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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the culture of Merit College, a teacher education college involved in a school-university partnership (SUP), comparing that culture to the culture of two elementary schools (one engaged in partnership activities with Merit and one that chose not to participate). The paper compares Merit's culture to that of a state university and a community college, analyzing each culture regarding values and beliefs aligned with collaboration, affiliation, and team building. Researchers also conducted interviews with administrators at the elementary schools regarding their perception of the efficacy of the Merit SUP. The paper explains organizational culture and change, arguing that reculturing may be an important prerequisite to successful planning, implementation, and maintenance of SUPs. Study results indicated that the elementary schools had much higher scores than the institutions of higher education on how they valued elements of collaboration essential to successful partnerships. Both elementary schools had principals who were strong leaders and were respected by their faculties. The results suggest that imposing a collaborative structure is not enough, and participants need to acquire the important skills of collaboration and teamwork. In the case of SUPs, a successful agenda for change must come from an agreement that involves the teaching faculty as well as college deans, school superintendents, and principals. (Contains 26 references.) (SM)

# School-University Partnerships: Collaboration Among Autonomous Cultures

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For more than a decade, reformers have been touting collaboration among educational stakeholders as the most promising vehicle for school improvement. Goodlad (1988) proposed school-university partnerships (SUP's) as a way to provide a simultaneous, individual and institutional renewal between higher education and K-12. It seems reasonable to assume that success in collaboration and partnership may be influenced by the degree to which each culture values such affiliation, cooperation and teamwork. Clark (1988) described the differences in organization culture between higher education and K-12 as being so significantly different "...that these people have a lack of knowledge of each other's culture and a lack of awareness of how they can work together to achieve more than can be accomplished by working separately." (p.32). Lieberman (1988) referred to schools and universities as having "...two very different cultures." (p.69)

This paper describes the culture of Merit College, a college of teacher education involved in a SUP and compares that culture to two elementary schools, one engaged in partnership activities with Merit and one that, although invited, chose not to participate. In addition, Merit's culture is compared to two other institutions of higher education, one a state university and the other a community college from file data provided by Human Synergistics Incorporated. An analysis was made of each culture as measured by the Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI), (Cooke and Lafferty, 1989) with particular attention paid to values and beliefs aligned with collaboration, affiliation and team building. In addition, interviews were conducted with the administrators of the two elementary schools as to their perception of the efficacy of the Merit SUP. A brief treatise of organizational culture and change is offered as a theoretical backdrop and an argument is made that reculturing may be an important prerequisite to the successful planning, implementation and maintenance of school-university partnerships.

## The Elements of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture was described by Bower (1966) as, the way we do things around here. Schein (1985) described organizational culture as "...a pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope...that work well enough to

be considered valid..."(p. 9). A culture contains the normative beliefs held by an individual regarding the expectations of others about his behavior as a member of a group or organization (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and those normative beliefs, held in common, by members of the organization (Homans, 1950; Mills, 1967). Chaffee and Tierney (1988) described three elements of culture:

(a) Structure: The "..ways in which the organization accomplishes its activities, including programmatic, fiscal and governance mechanisms" (p.18). and;

(b) Environment: Including but not limited to "...the objective context of people, events, demands and constraints in which the institution finds itself" (p.20). and;

(c) Values: The "...beliefs, norms, and priorities held by members of the institution", particularly "...values that pertain to the institution itself and the extent to which values are congruent among individuals and subgroups" (p.20).

Cooke and Lafferty (1989) defined culture as "...the behavioral norms and expectations associated with the shared beliefs and values held by organizational members." (p.1) Their Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI), used in this work, focused on those behavioral norms and expectations.

Collaboration in Higher Education and K-12: A Long History of Autonomy

Although there is some evidence that the culture of higher education may be moving from a traditional autocratic structure with decision making vested in administration, to one that is more participatory, Bergquist (1992) reports that the most prevalent culture is still one that values autonomy, individual achievement and independence. Bergquist described this type of culture to be indifferent or even hostile to public K-12 education. The reward structure of higher education also provides evidence that collaboration is not valued, particularly in the tenure and promotion process. Typically, competition is tacitly encouraged among faculty and the promotion of self in teaching, research and service is the most efficient route to tenure and promotion. In fact, the single authorship of research articles or books is often considered to be of greater merit than co-authorship when evaluating professor performance. Birnbaum (1988) described the professional college culture as giving importance to autonomy and independence.

