Integrating Co-operative Community-Based Research (CBR) into Doctoral Leadership Studies

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This study describes how co-operative learning and community-based research were combined and implemented as co-operative community-based research in a first-year doctoral educational leadership course at Seattle University. Participants were 18 students who constituted a newly admitted cohort. A mixed-methods longitudinal case study design was employed to examine (a) perceived factors that facilitate and/or frustrate co-operative community-based research; (b) demands that this innovation places on faculty, community partners, and students; and (c) principles for best practice. Results revealed a set of factors that interact with basic elements of co-operative learning to drive or deter success, including team growth/development (over time), group setup/norms (for functioning), team dynamics (particularly conflict resolution), perceptions of time (that generate emotional reactions to perceived progress) and participation of faculty and community partners (most helpful when continuous, responsive, and supportive). These findings suggest that faculty, community partners, and students engaged in co-operative community-based research should constantly seek clarity (of purpose, procedures, products), get concrete (use templates), communicate (frequently, respectfully, personally, mutually) and confront conflict (constructively).

Introduction

The leadership doctorate in the College of Education at Seattle University intentionally aims to develop leaders who value and serve organisations and communities in ways that advance social justice, while also supporting scholarly academic learning and dissertation research. In fact, its cohort structure provides opportunities to explore nontraditional ways to achieve these aims, always seeking to more fully live the university mission "dedicated to educating the whole person, to professional formation, and to empowering leaders for a just and humane world" (Seattle University, 2005).

A recent comprehensive evaluation of the educational leadership doctorate led to rethinking, re-visioning, and revising this advanced degree programme with mission in mind and the skill sets that effective leaders need in the twenty-first century. This also necessarily led to re-imagining how best to equip doctoral students to conduct skillful inquiry, not only for sound dissertation research, but as future professionals with the capacity to routinely plan, enact, and apply investigations useful for meaningful organisation development and positive social change.

Co-operative community-based research (CBR) emerged as the vehicle for involving a cohort of graduate students in authentic inquiry during first-year doctoral studies toward developing highly effective leaders with hearts for social justice and tools for sound research to inform constructive change. Although rarely implemented in doctoral degree programmes (evidenced by the overall lack of scholarly literature on CBR in doctoral studies), faculty posited that (a) combining CBR with co-operative learning held great potential for impact across a range of desired outcomes, (b) CBR conducted by student teams would create an authentic context for practicing and honing a host of leadership skills, (c) results could contribute to real change as community organisations/agencies with social justice agendas partnered with CBR teams to frame inquiry, and (d) students would transfer inquiry skills learned through the CBR experience to planning and conducting their own dissertation research.

Simply put, the faculty believed that CBR had the potential to provide added value by simultaneously addressing targeted programme learning outcomes typically pursued in separate courses distinctly designed for each purpose — such as leadership, research methods, professional studies, service-learning, or social justice courses. At the doctoral level, tackling outcomes more holistically by integrating co-operative CBR into leadership coursework during the first year of studies would immediately immerse students in doing research. This, in turn, would enable students to apply research concepts learned in first-year methods courses, face and solve real issues and challenges that emerge in research, and eventually transfer these insights and skills to their own dissertation research. Abundant mixed-methods data were collected to confirm or disconfirm these assumptions.

The initial results reported here focus exclusively on team effectiveness as perceived by the participating students. The numerous benefits that may result from co-operative CBR at the doctoral level are unlikely if teamwork becomes frustrated, fractured, or dysfunctional to the point of no return, leaving teammates unable to get back on track, constructively interacting to produce a quality product. In fact, the potential for less-than-optimal teamwork may be more likely when a shared team goal is broad, complex, and only accomplishable over long periods of time by achieving a series of smaller participant-determined tasks along the way — as is the case with co-operative CBR. Hence, the following questions guided this initial analysis:

1. What facilitates and/or frustrates co-operative CBR integrated into leadership coursework at the doctoral level?

2. What demands does co-operative CBR place on faculty, students, and community partner organisations?

3. What principles promote successful practice of co-operative CBR?

This article first provides brief overviews of CBR, co-operative learning, and how faculty combined both to engage doctoral students in a year-long experience intended to simultaneously develop leadership and research skills within a community social justice context. It continues by describing methods used to examine students' co-operative CBR experiences, then reports initial results. It concludes by discussing implications for effectively structuring co-operative CBR into doctoral coursework, including the demands placed on those engaged in such inquiry, principles for best practice, and pathways for future research.

Structuring Community-Based Research (CBR) Co-operatively

Community-based research (CBR)

Community-based research (CBR) is a participatory approach to scholarship in which university faculty and students work with local organisations to examine justice-oriented issues toward positively influencing change in the community. In the scholarly literature, CBR commonly is defined as:

> a partnership of students, faculty, and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change' (Strand et al, 2003: 3).

