

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR SERVICE-LEARNING



OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Align the philosophy, mission, terminology and concepts underpinning collaborative partnership for the triad (CHESP) model.
- Design a collaborative partnership.
- Implement a collaborative partnership.
- Apply the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain a collaborative partnership.
- Monitor, evaluate and institute feedback mechanisms among partners.
- Complete the template for the design of a module integrating service-learning in the curriculum. Use Appendix A: SECTION A: 3, 4, 15 and 16; and SECTION B: *Phase 1: Module Development and Design: 2; Phase 2: Module Implementation: 2, 5 and 6; Phase 4: Module Evaluation: 1, 2 and 3.* You may find it useful to draw on the content of Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 to complete the template.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Tennyson and Wilde (2000: 10):

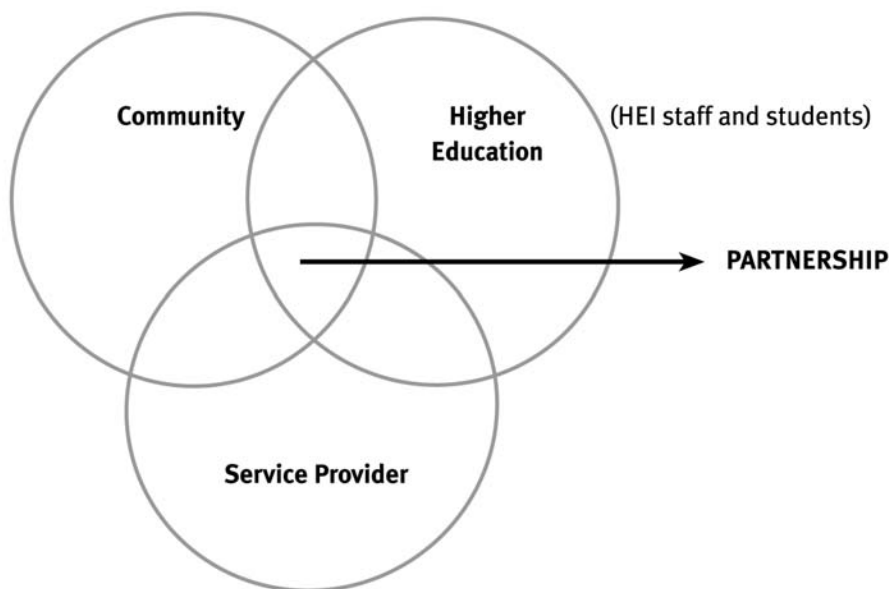
A partnership is an alliance between organisations from two or more sectors that commit themselves to working together to undertake a sustainable development project. Such a partnership undertakes to share risks and benefits, review the relationship regularly and revise the partnership as necessary.

The notion of working in partnerships is not new. However, in service-learning it is necessary to formalise informal connections and relationships to ensure effective interaction and a participatory approach to development initiatives. This chapter highlights the need for transformation of learning experience through partnership, and community development through collaboration among communities, services and HEIs.

The Reconstruction and Development Plan (ANC, 1994) provided a framework for redress of the imbalances of the past, which were manifested by social and economic disparities and inequalities in South African society. This strategic plan suggests that partnerships are imperative to its success and implementation. As the national government has decentralised various services, it has called upon the HEIs – in partnership with communities – to assist in achieving and sustaining service delivery.

In South Africa, one of the implicit values of partnership is the commitment to social transformation and redistribution through building and sharing of capacity. A partnership is a strategy that can be used to improve communities through social and human capital development (Nchabeleng, 2000). The CHESP model identifies three partners that form a triad: the service providers, the community and the HEI. According to Tennyson and Wilde (2000), a tri-sector partnership is an approach that could ensure that economic growth and opportunity are more equitable and sustainable for the partners. The formation of a triad partnership has the added value of a third partner whose presence could diffuse power struggles.

Figure 5.1: Triad Partnership Model: The CHESP Model



(Lazarus, 2001)

CHESP has been used as a vehicle by a number of South African HEIs to initiate and facilitate the development of such partnerships for the implementation of service-learning. The main goal of CHESP has been to contribute to the development of South African civil society through the development and promotion of socially responsive models for higher education; and central to these models is the development of partnerships among communities, HEIs and the service sectors (Lazarus, 2001: 1). The purpose of these tripartite partnerships is threefold: (1) community empowerment and development; (2) transformation of the higher education system in relation to community needs; and (3) enhancing service delivery to previously disadvantaged communities (Lazarus, 2001: 1). The partnership within the context of service-learning is appropriately described by Gelmon and Holland (1998: 5) as “knowledge based collaborations in which all partners have things to teach each other, things to learn from each other, and things they will learn together”.

