EDUCATION AS THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP: THE CONTEXT OF CO-LABOR-ATION

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ABSTRACT. This paper discusses the changing use of the concept of 'partnership' in three contexts: community partnership; partnership as part of public-private partnerships (PPP), and; partnership as the co-production of public goods. The paper introudces the politics of partnership as an aspect of the liberal democratic theory of governance and examines the notion in the context of devolution and deregulation. The paper finds the first two senses lacking in substance and more of a political strategy of neoliberal cooptation. The paper briefly examines the third sense of partnership as co-labor-ation as a means of enhancing democratic governance.
KEYWORDS: partnership, community, PPP, co-production, co-creation, democatic theory.

1. Introduction: Politics of "Partnership"

The common law of partnership is a general form of organisation for the pursuit of mutual interest and now very common also in government as a means for engaging citizens in governance activities which is a collaboration permitted and enabled through new forms of digital open government based on co-creation, co-design and co-evaluation of public services and public goods.[1] Education fits into this schema and offers important opportunities for partnerships. The overwhelming question that is addressed by the conference and needs to be asked concerns the question of power relations between parties, especially when the relationship is between the State and a people, constituency, or institution. The conference call implicitly addresses itself to whether genuine partnership is possible between such unequal entities, or whether the notion of partnership serves ideologically as a means for co-optation. The history of indigenous peoples is a history of the failed partnerships and treaties as Ngapuhi might well testify (OHCHR, 2012) yet the language of partnership remains as a vehicle for redressing historic grievances. The United Nations launched a new initiative in 2011 to promote

and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, "aiming to strengthen their institutions and ability to fully participate in governance and policy processes at the local and national levels."[2]

The initiative is "strongly grounded in *human rights principles* which align with indigenous peoples' vision of *self-determination, consultation, participation, and free, prior, and informed consent*, since these are key for establishing meaningful partnerships"[3] (my emphasis). I highlight these words because they indicate a framework for the language of genuine partnership. The notion of Expert Mechanism provides an additional source of independent advice. The mandate states: "The Expert Mechanism provides the Human Rights Council with thematic advice, in the form of studies and research, on the rights of Indigenous peoples as directed by the Council. The Expert Mechanism may also suggest proposals to the Council for its consideration and approval."

In this paper I distinguish three main notions of partnership as they affect education policy in New Zealand. The first is strongly connected to the notion of "community" and "governance" and it viewed from the perspective of liberal democratic theory of governance; the second is the notion of partnership inherent in the notion of "public private partnerships" (PPP); and the third is a concept of partnership construed as "collaboration". The first two notions are notions that have surfaced within neoliberal and Third Way politics. In general these terms mask power relations. The third is more visionary and arise in the context of the social knowledge economy as a form of collaboration that builds on the principles of social media.

Community partnership

When consultation and participation have been occluded or simply given lip-service by the State and when the State and big business have the legal resources to draw up "partnership" then public groups need some independent legal protection and advice. The principles of consultation, participation and informed consent are useful operating principles for partnership but the critical discourse of partnership in policy terms requires an understanding of the political context. As Norman Fairclough notes in his presentation "Participation and partnership: a critical discourse analysis perspective on the dialectics of regulation and democracy"[4]

> • Participants bring different construals of the event/process, expectations about how to proceed and orientations to being a participant, from official sources or experiences.
> • They bring different semiotic resources: discourses, genres and styles; intertextual and interdiscursive chains, relations of recontextualization

- 'Pre-constructed' resources are drawn upon and articulated together in potentially innovative, novel, creative, surprising ways.

He goes on to conclude that that "regulated forms of participation/ partnership may be spaces of dialectic between democracy and regulation and of emergence of democratic moments."

Paul Prestidge (2010) uses Fairclough's CDA to analyse the discourses of partnership between government and community organisations during the term of the fifth Labour-led Government (1999-2008). As he remarks in the abstract:

> This government came to power with a policy of building partnerships with community organisations and others, presenting partnership as a rejection of the contractual models of the previous administration… Two dominant partnership discourses emerged. The first was a community development discourse that can be traced to the 1970s, and which re-emerged in the 1990s as a resistance to the then dominant contractualist discourses of relationship between government and community organisations. The second was a modification of contractualism that drew from third-way discourses out of the United Kingdom, and in which government projects and programmes that involve community organisations were reframed as partnerships while retaining contractual mechanisms and ways of thinking. (p. xi)

His thesis provides a useful study of neoliberalism in New Zealand in relation to the concept of partnership and in particular first and second waves of neoliberalism focused on devolution and contractualism respectively and the third wave (Third Way) emphasis on partnership as a form of resistance to contractualism. He identifies various discourses of partnership and looks to the community development notion as less open to political co-optation although it can mask contractualism that only serves to instrumentalise relationships. Usefully he also discusses strategies to resist governmentalizing community groups and co-optation.