Figure 1 shows CBR at the intersection of its three major components: (a) university scholarship/research conducted by faculty and students for educational purposes; (b) community partner organisations/agencies that sponsor programmes serving public needs; and (c) change for social justice to foster access, equity, opportunity, and community well being.

Despite its ongoing development and application in higher education, little evidence exists in the scholarly literature on the use or effectiveness of CBR at the doctoral level. Perhaps this is because of practical considerations. For example, most doctoral programmes already devote substantial time and energy to equipping students for research through methods courses that

culminate in the dissertation. It also takes time to identify and secure community partners whose interests and timelines align with university/programme goals and the academic calendar, demanding a fair amount of preplanning by faculty/instructors whose workloads and professional commitments often are at maximum capacity. In addition, most doctoral leadership programmes require an applied internship in the field through which students practice and develop leadership skills in meaningful community contexts. When internships occur in organisations leveraged toward social justice, CBR may be viewed as a competing rather than value-added priority.

Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning, grounded by social interdependence theory (see Deutsch, 2006; Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Johnson and Johnson, 2005; Johnson et al, 2011; King and Stevahn, 2013), engages groups of individuals in constructively coordinating contributions — such as knowledge, ideas, skills, resources, experience, energy, persistence, and so on — toward successfully achieving a mutual team goal. Co-operative learning's long history of research across diverse contexts, disciplines, participants, and countries around the world — including studies conducted in higher education on undergraduate and graduate students — has produced an abundance of empirical evidence on five elements that mediate its effectiveness (see Johnson and Johnson, 2007; Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Johnson and Johnson, 2009; Johnson et al, 1998a; Johnson and Johnson, 1998b). These elements include:

1. Positive interdependence — establishing a shared group goal that links individual outcomes to those of others in a way such that one's own success is facilitated (or inhibited) by the extent to which all other teammates are successful (or not).

2. Individual accountability — following through, as when every team member provides needed contributions to accomplish the team goal and takes personal responsibility for the final completed team product by presenting, explaining, and defending all aspects of it.

3. Face-to-face promotive interaction — interacting in ways that support and encourage the success of all teammates, often requiring close proximity for meaningful interpersonal encounters that enable achievement of the shared group goal.

4. Social skills — enacting a host of interpersonal competencies broadly described as communication skills (verbal and nonverbal, such as providing ideas, checking for understanding, clarifying, summarising, listening, making appropriate eye contact, conveying openness and warmth); conflict skills (constructively managing disagreements or incompatible actions that block goal accomplishment); and cultural competencies (valuing diversity, respecting difference, including all, ongoing growth in knowing oneself and understanding others).

5. Group processing — evaluating and discussing the effectiveness of team dynamics, progress toward the final goal, and changes likely to enhance teamwork, thereby promoting team success.

In fact, when these basic elements intentionally are structured into the design and implementation of team tasks, interactions typically lead to a range of desirable outcomes that can be classified into three broad categories: (a) greater productivity and achievement, (b) enhanced interpersonal relations, and (c) increased psychological health and well being (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Johnson and Johnson, 2005; Johnson and Johnson, 2009). The stronger the five basic elements are embedded into the structural foundation of teamwork, the more likely teammates will perceive the imperative of working together constructively for mutual success and attain these benefits from doing so.

Co-operative community-based research (CBR)

In 2010, three faculty members who team-taught the year-long first-year leadership course to that year's incoming cohort of 18 doctoral students merged co-operative learning, based upon the five basic elements for success, with CBR. In fact, the actual implementation involved

integrating co-operative CBR into the first-year leadership course toward simultaneously accomplishing its specified goals/outcomes shown in Table 1. This first-year course focused on leader as self to develop/advance personal leadership skills. It set the foundation for the second year that focused on leaders in organisations who initiate, facilitate, and institutionalise constructive change, which in turn grounded the third and final year of leadership coursework focused on leaders in an interdependent world, examining links between organisational, community, and global interests for positive social impact.

Seattle University's Center for Service and Community Engagement introduced the leadership course faculty to three community partner organisations/agencies that had expressed needs for assistance with inquiry projects toward assisting each organisation with obtaining information needed for making decisions about how best to serve various traditionally underserved segments of the population. The first partner/project dealt with investigating the English language learning needs of residents in a low-income neighbourhood, many of whom were recent immigrants to the United States. The second partner/project dealt with examining the effectiveness of an outdoor education programme for youth, especially aimed at empowering girls of ethnic diversity living in the inner city who might otherwise not be able to pursue such activities. The third partner/project dealt with documenting the success of programmes promoting high-school-to-college success, especially for students who would be the first in their family to attend college, with special emphasis on those of Hispanic/Latino/Latina origin. Three co-operative CBR teams were formed to interface/interact with the three community partners and conduct the inquiries, respectively. After previewing information about each organisation — mission, purpose, programmes, services — and exploring respective websites, each doctoral student self-selected the CBR team dealing with the issue/topic of greatest personal interest. Team A consisted of 5 students, Team B of 7 students, and Team C of 6 students (the specific partner/project of each team intentionally is masked for confidentiality).

