COVER SHEET

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Distributing leadership for initiating university-community engagement

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Abstract:
Facilitating community engagement in education is promoted and emphasised as an investment strategy (Garlick 2000). However, the responsibility for facilitating university-community engagement rests upon university personnel to initiate collaborations with the community. This paper describes and analyses leadership processes for initiating community engagement with the new Queensland University of Technology campus at Caboolture. Data collection and analysis involved observation of practices, and coding interviews, minutes of meetings, and written correspondence with a wide range of participants (i.e., senior QUT staff, lecturers, preservice teachers, principals, school executives and teachers, and other community members). Results indicated that leadership processes involved: (1) articulating visionary directions, (2) communication for instigating change processes, (3) motivating potential key stakeholders, (4) promoting collaboration and team effort, and (5) distributing leadership. This study highlighted the impact of creating positive working environments for developing collaborative partnerships. However, new campuses need to shape university goals to suit individual contexts, which will require considerable input from key stakeholders. Initiating community engagement requires university personnel to connect key stakeholders, and the distribution of leadership will be essential in order to sustain university-community collaborations.

Engagement of communities with universities is an investment strategy (Garlick 2000), and collaboration between a university and its wider community has become central for developing a more just and civil society (Butcher, McFadden, & McMeniman 2003). This collaboration is fundamental for establishing social capital, which is "at the forefront of the attributes required by communities to generate viability in the global economy" (Garlick 2003, 2). Social capital refers to "certain social attributes of a community that provide it with 'wealth' over and above that residing in its human capital, natural resources, and physical and financial assets" (Kilpatrick 2003, 2). Kilpatrick claims there appears to be a relationship between the development of social capital and learning. Indeed, the literature emphasises the importance of developing learning communities, which aims at addressing its needs through partnerships in order to cultivate social capital (Kilpatrick, Barrett, & Jones 2003).

Learning communities may create social cohesion, capacity building and economic development (Kilpatrick et al. 2003). There are features that assist the development of learning communities. For example, the combination of geographical locations, common interests, and community needs may contribute to forming collaborative partnerships. Importantly, community

engagement with universities can reinforce the values of education (Cope & Leatherwood 2001), which occurs most effectively when community "groups and institutions have united forces to promote systematic societal change and share (or jointly own) the 'risks, responsibilities and rewards'" (Himmelmann 1994, 28).

Facilitating university-community leadership for education

Effective leadership is a key for implementing long-lasting change (Allen & Wing 2003; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning 2001). Whether in universities or schools, effective leadership can make a difference to the educational outcomes (e.g., Shields & Glatter 2003). However, today's leaders need to be more sophisticated in order to meet the challenges of a more complex society (Fullan 2001). Current educational leaders need to extend past the traditional views of leadership based on an individual's charisma (Allen & Wing 2003). As leadership is a creative endeavour it may be considered an art form (Grint 2003), particularly as there is no one way to lead, and catering for unexpected situations necessitates carefully crafted flexibility from leaders (Fidler & Atton 2004). Moreover, the instigation and development of community engagement with a university requires creative leadership, which is generally worked within a problem-based approach (see Cunningham & Cordeiro 2002). Yet leadership cannot be haphazard, instead it needs to be purposeful and strategic to meet the challenges of initiating and developing university-community engagement (e.g., Preedy, Glatter, & Wise 2003). There are further characteristics and skills that may assist today's leaders engage their communities, which includes the ability to: articulate visionary directions, communication for instigating change processes, motivate potential key stakeholders, promote collaboration and team effort, and distribute leadership.

Leaders need to project a vision for initiating new practices. This vision must be based on collective values and beliefs so as to inspire, motivate and empower others to work toward achieving common goals (Allen & Wing 2003). Hence, the production and articulation of explicit shared goals require clear visions (Allen & Wing 2003). Not only should the goals be explicit but also establishing procedures for accomplishing the goals need to be outlined, which includes organising schedules and personnel to be involved in potential university-community collaborations (Wiewel & Lieber 1998, 6). Visionary directions that lead to action may aid in benchmarking community engagement in order to measure future progress (Letven, Osteimer, & Statham 2001).