Service-learning involves a form of knowledge production that presents the academy with an opportunity to break its myopic preoccupation with academic forms of knowledge by validating experiential, indigenous, tacit and pre-theoretical knowledge endemic to the non-academic world (Muller and Subotsky, 2001: 10). Lazarus asserts:

It is within the partnership, when confronted with the different realities and forms of knowledge that each partner brings, that new realities and new forms of knowledge emerge and it is also within the context of effective partnership that the voice of the community and its reality is actually heard. (Lazarus, 2001: 8)

Efforts at community development can be expanded through partnerships between various stakeholders to ensure that complex social problems are overcome and to increase the impact of such interventions. In a healthy partnership each stakeholder brings a distinctive contribution to service-learning so that, together, the partners are able to do more than they could if they were on their own. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

5.1.1 Philosophy

A philosophy guides and shapes a partnership; thus it is important that the philosophical context of the partnership (Jacoby, 1999) is clarified and that these boundaries are set. When HEIs contribute to enhanced outcomes for the community, they simultaneously benefit themselves through enhancement of student learning and through application and research opportunities. It is the element of *reciprocity* that elevates partnership to the level of philosophy:

...an expression of values – service to others, community development and empowerment, reciprocal learning – which determines the purpose, nature and process of social and educational exchange between learners (students) and the people they serve. (Stanton, 1990, in Jacoby, 2003)

5.1.2 Mission

Partnerships bring stakeholders together to focus on achieving a mission and vision. Successful partnerships are aligned with the institutional missions, have institutional support, and reflect and influence the goals of the institution (Jacoby, 1999). A clear distinctiveness of purpose and goals (e.g. institutional mission, service-learning module outcomes, service and community needs) provides a basis for selecting among potential partnerships (Bingle and Hatcher, 2002). It also facilitates the process of information sharing and negotiation among partners about expectations, benefits and outcomes.

5.1.3 Definition

Partnerships are formal, long-term relationships agreed to by communities, HEIs and service agencies to achieve common outcomes. Partnerships can stimulate social change, and empowerment, and they concentrate on advancing a shared vision (Kaplan, 1985; Gray, 1989).

Partnership is the joint action of more than one party, which is not just focused on intended outcomes and impact but also on the learning, development and change that occur during the process. Partnership is also associated with collaboration, co-operation and the concerted effort of developing sustainable relationships among partners.

The following key indicators could be used to guide the formation of partnerships and as principles for forming and evaluating successful partnerships:

- Commitment to change and transformation;
- Shared philosophy, mission, vision, values and outcomes;
- A high priority on trust, mutual accountability and responsibility;
- Emphasis on collaborative relationships;
- Effective communication, evaluation and feedback;
- Emphasis on reciprocity;
- Acknowledging equality and equity; and
- Designed for sustainability.

5.2 THE STAGES OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Different building blocks are linked to the different stages of partnership development. According to Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman (1993: 320) there are four stages of partnership development:

1. Formation;
2. Implementation;
3. Maintenance; and
4. Outcome.

The **formation** stage of partnership development occurs at the initiation of funding and formation of working groups representative of key individuals who will steer the partnership. Within this stage the following aspects are important; resources exchanged by potential partners that lead to inter-organisational co-operation; advantages to potential partners in forming the partnership; and the articulation of a clear mission and outcomes for the partnership. Thus it is important at this stage that partners discover information about one another and determine the scope of the partnership (Cauley, 2000: 13). The formation stage is stimulated by the following conditions: positive attitudes towards coordination; mutual need or purpose; resource scarcity; failure of existing efforts to address the challenge; previous history of collaboration; and compatibility and capacity to sustain partnership and foster an environment for non-judgmental shared communication (Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman, 1993: 320).

Case Study 1

The Formation Stage

The process of conceptualisation began at the workshop (13-16 March) at Valley Trust. During this workshop each partnership was given the opportunity to engage in dialogue with one another to begin the process of partnership. At this point Ms Mkhize acted as a representative for her community (Cato Manor, Umlazi and Botha's Hill), Dr Sliep acted as a representative for her service provider (Valley Trust) and Ms Frizelle acted as a representative for her students (Psychology III university students). It was decided in early discussions that all three partners would be equally involved in the design, implementation and assessment of the university module. A number of meetings proceeded at which time the module structure was decided on in collaboration. The module content, lecturing responsibilities, mentoring/ supervision responsibilities and method of assessment were decided on.