The three faculty instructors who team-taught the course each mentored one of the three CBR teams throughout the entire year, providing consultation as teams were planning and carrying out basic inquiry tasks described in King and Stevahn (2013): (a) frame research questions (in collaboration with the community partner), (b) design the study, (c) determine samples, (d) collect data, (e) analyse data, (f) interpret findings, and (g) report results. Class met approximately one Saturday each month (September through May) and each afternoon was devoted to CBR. Students were encouraged to utilise their knowledge of co-operative learning — previously taught and modeled in class — to structure and conduct their CBR team projects, while also strategically applying and practicing an array of leadership skills that were the focus of the course (see Kouzes and Posner, 2007; Palmer, 2004; Rath, 2007; Runde and Flanagan, 2010).

Method

Design

This inquiry examines the effectiveness of co-operative CBR teamwork integrated into first-year leadership coursework as perceived by the doctoral students who comprised the participating cohort. It provides initial analysis of data from a longitudinal mixed-methods study that comprehensively examines a wider range of outcomes.

Participants

Participants were 18 doctoral students (5 men and 13 women) who constituted a newly admitted cohort that would stay together three years for the series of courses comprising the leadership strand of the programme. These students all had completed master's degrees, were ethnically/culturally diverse (38.8% representing populations of colour, 61.1% white), ranged in age from late 20s to early 60s (most were in the mid-30 to 40 age range), and were engaged in an array of professional contexts (PreK-12 education/administration, student development in higher education, nursing/health, theology/ministry, and nonprofit leadership). Most students

were working professionals (either full or part time) living in or near Seattle (although several traveled longer distances to campus). The size and mixed demographics of this cohort were fairly representative of the other cohorts that were beyond first-year studies in the programme.

Data collection and analysis

Two assessments provided data on CBR team functioning and effectiveness as perceived by the student participants. Each is elaborated below.

The CBR Process/Product Questionnaire was an assessment adapted from the Postdecision Questionnaire (Johnson and Johnson, 2007; Johnson and Johnson, 2009), used extensively in co-operative learning research to assess perceptions of effectiveness on important dimensions of team interaction and decision making. Its prior use provides an established history of validity and reliability. Participants completed this paper-and-pencil assessment during class at the end of the first-year leadership course into which co-operative CBR was integrated, and submitted it without identification (no names attached). The instrument consisted of nine items. The first eight were quantitative, focused on important dimensions of teamwork, and provided 9-point response scales anchored by semantic differentials appropriate for the content of each item (scored 1 through 9, negative to positive). The ninth item was qualitative, asking students to write three words that described their CBR experience.

For each CBR team, as well as for the entire participating cohort, means and standard deviations were calculated for all quantitative items, shown in Table 2. Responses to the single qualitative item were analysed by two independent coders who classified words as positive, negative, or neutral toward the CBR experience, shown in Table 3. Initial coding yielded 96% agreement, final coding 100% agreement through discussion and consensus.

The CBR Project Log was a digital chart/template assessment for keeping a continuous journal on CBR activities and reflections. The chart contained three columns, the first for recording a date, the second for describing actions/activities performed on that date, and the third for documenting personal reflections, reactions, insights, lessons learned, issues, and/or concerns (especially related to research, leadership, and social justice). At the end of the year during the final class session, all participants submitted a printed project log without identification (no names attached).

Two independent coders analysed the logs using two different qualitative approaches (see Gall et al, 2007; Gray, 2009). One used grounded theory analysis that involved (a) open coding (from which general thematic clusters emerged), (b) axial coding (to refine identified categories), (c) selective coding (to verify categories and discover others, if any), and (d) naming final themes to capture their character and nuance. The other used interpretational content analysis that involved (a) reading each log (separately and systematically), (b) identifying repeated ideas within each log (for topic identification), (c) identifying recurring topics across all logs (for major theme identification), and (d) naming final themes to best express their essence. The two coders compared findings, discussed discrepancies (which were few), then reached overall agreement on one set of final themes.

