Strategies for Capacity Development

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Overview

This paper is devoted to promoting but one strategy - **the establishing, enhancing and sustaining quality partnerships** - for but one overriding purpose - **to develop the capacity of residents of small towns and rural places to build dynamic and viable sustainable communities**. You have driven through many communities where people live and many fewer where people DO - they partner! The former communities are formed by default. It is the latter small towns and rural places that are dynamic and viable - by design. Which type I prefer to "call home" is obvious.

I could stop at this point, but for those of you who know university professors, that would be unheard of for such a person. I am no exception. I plan to expand the foregoing statement in the following ways:

1) I will explore my beliefs about the residents of small towns and rural places.

2) I will describe the style of leadership necessary for building and sustaining quality partnerships.

3) I will review the diversity and richness of resources available to those residents of small towns and rural places inside (horizontal linkages) and outside (vertical linkages) the community.

4) I will present some considerations for the quality partnership members to take into account for introducing community-based issues.

5) I will outline how to take charge of the issue resolution process.

6) I will discuss the role of telecommunications in establishing quality partnerships and in building dynamic and viable communities.

7) I will recap the first six foregoing points.

Beliefs About Residents of Small Towns and Rural Places

The only reason to develop a strategy for capacity development is to build **dynamic and viable** communities! Capacity development is especially crucial for small towns and rural places if we are ever to "level" the playing field for the residents to be competitive in the acquisition of resources. Why do the citizens of small towns and rural places need to live in dynamic and viable communities? I believe "that small towns and rural places are the basic building blocks of rural society, and, in the context of a global society, they are becoming increasingly complex and multi-dimensional, resulting in an ever increasing number of public issues needing resolution. Moreover, I recognize that individuals, the reason for the existence of these rural communities, are capable of growth, development and change, and that rural society can be enhanced by increasing the individual, organizational, and problem-solving knowledge and skills of its residents. Finally, I absolutely believe that creating a shared vision for the future of sustainable communities requires democratic participation.

Small towns and rural places face numerous barriers that inhibit the development of their fullest potential to "level" the playing field. There must be unique local, state, regional, national and international networks to catalyze, initiate, facilitate, and sustain quality collaborative partnerships that have the potential to improve the social and economic well-being of individuals in small towns and rural places" (Vision and Mission Statements, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development).

Any strategy for sustainable capacity development must meaningfully involve those who are to develop capacity. Capacity, for my purpose is developed to resolve individual, organizational, and community issues. Thus, if long-term capacity development is the goal, it must be accomplished through the establishment, enhancement, and nourishment of quality (win-win) partnerships. Quality partnerships need to have a diverse and rich array of resources capable of addressing the range of issues needing resolution.

Establishing, Enhancing and Sustaining Quality Partnerships: Transformational Leadership

Quality partnerships occur only when "the partners" talk the talk and walk the talk! In other words, don't ask others to do what you will not do. Craig Pace, senior consultant, Covey Leadership Center stated, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." The former includes competence, experience, vision, and leadership that establish resource base. The latter involves honesty, trust, believability, and valuing self and others, which results in credibility. The interdependence and interaction of

knowledge and credibility are the foundation of quality partnerships. From this foundation, participants quickly learn that "you gain power only when you give it away." Competition among partners becomes non-existent, maintenance of one's turf becomes unimportant, and credit for the sharing of resources to resolve an issue is equal to a sum greater than any individual input. In a word, EVERYONE WINS! Let me share a poem from an eighth grader with you. What makes this poem extra special for me is that the young lady is a cousin of the late, distinguished Penn State Professor, Kenneth Wilkinson. Jessica Marie Muniz wrote "Doing Community" which summarizes the idea behind "quality partnerships" where everyone wins!

Not just a place in which people live, but what people do
So much more than what we've come to believe it to be
It's personal deeds performed by people who care
It's being willing to cut down fewer trees for sale, so that my neighbors'
*   farm won't flood*
It's cooperating with others to make life better everywhere
Time volunteered to help children grow and understand the way of life
It's commitment to people who live where I live
It is unselfish giving
It is <u>Love</u>

The building of effective partnerships involves leadership - a special style of leadership, i.e., transformational leadership. Transformational leaders look at what needs to be done, the total resources available - including the context in which people interact and the people who are the members of the quality partnership and then proceed with the task at hand. Transformational leaders have highly developed inter- and intra-personal intelligence (the former being the ability to interact and energize people and the latter being self-motivated and inner directed). Transformational leaders are change agents- catalysts, resource-linkers, process helpers and produce synergism! How do they do this?

Essential Components of Transformational Leadership

Discovery of oneself - Who Am I?
- Clarify personal values and beliefs
- Assess values, guiding principles, competence, and confidence

Appreciation and celebration of the diversity in others
- Shift focus from "me" to others
- Promote constructive controversy - the focus must always be on issues

and not personalities - the former promotes growth while the latter promotes defensiveness, subversiveness, and hostility.

