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VALUE CREATED FOR SCHOOLS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the value created for educational institutions when entering into partnerships with other organizations. This study is conducted through the lens of Quality Management and marks the start of a larger research project focusing on the value created from partnerships in education developed to prepare students as citizens in a global society.

Keywords: quality management (QM), education, partnerships, global citizen, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

As our world changes into an internationally dependent society, customer demand for innovative schools that produce globally minded citizens is increasing (Helmold, 2021). In fact, a leader in Quality Management (QM), Peter M. Senge, and his colleague Daniel H. Kim state “our educational system is increasingly coming under fire for not preparing our children adequately to meet the demands of the future (Senge and Kim, 2013). Senge warns, “changes of the sort we have been working for in business will probably not be sustainable without parallel changes in public education.” Senge specifically calls for establishing partnerships in education to “bring perspectives and capabilities to educators seeking to produce fundamental change” (Senge, 2003), which can be applied to schools. Creating “global systems citizens” is fundamental because “society needs engineers, entrepreneurs, designers, architects, teachers, doctors and nurses, managers and workers who can help create a workable, sustainable, and prosperous global civilization (Senge 2012).”

Educational partnerships with a global focus are forming between universities and schools or between individual schools (Snyder, 2000). The partnerships are “collaboration networks” that foster student exchange programs and professional development opportunities for administrators and teachers. School partnerships expand their global reach through a Quality Management and systems theory perspective (ibid). In line with UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7, Snyder et al. (2000) created a dynamic, complex adaptive system of six interweaving features for development which work together to create globally minded students. One of these features indicates the importance of building “work groups, networks, and partnerships (Snyder et al. 2000).” A different systemic integration is posited by the Brookings Institution through a “Powered Up Schools” model placing “the school at the center of a community ecosystem of learning and support (Vegas and Winthrop, 2020).”

Parents, students, teachers, staff, board members, partnership organizations, and the school can be viewed as customers depending on the perspective taken in a study. As customers and their

needs are wide-ranging, customer value is an abstract concept in QM. Grönroos (2011) states that customer value is when the customer is or feels “better off than before.” The Shingo Institute states, “standard terms are often interpreted in very different ways, so “the only way to find out for sure [what the customer values] is to talk to them (Butterworth, 2019).”

METHODOLOGY

This study is the first in a framework of three studies that are to be combined into a larger research paper investigating the value of partnerships in education that are designed specifically to prepare students as global citizens. This study involves participants who are leaders or former leaders of a school in the United States. The second study involves participants who are leaders of organizations who partner with schools and the third case study involves participants who actively manage and sustain the partnerships between the schools and organizations.

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is the qualitative method that was chosen for the interviews with the participants. This method was chosen because AI is a storytelling process which prompts the participant to focus on positive change through “inspiring accounts of peak experiences, successes and strengths (Cooperrider et al., 2008).” The focused, open-ended nature of questioning allows for the participant to tell story with as much detail as they desire within a framework that can be cross-referenced for data collection. Four specific formats for the AI questioning were used which prompt the participant to describe a “peak experience” or “high point”, the strengths created, the value created, and dreams of an ideal future (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Whitney et al., 2010).

The AI interview questions were preceded by an overarching “why” question that primed the participant to reflect on the purpose of creating partnerships (Sinek, 2011). This question complements and supports the AI questions as it sets the stage for positive thinking and reflection while directing the focus of the interview for the participant.

The interviews for this case study were conducted with leaders at a school who purposefully seek out and sustain partnerships with organizations and other schools to provide a quality education for students with the intent of educating them to become global citizens. The interview questions were designed to have the participants describe the value that partnerships brought to the school. As the interviews progressed, any additional supporting questions asked were documented and asked of the other participants in this study.

RESULTS

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the value created for educational institutions when entering into partnerships with other organizations or schools. To do this, the interviews from the five participants were reviewed, broken up and sorted under the following codes describing the different value categories that were commonly mentioned throughout the five interviews. These value codes are “school”, “students”, “teachers”, and “parents”. The codes and excerpts of key words or phrases are in Figures 1-4.

