

Chapter 5

The Benedum Collaborative: Evaluating a Strategic Plan for Simultaneous Renewal

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ABSTRACT

The idea of simultaneous renewal articulated in the work of John Goodland (1994) has guided the Benedum Collaborative, a 20-year-old school-university partnership at West Virginia University. A strategic plan was developed in 2007 and updated in 2009 to guide simultaneous renewal activities. A rationale for simultaneous renewal is provided followed by a summary of the Collaborative's coordination features and governance structure. Previous program evaluation efforts are summarized. How the strategic plan was evaluated is followed by an analysis of the plans and reports across the ten goals. The current dean of the college taps her lenses and experiences in qualitative research, teacher education, and technology integration to comment on what has been done to support simultaneous renewal. The chapter recommends a program evaluation structure utilizing dynamic logic models be implemented in school-university partnerships to inform practice and understand the complexities of simultaneous renewal.

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION AS SIMULTANEOUS SCHOOL- UNIVERSITY RENEWAL

The Benedum Collaborative is a 20-year old school/university partnership that houses West Virginia University's (WVU) five-year, dual-degree program. The overarching idea guiding the Benedum Collaborative is the idea of *simultane-*

ous renewal, the understanding that both public schools and university partners grow together and that each informs the work of the other. The notion of simultaneous renewal was made explicit by WVU's membership in the Holmes Group, a national consortium of universities committed to education reform, including John Goodlad of the Center for Educational Renewal. Goodlad helped WVU as a consultant to guide the strategic plan-

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ning of what was known at the time as the Benedum Project. The initial participants knew that they “had to chart their own course for change” (Center, 1992/1992, p. i), but realized the need for closer collaboration of schools and university. In addition, the university system in West Virginia announced in 1992 several initiatives to improve higher education, one of which was to target quality in teacher education programs. The curricular efforts of the Benedum Project, built on subsequent across-university and schools input, submitted an initial report in 1992, which was updated with a teacher/administrator review in 1993.

The report recommended a number of distinctive features. The first feature acknowledged the view at the time that teacher education was a university-based responsibility. The present climate is questioning whether or not traditional, university-based teacher preparation programs produce the best teachers, or are alternatively certified teachers just as good? A second feature from the report was that the curriculum be based on what an effective novice teacher should know and be able to do. The report also cited the need for a program to be based on effective professional practice that goes beyond certification standards. The report recommended adopting research findings at that time, including knowledge construction, modeling of best practices, and field-based learning (Barnes, 1989; Kennedy, 1991), as well as novice teacher development assisted by peers and mentors (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Finally, the report recommended systematic collaboration with university and public school educators, a feature cited as important to effective professional preparation (The Holmes Group, 1986, 1990).

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania provided financial support starting in 1989. The first round of Professional Development Schools was selected in 1990 and the College of Human Resources and Education (now Education and Human Services) at West Virginia University chose to move from

a traditional four year program to a five-year program that conferred a content area bachelor’s degree and a master’s in education. The curriculum was redesigned and entrance requirements were raised. By 1992 a comprehensive curriculum and assessment plan for the Benedum Collaborative Model of Teacher Education at West Virginia University was developed.

A key outcome from this early collaborative visioning was a list of ten competencies for teachers. The program’s Characteristics of the Novice Teacher predated the INTASC standards. Contributing to the program’s initial design was three years of field-testing the model at six Professional Development Schools. These experiences fed into program development teams that ultimately developed a school-university curriculum to support the development of these Characteristics in new teachers. Additional PDSs were selected in 1994, 1997, 2002, and 2008. A total of 30 PDSs now provide elementary, middle, and high school practica sites for teacher candidates. The year 2000 marked the first class to graduate.

By 2008 the Collaborative, along with the other nine teacher education programs in the state, advocated for and obtained an annual line item in the budget of the West Virginia Legislature. This was an unusual and substantial accomplishment that is unrivaled by most institutions across the nation (Source: *Department of Education and the Arts: WV Code Chapter 5F, Fund 0294, FY 2009, Org 0431*). The largest item in the budget supports clinical coordination where PDSs receive funds depending on the number and grade level of students. In collaboration with university partners, the PDSs develop a budget plan to support teacher education and professional development in their schools. Additional funding supports university faculty liaison work, graduate assistantships, committee coordination work, and professional development activities for the Collaborative at large. WVU provides funding for the Clinical Coordinator and physical space for offices, classrooms, and meeting spaces.

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