For more information: www.chesp.org.za/docs/psychology

The **implementation** stage of partnership development is characterised by working groups representative of key individuals conducting a needs assessment to determine the constituents' concerns and develop intervention plans. Continuous and honest communication in committees, with regard to sharing of and debating ideas, is essential to the success of the implementation stage. Thus, it is important to develop communication skills in partners, and the infrastructure for the process of communication and interpersonal relationships.

Formalisation is essential to successful implementation. The rules, roles and procedures need to be defined and the degree of formalisation will determine the extent of investment of resources and exchanges among partners (Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman, 1993: 321). Seifer and Maurana (2000: 8) suggest a partnership agreement that is prepared and agreed to by all partners; it should clearly state the roles and responsibilities, purpose and goals, and should define outcomes, mutual benefits, financial and staffing considerations, copyright and ownership issues, evaluation process and publicity plan. Policy and procedure manuals can support the operationalisation of the document.

Case Study 2

The Implementation Stage

The Management of Gender-based Violence at UWC established a committee with the Saartjie Baartman Centre based on national policy regarding violence against women. This committee conducted a needs assessment at the centre and the following needs were discovered, which provided the students placed at the site with possible service-learning projects:

- Treatment of trauma including sexual assault and rape;
- Primary healthcare;
- Youth health programme; and
- Outreach services.

The university and the centre have since formalised their relationship and have taken the steps to establish a satellite clinic at the centre. The institution therefore provides the students and academics while the centre provides the facilities and a qualified health professional (nurse) who supervises at the service site.

The *maintenance* stage of partnership development consists of monitoring, and continuance of both the working groups of key individuals and partnership activities. Partnerships are complex approaches to organising and managing programmes because they involve blending different missions, cultures, work styles, resource concerns, expertise and timelines. The partners need to ensure that representatives acquire the skills and support to fulfil their commitment to the partnership outcomes. An adequate infrastructure to support the partnership process should be in place. Communication mechanisms can be sustained and improved through continuous and effective feedback, which will lead to programme improvement. Feedback strategies must be established and known to all and communication opportunities must be reliable and predictable (Sebastian, Skelton and West, 2000: 57). Factors that sustain strategies of communication – including basic cultural competences such as the development of awareness of one another’s cultural viewpoints, building of knowledge with regard to differences that could affect one another’s worldview and the development and utilisation of effective dialogue skills – must be understood and used (Sengupta, 2000: 41).

Case Study 3
The Maintenance Stage

The national CHESP programme has guided the process of developing sustainable partnership through its focus on capacity building as a critical part of the programme. This is the result of a rigorous monitoring and evaluation component linked to service-learning modules. Given the complexity of developing partnerships and the diversity of regions, each institution is required to develop a capacity building programme, through which partners are trained in service-learning and its various elements. The University of the Western Cape conducted a three-day capacity building programme in August 2004 and individuals in existing partnerships were affirmed and renewed their commitment to service-learning. This institution was part of the JET-CHESP 2005 capacity building programme to impart the necessary skills to its partnership members. Monitoring and evaluation is also a key element of this phase.

The *outcome* stage of partnership development comprises the impact of the partnership. Outcomes for partners could be based on different motivational incentives such as *material* incentives (in terms of physical resources), *solidarity* incentives (in terms of group identification and status) and *purposive* incentives (derived from achieving the goals of the partnerships, which are perceived as meaningful and important) (Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman, 1993: 322). The outcomes are different for each partner; this is partly because, while partners may *appear* to be equal, rarely is this true equality in terms of intellectual and social resources. Due to the nature and composition of the HEI, it tends to be privileged in terms of intellectual and social resources; and for this reason, there needs to be commitment to *equity* (rather than equality) in partnerships. Equity ensures that the necessary balance of power can be achieved and preserved by mutual respect and trust among partners and the sharing of credit for accomplishments in terms of outcomes. These partnership products and publications are an important component of building a strong foundation of trust and ensuring equity (Blake and Moore, 2000: 65).

Case Study 4 The Outcome Stage

School of Pharmacy (UWC):

- Compilation of TB manuals – for use at sites; intervention manuals for chronic diseases compiled;
- Capacity building of all three partners;
- Involvement of each sector in development of poster on patient knowledge; and
- Shorter wait by patients for medication.

Management of Gender-based Violence:

- Capacity building of all partners;
- Negotiating the development of satellite clinic on the site; and
- The Saartjie Baartman Centre to be used as a research site for Gender-based Violence to monitor the effects of intervention programmes on the health of both women and children and to secure funding (CHESP Showcasing, 2003).

5.3 THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Successful partnerships are developed on the building blocks of:

- Communication;
- Decision making; and
- Institutional management of change.