The notion of partnership as is evident from this study is deeply theoretical and cannot really be understood except in the context of democratic theory that focuses on building civil society. It requires the framework concepts from social democracy.

In one authoritative and much-cited study in the field of public health (Israel et al, 1998) the authors review community-based research to identify a synthesis of key principles. I summarise with an abridged version (pp. 178-180):

1. Recognizes community as a unit of identity.
2. Builds on strengths and resources within the community.
3. Facilitates collaborative partnerships in all phases of the research.
4. Integrates knowledge and action for mutual benefit of all partners.
5. Promotes a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities.
6. Involves a cyclical and iterative process.
7. Addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives.
8. Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners.

The challenges to partnership in this context include:
- Lack of trust and respect;
- Inequitable distribution of power and control;
- Conflicts associated with differences in perspective, priorities, assumptions, values, beliefs, and language;
- Conflicts over funding;
- Conflicts associated with different emphases on task and process;
- Time-consuming process;
- Who represents the community and how is community defined?

Finally the authors draw attention to facilitating factors and recommendations:
- Jointly developed operating norms;
- Identification of common goals and objectives;
- Democratic leadership;
- Presence of community organizer;
- Involvement of support staff/team;
- Researcher role, skills, and competencies;
- Prior history of positive working relationships;
- Identification of key community members.

I think this paper is a valuable contribution to the debate and provides useful guidelines when thinking about partnerships in a research context. The paper also discusses methodological issues and broader social, political, economic, institutional, and cultural issues.

Working with my old friend and mentor Jim Marshall on a range of community empowerment projects in the 1980s when I was at Auckland University we co-authored a number of papers that deal with similar issue. In "Evaluation and Education: the Ideal Learning Community" (Marshall & Peters, 1985) we proposed, and provided a justification for, a model of evaluation based upon the notion of the evaluator as educator, which is

sufficiently broad philosophically not only to subsume scientistic and humanistic models, but also to transcend them. Within this broad philosophical model we developed a particular theory of evaluation, based essentially upon Wittgenstein, and in which the notion of a learning community is taken as central and defined and elaborated in terms of ten definitive characteristics:

(1) The Learning Community as Dialogical
(2) The Learning Community as Communal-Collaborative
(3) The Learning Community as Praxical
(4) The Learning Community as Problem-focused
(5) And (6) The Learning Community as Reflective and Reflexive
(7) The Learning Community as Normative
(8) The Learning Community as Fallibilist
(9) The Learning Community as Creative/Transformative
(10) The Learning Community as Emancipatory

This work followed on from a project with Vivianne Robinson on the status and role of action research (Peters & Robinson, 1984) and papers with Jim Marshall based around community empowerment projects such as Te Reo O Te Taitokerau and theoretical attempts to develop partnership in research contexts (see the ten papers of Peters & Marshall entries in the bibliography, with Dave Para and Robert Shaw) and more theoretical pieces aimed at decoding problems concerning community partnership (Peters & Marshall, 1993). This approach and my partnership with Jim reached its final statement which is best represented in the three papers we contributed to the Royal Commission of Social Policy on "Social Policy and the Move to Community" (Peters & Marshall, 1988a;b) and "Te Reo O Te Tai Tokerau: Community Evaluation, Empowerment and Opportunities for Oral Maori Language Reproduction" (Peters & Marshall, 1988c). Needless to say we were very sceptical of government attempts at defining and using the notions of community and partnership for political reasons. Our scepticism was well founded given the politics of "choice" and "community" that followed in the next decades.