- Demonstrate **trust** in others and self—yields mutual trust, increased risktaking, and innovation. **Only when there is trust will you share** communication and growth.

Everyone has the potential to be creative, but creativity must be nurtured and encouraged in a low-risk environment otherwise creativity will be blocked and can lead to depression —"put downs" are a no-no. **Public praise and private constructive comments are essential elements in the interactive communication process if the goal is quality partnerships.**

Affirmation of shared values by members of the quality partnership
- Develop common ground — a common vision for the future
- Work cooperatively through consensus—build coalitions

Develop capacity in the partnership members
- Put shared values [vision] into action by giving others the power and authority to solve individual and group—organizational problems-**it's called empowerment!**

CREDIBILITY IS ENHANCED WHEN POWER IS SHARED!
Mutual responsibility requires and fosters self-confidence and self-esteem through the process of interactive communication

Serve a purpose within the partnership
- Be visible
- Be approachable and accessible
- Be patient as credible leadership takes time

Sustain hope in the members of the partnership
- Believe in the common goal-vision
- Use positive imagery
- Demonstrate **love** through encouragement and support—create a low-risk environment to encourage and enable risk-taking and innovation

So, if this is what transformational leaders do in order to establish, enhance and build sustainable and quality partnerships, what resources are available for their use?

Horizontal and Vertical Linkages: Internal and External Community Resources

"Transformational lead" partnerships utilize both the horizontal and vertical linkages available to the communities. Capacity development for the purpose of achieving dynamic and viable communities over time must include the total resource package **of the community** as well as those resources **available to the community** from outside its boundaries. This "total" resource package is referred to as horizontal and vertical linkages.

Horizontal linkages refer to the "within" community resources. These resources include, but are not limited to: individual, group/organization, and community resources. Creativity, responsibility, sharing of abilities, time and money are some of the main resources individuals have to bring to quality partnerships. In addition, they know which issues are important to them and on which ones they are willing to "spend" their resources to help resolve. Group and organizational horizontal linkages include all of the foregoing, but on an aggregate basis. Moreover, quality partnerships, without the concern for competition - turf maintenance - will share inter-group and organizational resources (e.g., staff, equipment, cost-sharing, meeting space, phone-fax expenses, contacts, facilities) in order to achieve dynamic and viable communities.

Horizontal linkages of the community incorporate, through the establishment, enhancement and sustainability of quality partnerships, all of the individual and group/organizational resources into a "whole" far greater than the sum of the disparate parts.

Vertical linkages refer to those resources available to the community from "outside" its boundaries. Many of these linkages result from the contacts of the members of quality partnerships. Individual, group/organizational, and community resources reach beyond the boundaries of a community through:

- personal and professional relationships; memberships in state, national, and international associations;
- social, economic, political, and cultural contacts and contracts; access to instantaneous worldwide information and entertainment;
- tailored educational programs delivered through distance educational channels;
- specialized medical diagnoses through telecommunications;
- monetary help with a diverse array of physical, educational, health, economic, environmental, and age related issues; local employment opportunities; and
- the Internet and e-mail linkages.

It is obvious that the "world of telecommunications" is becoming an increasingly important avenue for creating and sustaining quality partnerships both horizontally and vertically in dynamic and viable communities. A bit more about the role of telecommunications later.

Now To Do It: Accounting For and Changing Attitudes - Take Charge!

Quality partnerships and dynamic and viable sustainable communities do not just happen: they are developed and nurtured. They are continually evolving through a well-designed and articulated plan. How does one develop and nurture evolution?

First it is necessary to change traditional attitudes from a strategy of competition to collaboration, from a focus of self-interest to community interest, from perceptions of being resource scarce to being resource rich, from feelings of being knowledge, skill, and process deficient to feelings of abundance in these areas, from fear of the unknown to the excitement and challenge of opportunities lurking in the unknown, and from the decrying of diversity to the embracing and celebration of diversity. One simple approach to the changing of attitudes in these areas is to focus on the characteristics of the issue.

Characteristics of the Issue

Meaning

In magnitude and importance this characteristic of an issue is "tops." Meaning is "targeted" for the establishment, enhancement, and sustainability of a quality partnership. What are some common spots where one partner might have a different meaning than the others in the partnership? First, is the meaning of the issue -

    a. difference in vocabularies
    b. different meaning to same issue
    c. communicating your vocabulary into their vocabulary

Second, because of:

    a. your position, or
    b. the prestige or "power" connected with your position

Ease of Understanding

Clarification of meaning, amount of time considered as an issue, complexity, appropriateness are important to consider here.