Research which chronicles the tendency for public school teachers to operate autonomously and avoid collaboration in a public school environment is not new. Lortie (1969) found that teachers operate in a highly autonomous fashion within the classroom and many times the stated goals of the school or district, or in this case, perhaps the initiators of a partnership, had little congruence with those of individual teachers. Hanson (1985) described distinct spheres of influence enjoyed by both teachers and administrators with decisions related to instruction clearly within the purview of teachers. There is little reward for teachers to venture outside their primary teaching responsibilities.

Over the last ten years, K-12 systems have, at least given rhetoric to increasing collaboration and inclusion in decision making by practicing site-based management (SBM) however, according to researchers, there has been little change in the way authority and control is exercised. Although SBM, in many of its stated forms seems to have merit, most site-based management is little more than tinkering with the traditional structures of control and authority. Studies of school districts involved in SBM reflect a limited level of participation (Clune and White,1988; Malen, Ogawa and Kranz,1990). Wholstetter and Odden (1992) conclude that "...nothing has really been decentralized - SBM is everywhere and nowhere" (p.531). In addition, according to Wholstetter and Odden, SBM models vary significantly from district to district with regard to the amount of power shared. They usually lack clearly articulated goals, accountability systems and have taken a variety of forms. In most cases, SBM is little different than traditional principal-centered models of decision making. Like SUP's, SBM is often implemented without providing the requisite discussion, commitment and professional development to promote true partnerships. Sorenson (1995) found that, due to their isolation, teachers often lacked the information and skills to effectively collaborate and make technical decisions, resolve conflict among themselves, build teams and effectively communicate with one another. Reaching consensus on important issues often tested the strength of interpersonal relationships. Teachers often develop a strong social bond with one another and, although conflict between the teachers and students, parents or administrator is not unusual, disputes among colleagues are less frequent.

The process of effective collaboration often requires participants to confront and resolve conflict and candidly express divergent opinions. Teachers are often asked to engage in work for which they are not adequately prepared and that represents additional work to the stressful and difficult work of accommodating a myriad of student needs.

SUP's require participants to exercise skill in collaboration, communication and team building. The traditional view of the role of college faculty and K-12 teachers must be exchanged for one in which the participants advance beyond a simple symbiotic relationship (accommodation of student teachers by school districts and provision of professional development by the college) to one that creates a greater good (Schlechty & Whitford, 1988).

The notion that school systems and universities should collaborate to simultaneously improve is a powerful concept. The long standing schism between the university and K-12 notwithstanding, many school reformers believe collaboration between these two organizations is an intuitively sound and viable means of improving both systems. However, successful collaboration requires that individual participants hold requisite values and beliefs. Sirotnik (1988), when discussing school-university partnerships, stated that there is a "...body of values and beliefs that must be addressed critically in view of the commitments made by a school-university partnership effort" (p. 180). If one or more of the partner organizations does not value collaboration and affiliation to achieve a greater good, then success is improbable.

School University Partnerships - Simultaneously Reforming and Integrating Complex Systems

Predicated on the assumption that educators in colleges of education and public schools have similar objectives, providing quality educational experiences for students, at all levels, the school university partnerships seem to be a natural vehicle for simultaneously renew and school improvement. However, as with any attempt to change the status quo, attention must be given to unique qualities of the systems to be modified. The lack of attention on the part of educational reformers to understanding the traditions and strongly held collective beliefs (culture), the external and internal environments with which the organization must cope, and the intractable problems they must confront, has resulted in the failure of reforms that otherwise may have been successful

(Fullan, 1994). If a leader expects to affect sustainable change, he or she must first acquire an awareness of the organization's sub-systems, their complex relationships with one another and the total system's linkage to its external environment. In other words, they must have an understanding of the dominant culture, sub-cultures and how they interact. Too often, reformers attempt to change a complex systems by tinkering with one small piece of the puzzle. Dolan (1994) used the analogy of an automobile that is difficult to start in the morning. In this example, the owner simply takes the car to an automobile repair shop, has a part replaced, and the car's performance is quickly restored. Dolan makes the case that organizations are not mechanical systems that respond to piecemeal repair or modification to improve their performance.