5.3.1 Communication

Communication is the foundation for developing a successful partnership, as it is the process whereby information sharing occurs. Effective and efficient communication therefore ensures that the partnership develops in a transparent manner. El Ansari and Philips (2001: 125) identify communication as a critical element in establishing partnerships. The following points indicate the importance of communication in the partnership development process:

- Partnerships are dependant on open and clear communication. Rules for communication should be established to ensure language usage that is acceptable to all partners. The meaning of terminology must be clarified upfront.
- Effective communication can follow two paths – formal and informal. Formal communication processes could include weekly telephone calls, faxed updates and emails or letters. A structure should be established to relay these messages to the broader community. There may also be informal communication channels with local community leaders, and such communication is essential to establish and maintain in order to ensure sustainability of the partnership.
- HEI staff and leaders must be sensitive to community concerns, have the capacity to respond in a timely manner (e.g. returning phone calls from the community), and provide an honest account of institutional and departmental resources that can be contributed to building a partnership.

- Where possible, communication should be aided by face-to-face dialogue with community partners, preferably at the community site to demonstrate a commitment to the partnership.
- Communication should include marketing and showcasing, which involve actions and interactions that indicate how partners value the partnership; this will ensure support from all partners.

5.3.2 Decision making

Decision making should be done in a collaborative and consultative manner. Members of the triad partnership should be cognisant of how decisions impact on their roles and responsibilities, and should commit to the expectations that arise from such decision making.

5.3.3 Institutional management of change

Partnerships extend over time and might outlive the participation of their founders. Unpredicted changes can occur. A sustainable partnership incorporates – at initiation – a plan that will enable partners to respond without delay to future unforeseen changes or obstacles. These include, for example, internal changes in the engaged institution and changes in the community or service agencies; the most common types of changes are turnover in leadership or staff, a revision of partnership outcomes or projects, and changes in funding agencies, funding allocation and funding prerequisites. The management of changes in partnerships should be based on transparency, consultation, continuous feedback, monitoring and an evaluation process.

5.4 DESIGNING A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

Plan, initiate and negotiate a partnership based on the following steps:

- Identify and select appropriate community and service partners.
- Recognise and validate partners.
- Ensure equity and reciprocity.
- Clarify and commit to principles of HEI – community – service partnership.
- Ensure diversity.

5.4.1 Identify and select appropriate community and service partners

Relationships among academic staff and service and community agencies work best when they are ongoing and when each party feels it is sharing equitably in the association. It is crucial to identify and select appropriate community and service partners, whose needs and resources fit with your goals for student service-learning and development. Service-learning differs from professional internships in that the content of the work is not defined by the requirements of professional accreditation but rather by a need as defined by the community and service agencies. Responding to a need defined by the community and service agencies, not imposed from outside, is the best way to establish a long-term, reciprocal relationship.

Selecting, developing and maintaining strong relationships with service providers and community partners are critical to the success of service-learning. Without effective placement opportunities, the service experience can be frustrating and demoralising for students, academic staff and community partner organisations. The CHESP office at your institution could assist in identifying a manageable number of service and community agencies.

5.4.2 Recognise and validate partners

It is important to recognise and validate partners, through clarification of roles, expectations and benefits:

- **Service-learning partnerships – roles and responsibilities**

Clear roles and specific responsibilities are among the hallmarks of a successful service-learning experience for the different partners involved:

- Service-learning specialist or coordinator at the service-learning/ community engagement office on campus;
- Academic staff;
- Service and community agency staff; and
- Students.

Service-learning specialist or coordinator at the service-learning/ community engagement office on campus

Recognised by experts in the field as a critical role within a service-learning programme, a service-learning specialist acts as the primary liaison between academic staff, students and community and service agencies. This role necessarily combines a solid knowledge and understanding of both the realities of local community and service agencies and the world of academic study and teaching. Acting as liaison, translator, diplomat and matchmaker, the service-learning specialist brings specific talents to bear, in order to facilitate the partnership between campus and community, in a manner that will ensure the reciprocal benefits inherent in a sustainable, effective service-learning module. A service-learning specialist usually plays a role in assisting with the module/ programme construction, as well as the service placement design. If your institution has a service-learning specialist assigned to an office, your first step may be to contact the staff of that office, to discuss your interests and expectations regarding community partners and the ability of the staff to assist you in identifying and developing relationships with appropriate community partners. One of these specialists in service-learning can assist in evaluating existing service-learning partnerships and exploring new ones, both on the campus and in the community. This role is often referred to as the 'bridge' between all service-learning partners.

