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The Importance of a New Kind of Learning in Collaborative Networks

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ABSTRACT

There is wide agreement that in order to manage the increasingly complex and uncertain tasks of business, government and community, organizations can no longer operate in supreme isolation, but must develop a more networked approach. Networks are not 'business as usual'. Of particular note is what has been referred to as collaborative networks. Collaborative networks now constitute a significant part of our institutional infrastructure. A key driver for the proliferation of these multi-organizational arrangements is their ability to facilitate the learning and knowledge necessary to survive or to respond to increasingly complex social issues. In this regard the emphasis is on the importance of learning in networks. Learning applies to networks in two different ways. These refer to the kinds of learning that occur as part of the interactive processes of networks. This paper looks at the importance of these two kinds of learning in collaborative networks.

The first kind of learning relates to networks as learning networks or communities of practice. In learning networks people exchange ideas with each other and bring back this new knowledge for use in their own organizations. The second type of learning is referred to as network learning. Network learning refers to how people in collaborative networks learn new ways of communicating and behaving with each other. Network learning has been described as transformational in terms of leading to major systems changes and innovation. In order to be effective, all networks need to be involved as learning networks; however, collaborative networks must also be involved in network learning to be effective.

In addition to these two kinds of learning in collaborative networks this paper also focuses on the importance of how we learn about collaborative networks. Maximizing the benefits of working through collaborative networks is dependent on understanding their unique characteristics and how this impacts on their operation. This requires a new look at how we specifically teach about collaborative networks and how this is similar to and/or different from how we currently teach about interorganizational relations.

The Importance of a New Kind of Learning in Collaborative Networks

Introduction

Across all sectors there is a growing need for innovation. A key source of this innovation is derived from the learning that occurs between people and organizations. Learning is a key process in understanding practices in organizations, particularly how work gets done and what people expect. Whereas learning was previously considered an individual or organizational attribute (Wang and Ahmed, 2003), increasingly it is understood as occurring through the interactions of people within networks as well. Learning is considered to be both a central process and outcome of networks. As Stacey (1996) contends networks are the sites of major, complex learning which takes place through social interactions (385). An essential aspect of learning within networks is the interaction between members (Knight, 2002). Not only does learning provide gains for network members – individually and to their organizations, but also to the network itself in terms of broader collective or transformational learning.

Learning contributes to and maximizes collective knowledge, generates insights and ways of working, and aids in solving problems and creating innovations. An essential aspect of the learning process for networks is the interaction between network members, and the information and knowledge exchanges that take place among members of networks. Trust and reciprocity are key factors in how learning occurs. It leads to embedded sharing of views and interpretations. Networks allow for different types of learning. Following the distinctions made between organizational learning and learning organizations, two types of learning can be distilled from the network mode – network learning and learning networks (Knight, 2002).

Network learning occurs when the participants recognize the need to learn new skills and ways of behaving, not as individual organizations, but rather as a new collective whole. It is aimed at changing the way the participants interact with each other and the building of shared attributes. This type of learning occurs through the synergies created in the network and directed outwards from the network to the community outside the network. In this instance, network learning adds value to what occurs both inside and outside the network. This type of learning applies specifically to collaborative networks.

Learning networks relates to the idea that participants in networks gain new types of knowledge from the interactions in the network that they can then bring back and use in their work in their individual organizations. In effect the network serves as a “community of practice” and this type of learning is also directed back to the parent organization to improve their individual performance. This type of learning applies to all types of networks.

Since the emphasis on both learning and networks is likely to be ongoing there is a need to understand the concept of learning and how to function in and design optimal learning opportunities and processes for learning in networks. Knight (2002) has made the link between organizational learning and learning organizations and network learning and learning networks. In many ways the differences between network learning and learning networks and their outputs can be further aligned against the different network types depicted by Brown and Keast (2003) and Keast, Brown and Mandell (2007). These are cooperative, coordinative and collaborative networks. Table 1 sets out these distinctive types and their learning foci.

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Although learning occurs in all of these networks it is in collaborative networks where both kinds of learning play a major role. Collaborative networks are a unique form of network. Maximizing the benefits of working through collaborative networks is dependent on understanding their unique characteristics and how this impacts on their operation. How we learn about networks depends to a great extent on our knowledge of interorganizational relations (ior). Although this literature may apply to certain types of networks, this is not the case with collaborative networks. Collaborative networks are a very unique type of network. In such a network, members need to be committed to forming a new whole with new ways of behaving. To be able to operate in such a network, participants need to learn new ways of behaving and communicating with each other. The literature of ior does not lend itself to this new way of operating. New ways of learning about collaborative networks are required to understand the unique characteristics of collaborative networks and to be able to create the synergies that characterize collaborative networks.

