
Stewards of Simultaneous Renewal: Re-grounding Our Work in Memory, Relationships and Time

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Abstract: This case-in-point intimately reminds PDS stakeholders of the shared responsibility that is stewardship. In order to ensure our partnerships are prioritizing simultaneous renewal, we must actively revisit our emotional archives, relationships of mutuality, and shared time.

KEYWORDS: simultaneous renewal, passions, stewardship, relationships of mutuality, time, memories

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community
2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants

Ideally, Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships are delicately constructed in a third space (Zeichner, 2010). They are defined by stakeholders through layers of conceptual and philosophical purposes (Book, 1996). The foundations of partnerships are frequently revisited by stakeholders when considering innovative opportunities for professional growth, reflection, and transformation. This work, establishing and preserving PDS partnerships, is to be driven by the aim of simultaneous renewal (Goodlad, 1994). As stakeholders actively embrace renewal, its “architectural compass” draws into question “form and space and therefore ... human relationships and the quality of those relationships” (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018, p. 29).

Thus, what happens when partners no longer find themselves returning to the foundation of their work? It is no surprise to anyone in the field of education that day to day requirements mysteriously erode precious hours of the week. After some time, individuals rooted in school-university partnerships grow unable to respond to items flooding their inboxes unless they have red flags attached. However, what if these missed items pertain to individual and collective passions? Preferably, it is through the active pursuance of individual and collective passions that stakeholders foster the growth of partnerships by providing purposeful time and space.

In this article, I re-acclimate the daily business of PDS partnerships in Goodlad's legacy of simultaneous renewal (1994). In doing such, I attempt to ground our unconditionally busy lives back within three pillars of stewardship: memory, relationships of mutuality, and time (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018). Ultimately, I argue that partnerships must make purposeful space for the advancement of stewardship in order to continue the crucial work of simultaneous renewal.

Background

National reports have identified a need for tougher tests, and higher expectations have set forth continuous cycles of education reform in the United States (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1982; National Governors Association, 1986). Commission and task-force reports directed at failing schools, teacher education, and curricular decisions are “symptomatic of inadequate renewing behaviors” which narrowly address incompetence (Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988). Institutions, including public schools and universities alike, are troubled by report recommendations. Goodlad (1988) finds that instead of considering faults in conceptual planning or faculty development, institutions find it less painful to identify and remediate the inadequacies of individuals. As illustrated by Sirotnik and Goodlad (1988), this cycle of school reform superficially applies quick fixes to otherwise profound opportunities for renewal.

In response to the cyclical, quick fix nature of education reform, Goodlad (1988) argues that institutions do not have the capability to stand still; “they renew or decline” (p. 10). Goodlad (1994) presents an alternative to inadequate reform. This alternative, upon which school-university partnerships are constructed, is simultaneous renewal. Simultaneous renewal prioritizes opportunities for all partnership stakeholders to invest in mutual efforts with experts committed to similar work. Stemming from partnership generated inquiry, simultaneous renewal is expected to occur in both school and university settings when relevant knowledge and alternative, or “countervailing ideas for practice,” are brought to the table (Sirotnik & Goodlad, p.10, 1988).

School-university partnerships are rooted in this innovative approach to education renewal. It takes “detached” time and space in order to provoke ongoing renewal through periods of sustained dialogue and reflection across all stakeholders (Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988). Individuals cannot grow complacent in a partnership and assume that renewal is not needed. Stakeholders in

a partnership cannot place dialogue and reflection aside, waiting for a more opportune time to engage after an inbox is cleared. In doing such, complacency and daily priorities may lead to a partnership's decline.

Context

This conceptual work is based in a Mid-Atlantic university that has a long-standing PDS partnership between the local school district and college of education. Each year, undergraduate seniors who elect to take part in the Professional Development School (PDS), abandon the university calendar and follow the school district calendar from August through June. In the fall, teacher candidates spend four days per week in their cooperating classroom. During the fifth day and one night per week, teacher candidates complete their methods coursework. In the spring, teacher candidates spend five days per week in the same cooperating classroom and attend one weekly seminar in the evening.

Teacher educators in this context identify along a spectrum of roles in the school district and university. These partners may alternatively identify themselves as released classroom teachers, current classroom teachers, retired classroom teachers, university faculty, and/or PhD students. Regardless of role or title in each separate institution, all teacher educators in this partnership are involved with teacher candidate instruction and/or supervision.

While this context may be helpful in orienting the work to follow, I believe it is also important to note that these concepts, grounded in John Goodlad's agenda, may also pertain to other PDS settings. The ensuing manuscript has been purposefully written in first person, as it refers to my own reflections stemming from time spent as a teacher educator in one PDS partnership. It is with love and devotion that I share my concerns in order to spur conversations that purposefully ground our PDS's renewal back in meaningful stewardship.

Stewards of Memory

Partnerships carry two types of memories, official and individual histories (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018). To be a steward of collective memory in the space of a partnership is to "consciously curate an archive" that includes "the names and writing of founders, the genealogy of core ideas and ideals, and the chronology of milestone events" (p. 143). Individual histories are then woven throughout official archives as shared experiences of the past are passed on. In essence, Bullough and Rosenberg (2018) argue that each individual within a partnership must become a "cultural genome of a shared past" (p. 143).

While becoming stewards of a partnerships' collective memory sounds enticing and vital to the survival of its work, it may also prove to be quite difficult. Over the course of the past five years, the ebb and flow of stakeholders in my partnership has presented challenges to stewardship. New administrators, teacher educators and cooperating teachers coupled with the retirement of multiple long-standing stakeholders have created barriers for this work. Similar to Soder's (2016) reflection on the preservation of Goodlad's work, a partnership must navigate "how to keep the essence of the program, yet change it as necessary with changing circumstances" (p. 287).