Results

CBR process/product questionnaire

Quantitative findings from the CBR Process/Product Questionnaire reveal two noteworthy patterns, shown in Table 2. First, means calculated for the entire cohort (n = 18) reflect overall positive experiences relevant to the dimensions of teamwork described by the items that comprise the questionnaire; all means in the last column range from 7 to 8 on the 9-point scale (1 = lowest score through 9 = highest). Second, means for Teams A and B are slightly higher than those for the entire cohort, whereas means for Team C are consistently 2 to 3 points

lower on every item, ranging from 5 to 6.67. These mid-scale means suggest that interpersonal dynamics in Team C were somewhat frustrating, making teamwork more of a struggle.

Qualitative findings from the CBR Process/Product Questionnaire, shown in Table 3, reveal patterns similar to the quantitative findings. Analysed cumulatively, results indicate predominately positive experiences. Analysed by team, words reflecting positive dispositions toward the CBR experience were expressed more frequently in Teams A and B than in Team C, whereas words reflecting negative dispositions were expressed in Team C and not the others.

CBR project log

Seven major themes emerged from the CBR Project Logs that provided thick descriptions of students' CBR experiences, expressed in their own words through ongoing journal entries. These themes, shown in Table 4, point to the importance of attending to (a) team growth/development over time when tackling an initially broadly defined, complex goal, such as co-operatively conducting CBR, which requires long-term participation and commitment to working toward greater clarity as time moves forward; (b) team setup/norms that provide direction for concrete individual actions/contributions; (c) team dynamics that promote or impede interactions that drive or deter team progress, particularly those relevant to managing conflicts and disagreements constructively; (d) perceptions of time that create emotional energy and a range of responses, including urgency, need, and anxiety as days/weeks/months march on without much tangible progress, and satisfaction, pride, and gratification as tasks are successfully completed toward achieving the ultimate team goal; (e) faculty participation in the form of providing teams with ongoing guidance and support; (f) community partner participation sought by teams, especially clarity in focusing the inquiry, consistency in messaging, and organisational materials/information needed to move forward; and (g) methodological insights that students acquire, especially on the technical aspects of research necessary for sound, credible, useful results.

Discussion

Effective co-operative CBR

The purpose of the present investigation, which constitutes the first part of a long-term comprehensive study, was to examine what facilitates and/or frustrates co-operative CBR integrated into required leadership coursework during the first year of doctoral studies. Past research on team effectiveness (predominantly experimental and/or comparative) has provided abundant evidence on the importance of five basic elements for grounding and guiding successful group endeavors, namely positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). That is why the three instructors who team-taught the leadership course into which this CBR project was integrated intentionally taught these basic elements to all students in the participating cohort — by implementing a variety of co-operative strategies in class to teach leadership theory/content (such as three-step interviews, jigsaws, teams-games-tournaments) and deliberately debriefing the basic elements built into each.

As expected, all three co-operative CBR teams successfully produced and delivered a high-quality final product by the specified deadline, as evaluated independently by the three instructors according to the predetermined criteria. In fact, each team reported CBR project results in two formats: a PowerPoint presentation (primarily for the community partner organisation) and a scholarly academic paper (primarily for the university community) — both of which were submitted to each team's community partner and the three course instructors. However, despite each team's overall success as demonstrated by these final products, findings from the CBR Process/Product Questionnaire indicated variable experiences along the way. Not all teams, nor all individuals, had positive CBR experiences on important dimensions of teamwork, including feeling listened to and understood, influencing and feeling responsible for team processes/decisions and the final product/report, feeling satisfied with the team's overall

performance, and learning substantively about the CBR topic. This aligned with findings from the CBR Project Logs that revealed all teams (a) struggled to forge/gain a sense of clarity on the exact focus of their CBR project and on concrete tasks needed to move forward, (b) grappled with establishing team norms/functions/procedures, and (c) experienced conflicts/ disagreements to varying degrees.

Although the team goal of conducting a sound CBR study for social impact did create strong positive interdependence among teammates — all perceived the necessity of coming together to successfully plan, conduct, and produce a final report — this type of mutual goal differs from others commonly structured into classroom settings, many of which tend to be more narrowly and concretely defined, typically accomplishable within one (or several) class sessions. In contrast, the CBR team goal initially is broadly defined (vs narrowly), complex (vs simple), large in scope (vs small), and carried out for authentic purposes that transcend the academic course context (by virtue of being conducted for and with a community partner organisation for a valued/useful purpose) over long time frames (the entire academic school year), requiring sustained effort.