The focus of this paper is on learning in collaborative networks. The first section of this paper briefly identifies the different kinds of networks with an emphasis on collaborative networks and what makes them unique. We then go on to delineate the two different types of learning that can occur within networks. Drawing on a number of case studies we demonstrate both the utilization of the two different network learning modes and their impact on the effectiveness of different networks. We then highlight the need to teach people how to work in collaborative networks. The paper concludes with the implications of this new way of learning on the effectiveness of collaborative networks.

Different Types of Networks and their learning foci

In the literature networks are often referred to as collaborations (Agranoff, 2003; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Alter & Hage, 1993; Bardach, 1999; Huxham & Vangen, 1996; 2000). Although networks are ways that different organizations, groups and individuals work together, to refer to all of them as collaborations muddies the water (Mandell, 1994; 2001a; Mandell & Steelman, 2003). Instead, a distinction has been made among different types of networks (Agranoff, 2006) with some authors (Brown & Keast, 2003; Keast, Brown & Mandell, 2007) summarizing these as: cooperative, coordinative and collaborative, or the '3Cs'. In both the cooperative and coordinative networks participants are independent organizations and/or individuals who come together for a specific purpose. In cooperative networks it is to share information and expertise. In coordinative networks the purpose is to better coordinate existing services. In both types of networks the status quo is maintained. Each of these types of networks is considered a learning network or community of practice.

In a collaborative network the participants are *interdependent*. This means that although participants may represent independent organizations, members know they are dependent on each other in such a way that for the actions of one to be effective they must rely on the actions of another. There is an understanding that 'they cannot meet their interests working alone and that they share with others a common problem' (Innes & Booher, 2000, p.7). This goes beyond just resource dependence, data needs, common clients or geographic issues, although these may be involved. It involves a need to make a collective commitment to change the way in which they are operating (Mandell, 1994, p.107).

This means that the members can no longer only make changes at the margins in how they operate. Instead they will be involved in actions requiring major changes in their operations. The risks in collaborative networks are very high. Participants must be willing to develop new ways of thinking and behaving, form new types of relationships and be willing to make changes in existing systems of operation and service delivery. A key characteristic of a collaborative network is therefore that the purpose is not to develop strategies to solve problems per se (although this does take place), but rather to achieve the strategic synergies among participants that will eventually lead to finding innovative solutions (Cordero-Guzman, 2001; Keast et al., 2007; Mandell, 1994; 2001a; Steelman & Carmin, 2002). Learning here is transformational. The emphasis is on learning new ways of behaving and dealing with each other (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Mandell, 1994; 2001a). These types of networks are focused on network learning in addition to being learning networks.

Methodology

In order to 'test' the fit of the re-conceptualization of the differentiation of network learning types this paper adopts a meta analysis case studies drawn from an array of contexts – human services, infrastructure and government,

Case Selection and Building

To understand the motivations for network formation (and its relationship to network processes) a cross- national and jurisdictional approach was undertaken. The network cases were drawn from multiple levels of government and community operation and from the international arenas of Australia and the United States. This purposeful sample of essentially homogeneous network cases (Patton, 1987) was coupled with a modified version of the most similar/most different case approach (Przeworski and Teune (1970) based on different levels of operation – strategic policy, administration and practitioner. Selecting cases located at different operational levels enabled the subtleties in terms of formation, operation and outcomes to be explored and exemplified. Table 2 provides a summary of the six network cases¹.

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Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to build the six network cases. Interview respondents included network members as well as identified key informants within the service system. The use of a semi-structured approach allowed respondents to describe their understandings and experiences of the network; in particular the basis for the adoption of a network approach, in their own words (Denzin, 1984). In addition, in the Australian cases, focus groups were used to gain additional information from participants on their experience and understanding of the network. In all cases, a review of relevant written documentation was used to supplement the interview information.

¹ Contact authors for complete details of the cases.

In the next section we first delineate the two different ways that learning applies to networks. We then use the case studies to show how the two learning modes made a difference on the effectiveness of these networks.

