the literature on partnerships which was reproduced, in part, in *School-University Partnerships in Action*, edited by Kenneth Sirotnik and John Goodlad. Since then, I have been immersed in these partnerships, both as a school administrator participant and as a liaison between the University of Washington's Center for Educational Renewal and many of the partnerships in the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER). Before commenting further on the partnerships, a brief discussion of the NNER is necessary.

The National Network for Educational Renewal

The partnerships in the NNER were created to further the simultaneous renewal of schools and universities. In the closing chapter of *A Place Called School*, John Goodlad anticipated the forming of such a network:

> ...although we are just beginning with our work, the idea of The Partnership is capturing the imagination

> of others.... The interest is sufficient to stimulate my thinking regarding the prospects of a network of such partnerships, each a tub on its own bottom but linked with others, pursuing common goals—improving the schools we have, designing alternative versions based on some views held in common, and working toward educative communities.... Needed is a critical mass large enough to make a visible difference—a really sizable network of partnerships.... (p. 356)

In April of 1986, approximately two years after publication of Goodlad's study and eight months after Goodlad convened an invitational conference on the subject, the NNER was announced as an official body consisting of ten partnerships in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming. Shortly thereafter, partnerships were added in California, Hawaii, Indiana, and New York. Members ranged from long-existing groups to new partnerships created specifically to become part of the network.

As I have noted elsewhere (see Suggested Readings, Clark, 1986), people who discuss school-university partnerships and networks have different meanings for these terms. The notion of network adopted by the NNER is one of a group of similar organizations (school-university partnerships) coming together to learn from each other and to help each other accomplish common goals. A partnership, on the other hand, is an intentional joining of dissimilar organizations (public schools and universities, in this case) with a goal of satisfying mutual self-interests. Such partnerships have what Goodlad calls a "symbiotic relationship." While these views clearly were articulated to all members of the NNER from the inception, not all partnerships interpreted the statements similarly.

Present NNER membership includes partnerships between schools and universities in thirteen states; New York and Massachusetts are no longer members, and Connecticut has been added to the original group. During 1989-1990, working with Paul Heckman, Carol Wilson, and Roger Soder, I participated in a review of the NNER, visiting ten sites throughout the country as part of my responsibility. The observations that follow grow out of these visits.

There are persistent problems facing school-university partnerships, including the reward system for faculty members, difficulties in linking the disparate ecologies, problems in creating professional development schools, and the challenges presented by the changing demographics of urban areas. These have been discussed in detail by others and will not be treated extensively here. Instead, I will concentrate on some additional themes drawn from the 1989-1990 review.

Commonalities

The partnerships in the National Network share some common features. All include not only concern for school renewal, but also improvement of universities as part of their mission. Each has developed some governance structure that permits agendas to be adopted and other business to be structured to meet the mutual needs of the partners. Each has developed processes for sharing information about partnership activities with its constituents. Each has addressed, to some degree, questions of how teachers and principals should be educated and how school programs should assure equity as well as excellence. Regarding the latter, most have given attention to problems associated with tracking K-12 students. These partnerships also are similar in that they rely on themselves and not the NNER for funding; however, the amount of funding they have and the sources of this funding vary widely, as noted below.

It is unusual for a NNER partnership to be concerned equally with changes in schools and in universities. About half are focused on changing schooling, with the university operating in its age-old role as the source of wisdom. The other half emphasize changing university efforts to educate educators.

One of the few constants of school-university partnerships is the frequent change of key personnel. During their four to five years of existence, it is common for the partnerships to have had two to three executive directors. At least half the deans and superintendents on their governing boards have changed. Such lack of continuity makes it difficult for partnerships to sustain progress.

Organizational Patterns

Three organizational patterns have emerged during the formative years of these partnerships. Several partnerships have organized as groups of loosely federated seminars focused on a variety of issues. Sometimes such seminar groups operate as if they are independent of their origin; in such cases, the membership of one group is unlikely to be familiar with that of another. In these federations, university faculty members work with educators from the field, facilitating discussion about such subjects as school reform, tracking, elementary schooling, and new approaches to math instruction, much as they would conduct a class.

Other partnerships are organized with a governing board that establishes task forces and project groups. Some of these groups study issues, such as teacher education or how to serve at-risk students; others operate specific services, such as professional development centers and principal

preparation programs. One partnership is a coalition of single-purpose subpartnerships. In this setting, one subpartnership concentrates on teacher education and the creation of professional development centers; another focuses on the development of a new principal training program; another encourages and supports new principals; and another lobbies for the needs of urban school districts.

Leadership and Vision

All of the partnerships have designated someone as their executive director. The position is a full-time role in several instances, a part-time job in some, and in others, an added assignment for someone who already has a full-time job such as that of an associate dean. Not surprisingly, the executive director's effectiveness varies considerably with the time he or she has available for the position. It also varies with his or her perceived status. When viewed as a peer by the university faculty and as an equal by the administrative leadership of the schools, the director exercises considerable influence. When viewed as a subordinate (e.g., a graduate assistant), the person has a much more difficult time.