In fact, results from the CBR Project Log revealed additional considerations important to co-operative team efforts of this type. Along with attending to the basic elements of effective teamwork, it appears that co-operative CBR also needs to focus students on growth/ development over time and what it takes to manage this, especially as teams move through (a) stages of group development — forming, storming, norming, performing (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman and Jensen, 1977); (b) steps of inquiry — framing/focusing CBR questions, designing the study, sampling, collecting and analysing data, interpreting and reporting results (King and Stevahn, 2013); and (c) the university academic calendar — across academic terms, September through May. It also appears that three considerations greatly affect how students will experience such movement over time, including (a) perceptions of time and emotional reactions to it — such as anxiety when days/weeks go by without much progress, or elation when concrete steps toward the overall goal are completed successfully; (b) team setup/norms for operating — especially systems for clarifying project focus and concretely establishing group functions, procedures, tasks, roles, and responsibilities through the use of timelines, 'To Do' charts, meeting agendas, and routines for organising resources/materials and for interacting between class sessions; and (c) team dynamics through which interpersonal interaction takes place — particularly those dynamics fostering clear communication, complex decision making, and constructive conflict resolution.

It is noteworthy that all teams experienced ambiguity/uncertainty and conflict/disagreement — even those that forged a smoother pathway for teamwork. Some of this seemed to come from broad CBR project topics that needed clearer focus to guide actual investigations. Sometimes community partners were able to offer greater focus, but not always. Although students respected their community partners and valued the opportunity to serve, teams became frustrated when community partner needs or expectations seemed to unexpectedly shift, timely contact and information did not materialise, or tangible resources that only the community partner could supply were not available or accessible, necessitating adjustments and sometimes entirely new plans. Because community partner participation can make or break student efforts, this aspect of co-operative CBR needs greater attention, clarification, and mutual understanding from the onset.

Other frustrations came from teammates making and acting upon assumptions about each other or the team's purpose/pathway without checking for accuracy or negotiating mutual meaning. Some uncertainty and/or disputes surfaced from encounters that did not include all teammates for a wide variety of reasons, including unavoidable absences (due to illness, family issues, or professional demands); unilateral action without mutual discussion or agreement on what should be done; attempted use of Internet platforms that not all teammates could easily access or fluently use (creating a learning curve that seemed burdensome); and, trying to make complex decisions or address conflict via email (instead of in person).

Teams that set up clear working norms earlier (than later) in the CBR process tended to deal with challenging issues more readily and successfully, in contrast to those that had not established such procedures and routines. In all cases, the findings indicate that students appreciated and relied on guidance provided by the three course instructors, each of whom had experience in conducting research, assisted teams in thinking through options, provided concrete examples (especially of data collection instruments/protocols and formats for final reports), interfaced with community partners to pursue/negotiate needs when communication between teams and partners stalled, and mediated conflicts when teammates seemed unable to resolve them constructively on their own. Ongoing, attentive, active faculty participation matters for success.

Table 5 suggests how the findings in Table 4 (described above) coincide with the basic elements of co-operative learning. First, although the mutual, yet broadly defined, CBR goal motivates teammates to work together interdependently from the start, constantly seeking clarity of purpose will be necessary to determine specific tasks required for ultimate success. Second, individuals more likely will be accountable for personal contributions when the team setup/norms and tasks/procedures for doing so are concretely in place. Third, teammates will be better able to promote each other's success when faculty and community partners play supportive roles in the process, as when faculty closely monitor teamwork and appropriately intervene at key junctures, or when community partners provide timely focus, information, and resources. Fourth, social skills empower team dynamics for better or worse, and how teams manage conflict will be pivotal to ultimate success. Fifth, group processing devoted to team growth/development over time, in addition to reflecting on team functioning at any given instance, holds promise for enabling teams to better deal with the complexities inherent in CBR over the long haul.

Demands of co-operative CBR

The results from this study enable deeper insight into the various demands placed on those who engage in co-operative CBR at the doctoral level.

- Faculty — must prepare before the school year begins to secure appropriate community partner organisations and the contact person/people with whom students will interact. In doing so, faculty should discuss perceived purpose, focus, and organisational use of CBR results; explore possible research questions; discuss types of data/information that will be most useful; consider realistic/doable timelines and how best to facilitate regular contact with CBR teams, and explain the importance of developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Faculty also should structure the basic elements of co-operative learning into CBR; provide a sample timeline and concrete templates to assist team setup/ functioning/processing; and focus team processing not only on team dynamics, but also on larger contextual issues that may be problem solved, such as dealing with competing priorities (jobs, family, other graduate courses, responsibilities at certain times in the calendar year). Ultimately, conducting CBR successfully will demand that students/teams continually clarify the project focus and the tasks needed to get it done — and faculty can assist through constantly monitoring and intervening at key junctures. Finally, faculty should possess conflict skills and be prepared to mediate constructive resolutions when disagreements and disputes occur (which they will).

- Community partners — must engage in preliminary meetings with faculty and be available to students/teams for needed clarifications along the way (such as clarifying the purpose of the project, research questions, types of data deemed credible, and how results will be used). Mutually developing the MOU with student teams also is important to map the scope of work and determine how regular contact/communication will take place to better enable consistency and steady progress over time. Partners also need to remember that, for students, conducting CBR in many respects is like an internship; it provides an unpaid first-hand experience valuable for its authentic purpose (meeting a real community need) and its potential to assist students in developing important leadership and research skills.