Academic staff

As part of a module, the academic staff member has a very specific role as lead educator. Responsible for design of the module, establishing learning outcomes and planning for evaluation of learning, the academic staff member also plays a critical role in implementing reflection techniques to facilitate students' drawing meaning from the experience, and in linking

that experiential learning to other more formal academic learning sources within the curriculum or programme. Academic staff also have a role to play in guiding students through the experiential component of the service-learning module, in fostering a strong relationship with the community and service agencies, and in exploring possibilities of involving staff from community organisations as co-educators. Finally, this role of lead educator in a community service-learning initiative offers the opportunity to integrate the concepts of citizenship and social awareness in the academic content of the module. It should be noted that, in the absence of a dedicated staff member designated as service-learning specialist or service-learning coordinator (see above), the academic staff member usually assumes this additional role and these responsibilities.

Service and community agency staff

As a full partner in a service-learning module and/or programme, staff from service and/or community agencies provide relevant information on the service needs of the agency. Additionally, they take a lead in collaboratively designing service placements that both address real community needs and meet the stated learning outcomes for the students. Their specific knowledge and experience make service and/or community agency staff the best partner to take responsibility for required orientation and/or training to prepare students for active involvement, and to supervise students during their service placements. (Note that this is the *ideal* situation). Service and community agency staff can play an invaluable role in providing evaluation of the students' verified sense of responsibility throughout their service placements, and in any observed learning demonstrated by students. Staff of service and/or community agencies should also, ideally, be prepared to collaborate with the academic staff as co-educators; for example, they may be invited by the academic staff member to present in the lecture hall on relevant subject matter.

Students

Students intentionally take on the dual role of learner and service provider. They should expect to participate in activities that prepare them for this role, to actively engage in service delivery in the community and to reflect upon the meaning of the experience to them personally, intellectually, and with respect to citizenship. Students must accept the responsibilities inherent in community engagement, including ethical helping, responsible behaviour, and respectful relationship building. In effective service-learning modules or programmes, students who take appropriate responsibility for their own learning and maturely approach their roles within the community not only create an environment that supports their education and development but also establish a context with increased capacity for their contributions to strengthening community on a variety of levels.

In terms of recognising and validating partners, academic staff members who have achieved successful community partnerships have recommended the following (adapted from Gettysburg College, 2005):

- Meet with the service and/or community agency representative to review the module descriptors and to articulate reciprocal goals. Service and community agency staff are more

effective partners if they know academic staff expectations. It is strongly recommended that academic staff members meet with service and community agency representatives *at the service site*.

- Establish a statement of understanding that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of students, service and community agencies, and academic staff. Have all parties read, sign and retain a copy.
- Maintain regular contacts, determined jointly, with service and community agencies, to address concerns, answer questions and solve problems.
- Ask the service and community agencies to do a short presentation about their work to the students within the first two lecture sessions. This gives students a chance to see who they will be working with and clarify the service and community agency missions.
- Provide service and community agencies with module descriptors and academic calendar.
- Allow for varying service and community agency needs and schedules. Seasonal demands or client crises can make it very difficult for agencies to accommodate students who may require supervision.
- Involve service and community agencies in the educational process with students, including reflection sessions and journaling. The partnership should always demonstrate mutual respect and be open to service and community partner participation.
- Perform collaborative module assessments. Collaborative assessment of students, module effectiveness and placement experiences can be very helpful in planning for future efforts.

Effective placements create positive experiences! A common mistake made by academic staff is to assume that service and community agencies are always ready to 'plug students into' programmes and projects that will enhance the students' learning experiences. The partnership will be rewarding only by allowing for thoughtful and timely preparation and communication.

- **Provide service agency/ community orientation**

Provide an orientation of your service-learning module to all of your service agency/ community partners through a meeting or 'community gathering'. A breakfast or luncheon meeting, held about two weeks prior to the module's commencement, is an opportune time. It allows community partners to network with one another as well as obtain detailed information about your module. The value of such an event has been well documented by academic staff and service and community agencies alike.

5.4.3 Ensure equity and reciprocity

Equity in partnerships requires that partners have sufficient respect for, and trust in, one another to confront the varied expectations of each partner, with openness and sensitivity. It is important to recognise that partners may be in different phases of development, which may affect the contribution (based on the availability of resources) each one has to make; partners should respect this. Partners should therefore approach the development of partnership in a just and fair manner, as equity is closely aligned to the principles of fairness, democracy, accountability and diversity. It could therefore be said that there is no equality in partnership but that this remains the ideal. Partnerships should be equitable *as a rule*.