Cultures are complex arrangements that learn and change, depending on their structure, environment and values (Chaffee and Tierney, 1988) and understanding their dynamics is difficult. To further illustrate the difference between unpredictable, complex systems and simpler ones, Birnbaum (1988) used the analogy of a pool table and the action of billiard balls, within the finite boundary of the table. This simple, predictable system is set in motion when some, or all, of the billiard balls react to the kinetic energy imparted to them by the cue stick. When the energy is expended, the balls stop reacting and remain stationery until they are struck again. This relatively simple system of physics and geometric relationships is predictable. Birnbaum described complex systems in a different way and asked us to consider the difficulty of playing pool if "...each ball 'learned' from being struck and reacted slightly differently each time it was hit!" (p.35). Implementing change in complex systems can be a little "...like being in a maze in which the walls change with every step you take...Cause and effect in such systems often can be neither predicted nor adequately explained." (p.35)

Organizational culture represents that set of collectively held assumptions and beliefs that are valued and to which organizations cling tenaciously. If, as Schlechty and Whitford (1988) and Lieberman (1988) posit, that the cultures of universities and schools are significantly different, then substantive disagreement and conflict over disparate beliefs and values can be predicted.

The Merit SUP.

This section describes one SUP and its planning, implementation and operation. The Merit College of Education (a pseudonym), has operated a school-university partnership for several years. Initially, the partnership was enthusiastically supported by a small number of pre-service teacher education faculty at Merit who had been involved in its development at the college however, conflict among other faculty members, over the efficacy of the partnership, was frequent and, as with many, if not all change efforts, participants varied in their commitment to the work. Partner districts were invited to join and were charged a membership fee however, revenues and tuition waivers flowed back to the districts for their work with college students. Decisions about membership were made by the college dean, superintendents and other administrators. There was some concern on the part of uninvited districts regarding elitism or favoritism.

At first, a relatively small number of faculty were selected to participate in the school-university partnership, but later, a directive was made by the Dean that all faculty, including those previously working exclusively in graduate programs, would take part in the pre-service teacher education program, requiring all faculty to spend a significant portion of their time working in the field with public school personnel. This represented a significant change in the role of all faculty and resulted in a reluctance on the part of some to become engaged in the work.

Public school teachers, involved with the preparation of teacher candidates, were referred to as clinical faculty. They were regularly consulted about decisions regarding the operation of Merit's program. The new priorities for college resources, and the inclusion of public school faculty in decisions that affected college faculty, were a regular source of conflict among faculty members . Except for a commitment on the part of K-12 schools to allow their teachers to spend more time supervising college students and accepting student teachers, little of substance changed within partnership schools districts. According to district administrators, instruction and administrative structures did not change appreciably within the K-12 schools with most changes occurring at the university for faculty and students.

Over time, several changes within the college began to impact the partnership. Over a five year period, enrollment in the teacher preparation program declined over 30% and the university's central administration alerted the college that revenues would be cut substantially. Public school teachers and districts were subsequently paid less for their support of students and tuition waivers for those involved were reduced or eliminated. The dissatisfaction with the partnership, expressed by some faculty members at Merit, was matched by members of the K-12 side of the partnership. One superintendent who's district was a member of the SUP and accommodated a large number of Merit's students involved in field experiences, described the perception of clinical faculty (K-12 teachers) as very negative about any benefits derived by the public schools from the partnership. Teachers perceived themselves as doing most of the work and seeing little value in their contacts with college faculty as a means to improve their performance. Mutual benefit was not perceived and several teachers felt that they were simply providing opportunities for pre-service teachers. The principals of two buildings in the district (See Table 1), one of which invited students and faculty from the college into the school and one that did not, were interviewed.

The Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI)

During the spring of 1995, the Merit College's faculty was asked to complete the Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI). Results of the inventory were shared with faculty and administration, in the hope that the results might provide important insights into the belief and values of the college faculty and provide data for future decision making. In addition, two elementary school faculties, in a partnership district, were asked to complete the OCI. One school was selected because it was an active participant in the partnership, the other because it chose not to engage. A comparison of organizational culture is provided in Table 1.

The Instrument

The OCI (Cooke and Lafferty, 1989) is a self-report diagnostic instrument that is designed to measure the normative beliefs and shared behavioral expectations held by members of organizations. Cooke and Szumal (1993) offer the following with regard to the instrument's reliability and validity:

> Tests of three types of reliability (internal consistency, interrater and test-retest) and two types of validity (construct and criterion-related) on data provided by 4,890 respondents indicate that the inventory is a dependable instrument for assessing the normative aspects of culture...Factor analysis results provide general support for the construct validity of the scales, most of which were related to both individual and organizational criteria as predicted. (p. 1299).