Understanding processes for initiating university-community engagement involves understanding community values, needs, expectations, and ways to initiate leadership in order to facilitate such processes. These include leaders' abilities to share power and resources equitably with key stakeholders. Part of community expectations involves the inclusion of community concerns about the goals and outcomes of a community-university partnership (Ramaley 2001). Processes for initiating community engagement also need to consider that "partnerships are learning environments" (Brukardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher 2004, 9), therefore, change processes need to be communicated to all parties involved in the potential collaboration.

Effective leaders create conditions to motivate and encourage commitment of key stakeholders to work as a group. "University engagement is grounded in a growing body of scholarly research that demonstrates its effective impact on teaching, learning and community-based problem solving" (Brukardt et al. 2004, 3). The perspective of potential participants needs to be considered to "develop a unique and tailored strategy to recruit each prospective partner" (Rubin 2002, 45). Disagreements may arise from genuine concern for learning, which can become learning experiences for the collective (Fullan 2001, 41). Building relationships and trust can aid the motivation of key stakeholders, particularly if leaders are mindful of needs and purposes for establishing such relationships. "Collaboration is a planning approach that presupposes constructing relationships between parties, since planning, gathering resources, and implementing what has been planned are arrived at through joint effort" (Wiewel & Lieber 1998, 5).

Supportive working relationships can rouse confidence in colleagues to experiment with practices (Hargreaves et al. 2001) to create "new theories of community engagement coupled with practical examples" (Brukardt et al. 2004, 11). Effective collaboration may be facilitated through professional dialogue, but leaders need to ensure sufficient time and resources are allocated for meaningful involvement (Hargreaves et al. 2001). The leader "becomes a context setter, the designer of a learning experience—not an authority figure with solutions" (Fullan 2001 112). It appears that involving more community partners in leadership generates greater team cohesion (Pugalee, Frykolm, & Shaka 2001) provided there are mutually beneficial arrangements with commonly shared agendas. A shared agenda also shares the power and responsibility as well as the risks and rewards (Himmelmann 1994; Ramaley 2001). Furthermore, Ramaley claims that embracing an engagement agenda aims to strengthen democracy, encourage responsible citizenship and civic duty, and facilitate a commitment to education.

Effective leadership should foster leadership in others (Fullan 2001). For any organisation to be effective, strategic planning needs the commitment and ownership of all staff, not just senior managers (Preedy, Glatter, & Wise 2003). Effective leadership encourages interaction and management across key stakeholder groups (Pierce & Johnson 1997). Brukardt et al (2004) refer to distributing leadership as recruiting and supporting "new champions". This type of leadership is termed "situated enabling" (Faulk & Mulford 2000 cited in Kilpatrick 2003), as it is situated in a community with particular needs, and "such leadership must enable the participation and interaction between the diversity of stakeholders" (Kilpatrick 2003, 5). Key stakeholders can provide meaningful information for planning and implementing innovations (Allen & Wing 2003; Davis & Ellison 2003; Rubin 2002); however initiatives can fail to involve sufficient stakeholders (Duke 2004), even though there is ample evidence to suggest that involving more stakeholders can have a wider influence on implementing innovations (Kember 2000).

Context for this study
This study describes and analyses leadership processes for enacting community engagement with a new university campus. In particular, a key part of this study involves investigating university-community interactions and

analysing dialogue for facilitating engagement between the Faculty of Education and a rural community. Caboolture Campus is an outreach campus of the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and commenced offering a Bachelor of Education program at the beginning of 2005. The QUT Blueprint (2003) emphasises engagement as a theme to guide strategic thinking, and implementing this direction requires "partnering with other organisations" to "open up opportunities" and "provide ways of sharing resources or programs" (QUT Blueprint 2003, 7). QUT statements and briefs provided directions to guide new campus staff. Yet, how does a university initiate community engagement? This paper aims to describe and analyse the processes that sought to initiate university-community engagement linked to a new campus.

Data collection methods and analysis

Data collection methods included interviews and dialogue with key university staff, minutes of Faculty of Education and school community meetings, observation of university-community participation in programs, university documents (e.g., policies), and written correspondence between key stakeholders (i.e., university staff, preservice teachers, and community participants). Data were gathered over a one-year period on processes for initiating university-community engagement with emphasis on: (1) articulation of visionary directions, (2) communication for instigating change processes, (3) motivating potential key stakeholders, (4) promotion of collaboration and team effort, and (5) distribution of leadership. Written documentation (i.e., minutes of meetings, policies, letters, and emails), observations of practices, and interviews were coded for commonalities (Hittleman & Simon 2002) within the above five themes. The following results and discussion will also be reported under these themes.