In Figure 1, school leaders stated that partnerships provided value to the school by providing marketing or sales pitches (Participants A and C), increasing enrolment (Participants B and D), differentiating the school from other schools (Participants B and E), driving or expanding the curriculum while providing new resources (Participants A and B), building relationships with other organizations (Participant A), and helped the school become stronger (Participant B).



Fig. 1 – Excerpts from Participants A-E grouped under the code “School” (Miro, 2022).

In Figure 2, school leaders stated that partnerships created value for students by providing connections with others outside of the school community (Participants A, B, C, D, E), becoming internationally minded (Participant E), broadening awareness of other perspectives (Participants A and C), collaborating or learning cooperatively (Participants C and D) or addressing different learning styles (Participant E), providing diverse experiences (Participant C), creating lasting connections or relationships (Participant D) or authentic connections (Participant C), and creating independence (Participant E).

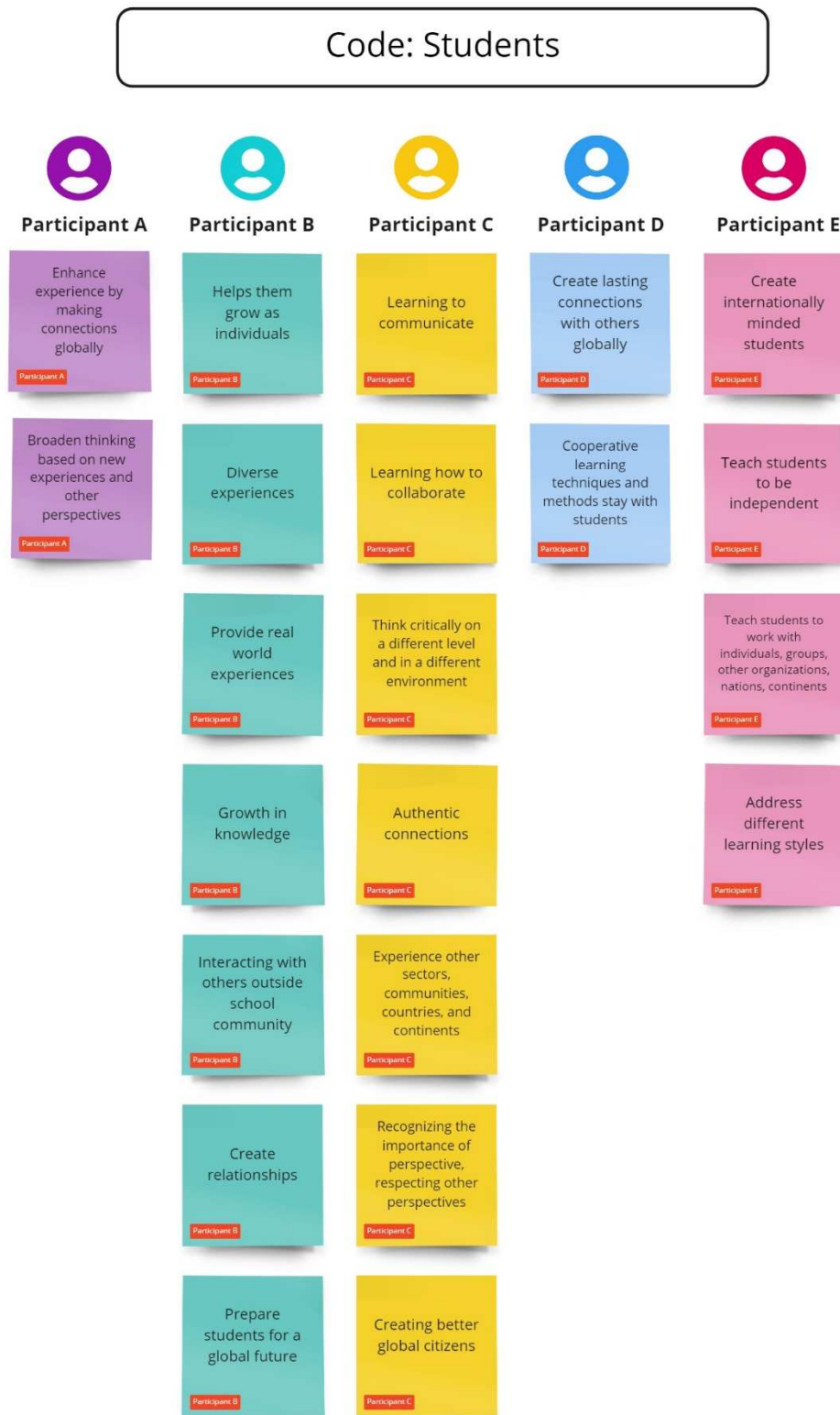


Fig. 2 – Excerpts from Participants A-E grouped under the code “Students” (Miro, 2022).

In Figure 3, school leaders stated that partnerships provided value to teachers by giving them the opportunity to collaborate and cooperatively learn with their partners (Participants C and D), providing them more resources to educate and enhance the student experience (Participant

A), providing trained volunteers to assist teachers in delivering partnership learning experiences (Participant A), providing diverse experiences (Participant B), providing more professional development opportunities and fostering a growth in knowledge (Participant B), sometimes providing a supplemental income (Participant B), fostering an understanding of different perspectives (Participant D), and creating a motivation for teachers to learn more (Participant E).