The OCI measures 12 normative beliefs arranged into three domains (four each). These are:

> Constructive cultures, in which members are encouraged to interact with others and approach tasks in ways that will help them meet their higher order satisfaction needs, are characterized by Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Humanistic-Encouraging and Affiliative norms.
>
> Passive/Defensive cultures, in which members believe they must interact with people in ways that will not threaten their own security, are characterized by Approval, Conventional, Dependent and Avoidance norms; and
>
> Aggressive/Defensive cultures, in which members are expected to approach tasks in forceful way to protect their status and security, are characterized by Oppositional, Power, Competitive and Perfectionistic norms." (Cooke and Szumal, 1993, p.1,302).

Although a description will be provided later that reports scores in the passive/defensive and aggressive/defense domains, the focus of the discussion will be on constructive styles because they represent an organizational culture most conducive to collaboration, team building and partnerships. Under the heading of constructive cultures, Cooke and Lafferty (1989) further define the four styles as follows:

> Achievement organizations are effective; problems are solved; clients and customers are served well, and members think and behave in ways that are healthy and mutually beneficial to themselves and the organization.
>
> Self-Actualizing organizations value creativity, quality over quantity, and both task accomplishment and individual growth and satisfaction.
>
> Humanistic-Encouraging organizations are participative and employee centered. Members are expected to be supportive, helpful and interested in the suggestions and ideas of others.
>
> Affiliative organizations place a high priority on constructive interpersonal relationships and personal satisfaction of members. People are expected to treat one another in a friendly and pleasant way and to openly share information, opinions and feelings.

The constructive styles section of the inventory measures the organization's collectively held values and behavioral expectations very similar to Sirotnik's (1988) body of values and beliefs, discussed above. This body of values and beliefs seems to parallel the Constructive styles defined in Cooke and Lafferty's (1989) OCI, including understanding, communication,

interdependency (Humanistic/Encouraging, Affiliative), leadership, accountability, renewal (Self-Actualizing), democracy, empowerment by minimizing bureaucratic entanglements and have a commitment to excellence and efficiency (Achievement).

Results

The results of the OCI were not surprising to the Merit College faculty and many remarked that the results held substantial face validity. Faculty raised questions as to Merit's culture when compared to other educational organizations. Therefore, the Merit culture profile was compared to other culture profiles obtained from Human Synergistics and used here with permission; one profile completed by another state university; one from a community college; and two schools from a Merit partner district.

Caution was taken here in reporting results. Although there is some support in the literature that higher education and K-12 may have cultures more comfortable with autonomy, what is reported is not intended to generalize about either. It is not known whether Merit and the other cultures described here are typical.

Scores for each organization, of the 12 elements of culture, were reported using quartiles rather than mean scores. In addition, differences between and among institutions were only reported to be significant if they differed from Cooke and Lafferty's (1989) benchmark profile referred to by them as an "excellent organization", by more than one quartile. The benchmark profile is predicated on the performance of an actual, national, non-profit organization that was judged to be excellent in terms of Peters and Waterman's (1982) criteria, by its members (managers and employees) and clients and has enjoyed an excellent reputation for decades. Although Cooke and Lafferty maintain the anonymity of this organization, it is described as having an open, supportive environment, characterized by team work, cooperation, personal development and high performance goals.

Merit College, the state university and community college all produced similar scores in their cultural profiles but none produced scores which seem to value the elements of collaboration described in Cooke and Lafferty's (1989) excellent profile or Sirotnik's (1988) body of values and

beliefs, essential to successful partnerships. The two elementary schools on the other hand scored very closely to the excellent organization profile with high scores in each of the constructive styles and low scores in both passive/defensive and aggressive/defensive styles. Both principals were described as strong leaders and respected by their respective faculties.

It was discovered that the one school's participation with the partnership was due to the fact that the principal had actively encouraged it and felt some obligation to help the partnership survive. The principal from the non-participating school indicated that all things being even, notwithstanding that a few student teachers were placed in the school each year, teachers there could get more value from professional development through districts resources without the hassle of accommodating large numbers of student teachers. Neither administrator made reference to a symbiotic relationship with the college.