Visionary leadership is essential for the success of these partnerships.

Executive directors struggle with the ambiguity of their role. School district personnel often perceive the person as an administrator who will organize meetings, serve as a communication link among partners, develop budgets, secure funding, resolve conflicts between individuals and agencies, and ensure that new members are oriented to the culture of the partnership. University faculty members tend to see the position as a link to the field, but they expect the person in it to operate by the norms of faculty culture. Consequently, faculty expect directors to publish articles, inquire into substantive issues, and perform other scholarly work (and if they do not, faculty members view them as less than peers). These differing expectations create stress for the people in the roles, as well as confusion within partnerships. Most executive directors see themselves as responsible for developing a common vision—a view not always shared throughout the partnership.

A number of theorists have suggested that visionary leadership is essential for the success of such partnerships. NNER partnership experiences confirm the importance of people who can propel others through the strength of their ideas. Of course, Goodlad's notion of symbiotic relationships has been influential as an idea that attracted many to the concept of partnerships in the first place. Beyond that, in each partnership making real progress, there has been the work of dedicated leaders.

The individuals who continue to exert leadership have many different

professional roles. In one partnership, an executive director inspired a large number of teachers to develop a teacher leadership strand that is having a broad influence on teachers' roles throughout the partnership. A director in another setting has focused her group on the powerful ideas of critical pedagogy. Another director has generated enthusiasm for inquiry into issues of educational renewal in school people in three different partnerships with which he has been associated.

As suggested, however, not all leadership comes from executive directors. A dean in one partnership has produced enthusiasm for alternative approaches to training administrators, while deans in several others have created trust between school officials and university faculty. In one partnership, key superintendents and principals preserved the partnership by seeking out a new partner when the university with which they were working lost interest. Leadership also has come from assistant superintendents who have inspired their partnerships to focus on school-based renewal.

Resources for Partnerships

For implementation, ideas generated by such leaders require resources. Several partnerships have relied heavily on foundation funding during their early years; several others are financed entirely by university funds. Most involve member contributions, supplemented by additional funding. The most highly financed of the participant-funded partnerships enjoys an annual budget of approximately $325,000—nearly $25,000 a year from each partner. These fees have helped create an organization that has obtained grants from the state and from four local and national foundations. The budget is subsidized further by added expenditures from school districts for released time of teachers and for participation in special projects, and by the university for office space and faculty release from teaching loads. At the other end of the spectrum is a partnership that obtains some $500 from each of its member districts. Unfortunately for those who envision that partnerships can make radical changes in schooling and universities, the common investment in care and feeding of the partnerships is on the low end of the spectrum. As long as school districts continue to invest less than the cost of a football coach and universities resist supporting senior faculty in full-time leadership of the partnerships, they will fall short of their ambitious goals.

Individual and System Egos

In addition to shortfalls in funding, another problem is the emphasis on individual recognition. The university system is so geared to rewarding individual endeavors that many faculty members seem reluctant to commit

to partnership activities that are not their pet projects. In some cases, faculty members have gone ahead with the projects, but to outsiders these are known as Professor Doe's "at-risk project" or Professor Smith's Professional Development Center. While meeting with legislators from one state, I heard about three partnership projects, all of which were attributed to the professor who was providing leadership, rather than to the partnership. Still, in such instances, there is at least some forward movement.

In other cases, professors and administrators simply withdraw from specific partnership efforts so they can get full, personal credit for any activity. One superintendent made it clear that he would not risk dealing with a controversial issue within a partnership because he was applying for a superintendency in a larger district and did not want to "rattle any cages." He was particularly concerned about university participants in the partnership whose recommendations were apt to be sought by the school board conducting the job search. In one partnership, a professor explained that the reason few of his colleagues were as engaged as he was in activities with schools was that each had his or her own project and did not need the partnership for personal recognition. In more than one instance, school districts have limited their participation in a partnership project, preferring to engage in their own approach to training administrators or teachers, for example, rather than permitting the partnership to take credit for progress. In short, not only is it difficult for school districts and universities to collaborate, it is hard for school districts to work with each other and for individuals to collaborate within institutions. Nevertheless, collaborators, not prima donnas, are needed if partnerships are going to succeed.

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Getting to the Action

Partnerships also experience difficulty getting to the school level. Most find it easy to generate retreats, conferences, and seminars that deal with current issues. Many make good use of visiting experts to stimulate these conversations and of local people to continue them. Universally, however, translating this conversation to action in schools is an arduous and infrequently accomplished task. Teachers and principals in several partnerships expressed frustration as they returned from stimulating partnership conversations only to find that they were unable to generate similar enthusiasm for the ideas within their schools. One teacher shared a story about the wonderful image a professor had of "chats by the fireside" that would enable them to engage in real reflective analysis of their work. She was rebuffed by a colleague who said she would prefer a plumber who could fix the single toilet in the faculty room to a professor and his fireplace. Such rejections

aside, at each partnership there has been some progress in translating conversations about renewal into action.