Results and discussion

Articulating visionary directions
University policies provided directions in order to guide the institution's functions and processes. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) articulated its plans for linking the university with local communities by encouraging field-based learning and professional development. The QUT Blueprint (2003) emphasised engagement as a theme to guide strategic thinking, and implementing this direction required "partnering with other organisations" to "open up opportunities" and "provide ways of sharing resources or programs" (QUT Blueprint 2003, 7). These statements and briefs provided visionary directions to guide new campus staff.

In order to articulate visionary directions, leaders aimed to understand the needs of institutions and potential participants. Organising meetings aided in gathering information to ascertain participants' needs, which provided valuable understandings for articulating educational directions. Academic leadership in the Faculty of Education included establishing a focus group for preservice teachers and a reference group for school leaders (e.g., principals, deputy principals, and teachers). Each group had three meetings during the year. Initial meetings indicated a mixture of excitement, anxiety and concerns about formulating group cohesion. Nevertheless, setting agendas in consultation with potential key stakeholders became a proactive medium for articulating visionary

directions. These meetings focused on establishing university-community relationships for mutual benefit. For example, the community had strong interest in professional development on literacy in middle schooling and Indigenous studies, while the university had interests in developing their preservice teachers and accessing school resources for teaching purposes. These items were added to the agenda and were opened for discussion for which positive results of professional development plans, Indigenous involvement, and the use of school resources were proposed. One acting principal of a state school noted in an email, "This has been a valuable two-way learning exchange".

Presenting the university to the community allowed for university agendas to combine with community agendas. For example, 16 schools within the vicinity of the university conducted district meetings. Midway throughout the year, the university agenda of community engagement had reached these district meetings for which university campus leaders were invited to attend. This allowed for more open discussion on forming university-community relationships. Partnership needs were clearly articulated at this meeting, and a subsequent email from the Chair expressed interest in having literacy and science education seminars and workshops conducted by university personnel. The Chair also stated, "We would welcome as many student teachers as you could make available to work beside teachers in both extension and learning intervention groups". Crucial to the university agenda was the acceptance of preservice teachers into the middle-years school, as this campus focused on middle schooling. The Chair provided the Faculty of Education executive with contact details of the district schools so more personalised contact for organising middle-school arrangements could be created.

As a result of year-long university-community development, the new campus constructed its own policy under the QUT Blueprint (2003). The campus policy now aims to "foster a culture of partnership and engagement" by expanding "the number of community engagement activities with a focus on projects linked to the academic programs of the campus" (QUT 2005, 3). Most importantly, is the directive to "embed the campus within the QUT community" (QUT 2005, 3); however this policy needs to advance the process by suggesting ways to embed the campus with the community.

Communication for instigating change processes
Effective leadership requires an understanding of change processes (Fullan 2001). From the beginning, university staff was prepared to expect the unexpected and understood the complexities of community needs. Not surprisingly, developing new structures and frameworks were met with positive and negative responses from key stakeholders in both university and community settings. Miscommunications occurred. One executive had misread the venue for a meeting and as a consequence missed the meeting; however this was met with an endeavour to "try to do better next time".

Communication for instigating change processes requires an understanding of how to address community and university concerns. Significant concerns were expressed by two university staff members about expectations for their involvement in the new campus. They had reservations about the "extra workload" required of them to "instigate negotiated programs", and had

concerns about equity issues for the delivery of the same course across campuses. The vision for the new campus was a middle-school focus with increased preservice teacher involvement in schools. Nevertheless, a few preservice teachers also expressed concern about not receiving a more community-based program. These were students who, as one preservice teacher expressed, expected a "more practical-based program" and being "out in classrooms learning the information first hand".