Table 1 outlines areas within the OCI in which scores from the five educational organizations either match or differ from what the authors describe as an excellent culture, by more than one quartile. When comparing scores against Cooke and Lafferty's benchmark culture profile in Constructive Styles, that is, those attributes that would indicate that an organization values collaboration and cooperation (Table 1) the two elementary schools, both partner school and non-partner school, did not deviate from the excellent organization by more than one quartile indicating support for the values of affiliation, partnership and teamwork. In the case of Merit College, scores differed by two quartiles from the excellent profile. At least for Merit, the state university and the community college, autonomy and independence would seem to be valued more than collaboration and supportive activities.

The higher education organizations also scored higher than the benchmark profile in Passive/Defensive styles (7 of 12 comparisons) indicating a tendency to value and believe in ways that would be destructive to efforts to cooperate and collaborate in solving problems.

Cooke and Lafferty's Aggressive/Defensive styles varied least from the benchmark profile with the exception of Perfectionistic tendencies. Cooke and Lafferty (1989) indicate that a perfectionistic is a style that is taken beyond what would normally be considered productive work

## TABLE 1

Comparison of Results to the Organizational Cultural Inventory in Quartile

| | Excellent | Merit | St. Univ. | Comm. Coll. | Sch.Dist. A | Sch.Dist. B |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constructive | | | | | | |
| Achievement | 4th | 1st ** | 2nd * | 2nd * | 2nd * | 3rd |
| Self-Actualizing | 4th | 1st ** | 2nd * | 2nd * | 2nd * | 2nd * |
| Humanistic/ Encouraging | 4th | 1st ** | 2nd * | 3rd | 2nd * | 3rd |
| Affiliative | 4th | 1st ** | 2nd * | 2nd * | 2nd * | 3rd |
| Passive/Defensive | | | | | | |
| Avoidance | 1st | 4th ** | 3rd * | 3rd * | 3rd * | 3rd * |
| Dependent | 1st | 3rd * | 2nd | 2nd | 3rd * | 2nd |
| Conventional | 1st | 3rd * | 3rd * | 3rd * | 3rd * | 2nd |
| Approval | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd | 3rd | 3rd | 2nd |
| Aggressive/Defensive | | | | | | |
| Perfectionist | 1st | 3rd * | 3rd * | 3rd * | 4th ** | 3rd * |
| Competitive | 2nd | 3rd | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd | 2nd |
| Power | 2nd | 3rd | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd | 2nd |
| Oppositional | 2nd | 3rd | 3rd | 3rd | 3rd | 2nd |

* Denotes scores that are more than one quartile from that described as an "excellent organization", Cooke and Lafferty (1987).

** Denotes scores that are more than two quartiles from "excellent organization" scores.

where members are expected to pay attention to every detail, work long hours, do everything perfectly and view work as the most important consideration. Only three of 12 comparison were at least one quartile higher than the excellent profile; all of these were in the perfectionistic style.

Although scores obtained on the OCI, for institutions of higher education tended to be very low in collaborative values, they all tended to be quite similar in this deficit. When comparing constructive values, although Merit College had the lowest scores of any of the profiles, in all four sub-topics (1st quartile), the higher education organizations had a 2nd quartile score with only one exception in the 3rd quartile). In the Passive/Defensive category, one score for Merit college was the extreme (4th quartile) but 9 of 12 scores were identical at the 3rd quartile and two were matched at the 2nd quartile. In the Aggressive/Defensive sub-topic again, 10 of 12 were identical at the 3rd quartile and 2 matched at the 2nd quartile with one extreme score in the 4th quartile (School District A).

SUP's - As Organizational Marriage

Sirotnik and Goodlad (1988) described school-university partnerships as a marriage that, in the best of cases, can be occasionally filled with tension. If the analogy of marriage is applicable, then an important component of success for school-university partnerships would be the will of either side to make a commitment to the union, that is, make the necessary sacrifices for the good of the relationship. If either partner believes that marriage holds little value for them, then it is reasonable to expect a short honeymoon and the probability that the relationship will be short-term. Further, if this union was an arranged marriage, brokered by administrators (college deans and school superintendents), without the participation of the betrothed (members of both organizations), commitment to collaboration will be seriously limited, conflict and tension are predictable and substantive reform for either institution is unlikely. The marriage must be valued by those doing the work, or it will not last. An arranged marriage between university and K-12 schools to simultaneously reform both organizations will not be enough to change the culture of either system. The first priority of those engaging in school-university partnerships should be to assess the culture of each organization and carefully articulate agreement on fundamental beliefs,

values and the respective roles of each partner. In addition, a systematic plan for the improvement of those skills, essential for successful collaboration, should be initiated with the intent of reculturing both organizations so that collaboration and cooperation can be successful. Without underlying consensus of the purpose and function of schooling and a careful self-evaluation of culture, attempts at collaboration will most like only frustrate those involved. In order for collaboration to be effective, affiliation must be a part of the school's and university's new culture.