- Students — must devote time to developing the MOU with their community partner at the onset, so that everyone is 'on the same page' regarding expectations. Students also should make every effort to attend all team meetings (and follow established procedures for communicating with teammates when absences are unavoidable), make project clarity a continual priority, establish agreed-upon team norms and procedures, and develop a system for storing and accessing documents (such as meeting minutes, completed templates, processing forms, and other project resources). Building group processing into CBR meeting agendas will help ensure this actually occurs — both verbally and in writing — to track progress, make refinements, and think about how insights and skills learned through CBR may be applied to future programme and professional endeavors. Finally, students should expect conflict and preplan procedures for resolving it constructively.

Principles for co-operative CBR

The results from this study also point to the following set of principles that faculty, students, and community partners should keep in mind when pursuing co-operative CBR.

1. Seek clarity. Constantly work to clarify the focus of the CBR project, specific tasks needed along with way, and who will be responsible. Before actually working on the project, develop and sign an agreed-upon MOU — among teammates (to establish internal group functioning); between teams and community partners (to set a clear focus, calendar for checking in, and helpful modes of communication); and between teams and mentoring faculty (to clarify how instructors will engage, intervene, and assist). CBR practices are likely to become increasingly more productive when teams relentlessly keep clarity at the forefront of their efforts.

2. Get concrete. The more tangible, the better. Activities and interactions to keep the project moving forward will benefit from concrete templates, charts, and forms useful for getting tasks done. Provide templates for working through the steps of inquiry, calendars for developing timelines and targeting benchmarks, agendas for team meetings, 'To Do' charts for specifying roles and responsibilities, outlines and language for each MOU, and group processing forms for routine reflection — verbal and written — to systematically track and revisit what worked well, what needs refinement, and suggestions for advancing progress. These concrete items hold great potential for contributing to the clarity needed for successful work.

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Just like 'location, location, location' highlights the importance of place for successful endeavors, 'communication, communication, communication' points to the crucial role that interpersonal interaction plays in successful CBR, affecting team dynamics, for better or worse. Meaningful and useful communication is more likely to occur when it is clear, accurate, concrete, transparent, frequent, inclusive, respectful, and culturally competent with everyone contributing, actively listening, confirming assumptions, reaching consensus, and regularly processing team dynamics. Also realise that electronic platforms often will not enable the nuance that face-to-face communication provides, so conduct complex exchanges face-to-face or by phone.

4. Confront conflict. Disagreements and incompatible activities will occur, so be ready. Agree on preplanned procedures for expressing conflict and dealing with the emotions it will generate. Anger, resentment, hurt feelings, and numerous other reactions to conflict easily can escalate the situation, making things worse. Hence, create a regular and systematic way to check whether people are experiencing conflict and, if so, take time to use appropriate procedures/skills for working it out constructively (see Johnson and Johnson, 2009; King and Stevahn, 2013; Stevahn and King, 2005), which may involve seeking an impartial mediator to facilitate the process (such as faculty/instructors). Remember, when managed positively, conflict has value — it alerts participants to what matters, points to what needs adjusting, and provides opportunities for greater understanding, trust, and cohesiveness.

Conclusion

Few studies exist on the implementation of CBR at the doctoral level; even fewer (if any) explore connections between co-operative learning and CBR in educational leadership. Results from this initial exploration indicate that CBR structured co-operatively creates strong perceptions of positive interdependence among participating students who can successfully complete useful scholarly inquiry with and for community partner organisations committed to social justice. Results also suggest that this requires attention to a set of factors (in addition to those underpinning effective co-operative teamwork) that deal with the complexity and long-term nature of CBR, further driving or deterring success.

Strengths of this initial study include complete data sets (all students in the participating doctoral cohort provided input), a valid and reliable quantitative questionnaire to assess students' experiences in their CBR teams, qualitative log narratives that provided thick description over the entire year of implementation (longitudinal design), independent coders who applied two approaches to qualitative data analysis (resulting in similar findings), and the triangulation of results across mixed methods (the questionnaire and log that produced quantitative and qualitative data). Limitations include a relatively small sample size (although participants constituted nearly one third of all students in the doctoral programme and were reasonably representative of that larger population), the self-report nature of the data (although triangulation of different types of data from separate assessments increased the credibility and trustworthiness of the results), and the descriptive design (although it was longitudinal and therefore a plausible first step toward future causal or comparative studies).