It is no wonder, with all of these changes, that valued archives have been buried. Over the course of just a few years, I have seen a partnerships' collective memory transition into individual memories held by just a few stakeholders (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018). Under this guise, past

practices are discussed in troubling ways. Current stakeholders are left wondering about activities and decisions that now seem dubious as partners do not have a living archive of our cultural past. Bullough and Rosenberg warn that “the lack of interest *in* the past and the lack of knowledge *of* the past tend to be accompanied by authoritarian and utopian thinking” (Gunn Allen, p. 589, 1999 cited in Bullough & Rosenberg, p. 143, 2018).

While it may feel empowering to plan and implement new and innovative practices, this must be done with a nod to the past. Partnerships need to find ways to archive these memories because the original foundation of a partnership will continue to shape future practices. When individual stakeholders strive to share, listen, and learn from a collective memory, the work of simultaneous renewal is infused in a partnership. Likewise, a partnership must flexibly consider the needs of current stakeholders by “including their wisdom and practical knowledge, rather than fixing [their] deficiencies” (Bullough & Rosenberg, p. 26, 2018). In order to find a balance in which partnerships celebrate their antiquity and build upon current strengths, stakeholder discourse must exist with relationships of mutuality.

Stewards of Relationships

Daily practices may leave individual stakeholders performing as soloists, navigating a near-impossible selection of music. In doing so, partnerships slowly lose sight of their ensemble (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018). As individuals try to re-join this ensemble, fear of the “external control directing a rearrangement and reshaping of aspects of established practice” controls the narrative (p. 25). Instead of backing away from this fear of reform, restructuring, and reculturing, stakeholders must take on a different perspective. Stemming from the powerful philosophies of Dewey, Goodlad advances that partnerships must frame the opportunity for educational improvement as a learning problem. Simultaneous renewal promises an approach to educational change which develops from, draws upon, and “enhances the talents and abilities of all those who have a stake in a problem and its solution or its better management” (Bullough & Rosenberg, p. 25, 2018).

Individuals in a partnership must ground their work in relationships of mutuality. In order to develop and flourish as individuals and a collective whole, it is necessary to engage in democratic relationships that depend “upon what some would choose to call generosity, trust, and respect, and yet others (in whose numbers am I) would boldly term love” (Kerr, as cited in Soder, Goodlad & McMannon, p. 13, 2001). Simultaneous renewal is an internal process which requires motivation, dedication, and time (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018). Stakeholders must make time for relationships because while individuals may be different from one another, partnerships are also “dependent on each other in so complex a manner” (Dewey, as cited in Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018).

This past school year I had the privilege of working alongside a teacher candidate and her cooperating teacher as a triad of inquirers. In a cyclical nature, we began exploring problems of practice present in the classroom and my own supervision through peer coaching pre-observation meetings, observations, and debriefs. It was through the development of our triad relationship that we began to trust one another and were able to foster continued professional growth. Building this relationship took time, dedication, and an interest in learning from and with one another. However, I fear that without purposeful creation of time and space, stewardship of such relationships are quickly becoming few and far between.

By embracing relationships of mutuality, partnerships inherently welcome discussions that examine our institutional tensions, rather than avoid them (Burns, Yendol-Hoppey, Nolan, & Badiali, 2013). The cultural norm of shared decision making creates space for cognitive dissonance and places value in the dialogue more so than the logistics of hasty next steps. In order to create and maintain a shared investment in this stewardship of relationships, partnerships must prioritize time.

Stewards of Time

Even the strongest partnerships are continuously tested by full inboxes, seemingly unimportant meetings, and unexpected high fevers. After some point, perhaps a sunken morale is felt by multiple stakeholders as individuals work tirelessly to try and stay afloat. Goodlad (1990) warns that it is self-deceiving and ludicrous to expect renewal to happen as individuals and collective partnerships continue a usual routine. Stitzlein (2017) cautions that by handing over care of public institutions, individuals assume democracy has and will continue to operate with or without active commitment on each individual's part. And yet, it comes as a frustrating surprise to individual stakeholders that after a period of success in which a partnership seemingly ran itself, an impending decline seems inevitable.

While it may seem impossible, individual stakeholders must become stewards who actively consider the past, present, and future of a partnership. Bullough & Rosenberg (2018) argue that "imagining is central to stewardship, and it is possible only when we care as deeply about imagined future generations as we do about our own" (p. 141). When planning semester-long endeavors, it is an obligation to commit to time in which stakeholders engage in conceptualizing the future of a partnership.

Participating in a PDS partnership requires a commitment of time that will eventually impact more than one class of 24 students. I have seen and experienced time constraints weigh on a partnership as the demands of our profession increase. As such, it becomes easy and elusive to participate in a partnership without a full commitment to the simultaneous renewal of education. This, however, becomes the downfall of our work. Simultaneous renewal within partnerships is vastly enhanced when *all* stakeholders champion time dedicated to the development and preservation of a collective memory and relationships of mutuality.

Conclusion

It has taken a few years for me to begin to understand the delicate yet vital nature of school-university partnerships. Stakeholders in these partnerships are tasked with the daunting challenge of fostering the simultaneous renewal of education for our present and future contexts. However, just as I found myself focused in a daily routine of tasks, it, too, is easy for stakeholders to lose sight of the bigger project, one that is continuously shaping our tomorrow (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018). In closing, I would like to task you with becoming a steward of your PDS by asking questions about the foundations of your partnership, reading archived publications, and prioritizing time for open dialogue. The work of school-university partnerships is essential to the renewal of education in our country, but these partnerships will only make an impact with each stakeholder's active stewardship.

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