Open communication from the outset was essential, and providing positive and constructive feedback to stakeholders for their involvement in university engagement tended to encourage further participation. Many principals had varying viewpoints and there was considerable negotiation at the reference group meetings to find middle ground. There were some principals who did not want to be involved in the program. It appeared difficult for the university to connect government and non-government education sectors, which only occurred at three informal talks (breakfast, morning tea, and luncheon). Greater collaboration between these sectors in the wider community will need to be placed on future agendas to ensure community engagement is comprehensive, inclusive, and reaches maximum potential.

University executives (e.g., Vice Chancellor, deans, executive deans, course coordinators) were available to the campus community as a show of support and interest for initiating university-community collaborations. This supportive environment may have contributed to the development of positive relationships, as various community groups were present at times for such interactions. In addition, university staff initiated media releases about university-community engagement, which aimed to promote the university's presence and willingness to be involved. Change processes can be slow; however this environment was a new setting and as such became a sponge for initiating activities. It may be that stakeholders wanted to be on the ground level in order to have a firm say on educational directions. Indeed, changing practices may be more difficult than initiating new practices.

Motivating potential key stakeholders
The university took the initiative to inform potential key stakeholders of its intentions. Inviting stakeholders (including university and community executives) to meetings and informal gatherings aided in forming relationships and motivating them into action. To illustrate, invitations to school executives to attend an informal breakfast, morning tea, and light luncheon at early points in the year assisted all parties to become familiar with each other and allowed opportunities to present intentions. As a result of a breakfast talk, a deputy principal emailed "I look forward to working closer with you and your students, as I can see huge benefits for both parties". It was interesting to note that the same deputy principal was "happy to be part of a discussion panel" for educating preservice teachers and noted informal meetings as a way to discuss issues, point in case, "maybe we could catch up for coffee".

Further motivation included the formation of a focus group for preservice teachers and a reference group for community leaders. The focus group was emailed to participate in "informal chats" to discuss "positives and negatives of studying at the campus and how to improve the learning environment for the future". Responses to this meeting highlighted community atmosphere and

university staff as positives, however, suggestions for improvement included enhancing the library facilities and replacing any video lectures with live lectures. As a result of this discussion, measures were taken to develop library resources and action was sought to minimise video lectures.

The Faculty of Education request to have preservice teachers placed in local schools had motivated school executives to offer school placements. For example, one school principal wrote, "we are able to accommodate 6 preservice teachers", another stated "we will take 4 students on any Friday". Offers of providing professional development to the community further aided in motivating key stakeholders. A principal wrote, "It was great to see around your campus and hear about your future plans. I look forward to working with you in the next phase of our partnership". This meeting was reciprocated with positive comments on community engagement with the university, for example, a university academic coordinator wrote to the reference group,

> These discussions were helpful in providing a framework as to how we can promote the relationships between the schools and the university. I am in the process of collating the data from your surveys and will stay in touch about further activities with the university.

Promoting collaboration and team effort
As the year progressed more collaboration between the community and the university became apparent. Principals cooperated with lecturers, community services (e.g., Anglicare and Smith Family) interacted with preservice teachers, and university executives networked with the full range of stakeholders. Teams were beginning to form after three informal gatherings (i.e., the breakfast, morning tea, and light luncheon), and subsequently became further evident during planned meetings. Part of promoting collaboration and team effort was the construction of shared agendas (see Thompson, Story, & Butler 2003), and these agendas became clearer as stakeholders presented their needs and concerns.

Establishing partnerships required clarity on roles and responsibilities. The first reference group meeting, which involved school executives and university staff agreed upon ensuring mutual respect, open communication, sharing of resources and teachers, facilitating opportunities for professional development, and developing benefits for all parties (i.e., preservice teachers, students, teachers, academics and the wider community). One community staff member was appreciative of university executive for making these connections with schools and wrote "Thanks so much for establishing this relationship. I think this will be ongoing and fruitful for all".

Distributing leadership
Leadership distribution could be noted in the focus and reference group meetings, along with individual school executives who wanted university involvement for specific purposes. For example, one principal requested preservice teachers for a school innovation entitled "Learning Engagement Online", which focused on assisting children who experienced learning difficulties. This school provided training for these preservice teachers, which further indicated an educative partnership. Two other examples included a state school deputy principal who educated preservice teachers on the

planning, implementation and review processes of her school's middle-year's program, and a principal who hosted preservice teachers' discussions on middle-school teaching and learning tasks.

