Creating Global Partnerships:
Strategies for Non-profit Organizations’ Systemic and Sustainable Initiatives for Adult and Continuing Education Associations

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Abstract

Today’s competitive, global marketplace requires internationalization of education at all levels, from courses to programs and from instructor to the top of the organization. This new way of thinking is needed not just for educators but for educational associations as well. To remain relevant and sustainable to current members and to attract new members from diverse areas of the globe, associations must be proactive in broadening their mission. As most educational associations are non-profit, volunteer-driven organizations, competition for new members may be a foreign concept, yet in today’s world such activities are vital to survival of the organization.

One way to broaden an educational association’s relevancy is by developing partnerships with like-minded organizations. The importance of collaborations and collective action has long been recognized in the management literature as part of an effective business strategy. For non-profits associations, partnerships require a new paradigm that focuses on merging resources and culture to maximize strengths. By increasing the scale of collaborations, associations may be able to enhance their sustainability and relevance for the future. Partnerships allow associations to build on one another's strengths, share resources, decrease risk, and allow for new ideas and innovation. In a global world this means reaching out to a larger and more diverse audience across international boundaries.

This paper will review the literature related to non-profit and association management and discuss a case study from one organization’s methods to enhance alliances. The results of a survey-based research approach used by the association to access strategic connections will be discussed. The survey was conducted to identify avenues of potential cooperation with organizations related to adults and education. By working through current members, the association is attempting to develop partnerships by first using pre-existing personal relationships that will hopefully lead to formalized connections. To support this process a template for global partnerships was developed to help focus on strategic priorities for both organizations and yield a more successful long-term partnership. This template facilitates a standard method of managing partnership relations between the associations and the communities that they serve and share. Utilization of the connections and networks of members who believe in both associations’ visions and missions will greatly increase the likelihood of success. Overall, the purpose of this paper will be to examine the literature, share initial results of the survey, describe a partnership template, and outline planned future directions.
Global Marketplace

- Competition for members
- Internationalization at all levels
  - Education
    - Courses to Programs
    - Instruction to Organization
  - Associations
  - Business and Professions

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Characteristics of Associations

- Umbrella associations
- Non-profit organizations
- Professional development
- Volunteer leaders and members
Partnerships

• Like-minded organizations
• Professional development
• Business strategy
Literature Review - Associations

• Benefits of membership – Flanagan (1992)
• Internationalization of professionalism - Evetts (1995)
• Continuum of professional education - Knox (2000)
• Trends and transitions – Cervero (2000)
• Relationship marketing - Gruen, Summers, & Acito (2000)
• Organizational identity - Young (2001)
Literature Review – Associations (continued)

• Educational technologies – King (2002)
• Definition and purpose for both the academic and practitioner - Friedman & Phillips (2004)
• Why collaboration in non-profits - Guo & Acar (2005)
• Partner attributes - Arya & Lin (2007)
• Collaborative decision making in non-profits - Sowa (2009)
• Roles and responsibilities of professional associations – Henczel (2013)
Key Concepts

• Management strategy – shift in paradigm
• Increase scale of collaborations
  – Build on strengths
  – Share resources
  – Decrease risk
  – Develop new ideas and innovations
• Internationalization
Case Study

- MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)
- Survey of Members
- Board Members’ Networking
- Strategic Template
Communication/Collaboration Process
Summary/Implications

- Analyze the characteristics of the professional organizations
- Reflect on organizational learning and adaptation
- Recognize the perceived rewards or benefits of collaborations
- Develop an international strategic direction
Thank you!!

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• Henczel, S. (2013, October). Professionalism: Exploring the role and responsibility of our professional associations. In Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa Conference (pp. 20-23).
Selected References

- Sowa, J. E. (2009). The collaboration decision in nonprofit organizations: Views from the front line. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector, 38*(6), 1003-1025
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