Differentiating Different Modes of Learning Within Networks

Learning Networks

Learning networks are groups of organizations and/or individuals that come together with the express purpose of learning together, from one another. Members of these types of networks are interested in moving from what they know to beyond their individual constraints. In this mode, derived learning is taken back to the individual organizations represented in the network for their benefit. These types of networks have also been referred to as communities of practice (Snyder & Briggs, 2004). According to Snyder & Briggs (2004:173) learning networks "...can combine disciplines, interests, and capabilities across boundaries to take on national priorities." According to these authors, a learning network or "community of practice" "...is a particular type of network that features peer-to-peer collaborative activities to build member skills as well as organizational and societal capabilities"(174).

The focus in learning networks is on the learning of individual group members and is evidenced by an individualistic focus and a link back to apply the learning to the individual members of their organizations. It has to do with what each firm can learn (acquire) about each other, or from their interactions. Even where it is recognized that the interaction might lead to new joint learning, the focus is typically self interested and on how each firm can derive private benefit.

Network Learning

Network learning is learning by a group of organizations. It is collective learning. The benefit of this type of learning is directed to assist the network itself. The focus is on making a contribution that is wider than the individual or individual organization. The emphasis is on the broader community and is evidenced by shared cognitive structures, norms, shared interpretations and collective practice. In this way network learning becomes more than the sum of the learning of the individuals, groups and organizations that constitute the network; it results in changes to the attributes of the network, such as interactions, behavior, processes and shared narratives (Dunford and Jones, 2000; Knight, 2002).

Based on the two learning modes cooperative and coordinative networks are focused on business as usual. The emphasis is on participating agencies working together to a sufficient level to support their individual goals or to do the same work more efficiently. Accordingly, in these network modes learning is directed at the benefits to participating agencies. They are engaged as learning networks or communities of practice. By contrast, since collaborative networks are about systems change, the learning orientation is focused not only on the individual organizations, but also on transformation or changing the ways that people work together and the structures and processes that support and sustain such change. Moreover, through these adjustments the cumulative learning of network members can be directed beyond the network to create broader social benefit.

The primary focus needs to be on network learning. As such, unless participants recognize the need to take this extra step, a collaborative network will not be as effective as possible.

These distinctions are evident in the six case studies used in this paper. These cases are based on research undertaken in both Australia and the United States and include: Chief Executive Officers Forum (CEO) (Keast et al., 2006), Service Integration Project (SIP) (Boorman & Woolcock, 2003; Keast et al., 2004); Family Youth Connections Network (Keast & Brown, 2006), The Water Forum (WF) (Connick, 2006), New Futures (NF) (Annie E. Casey Foundation, undated; Mandell, 1994, 2001b; The Center for The Study of Social Policy, undated); and Life Services Systems (LSS) (Mandell, 1994).

The case studies

Both the WF and SIP cases were set up by government agencies based on the need to overcome a major crisis. SIP was formed in response to the violent death of an elderly citizen. The state government supported community demands that the agencies responsible for addressing the social and economic problems that culminated in the incident should do something different in order to prevent this from happening again. In particular, there were calls for the agencies to move outside of their siloed service models to form a collaborative networked response (Keast, 2004, Keast et al, 2004; Boorman & Woolcock, 2003).

The WF was formed in order to negotiate an agreement on how to better manage the water supply in the northern California region and also to preserve the habitat. Prior to the formation of the network all parties (government agencies, private developers, environmentalists, farmers and community groups) were constantly fighting with each other in court as to what should be done in the region.

In the case of the WF the participants recognized from the outset that in order to be effective, they would have to form new relations, change their behavior and institute systems changes (a collaborative network). This was accomplished through the use of a unique type of negotiation process called interest-based negotiation (Connick, 2006). Although the process took over five years, as a result of this innovative method, they were able to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that committed all parties to work together in new ways for 30 years. This MOU is still in effect and has had an impact on making changes in the entire water system in Northern California.

In the case of SIP, although the network was set up initially to better coordinate existing services (a coordinating network), participants recognized from the outset that a traditional authoritative approach would not work. As a SIP respondent noted: "It was recognized that we had to change the way we were working" "We had to develop stronger, more collegiate relations" (SIP Interview). In this case the catalyst to building stronger relationships, collegiality and mutual commitment was a Graduate Certificate in Inter-Professional Development in which members established a common language and vision (Keast et al, 2004).