Schools Are Renewing

Images of renewing schools visited throughout the year come to mind. I visited an urban high school with a warm and comfortable environment. It's led by an enthusiastic principal. She was working actively with the partner university to create a program that would identify high school students to work as a cohort with elementary students under the tutelage of interns from her school. Her students, all inner-city minority youngsters, then would move on to become education students at the university before returning as a group to intern in her school.

Two elementary schools, 3,500 miles apart, were busily at work on multi-age groupings of their students and on alternative means of assessing student progress. They were able to link up electronically to discuss their gains. A high school in another partnership had broken down a long-standing tracking program and developed an interdisciplinary program for ninth graders that was being expanded to the tenth grade. They had received help from a junior high 3,000 miles away and a high school equally far from them.

In another partnership, I watched as teachers and interns engaged students in exciting reading activities that had developed out of the partnership, in spite of restrictive district rules. In a number of schools, in fact, faculty and principals indicated that what they had learned as a result of their partnership activities was causing them to change their instructional approaches to more constructivist, less behavioristic, techniques even though their districts favored the latter. This suggests that partnership activities may not be the best idea for the districts that do not want teachers who will challenge established practices.

Faculty in several middle schools described how changes they have been making have generated changes in related elementary and high schools. Their rejection of tracking and their emphasis on interdisciplinary curricula, while in keeping with major reform recommendations for middle level schooling, have helped promote reexamination of curriculum and instruction at the other levels.

During the fall of 1990, one partnership convened teachers to consider with their university colleagues questions of action research. Too frequently, universities tell school people what to do. In this case, individuals from both settings learned together. Two other partnerships are taking similar approaches.

In short, while it is hard to generate collaborative renewal efforts, many examples of such activity occur within the NNER.

Changes Extend Beyond Schools

As schools begin to change, they begin to create changes in the district of which they are a part. As schools approach teaching differently, universities make changes in programs for the education of educators.

One activity that does not appear to be as hard as changing what happens in schools is the development of support groups. In each partnership, several participants praised the personal and professional support they received. It was not unusual to hear testimony to the effect that "two years ago, I would have said that if this partnership ceased to exist, it wouldn't make much difference. Now I know that if the university or my superintendent tried to take us out of it, I would find some way to keep the group together because the contacts are so valuable."

In one partnership, a superintendent withdrew her district, saying that it was of little benefit to her people. (She was a good example of the kind of person needing individual recognition, as identified above.) A group of her teachers who were involved in a math project through the partnership came, literally crying, to the faculty member working with the project, begging him to find a way for them to continue. A principal and teacher team, involved with linking school-based renewal initiatives, solved their problem differently: they continued to come to the meetings in spite of their superintendent's decision. In each of these cases, the teachers and principals indicated they were receiving an opportunity for professional dialogue that did not exist elsewhere.

Despite the problems, there is much hope for the future.

Hope for the Future

Although problems persist for school-university partnerships, there is much hope for the future. In spite of the continuing clash between the university norm for publication, rather than "field" work, and the continuing difficulties people in schools and universities have in understanding each other's culture, progress is being made. Throughout the membership of the NNER, partnerships are succeeding in creating individual schools that can serve as exemplary places for the clinical phases of the education of educators. Cohort programs have been established that provide for the preparation of administrators whose learning is deliberately connected to inquiry into how schools can be renewed. School and university people alike express determination to continue, in spite of setbacks created by turnover in key positions and difficulties in obtaining funding.

For the most part, the partnerships, like children responsible for a growing puppy, now know that much hard work is necessary if the benefits of the relationship are to be realized. People have discovered that their

houses have changed as they learned to work with others. Deans have discovered that faculty members often are in the field, rather than in the library. Superintendents have found that they have spawned some revolutionaries among their principals and teachers. While truly symbiotic relationships of the type envisioned by Goodlad have not been forged yet and radical renewal of schools is avoided in most instances, many exciting efforts have been initiated and, in at least several of the partnerships, there are signs that mutual interests are beginning to be served.

Suggested Readings

Clark, Richard W. "School/University Relations: Partnerships and Networks." Occasional Paper No. 2, Center for Educational Renewal, College of Education, University of Washington, 1986.

Goodlad, John I. *A Place Called School*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984.

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Wilson, Carol, Richard Clark, and Paul Heckman. "Breaking New Ground: Reflections on the University Partnerships in the the National Network for Educational Renewal." Occasional Paper No. 8, Center for Educational Renewal, College of Education, University of Washington, 1989.