Conference Presentations


Book Review


FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ORAL EXAMINATION
HEATHER McRAE

FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
EdD

Wednesday, December 16, 2009
SFU Vancouver (Room 1425) at 2:00 PM

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones

Senior Supervisor: Dr. John LaBrie
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IN SEARCH OF COMMON SPACE: EXPLORING UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION’S ROLE IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explored the experiences and perceptions of community and university members relating to their participation in collaborations for the social good. A review of the literature on civic engagement provided the context for examining the ideas and issues of 15 representatives from three different professional groups: university continuing education (UCE), community-based research (CBR) and community organizations (CO).

The theoretical views of two contemporary social theorists guided the development of this study. Habermas’ theory of communicative action provided the framework for identifying the research questions, designing the data collection instruments and analyzing the data. Taylor’s notion of common space offered a way to view community-university partnerships through providing a lens for understanding how different groups can collaborate to influence positive social change.

The study findings suggest that currently only representatives from CBR and CO share common space in collaborations that support the social good. Based on my analysis of the data, the professional organizational model of UCE with its emphasis on cost-recovery vocational programming is one of the limiting factors affecting the involvement of UCE staff members in community-university partnerships.

This research study offers new insights about the role of UCE practitioners in facilitating the civic engagement initiatives of the university. Strategies to reframe the role of UCE within the university include the development of a civic engagement model for UCE practitioners that incorporates aspects of their historical and current practices, provides a lens for initiating new discussions, and includes social measurement tools to acknowledge their contributions to community-university partnerships. Expanding the concept of common space to include involvement from representatives of national service and funding organizations could increase opportunities for knowledge mobilization and encourage the development of partnerships and research collaborations that support the social good.

Academic Record
1992 – Master of Science, Leisure Studies and Services, University of Oregon
1979 – Bachelor of Recreation Education, University of British Columbia

Professional Experience
2004 – Present Program Director, Arts and Science Programs, Division of Continuing Studies, University of Victoria
1993 – 2004 Manager of Continuing Education, Faculty of Adult and Continuing Education, Okanagan University College
1988 – 1993 Cultural and Social Programmer, Division of Student Services, Okanagan University College
1987 – 1988 Chair and Instructor, Activity Aide Program, Faculty of Health and Human Services, Okanagan University College
1984 – 1987 Recreation Therapist, Penticton Regional Hospital
1982 – 1984 Recreation Therapist, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Edmonton
1979 – 1982 Recreation Therapist, Valleyview Hospital, Shaughnessy Hospital