In both cases, the participants recognized the need to work as a collaborative network. As a result, the participants engaged each other not only as a learning network, but emphasized the critical

element of network learning. This emphasis resulted in building better and stronger relationships that have continued in the long run.

In the cases of LSS and FYCN the networks were formed based on the desire for better coordination of the work of government agencies. With LSS the driving force was to insure that mentally disabled adults would not get “lost” in the social services system. This project was established based on a grant from the Michigan State Development Disabilities Program. The agency forming the network perceived their role as directing all participants to coordinate their efforts to realize this goal. All agencies were able to follow their existing case management rules and regulations but had to work in a coordinated effort in their program. In order to remain in the program each agency had to agree to work within a case management framework set up by the lead agency. To the extent that the participants were able to better coordinate their efforts and work together more efficiently they were considered effective.

In this case, LSS was involved as a learning network and became a community of practice. However, as one participant indicated the participants were never able to institute real change because they insisted on maintaining the status quo. In order to go further, they would have had to use network learning to build new relations and change their behavior. In effect, they would have had to form a collaborative network, but this was not what they wanted to do.

The FYCN was formed in response to a federal government policy stance requiring that previously independent services work together to develop a seamless approach to the youth homelessness service system. Under this initiative funding was directed only to those agencies demonstrating a networked approach to service delivery. Unlike the LSS, however, in the FYCN, while the primary impetus for a networked form was generated by government policy and funding, the idea of a set of agencies working together rather than in silos as was the case also had strong resonance within this network (Keast and Brown, 2006). For many agencies the previously competitive practices were seen as detrimental to the overall quality of services for young people. A coming together of ‘like agencies’ was seen as a positive and progressive concept.

Taking this agenda further, some participating agencies stressed that ‘far from being pushed into a network form by government funding, they were motivated to do this ‘because it was the right thing for our clients and our agencies’’. Through their structured relations the FYCN members developed stronger interpersonal relations which provided additional support for the work that they were doing and enabled them to branch out from the ordered linkage arrangements to create new processes and outcomes. As a result of the growing commitment to working together, coupled with the embedded routines and practices, the FYCN contributed strongly to the local services system. In particular they developed a co-location model of service delivery, which aided joint case management and led to a number of effective cross agency projects (Ryan, 004; Keast and Brown, 2006).

In effect, although organized as a coordinating network, they actually worked as a collaborative network and were involved in network learning. This allowed them to not only coordinate existing services but to move onto more innovative systems changes as well.

In New Futures (NF) the aim was “to encourage a fundamental restructuring of the way [the communities in the program] planned, financed, and delivered educational, health, and other services to at risk-youth” (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, undated). The program was funded and directed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Because the emphasis of the program was on preventing truancy, funding went to the School Superintendent who assumed that the money should only go to improving programs for the schools, that is, doing the same work more efficiently. As long as new programs for the schools were approved, the program appeared to achieve success

The difficulty was that the grant was meant to provide a way to develop new ways of serving youth across all agencies (governmental, private and non-profit) in the community. In order to do this, it was necessary to try to change existing systems (including the schools) and to develop a new whole. The network operated as a coordinating network, but needed to become a collaborative network in order to fully meet the goals of the grant. Although involved as a learning network they needed to be involved in network learning as well. As this never happened, the network was eventually disbanded without meeting the goals of the grant.

This network is in contrast to the CEO network. The rationale for the formation of the CEO network was on establishing a whole-of-government approach to human services under the imprimatur of the state Premier (Menzies, 2002). A significant strategy for achieving this ‘cross-cutting’ goal centered on tapping into the CEOs’ personal relationships to engender a deeper understanding of each other and their work (O’Farrell, 2002). The formation of stronger interpersonal networks between the heads of departments was perceived essentially as a tool which the government could use to bring together a diverse set of resources. Although there was rhetoric of collaboration, in effect this network was focused on coordination through better alignment of resources and working more efficiently, rather than changing the system of service delivery.

However, on their own initiative informal relations between the leaders of the departments proved to be insufficient mechanisms to achieve a coherent package of policy and service initiatives. In response, a more formalized, vertical top-down approach that drew on structured meetings, set programs of work and planned agendas was instituted to supplement the informal relationships. Extending this vertical focus the network also became subject to ‘management and oversight’ by a Secretariat reporting directly to the Premier of the state. To drive the agenda for cross-department working, salary incentives were introduced for CEOs. However, alongside this vertical relational emphasis, the CEOs continued to interact and through initiatives such as the Community Cabinet Meetings were able to gain deeper personal insights and build commitment to each other. Through this interpersonal approach they were able to push past some of the previous turf based impediments to integrated policy and service delivery and create small windows of collective outcomes (CEO Interviews).