Service-learning demonstrates reciprocity between the HEI and the community when the service-learning is organised to meet both the learning outcomes of the module and the service needs identified by the community (Bringle and Hatcher, 2002: 505). According to Gelmon and Holland (1998) sustainability of a partnership is directly linked to an ongoing sense of reciprocity related to the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

5.4.4 Clarify and commit to principles of HEI – community – service partnership

In order for all partners to commit to the principle of HEI – community – service partnership, ensure that all partners have knowledge of:

- A shared vision of the partnership;
- The underpinning principles of the partnership;
- The rights and obligations of each partner;
- The expectations of each partner with respect to achieving outcomes in the community;
- The specific contributions and responsibilities of each partner in terms of achieving outcomes in the partnership;
- The reporting and monitoring mechanisms and expectations;
- The frequency and purpose/ content of meetings of the partnership – with provision made for monitoring the process;
- The frequency of meetings to maintain, affirm and renew relationships;
- Means for negotiating, discussing differences and managing conflict;
- Ownership of materials, reports and other project outcomes; and
- Budget allocations and reporting requirements.

(Nchabeleng, 2001: 32)

5.4.5 Ensure diversity

Diversity implies understanding communities and HEIs in terms of power, oppression, empowerment and social justice. Dynamic and successful partnerships are grounded in valuing and respecting diversity. Valuing diversity ensures that the unique skills, capabilities and contributions of each individual, group and stakeholder are recognised in the partnership.

Diversity adds a critical balance to the partnership as it becomes easier to understand each member's perspective on an issue and one another's ideas about a course of action. Diversity develops awareness, challenges attitudes and beliefs, and provides a context for examining underlying stereotypes that affect capacity for change. The individuals whose lives are affected by decisions must be equally represented in the decision-making process (El Ansari and Phillips, 2001).

5.5 MAINTAINING SUSTAINABLE HEI – COMMUNITY – SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS

Kaye (1999: 372) argues that if coalitions (partnerships) meet the needs of their members they will be successful, and suggests that we use the six 'Rs' of participation:

- Recognition – recognise contribution;
- Respect – everyone wants to be respected;
- Role – everyone needs to feel needed and valued;
- Relationship – encourage accountability, mutual support and responsibility;
- Reward – there must be obvious benefits; and
- Results – deliver on outcomes.

The following are further useful hints in terms of maintaining sustainable partnerships:

- Introduce partners to the class;
- Create and maintain a database;
- Maintain contact; and
- Structure supervision at sites.

Introduce partners to the class

It would be helpful if you were to introduce your community partners to your class. As your service-learning module commences, provide partners with the opportunity to present their community and service context to the class. If you are using different service sites, you might wish to schedule the introductions over a period of days throughout the first week or two; alternatively, you might wish to arrange an orientation programme prior to the commencement of the module.

Create and maintain a database

Create and maintain a database in the form of a placement file as students are placed in various community settings. These files should be available to all partners and reflect the details of the service site and key contact numbers, learning objectives of the module, the times of placement, various forms for supervision and evaluation of students etc. This will facilitate the monitoring and progress of the module, as well as providing a valuable system and data for future use.

Maintain contact

Maintain contact and troubleshoot with the service and community agencies. Bradbard *et al* (1999: 18) highlight the importance of communication and maintaining contact when they assert that “communication is the key” and “we need to ensure that our three-way communication is functioning in top form”. Communication mechanisms can be sustained and improved through continuous and effective feedback, which will lead to improved partnerships and hence service-learning experiences.

Structure supervision at sites

It is essential that clear guidelines with regard to supervision be provided to the site service provider, with someone always available to supervise and assist students. The designated supervisor needs to have a clear understanding of the content of the module and how the service-learning experience enhances learning. In the partnership, training should be provided so that the main ideas of service-learning are reinforced during the service placement (Stacey, Rice and Langer, 2001).

5.5.1 Conduct student orientation, training and supervision

Adequate orientation and training imply that staff and students are adequately prepared for the tasks they will perform. Student orientation may occur in lecture venues and/or on site by the lecturer or service and/or community agency site supervisor. If your students are going on site, it is best if the orientation happens on site; that way the students can become familiar with the location. During the orientation, it is important for students to understand clearly their responsibilities. The service-learning/ community engagement office on campus can coordinate and plan the orientation for your class. The following topics should be covered in orientation sessions:

- History, mission, structure and location of the service sites;
- Background and description of the individuals to be served;
- Social, political and economic issues related to the service site setting;
- Responsibilities: task assignments, expectations, role definition etc.;
- Protocol/ professionalism: policies, procedures, dress, manners, punctuality etc.;
- Client courtesy: behaviour and attitudes toward clients receiving the service;
- Problem solving around difficult situations that may arise; and
- Record keeping, supervision and accountability.

