

New Frameworks to Support University-School Partnership Improvement Hubs: A Conceptual Paper

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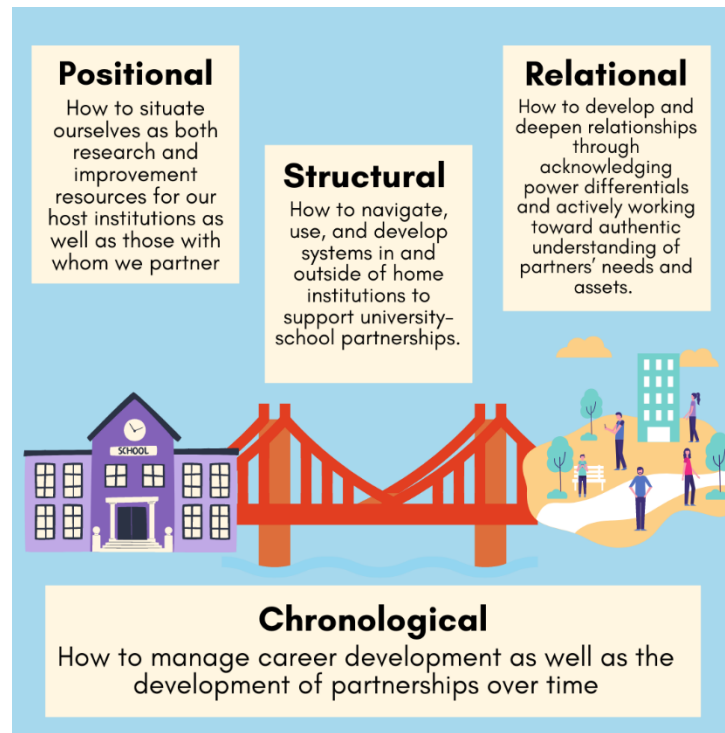
Paradigm Shifts for University-School Partnerships

In this paper we (two university-school improvement hub leaders) argue that paradigm shifts are needed with regard to how and what we prioritize when attempting to improve schools, as well as how those engaging in school improvement work are supported. This call for paradigm shifts recognizes that the fragmented approaches to school improvement prevalent today are sub-optimal and are due to be replaced with approaches that build from collaborations across communities, institutions, and sectors and honor a diverse array of individuals' unique skills, expertise, and experiences in solving complex problems (Germain, 2022).

The first of these paradigm shifts strikes at the core of how university-based researchers conceptualize the intended purpose and outcome of their research. Rather than a reliance on evidence-based practices (EPBs) and studies intended to generate them, calls for practice-based evidence and participatory research designs abound (Eppley et al., 2018; Joyce & Cartwright, 2020). This shift requires honoring context-dependent knowledge that considers what affordances and constraints to improvement exist within particular settings (Cai et al., 2020). The second of these shifts requires acknowledging the relational aspects of addressing wicked problems (i.e. problems that are complex and require interactions among multiple stakeholders) rather than treating them as purely technical problems (Fixsen et al., 2017; Hinnant-Crawford & Anderson, 2022)— an approach that has repeatedly failed to effect lasting change, especially for those most vulnerable and marginalized (Gomez et al., 2016). The third shift recognizes that addressing the complexity of educational problems requires learning through trial and error requiring researchers and those closest to the problems to engage with each other for extended periods of time rather than on short grant cycles oriented to achieving outcomes prioritized by those outside the systems targeted for change (Bryk, 2021).

Conceptual Framework for Hub Leader and Hub Development

With these paradigm shifts in mind, we propose an emergent framework with four interrelated considerations (positional, relational, structural, and chronological) for the development of university-school partnership improvement hubs as well as the development of the bridging scholars who lead them (see Figure)



Conclusions and Implications

Through an examination of our own lived experiences and the improvement literature, we assert that re-envisioning the development of university-school improvement hubs and those who lead them, is an essential, yet underexamined and undertheorized priority.

Among other implications, our emergent framework implicates changes in:

- doctoral programs in educational leadership
- early career faculty development programs
- mid-career faculty development programs

Our intention in opening the “black box” of university-school improvement hub and hub leader development through our own experiences and in this emergent framework, offers an invitation to engage other improvers to make good on Goodlad’s (1993) calls for the simultaneous renewal of colleges of education and schools in the 21st century.

The chapter on which this brief is based will be published in the book *Continuous improvement: A leadership process for school improvement* for the Leadership in School Improvement (LSI) SIG book series published by Information Age Publishing in 2023.

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