Another principal led the way for further funding for his school by collaborating with the university on securing resources for the preparation of preservice teachers. He highlighted the mutual benefit to the community and university by stating anticipated outcomes. For instance, he wrote that as a result of this collaboration "teachers can increase their own knowledge thus benefiting their own professional development and encouraging lifelong learning". He also stated that accessing these additional resources may enhance preservice teachers "effectiveness within the practicums which may have the potential to increase the quality of our future teachers". Most important was his vision to "develop our relations with our collaborative partners".

Executives at the new campus were commended by university leaders from the central campus and, in turn, course coordinators at the new campus were supported to undertake leadership roles and experiment with implementing university-community activities. This positive environment lead to distributing leadership roles to lecturers who then devised three innovations, namely: (1) involvement of teachers, students, and parents in an ICT program entitled "The Fifth Dimension", where students used clay and technology (claymation) to create stop-motion animation over eight two-hour sessions; (2) a cohort of preservice teachers involved in Health and Physical Education (H/PE) instructed middle-school students on a variety of PE skills over a six-week period; and (3) an inventive teaching sequence was used with 14 preservice teachers and two classes of middle-school students for understanding sustainable living issues such as sustaining frog habitats, chemical effects on water, renewable energy and electromagnetism. Such distribution of leadership broadened the scope of the university-community collaborations for the Faculty of Education and allowed more partners to enter the relationship. Feedback from lecturers, preservice teachers, teachers, and students indicated suggestions for improvements and sufficient positive responses for these programs to continue on a larger scale the following year.

Summary and conclusion

Institutions need to develop their own academic priorities with clear goals for achieving those priorities (Holland 1997). Articulating visionary directions for initiating university-community engagement provide fundamental frameworks for university personnel. Such visions consider the needs of the university and its community, and should be reflected in the university's goals (Wolff & Maurana 2001). However, new campuses need to shape these goals to suit the individual contexts, which require considerable collaboration between key stakeholders.

Clearly, establishing trust between a university and its community was the basis for creating partnerships. Forming these relationships were met with positive and negative reactions as each party aimed to discover their roles and responsibilities, so there needed to be adequate time to tighten such partnerships (Kriesky & Cote 2003). Communication for instigating change processes involved continuous flexibility, compromise, and feedback in order to

strengthen the partnerships (Wolff & Maurana 2001), and it also required partners to have a collective understanding of change processes and how to effectively implement initiatives.

University personnel needed to understand how to motivate potential key stakeholders in order to form partnerships. This study indicated that mutually beneficial arrangements such as sharing of resources and providing services can motivate both university staff and community stakeholders. Informal gatherings and formal meetings can further assist in establishing, developing, and consolidating collaborative partnerships. Informal gatherings where a university hosts for the community may prove to be highly valuable in making connections between public and private sectors.

A key factor for success is effective leadership (Fullan 2001). This study highlighted the impact of leaders creating positive working environments for developing collaborative partnerships, however, establishing such partnerships may prove easier than maintaining them over periods of time. Indeed, as the university extends itself further into the community through significant interactions and media coverage, more and more university involvement may be expected by the community. The difficulty will be staffing areas of need; hence distributing leadership will be essential. To cater for the range of potential university-community interactions will require further empowerment of community members in leadership roles. The university would need to facilitate these leadership roles through professional development with an aim to create autonomy and sustainability. Constraints that surround such proposals will require more meetings with the wider community.

It may be noted in this study that a shared agenda occurs through effective communication where key stakeholders consider the various viewpoints. Providing reasons for involvement in particular innovations and deliberating concerns and issues may shape collective educational focuses, and may also develop new modes of practices by experimenting with innovations (see Brukardt et al. 2004). Consultation on processes and projects must be open to critical discussion as this aims to gain trust for securing further university-community engagement.

It may be concluded that the initial facilitation of community engagement rests upon university personnel to connect key stakeholders.   However, the continued process of initiating university-community engagement requires collaborative leadership, which involves articulating visionary directions, communication for instigating change processes, motivating potential key stakeholders, promoting collaboration and team effort, and distributing leadership. Importantly, distributing leadership will be required in order to sustain university-community collaborations.

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