In a book that is the culmination of much of this work Jim Marshall and I developed the theme of individualism and community as policy metaphors to examine the crisis of the welfare state in New Zealand with the coming to power of the Fourth labour government and the onslaught of neoliberal policies (Peters & Marshall, 1996). We examined communitarian responses to the crisis, forms of neoliberal individualism and ended by suggesting elements for a critical social policy. In this work while we framed the question of community within liberal democratic politics we did not

specifically address the concept of partnership nor did we provide an analytical concept of *governance* that might be the basis for an evaluation of the reshaping, rescaling and blurring boundaries between public and private actors under neoliberalism. "Partnership" as conceived by the neoliberal policy regime is intended to draw together state, market, and civil society in pursuit of entrepreneurial goals which really means that the rhetoric of governance and partnership actually shifts responsibility from states onto communities. We might see official rhetoric about partnership as part of government technology or technocracy (Foucault might say governmentality), for coordinating grassroots social democratic community action with capacity-building from above. Under managerialism by-passes community partnership and eschews democratic mechanism for performance management techniques often dressed up in terms of "empowerment" and "engagement".

Partnership as PPP

Often the language of partnership is policy-speak for "working together" often when there is no specification of partnership responsibilities or decision-making. Also as the conference call makes clear the dominant neoliberal form of partnership is so-called public-private partnership (PPP) that is a government service funded through the private sector. In the period 1999 to 2009 some 1400 PPP deals were brokered in the EU with capital value of €260 billion and since the GFC of 2008 these deals have declined by about 40% (Kappeler & Nemoz, 2010). The concept of private-public partnership is therefore relevant to the policy discourse of partnership. Fennell (2010) reports that PPP has been embraced by agencies such as the World Bank as a possible way to ensure access to education by bolstering demand-driven provision as well as more cost-effective supply of education (World Bank 2003, 2005; Tooley & Dixon 2005) and she focuses on how such partnerships affect the educational experience and outcomes of the poor. Fennell (2010) notes that PPP as a means of promoting universal access has "added to the number of non-state providers of schools in the last two decades" and seems quite sanguine about the prospect. By comparison Stephen Ball suggests: "The 'reform' of the public service sector is a massive new profit opportunity for business… the outsourcing of education services is worth at least £1.5 billion a year" (Ball, 2007: 39-40). Others have asked why PPP have become "a favoured management tool of governments, corporations, and international development agencies" (Robertson & Verger, 2012, p. ?) and they remark,

> when governance is located in multiple sites, both the governance
> of educational PPPs, and PPPs as a tool of governance over the

education sector, becomes problematic. Who is the relevant authority? Who is affected by decisions of various governments, transnational firms, foundations, international agencies or consultants? From whom should those affected by decisions seek account? Is the managerial discourse on risk taking appropriate for the distribution of a public good as education? Does managerial governance, with its focus on outputs and efficiency pay sufficient attention to the complexity of education processes?

Currently the New Zealand government is investigating alternatives to building new school property. The Ministry of Education website refers to PPP in the following terms:

> Under a PPP a private partner is responsible for designing, building, financing and maintaining school property over a long term contract. The term is generally 25 years from when the school is opened.
>
> The Ministry pays the private partner quarterly. The payment is reduced if the school facilities do not meet the standards specified in the contract. This effectively provides a 25 year guarantee on the buildings, unlike schools constructed and managed normally.
>
> The government still owns the land and buildings. All education matters within the school remain the responsibility of the principal and board of trustees. (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2014, "Public private partnerships (PPP) for new school property")

In March of this year (2014) Cabinet agreed that four schools in Auckland, greater Christchurch and Queenstown will be delivered using a public private partnership (PPP).[5]

It looks very likely that social infrastructure in New Zealand will be increasingly provided through these "partnerships" at both national and local levels.[6] The Conferenz website details a conference on PPPs in New Zealand with the private sector sponsors

> PPPs have been embraced by overseas countries as a way of providing essential public services in a way that provides the most value for money. This model has only recently begun to gain some momentum here, with the construction of the first PPP schools and prisons underway and to be completed in the near future. (Conferenz, 2015, "About")

The conference agenda lists an agenda with opening remarks from Rob Steel, who is Performance Manager for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority and Maureena Van Der Lem, Senior Analyst at The Treasury whose talk is billed in these words:

> By 2030, it is envisioned that New Zealand's infrastructure will be resilient, co-ordinated and contribute to economic growth and increased quality of life. Public private partnerships are a viable way to inject much needed funding into new projects that will guarantee value for money public services. (Conferenz, 2015, "Agenda")