Although each of the three different types of networks (the 3C’s) are acceptable modes of achieving goals, it is the collaborative network that is the most complicated, risky and difficult type of network. The cooperative and coordinative network are involved as learning networks and the effective ones become communities of practice, which is a big step forward for them. In the collaborative network, however, participants need to be involved in network learning as well. Although time consuming and difficult to achieve, the outcomes are far more innovative and do not

rely on the status quo. It is critical, therefore, that when we teach about networks that we emphasize this unique aspect of collaborative networks.

Learning About Network Working

Due to the unique characteristics of collaborative networks it is important that the way we learn about them is not lumped together with how we learn about other types of networks. Of particular importance is that the way we teach about collaborative networks and how to work within these organizational forms to both students and practitioners, has an impact on how participants in collaborative networks will think about networks and in turn what kinds of interactions they will have in networks. In teaching about collaborative networks, therefore, the task involves structuring meaningful dialogue, framing and reframing perceptions to secure a cohesive view and guiding questions and discussions to better elicit concerns and highlight common points of interest.

The process has been described as the difference between discussion and dialogue (Innes & Booher, 1999; Bobrow, 2006). Dialogue “refers to the exploration of options while [discussion] refers to making decisions ... dialogue involves listening, respecting what others have to say, suspending judgment (i.e. avoiding the tendency to defend pre-existing beliefs), and voicing reaction” (Bobrow, 2006: 270). The key is to get people to not only listen to what each other has to say, but to build a better understanding of what each other is saying. The notion of ‘collective understanding’ arising from shared meanings and language has been identified as a core feature of successful collaborative networks (Keast et al, 2004).

In all networks members come from different types of organizations, not only with different ways of operating but with different values, attitudes and perceptions of each other and this is reflected in the language they use with each other (Mandell, 1994). In order to be effective, therefore, members of collaborative networks must “learn to talk *to* each other, not *around* each other. This is particularly true in collaborative networks where participants must learn, in effect, to step into each other’s shoes’ and adjust their behavior based on this changed perspective” (Mandell, 2001a). This, in turn, needs to lead to a new way of thinking and behaving with each other based on developing a shared perspective (Mandell, 1994; Bobrow, 2006). Mandell & Steelman (2003) refer to this as the orientation of members. According to them, “this relates to members’ background, value systems and perceptions going into the new interorganizational arrangement and how these are reshaped by the interactions occurring within the arrangement” (205). This highlights the need for participants coming into collaborative networks to have a full understanding of what will be needed in order to be effective.

Not only is an understanding of collaborative networks needed, therefore, but also the ability to communicate differently with each other. In light of the importance of the ability to communicate in networks, it is interesting to note that the concept of language has not been a major focus of network research and writing. There are, however, a few key exceptions. In 1988, Mandell wrote about “communication networks” (410). She indicated the emphasis needs to be on the ability to network within “a system of organizations” (410). For her, instead of an emphasis on management taking place within the individual organizations making up the network, “...the emphasis instead is on management that spans organizational boundaries which must be accepted as an integral part of

the managerial perspective” (411). This is particularly true in collaborative networks where the participants need to engage in changing systems and building new types of relationships.

According to Holden (2008), there are key differences between different languages and language is a means to influence “the quality of interpersonal relationships, the communication of information and instructions and shaping organizational self-reference” (243). Language is also critical in establishing a social identity, status and power positions in groups (Lauring, 2008). Language is a means of socialization and is used to create bonds and/or divide individuals and groups because “the roles and social relations available in the greater community or organization are transmitted and internalized through language” (Mueller, 1993 as cited by Lauring, 2008: 347-348). In addition, Lauring (2008: 348) notes that “language ... can be strategically used as a symbolic tool in the formation of collective communities. Therefore, the existence of language within a group can lead to both polarization and accommodation, depending on the context”.