During the orientation session(s), issues of confidentiality and professional ethics should be discussed with students. Students should be shown how to perform the required activities and should become acquainted with the standard operating procedures of the service provider. It is important to remember that some students have little or no work experience and may not be aware of the norms and expectations in the workplace, especially regarding such issues as dress, punctuality and professionalism. The students should receive a copy of any relevant manuals of the service provider.

Students also have rights and should be treated as professionals. Student rights and responsibilities are the following:

Rights

1. To be treated as a co-worker;
2. To be thoughtfully assigned;
3. To know as much as possible about agency organisation, policy, people, programmes and activities;
4. To receive orientation, training and ongoing supervision for the job expected;
5. To receive sound guidance and direction;
6. To be provided with a variety of field experiences;
7. To pursue leadership roles;
8. To voice opinions and to have ideas included in the planning of programmes, activities and curriculum;
9. To do meaningful and satisfying work; and
10. To be evaluated based on service completed and learning demonstrated.

Responsibilities

1. To be open and honest at the site from the beginning;
 2. To understand commitments of time and tasks and to fulfil them;
 3. To participate in evaluation when asked to do so;
 4. To share thoughts and feelings with staff, including making the learning objectives clear to the people with whom they will be working;
 5. To respect confidentiality;
 6. To seek honest feedback;
 7. To serve as ambassadors of goodwill for the project;
 8. To be effective advocates for change when it is needed;
 9. To enter into service with enthusiasm, curiosity and commitment; and
 10. To serve in a manner that preserves the reputation and integrity of the HEI and the agency.
- (Alpena Volunteer Center, 1990)

Tips for preparing students for meaningful service

The following tips could prove useful during student orientation sessions:

- Describe the community.
- Impress upon students their responsibilities as representatives of the HEI.
- Introduce students to the work of the agencies.
- Provide some information/ training as to what students will actually be doing in the community.
- Describe typical problems that students might encounter and offer suggestions about how to overcome these problems.
- Explain the role of reflection and the mechanics of assessment.

5.5.2 Develop ethical partnerships

Service-learning concerns the development of the person as an accountable individual and as an engaged participant in society and community, nationally and globally (Colby *et al*, 2000). Ensuring the development of principle-centred, ethical partnerships necessitates continuous discussion with partners during the service-learning experience throughout the four stages of partnership development. It is important to explore the ethical implications of the HEI – community – service provider partnership, as it is essential to maintain the delicate balance between the needs of students and the needs of the communities and services. In the case of HEIs, partnership is a key indicator for managing quality, as engagement, collaboration and partnership are identified as the cornerstones of an institution's service-learning initiative. Sufficient resource allocation should therefore support this partnership objective (HEQC/ JET, 2006: 18).

Ethical obligation of the HEI:

- Balancing the needs of students with the needs of communities and services;
- Safeguarding the interests and wellbeing of the community by educating students to become competent service providers who are responsible members of the community. This is achieved when students are instilled with a sense of an ongoing obligation to service and ethical interaction with the community through the service-learning experience; and
- Service and benefit to the local community and society at large.

(Quinn, Gamble and Denham, 2001)

Ethical obligation of academic staff:

- Provide comprehensive professional preparation with diverse learning experiences.
- Provide students with a framework for ethical behaviour in community settings.
- Prepare students for a lifetime of service to the community.
- Prepare students for the specific community learning experience.
- Consider community needs, interests, and wellbeing.
- Avoid harm or burden to the community.

(Quinn, Gamble and Denham, 2001)

Ethical obligation of the community:

- Provide adequate supervision and entry to the placement site based on agreement with the HEI.
- Share indigenous, tacit and pre-theoretical knowledge prevalent in the non-academic world.

Ethical obligation of the service provider(s):

- Provide the facilities and context for the service-learning experience to occur.
- Provide adequate supervision and assessment based on agreements with the HEI.
- Share professional skills and knowledge.
- Provide students with a supportive, mentoring environment.

Ethical obligation of students:

- Strive to do no harm.
- Display academic integrity and respect.
- Embrace diversity in community settings.
- Show willingness to commit time, knowledge and skills to enhancing the wellbeing of the community.

Ethical dilemmas

There are several ethical dilemmas that could surface in relation to roles of partners and should thus be considered:

- The problem of conflicting loyalties;
- The eliciting of real, rather than symbolic, participation;
- The dilemmas posed by funding sources;
- The unanticipated consequences of organising; and
- The matter of whose 'common good' is being addressed through the organising effort.