PPPs are definitely on the agenda in a wide variety of projects including, education (school property), transport infrastructure, ultrafast broadband, prisons, primary health care (Investment in Human Capital Infrastructure"), and so on.[7] As the *National Business Review* reported:

> Last week's government decision to go ahead with a PPP for the $1.3 billion Transmission Gully motorway north of Wellington should just be the beginning, Council for Infrastructure Development ceo Stephen Selwood says. "The PPP model is applicable right across the infrastructure sector, from roads to water supply, local councils, schools and hospitals. "There are few sectors where the model does not have the potential to add value." (Allison, 2012)

The New Zealand Treasury's own analysis is not quite so rosy, mentioning problems and complex difficulties with tendering and negotiation, performance enforcement and political acceptability.[8]

Partnership as Co-labor-ation: the co-production of public goods
In their manifesto for co-production, the New Economics Foundation (2008) suggested that the traditional public economy of service is failing because "Neither markets nor centralised bureaucracies are effective models for delivering public services based on relationships"; "Professionals need their clients as much as the clients need professionals" and "Social networks make change possible" (p. 8). The Foundation defined the concept in the following way: "Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours" (Slay & Robinson, 2011, para. 2).

The term was first developed by Elinor Ostrom who used it "to explain to the Chicago police why the crime rate went up when the police came off the beat and into patrol cars," "explaining why the police need the community as

much as the community need the police" (Stephens, Ryan-Collins, & Boyle, 2008, para. 1). Anna Coote and others at the Institute for Public Policy Research use the concept to explain "why doctors need patients as much as patients need doctors and that, when that relationship is forgotten, both sides fail" (para. 2). Edgar Cahn used it to explain how critical family and community relationships were part of a core economy, originally called *oekonomika* (para. 3). This reciprocity and mutual help and exchange at the very heart of the social economy is built upon principles that view citizens as equal partners in the design and delivery of services, not passive recipients of public services. Co-production is about a mutual and reciprocal partnership between professionals and citizens who engage and make use of peer, social and personal networks as the best way of transferring knowledge and supporting change. As the New Economics Foundation's (2008) manifesto suggested, co-production "devolve[d] real responsibility, leadership and authority to 'users,' and encourage[d] self-organisation rather than direction from above" (p. 13).

This aspect, while enhanced and facilitated by new social media, has its home in a theory of the commons, a policy of personalization and a political theory of anarchism that collectively forms around peer-to-peer relationships and that replaces the old emphasis on the autonomous individual. This conception becomes even more helpful as the new logic of the public sphere when the notion of co-creation and co-design sit alongside co-production. Let me briefly see if I can redeem these claims by suggesting the outline of an argument I would like to foreshadow here and take further on future occasions.

The theory of the commons begins in the 17th century with common fields and town commons in New England. Simply put, commons are resources jointly shared by a group of people. The notion has experienced a huge revival since the mid-1980s. As van Laerhoven and Ostrom (2007) explained, "Scholars working on the study of the commons since the mid-1980s have helped forge a substantial transdisciplinary approach to the study of an important type of socialecological system"(p. 4). Nancy Kranich (2004) put it succinctly when she applied the notion to the realm of information:

> The Internet offers unprecedented possibilities for human creativity, global communication, and access to information. Yet digital technology also invites new forms of information enclosure. In the last decade, mass media companies have developed methods of control that undermine the public's traditional rights to use, share, and reproduce information and ideas. These technologies, combined with dramatic consolidation in the media industry and new laws that increase its control over

intellectual products, threaten to undermine the political discourse, free speech, and creativity needed for a healthy democracy. (p. I)

In particular, in the open-access legal regime, nobody has the legal right to exclude anyone else from using the resource. The common-pool resources resemble what economists call public goods. A commons analysis is seen as providing the best framework for talking sensibly about the complex relationships between democratic participation, openness, social equity, and diversity. The open, flat, peer-to-peer network that is based on open and equal participation is seen as the best hope for promoting democratic discourse that allows for individual freedom of expression (Benkler, 2006).