This emphasis on the impact of language on participants working through collaborative networks highlights the need for a new way of teaching about collaborative networks. In this regard, the language of intergovernmental and interorganizational relations (IGR/IOR), rather than helping in this process, hampers it. The language of IGR/IOR is based on the assumption that what individual organizations need to do when they work with other organizations is to control uncertainties by focusing on their own individual needs in order to protect their individual environment. Instead, a new way of thinking is needed, one that incorporates the intricacies of working within a new collective whole and not just an individual organization.

For instance, in IGR/IOR, we think of boundary spanning as a strategy to reduce uncertainty in an organization’s environment. In collaborative networks, the key is to eliminate boundaries and incorporate all of the relevant stakeholders within the network. By thinking in terms of boundary spanning, participants behave as if they have to protect their own individual organization from the other organizations within the network instead of trying to find mutual grounds for new ways of working together.

In essence, there is a need to use a new type of language when teaching about collaborative networks. This language will need to incorporate the views and values of the individual members, but would focus on reframing the problems and approaches to how to solve these problems. Along this line, language can be used judiciously to redirect attributed responsibility from one member (often the leader/coordinator) to the collective membership rather than one person. This is the difference between “you should” and “we should”. Instead of using the “jargon” of the individual organizations and/or groups represented in a network, this new language would provide a new way of expressing the explicit processes that are specific to collaborative networks and network interactions. Examples of this new type of language would include the following:

- instead of meetings, there would be network gatherings
- instead of memorandum of understanding there would be terms of engagement; instead of agendas, there would be work programs

- instead of managers there would be “synergistic leaders” (Mandell & Keast, 2009)
- instead of boundary spanners there would be “relational capital” (Mandell & Keast, 2009)
- instead of emphasizing the accomplishment of tasks there would be an emphasis on interpersonal relations

The use of this new type of language, with new symbols and notions of reality would result in the reframing of the problem(s) (Bobrow, 2006). Rather than a collection of individual problems, the process would lead to a new collective whole. Innes & Booher (1999) sees this as similar to the creative process of composing tunes. Just as composers see familiar elements in new ways, participants of networks would be able to see new possible relationships and develop collective and unexpected solutions to complex problems.

Although not an easy task as the case studies have indicated, this can be accomplished. If collaborative networks are to reach their full potential for effectiveness, we will have to begin the process that is needed. This will include learning to share perspectives in order to form a new community of practice (a learning network). It will also involve creating network learning based on the new ways of working in collaborative networks.

Implications and Conclusion

Although the two concepts of learning have been dealt with separately they are interrelated in collaborative networks. In collaborative networks, although a new collective whole must be created in order to be effective, the participants in the network still represent individual organizations. They will therefore not only be involved in the idea of learning networks, but in the idea of network learning as well. As learning networks they will benefit the individual organizations that they represent. In addition, however, in terms of network learning, they will move far beyond the boundaries of their individual organizations. They will develop new relationships with each other as well as building new types of skills that will benefit both the collaborative network itself as well as the community at large.

This, of course, requires time spent on the development of a more sophisticated relationship language and vocabulary, simply to enable us to talk to each other, learn from each other and talk about how we are in a relationship. To be of use such a network vocabulary will need to reflect a much deeper understanding of how relationships are built, sustained and the knowledge passed on. As in all networks, however, this is not always an easy thing to do.

To overcome any obstacles, a suite of actions will be needed. The first step will be learning about each other and adjusting our attitudes, perceptions and mindsets to accommodate all views. This will have the effect of getting people to see each other in a different light and also to get additional information out into the open that might shed light on complex problem solving. The second step will be to impart these new perceptions to the parent organizations represented in the network. The key will be to recognize the political position of the parent organization and to insure their buy in, at least at a minimum, of the process. Third, participants will need to find common ground to build a new foundation and create new types of behavior. This will be accomplished by establishing

a new “meta-language” that pulls all the participants together in terms of how they are able to understand and communicate with each other.

To accomplish these steps will rely on the establishment of agreed upon ground rules of behavior and in some cases may even require specific training programs in new ways of behaving (Connick, 2006; Keast, et al, 2004). This leads to the emphasis on new ways of teaching students and practitioners what it means to operate in collaborative networks. Although it is clear that collaborative networks are distinct from other types of networks, this distinction has not been made clear in the way we teach about them. Rather than rely on prior to lay the foundation of how we think about collaborative networks, a new type of teaching will be required.