Co-operative CBR in the educational leadership doctorate holds potential for equipping students with knowledge, skills, and dispositions applicable to a host of desired outcomes, including meaningful connection with the community, advocacy for social justice, capacity to conduct sound dissertation research, and the development of professional leaders who inspire, guide, and serve people effectively. This study provides a useful foundation upon which to build and expand future investigations toward further detailing the challenges, requirements, and benefits of integrating co-operative CBR into doctoral degree programmes.

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Appendix

Figure 1 Components of Community-Based Research (CBR)

	Goal/Outcome
1.	Understand and further develop yourself as a leader.
2.	Understand, compare, contrast, synthesise, and apply foundational leadership frameworks.
3.	Understand and apply decision-making methods for effective leadership.
4.	Understand, compare, contrast, synthesise, and apply theoretical and practical foundations for effective change.
5.	Understand, internalise and apply interpersonal human relations skills for effective leadership.

6.	Understand, critique and apply sound research in the social and behavioural sciences.		
7.	Apply community-based research to advance social justice.		
8.	Understand, apply, and critique scholarly writing.		
9.	Collaborate to enhance critical inquiry, support leadership development, and celebrate professional/ academic accomplishments		

Note. From Stevahn et al (2010). Goal/Outcome 7 directly focuses on CBR; Goals/Outcomes 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9 intersect with CBR.

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Table 1 First-Year Leadership Course Goals/Outcomes

Item	Team A[a]	Team B[b]	Team C[c]	Total[d]
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
1. To what extent did the members of your CBR team listen to your ideas?	8.80 (0.45)	8.57 (0.79)	6.67 (0.82)	8.00 (1.19)
2. To what extent did the members of your CBR team understand your ideas?	8.40 (0.89)	8.57 (0.79)	6.67 (1.21)	7.89 (1.28)
3. How much influence did you have on team decisions?	8.40 (0.89)	7.71 (0.76)	6.50 (1.05)	7.50 (1.15)
4. How responsible do you feel for team decisions?	8.40 (0.89)	7.71 (0.95)	5.00 (1.26)	7.00 (1.78)
5. How much influence did you have on your team's final CBR report?	8.60 (0.55)	7.57 (0.79)	5.67 (2.34)	7.22 (1.83)
6. How responsible do you feel for your team's final CBR report?	8.60 (0.55)	8.14 (0.69)	5.83 (2.32)	7.50 (1.82)
7. To what extent are you satisfied with your team's overall performance?	8.80 (0.45)	8.71 (0.49)	5.50 (1.52)	7.67 (1.81)
8. How much did you learn about the research questions that your team investigated?	7.60 (1.52)	8.43 (0.79)	6.00 (1.55)	7.39 (1.61)

Note. Scoring scale: 1 = negative anchor/descriptors (Not at all, Nothing at all, None at all, Not responsible, Very dissatisfied) through 9 = positive anchor/descriptors (Completely, A great deal, Very responsible, Very satisfied).

[a]n = 5. [b]n = 7. [c]n = 6. [d]n = 18 total participants.

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Table 2 CBR Process/Product Questionnaire: Quantitative Findings

Words	Team A[a]	Team B[b]	Team C[c]	Total[d]
Positive	**14 (100%)**	**20 (95%)**	**9 (50%)**	**43 (81%)**
	3 Challenging 2 Collaborative 1 Educational 1 Engaging 1 Enlightening 1 Fulfilling 1 Insightful 1 Learningful 1 Profound 1 Rewarding 1 Valuable	4 Collaborative 1 Community 1 Chemistry [group] 1 Empowering 1 Evolving 1 Focused 2 Growth 1 Informative 1 Insightful 1 Learning experience 3 Positive 1 Synergy 1 Team effort 1 Worthwhile	1 Challenging 1 Communication 1 Enlightening 1 Fun 1 Humor 2 Informative 1 Patience 1 Triumphant	

Negative	0	0	9 (50%) 1 Difficult 1 Disengaged 1 Frustrating 1 Long 1 Taxing 1 Troubling 1 Trying 1 Uncommunicative 1 Unfortunate	9 (17%)
Neutral	0	1 (5%) 1 Research	0	1 (2%)
Total	14 (100%)	21 (100%)	18 (100%)	53 (100%)

Note. Responses to Item 9: Write three words that describe your CBR experience.

[a]n = 5. [b]n = 7. [c]n = 6. [d]n = 18 total participants.