The crystallization of new beliefs for the organization (changing culture) is the cornerstone of discovering what Sergiovanni (1990) called a shared covenant, that is, agreement among organizational members on values, beliefs and goals essential to implementing and sustaining innovation. The identification of a set of commonly supported goals is a powerful step in moving members of an organization toward meaningful change. Stacey (1992) advised us to continually create "...agendas of issues, aspirations, challenges and individual intentions" (p.146) of those within the organization. For Stacey, the critical element of an "...emerging strategy is the effectiveness with which managers in an organization build and deal with such agendas of issues" (p.146). The change agenda must come from within the organization not from outside, predetermined by a leader. In the case of SUP's, the agenda for change, if it is to be successful, cannot come from an agreement between college deans, school superintendents or principals. It must derive from the planning and support of those professionals most deeply invested in the work, that is, teaching faculty.

In the case of SUP's, this agreement or consensus of purpose, is difficult to create if members of either organization sees those of the other, as less than viable partners. Institutions of higher education are often criticized by practitioners as being stuck in the past, outdated or irrelevant to the work and challenges of public schools. References to the ivory tower (vis-a-vis the real world) have been common, indicating that, to some, members of academe seem incapable of knowing what is important and recognizing that which is valuable to current professional practice. Reliance on didactic instruction, research on sometimes obscure, esoteric topics and a reliance on tenure have been the subject of criticism over the years.

Schlechty and Whitford (1988) stated that the most effective school university partnership would be one in which the two organizations work together in a manner which transcends a symbiotic relationship and creates an organic relationship in which serving organizational self-interest is replace with working together to accomplish common goals for the greater good.

Discussions about a collective vision serve to reaffirm a fundamental belief system and provide a clarity of meaning for actors within the organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982) suggest that to improve organizations, presumably including educational ones, "...we need to relearn old lessons about how culture ties people together and gives meaning and purpose to their day-to-day lives" (p.5). Saphier and King (1985) outlined a number of critical elements in positive school culture that include honest open communication, interpersonal trust and confidence, an environment that tolerates mistakes, tolerance for experimentation, tangible support, involvement in decision making, valued traditions and an atmosphere of collegiality. Planning processes that feature attainment of group consensus on key issues provide the opportunity to recreate school culture. Pivotal decisions on such issues as organizational beliefs, mission (purpose), clearly articulated educational objectives, established priorities, a set of operating principles and an implementation schedule, focus effort and help provide unity of purpose. Developing and supporting such a shared covenant is the truest form of empowerment (Sergiovanni, 1990).

Finally, imposing a collaborative structure is not enough. Participants need to acquire the required skills of collaboration and teamwork. Deal (1982) stated that we should think of change as a process of skill building. "Even if people understand and accept a change, the often don't have the required skills and ability to carry out the new plan" (p. 165). Given the culture profiles discussed above, this may be the case with those involved in school-university partnerships. Lieberman (1988) addressed the need to build skills in managing change, collaborative relationships, conflict mediation and confrontation skills among those who would engage in school improvement. She stated, "Collaboration does not come as a natural consequence of working in a school. It must be taught, learned and nurtured and supported until it replaces working privately." (p. 156).

Summary

A school-university partnership, intended to simultaneously improve the education of students in both systems, is a powerful notion. A truly collaborative effort between K-12 schools and colleges of education would seem to hold great promise for the long sought improvement of our nation's public education system. However, if the culture of either organization is not conducive to collaboration, improvement and simultaneous renewal will be inhibited, if not precluded.

Prince (1989) found that culture can act as an invisible force that can block the best effort of reformers and that a system cultural renorming can be accomplished through a thorough, systematic organizational self-examination. Perhaps the first step in building partnerships is the renorming of culture.

Cultures can and do change. The first order of business, when preparing to embark in the linking of public school systems and universities, is to carefully assess the respective cultures and begin the partnership by developing the skills necessary to successfully collaborate.

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