(Minkler and Pies, 1999)

Ethical decision-making framework for addressing dilemmas:

- There must be a definite expressed need by the community, which provides the reason for placing students in a particular service-learning experience.
- The service-learning experience will result in learning that cannot be acquired in a classroom/ laboratory setting.
- A favourable risk/ benefit ratio must exist for the student, community and services.
- Community and services should provide voluntary and informed consent.
- The benefits and burdens of service-learning experience must be fairly and equitably distributed among the different populations and communities.

(Quinn, Gamble and Denham, 2001)

5.5.3 Deal with challenges

The partners in a service-learning module face particular challenges related to their specific roles.

Challenges for students: There are certain aspects of service-learning placements that can challenge students. These include: lack of experience and skills; a possible sense of entitlement; holding stereotypical views; personal comfort zones being challenged by experiences with diversity and poverty; and so on. Students often also have safety concerns and feel the pressure of heavy workloads.

How to address these challenges:

- Ensure adequate supervision of students at service sites, to address issues such as students feeling inadequate, safety concerns and so on.
- Provide positive reinforcement and support to the students through engaging them in weekly reportback sessions.

- Require each student to keep a critical incident journal, in which s/he discusses in detail particular events at the service site; this allows the academic to gauge the student reflection that has occurred, which enhances Mode 2 learning – that is, knowledge that occurs within the context of application and involves greater involvement with the local community (Jackson and Ward, 2004). Also, provide students with regular opportunities to share their experiences.

Challenges for academic staff: Typical challenges associated with service-learning for academic staff include: the strain of the additional workload; time constraints; power relations (issues of equity and reciprocity); the need to supervise students; and the work entailed in maintaining the partnership (i.e. regular meetings, communications etc.).

How to address these challenges:

- When staff members make a commitment to service-learning, ensure that resources are made available to enable them to design and sustain an effective programme.
- Organise regular feedback sessions with partners.
- Employ senior postgraduate students to assist with supervision at sites.

Challenges for community representatives: Characteristic challenges for community partners include: particular expectations that might not be met; varying levels of experience and skills; power relations (issues of equity and reciprocity); limited availability, and time constraints; the work required to maintain the partnership (i.e. regular meetings, communications etc.); and resource constraints.

How to address these challenges:

- Clarify roles and expectations.
- Engage in regular feedback sessions.
- Invite community representatives to assist with orientation, supervision and assessment of students.

Challenges for service providers: Service providers might experience the following challenges with regard to the service-learning module: resource constraints; particular expectations that might not be met; limited availability, and time constraints; a heavy workload; power relations (issues of equity and reciprocity); and the work required to maintain the partnership (i.e. regular meetings, communications etc.).

How to address these challenges:

- Clarify roles and expectations.
- Engage in regular feedback sessions.
- Invite service providers to assist with orientation, supervision and assessment of students.

5.6 MONITORING, EVALUATING AND INSTITUTING FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

5.6.1 *Networking – share best practice*

Partners need to recognise and celebrate the successes, challenges, lessons and best practice that have emerged from their work together; this can take the form of joint papers, presentations, showcasing and exhibitions.

5.6.2 *Ensure the viability of the partnership*

Prestby and Wandersman (1985) developed a framework for organisational viability, based on four components of organisational functioning: 1) resource acquisition; 2) maintenance subsystem (organisational structure); 3) production subsystem (action and activities); and 4) external goal attainment (accomplishments). According to this model, the viability of organisations (partnerships) depends on obtaining adequate and appropriate resources, developing an organisational structure for accessing resources, and the efficiency and effective use thereof, to conduct activities, which lead to outcomes benefiting all members.

The viability of a partnership should be a priority from the initiation of the partnership. Suggestions for ensuring viability are:

- Comprehensive planning;
- Time management;
- Flexibility;
- Sustained and ongoing communication;
- Joint decision making;
- Initiation and facilitation of change when necessary; and
- Regular monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

5.6.3 *Expand or terminate the partnership*

When the partnership has served its purpose, it is important for proper closure to take place. Partners also need to recognise that the explicit purpose for which they came together has been fulfilled.

- Consider holding a ‘closing ritual’ to honour the work you have done together, the relationships established, the changes undergone, and the independence of each organisation.
- Each partner’s new strengths and skills as well as their next challenges should be acknowledged and honoured.
- Documentation and publication of the process and outcomes are important.
- Debriefing, evaluation and feedback are important.

If the partnership has been successful and if the service needs expansion, there is every reason to continue the existing partnership and/or form a new partnership.



SELF-STUDY ACTIVITY

Develop a plan for the collaborative partnership you will use for the practical implementation of the service-learning module you are developing. Supplement your plan with the systems you would put in place to facilitate, implement and assess the partnership.