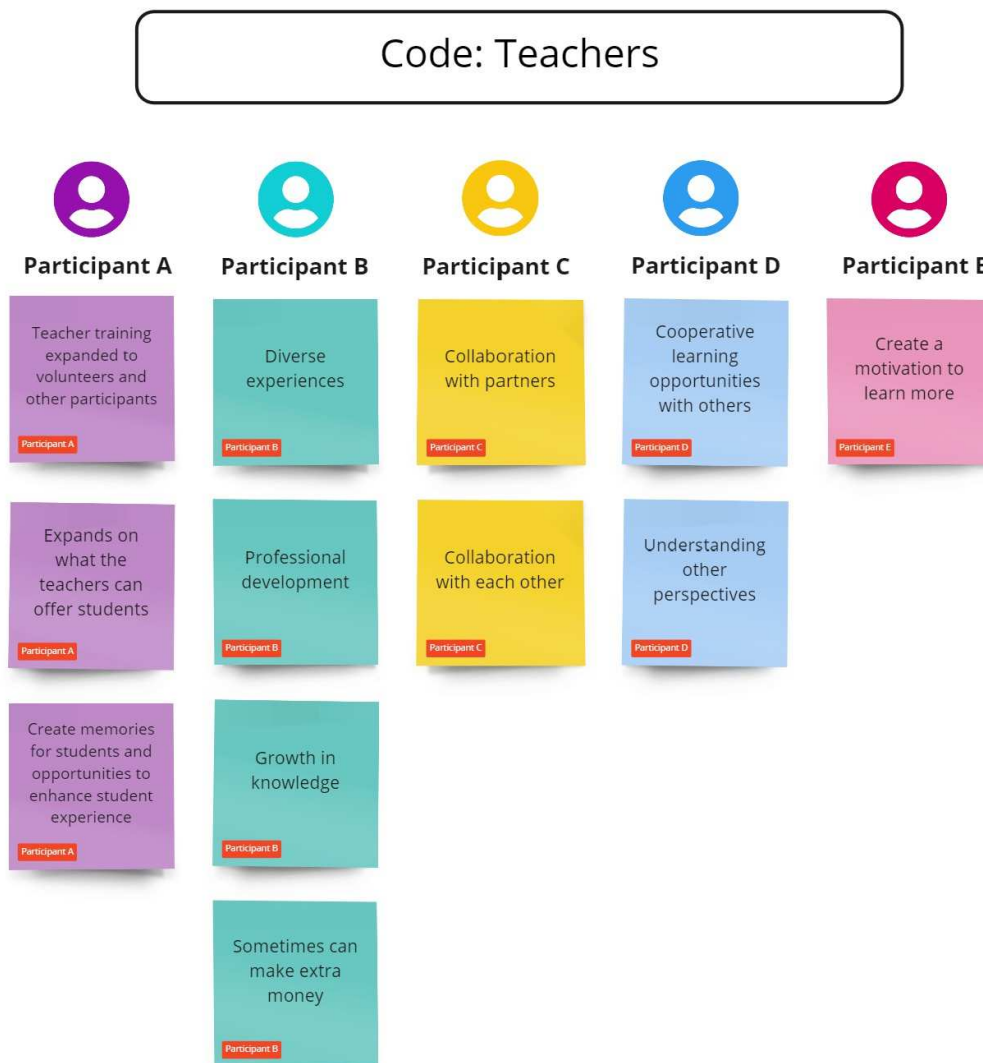


Fig. 3 – Excerpts from Participants A-E grouped under the code “Teachers” (Miro, 2022).

In Figure 4, school leaders stated that partnerships provided value to parents by providing a reason to enrol their child in the school (Participants A, B, C, D, and E), providing unique opportunities or choices for their child to enrich their education (Participant A and B), and providing opportunities for parents to become involved with their children through the partnerships offered (Participant A). In Figure 4, participants also stated that they believed that some parents took school partnerships into consideration when choosing a school for their student and that other parents do not realize what partnerships are present until after they have enrolled their child (Participants A, C, and D).



Fig. 4 – Excerpts from Participants A-E grouped under the code “Parents” (Miro, 2022).

Themes of value created from partnerships emerged in the four categories of school, students, teachers, and parents. The minority of value was described as financial through providing a supplemental income for teachers (Participant B) and increasing enrolment (Participants A, B, C, D, and E). The rest of the value described through the themes of building relationships by making connections through collaboration (Participants A, B, C, D, and E), providing experiences which can create a motivation to learn more (Participants A, B, C, E), and creating a global mindset through broadening awareness of different perspectives (Participants A, B, C, D, and E).

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that leaders of schools consider partnerships with other schools and organizations valuable because they may contribute to an increase enrolment; they provide relationships and connections for teachers, students, and the school; they provide experiences that inspire learning for both teachers and students; and create a global mindset through