Ease of Mastery	Can the intended partners resolve the issue? Will it involve both horizontal and vertical linkages?
Benefits (costs)	Economic, social, political and/or cultural - all those appropriate benefits/costs must be entered into the issue equation.
Pleasure	Will resolution of the issue provide pleasure?
Prestige/Status	Will the intended audience gain prestige/status if the issue is resolved?
Convenience	Will resolution of the issue make life more convenient–easier?
Penalty	What negative aspects could be associated with issue resolution?
Risk	How much? To whom?
What Will People Think (Repercussions)	Is/willissue resolution be socially, culturally, and/or politically acceptable given the current standards and norms?

These characteristics must be addressed before attempting to form quality horizontal and/or vertical linked partnerships. That is, partnerships that will be collaborative in developing strategies to resolve a community issue.

A related component associated with changing attitudes is the process by which partners become award of knowledge, processes, internal and external resources, and how to introduce an issue into the community for sustainability. This component is known as the diffusion process.

Diffusion Paradigm - Processes and Key Information Sources:

Diffusion is a mental process - cognitive and affective that involves six disparate, but logically following stages, and uses varying key information sources to move from one stage to the next.

Table 1: Stages in the Diffusion Process

Underneath each stage in the diffusion process following, ranked in order of importance as influences, are the individuals and organizations likely to affect an individual's decision become involved in the resolution of an issue.

AWARENESS	INTEREST	EVALUATION	TRIAL	ADOPTION	INTEGRATION
Learns about a new issue	Get more information about it	How does this issue effect me/my community	How can this issue be resolved	Issue is resolved	Becomes a part of annual/longtime practice
1. Mass media (radio, TV, newspaper, magazines)	1. Mass media	1. Friends and neighbors	1. Friends and neighbors	1. Personal experience is the most important factor in continued use	1. Personal experience is the most important factor in continued use
2. Educators/ Colleagues	2. Educators/ Colleagues	2. Educators/ Colleagues	2. Educators/ Colleagues	2.Educators/ Colleagues	
3. Friends and neighbors	3. Friends and neighbors	3. Dealers and sales people	3. Dealers and sales people	3. Friends and neighbors	3. Socially economically, culturally, and/or politically ingrained
4. Dealers and sales people	4. Dealers and sales people	4. Mass media	4. Mass media	4. Mass media	
				5. Dealers and sales people	

The most important finding from the diffusion process is that any quality partnership must include the diversity of persons who can help move the issue towards resolution. The diversity of partners includes people from both the horizontal and vertical links of the community.

The Role of Telecommunications in Quality Partnerships and Dynamic and Viable Communities

The array of telecommunications available to "partners" is becoming an increasingly important "tool" in helping to "level" the playing field in small towns and rural places. How can this tool help develop transformational leaders, strengthen both the inside (horizontal linkages) and the outside (vertical linkages), improve the dynamic and viable nature of small towns and rural places, and help to ensure their sustainability?

Distance learning opportunities through pictel, the Internet web pages, e-mail, satellite down links, and local cable access are growing logarithmically. In-home computers utilizing Internet and e-mail, pictel, web page access and satellite down links at school and health care facilities, libraries - more appropriately, information centers (didn't forget Professor Vavrek), banks, and other private/public agencies and organizations are increasingly being made available for use to the residents of all ages in communities - especially those that are dynamic and viable. Increased usage by community residents of this array of growth opportunities must be tempered by a concerted effort to change attitudes regarding information access.

Once people begin to accept and use "virtual information" then telecommunications become a major vehicle for strengthening partnerships; finding case studies to modify and build on for their community; courses - either formal for credit or non-formal, non-credit; public/private agencies and organizations available to communities at little or no cost to a particular community; "at-home" resources to help resolve community issues; and professional associations' membership lists to help find a "fit" with a particular issue. Thus, telecommunications can help establish, enhance and sustain the inside - horizontal linkages and especially the outside or vertical linkages for the purpose of building dynamic and viable sustainable communities.

Thus, We Have Come Full Circle

There is but one strategy for capacity development in this global and inter-galactic age and that is to establish, enhance and sustain quality partnerships in order to develop the capacity of residents of small towns and rural places to build dynamic and viable sustainable communities. Hopefully, some of the concepts - beliefs about the residents of small towns and rural places,

transformational leadership, horizontal and vertical linkages in order to leverage the total resource package available to these places, and the characteristics of an issue to be considered along with the diffusion process by which an issue is recognized and resolved, and the role of telecommunications in leveling the playing field for such communities - I have shared with you, if implemented, will help achieve both the quality partnerships and dynamic and viable communities. It is only when the "total" package is in place that quality partnerships can leverage the resources necessary to build dynamic and viable sustainable communities and telecommunications are helping to provide unlimited access to opportunities in this endeavor.

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