This new type of teaching will need to focus not on just protecting the individual organizations in the network, but rather allowing them to find mutual ground and understanding of what it means to work as a new whole. What will be needed is to move away from just emphasizing networks as learning networks, although this is important and should be one of the elements in the way we teach about collaborative networks, to emphasizing the key factor of network learning. In other words, there is a need to move from thinking of collaborative networks as individual organizations working together to understanding collaborative networks as interdependent organizations that must rely on each other in order to solve their most complex problems.

Finally, learning will need to occur at a number of different levels. Of course participants of collaborative networks will need to be involved. In addition, however, those outside the network who have an impact on the outcomes achieved in the network will have to be involved. This will include the heads of the parent organizations represented in the network as well as decision makers and community members that will be impacted by the activities of the collaborative network. For the heads of the organizations represented in the collaborative network, they will need to be reeducated in how they think of their organization vis a vis the other organizations in the network. Everyone involved will also have to be reeducated in what it means to work through collaborative networks. The risks will be high but the ability to find innovative solutions to our most complex problems should be worth it.

Table 1: Differentiating Network Types and their Learning Focus

Network Types		
COOPERATIVE	COORDINATIVE	COLLABORATIVE
Low trust — unstable relations	Medium trust — based on prior relations	High trust — stable relations
Infrequent communication flows	Structured communication flows	Thick communication flows
Known information sharing	'Project' related and directed information sharing	Tactic information sharing
Adjusting actions	Joint projects, joint funding, joint policy	Systems change
Independent/autonomous goals	Semi-independent goals	Dense interdependent relations and goals
Power remains with organisation	Power remains with organisations	Shared power
Resources — remain own	Shared resources around project	Pooled, collective resources
Commitment and accountability to own agency	Commitment and accountability to own agency and project	Commitment and accountability to the network first
Relational time frame requirement — short term	Relational time frame medium term — often based on prior projects	Relational time frame requirement — long term 3-5 years
Learning Mode: Learning Networks/ Community of Practice: Self-Interest: Securing information	Learning Mode: Learning Networks/ Community of Practice :Self-Interest: Learning more efficient means of coordination	Learning Mode: Emphasis on: Network Learning/ Transformational: Collective Learning: Building a New Whole

Source: Keast & Brown, 2003; Keast et al 2007

Table 2: Summary Details of Study Cases

Cases	Purpose	Service orientation/goal	Operating Level and Strategies	Composition	Outcomes
CEO Chief Executive Officers Human Services Network	Whole of government coordination	Strategic Integrated Policy and Service	Strategic policy level - Imprimatur of Premier - Official Mandate - Tight agendas & action plans - Interpersonal (limited, but growing) - Community Cabinet Meetings	Chief Executive Officers of State Government Human Services Departments	New Initiatives such as: Community Cabinet Meetings Integrated Policy Windows of Collective Outcomes
SIP Service Integration Project	Systems Change: Community Governance	Community governance	Administrative/regional - Training Course - Tight Agendas - Core team/driver - Strong/dense relationships - Sense of Collegiality	Regional Managers of Government and Community Agencies	- Stronger , More Collegial Relationships - Mutual Commitment - Common Language & Vision
FYCN Youth Connections Network	Seamless Service Approach	Seamless Service Provision	Practitioner/base level - MOU - Strong driver - Brokerage & contracts - Case Management Interpersonal: - Regular Workshops Relationship building activities	Community Service Practitioners	- Stronger Interpersonal Relations - Co-Location Model of Service Delivery - Cross Agency Projects
WF The Water Forum	Develop innovative solutions	Innovative solutions to existing policies	Strategic level - Developing New Relationships/ Behaviors - Outside Consultant Training Using Interest-Based Negotiations - Strong Dense Relationships	Heads of State Agencies; CEOs of Private Companies; City Managers; Heads of Non-profit & Community Groups	MOU to develop innovative solutions for 30 years Changes in water system in Northern California
NF New Futures Program	Build new systems for youth	Integrated policies & services	Strategic level - Foundation Grant Authority - Informal Meetings Among Some of the Participants (limited)	City Manager; Heads of Public Agencies; CEOs of Private Companies; Heads of Non- Profit & Community Groups	Limited Coordination; Network disbanded without innovative solutions
LSS Life Services System	Better coordination of services	Seamless service provision	Administration Practitioner Level - Case Management Use of Existing Agencies' Rules & Regulations	Department Heads; Service Practitioners	Limited Coordination Maintained Status Quo

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