broadening awareness of different perspectives outside of the school community for teachers and students. The results also indicate that not all parents are aware of or take into consideration the value of partnerships prior to enrolling their child into a school. This aspect of not expecting that partnerships could be a valuable asset in their child's education until after enrolment is possibly a sign of the presence of Attractive Quality (Witell, et al., 2013). This study was limited as it was conducted with five participants who were or are leaders of a school and did not include individuals outside the role of leadership. The study was also limited in that it included participants affiliated with a school in the United States and did not include participants from other locations.

CONCLUSION

This study is part of an ongoing research project that will include interviews with leaders from international schools, leaders of organizations, and teachers and volunteers who maintain the partnerships between schools and organizations that have the common goal of educating students on becoming productive global citizens. The research project will employ Grounded Theory as the method in which to analyse the data. Grounded Theory is commonly used in qualitative research to "generate a theory using comparative analysis." Interviews are broken up into excerpts, the excerpts are grouped together, connections are made, and then are tied together under one category which creates support for a final theory (Glaser, B. and Strauss, A., 2017). This process is iterative, and categories can change with the inclusion of more data from additional interviews (Bryant, A. 2019). With the emergence of the presence of Attractive Quality from the data analysis, this will be included in further research involving surveying or interviewing parents regarding the factors they considered when choosing to enrol their child in a school.

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