Source: © 2012 Laurie Stevahn, Tana Hasart and Rissa Wabaunsee

Table 3 CBR Process/Product Questionnaire: Qualitative Findings

	Theme[a]	**Description**
1.	Team growth/ development	This occurs over time as teams clarify and move through (a) stages of group development — forming, storming, norming, performing; (b) steps/tasks of inquiry — framing questions, designing, sampling, collecting data, analysing, interpreting, reporting; and (c) the yearly university calendar — fall, winter, spring quarters and the ebb/flow/rhythm/demands within and across each.
2.	Team setup/ norms	This pertains to team formation, function, procedures, and tasks; this positively impacts team progress when formalised earlier than later in the CBR journey.
3.	Team dynamics	This focuses on communication, collaboration, interpersonal interaction, and conflict; this constructively facilitates/enables teamwork or destructively frustrates/impedes teamwork.
4.	Perceptions of time	This creates changing emotional responses at various points on the CBR journey, including a sense of urgency, need, anxiety and/or progress, satisfaction, pride, accomplishment.
5.	Faculty participation	This facilitates team success when an assigned instructor provides ongoing guidance, support, expertise, clear models/examples, and assistance in mediating conflicts constructively.
6.	Community partner participation	This frustrates success when teams need (a) direction, information, materials; (b) ongoing and timely contact, interaction, and communication; (c) consistency in messages/requests; and (d) assurance of being on track.
7.	Methodological insights	This evolves from facing technical issues, challenges, decisions, and implementations in authentic research, especially in framing questions and developing instruments/protocols for data collection.

[a]n = 18 total participants.

Source: © 2012 Laurie Stevahn, Tana Hasart and Rissa Wabaunsee

Table 4 Themes Emerging from CBR Project Logs

	Basic elements of co-operative learning	**Factors driving co-operative CBR**	**Factors deterring co-operative CBR**
1.	Positive interdependence anchors the team goal	Team goal is: • Shared/common. • Meaningful/authentic. • Precise/clear/concrete (progressively and steadily emerges over time). • Subdivided into clearly defined/doable tasks. • Mutually understood.	Team goal is: • Broad/general or abstract/ambiguous in its articulation and remains so over time, despite being shared, meaningful, and understood. • Ill-defined (vs well-defined), making it difficult to plan or carry out concrete tasks toward achieving the overall goal.

2.	Individual accountability is influenced by team setup/norms	Team setup/norms are: • Established early, revisited frequently, applied consistently, and revised when needed/helpful. • Concrete for directing individual contributions (enhanced by timelines, task descriptions, 'To Do' charts that designate roles, responsibilities, deadlines). • Mutually agreed-upon and systematically enacted. • Inclusive, resulting in expectations for joint involvement and equal distribution of tasks.	Team setup/norms are: • Assumed, ambiguous, unclear, or unaddressed regarding formation, function, tasks, procedures. • Too broad/general to provide clear pathways for directing individual action and follow-through on assignments/contributions.
3.	Face-to-face promotive interaction is influenced by faculty and community partner participation	Faculty and community partner participation are: • Ongoing and timely, providing guidance, support, feedback, direction, expertise, needed resources, conflict mediation, encouragement for positive problem solving and wise decision making about CBR work. • Consistent in consultation/messaging.	Faculty and community partner participation are: • Inconsistent, unpredictable, not explicated/understood, unresponsive, missing, or silent for long periods of time. • Unclear or inconsistent in communication/messaging over time (eg from meeting to meeting).
4.	Social skills empower team dynamics	Team dynamics produce: • Effective communication among all teammates (who all are present for meetings, discussions, decisions). • Co-operation/Collaboration. • Interpersonal interaction that is inclusive, respectful, honest, and culturally appropriate. • Constructive conflict in which teammates express disagreements and emotions directly, calmly, respectfully (in person, not by email) and engage in social perspective taking toward reaching mutually agreeable solutions.	Team dynamics produce: • Incomplete communication among teammates (when one/some are absent from meetings, discussions, decisions). • Destructive conflict characteriSed by unchecked assumptions, email exchanges (vs face-to-face), angry/explosive outbursts, verbal attacks, mistrust, hurt feelings, and fight-or-flight behaviour. • Unilateral or exclusive communication (vs transparent among all). • Communication over-reliant on Internet platforms that not all teammates are skilled or comfortable using.
5.	Group processing affects team growth and development over time	Team growth/development over time is promoted by ongoing reflection/evaluation in verbal and written formats that assist movement through: • Stages of group development (form, storm, norm, perform). • Steps/tasks of inquiry (framing questions, designing, sampling, collecting data, analysing, interpreting, reporting). • University calendar (fall, winter, spring quarters; the ebb/flow and rhythm/demands within and across each).	Team growth/development over time is frustrated when: • Teams get stuck at the 'storming' stage of group development (serious, prolonged, destructive conflict goes unresolved). • Clear and concrete steps/pathways for inquiry are slow to emerge (producing anxiety). • Other life issues are not addressed, such as competing demands created by the university calendar, other courses/assignments, jobs/careers, and family.

Table 5 Basic Elements of Co-operative Learning and Factors that Drive or Deter CBR Success