Co-creation is a term that developed in the early 2000s to describe business strategies for involving customers in the production of goods and services (Alford, 2007; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2010, 2012). It is often seen as a form of mass customization and sometimes also viewed as a form of "individualization." The radical notion has little to do with markets. This is what Benkler (2006) called social production or "commons-based peer production" (p. 60). In recent years, the emphasis and trend has been toward open democratic information resources and platforms that provide software and licensing commons and promote open access in scientific communication, digital repositories, institutional commons such as online libraries, as well as subject or discipline-specific commons (Peters, 2008a, 2010b, 2010c). The connection between "information" and "commons" is still in its infancy, yet it holds promise for new forms of the public based on co-production of public goods and services, co-creation and personalization that decenters the state and all forms of central authority in what I will call, using Paul Feyerabend's (1993) term, a new configuration of "epistemological anarchy".

Too often as scholars we emphasize "knowledge that"—as philosophers say, "propositional knowledge"—that which comes to us in the form of sentences or statements generally in books or articles, and sometimes in oral or speeches genres like seminars or conference papers. Rarely do we accent the "knowledge who," the personal contacts that often form friendships and provide the collegiality that form the basis of the academic networks that last a lifetime, transcending the purely professional and exercise a strong and lasting positive influence. Collegial trust registers integrity, a kind of confidence and certainty as well as well hope. Trust allows us to form relationships and to depend on others. It also is dangerous—it makes us vulnerable and is risky because of the possibility of betrayal. When and whom to trust are vital epistemological questions to younger academics who depend on their mentors. The value of trust takes us beyond questions of simple cooperation to the development of a shared moral and political

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universe. It is within this space that a kind of purposeful or project sharing takes place and collaboration is fostered.

I have argued that personalized learning has emerged in the last decade as a special instance of a more generalized response to the problem of the reorganization of the state in response to globalization and the end of the effectiveness of the industrial mass production model in the delivery of public services (Peters, 2009). I examine personalization as a major strategy for overcoming the bureaucratic state through "mass customization," a discourse from which the concept of personalization emerged. I argue that personalization exists as a general concept that has become the political basis for a new social democratic settlement, encouraging citizen participation in the choice and design of service, and thus representing a major change in British social and public philosophy.

There have been many attempts to elaborate the crucial importance of the close relationship between universities and the public good, emphasizing links between civil society, public discourses and deliberation, public culture and the health of democracy. The notion of the public sphere lies at the heart of the liberal theory of civil society and is distinguished by an institutional setting characterized by openness in communication and the production of public goods (Calhoun, 2001, 2006). Habermas's (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* serves as the point of departure for the analysis of the formation of the bourgeois public sphere that depended upon the principle of universal access to constitute a realm characterized by critical-rational debate.

The institutionalization of a fully political public sphere took place first in Britain during the 18th century and was preceded by a literary public culture that revealed the interiority of the self and emphasized a communicative, rational subjectivity that created a new phenomenon of public opinion and the basis for a new liberal constitutional social order. There have been critiques of Habermas's conception in terms of marginalized groups excluded from a universal public sphere (Fraser, 1990) and the way in which Habermas draws the distinction between public and private. Other scholars have sought to develop the concept of the public sphere emphasizing its discursive or rhetorical nature (Hauser, 1998). Habermas's work on the public sphere was written well before the age of the Internet, and some followers have developed his theories within the new public space of electronic and social media that, unlike traditional industrial one-way broadcast media, are open, interactive and characterized by a plurality of voices and the absence of a central control or authority.

Against neoliberal theories that seek to privatize the public sphere, Hardt and Negri (2004; 2009), following Michael Foucault's (2008) biopolitics, suggested that in the liberal political economy, the very distinction between

public and private spheres is founded upon a concept of private property in an economy of scarcity. With the post-modernization of the production of knowledge and a shift to the knowledge economy, Hardt and Negri (2009) saw open source and open access as encouraging new forms of collaboration that no longer hold that economic value is founded upon exclusive possession; rather, increasing such forms depends upon new collectives based on the logic of networking that has the power to reconstitute the public sphere.

The global knowledge economy represents a set of deep structural transformations in the transition to a networked information economy that has the power to alter not only modes of economic organization and social practices of knowledge production, but also the very fabric of the liberal economy and society. Distributed peer-to-peer knowledge systems rival the scope and quality of similar products produced by proprietary efforts and provide an institutional global matrix for a confederation of public spaces. The rich text, highly interactive, user-generated and socially active Internet (Web 2.0) has seen linear models of knowledge production giving way to more diffuse open-ended and serendipitous knowledge processes. There have been dramatic changes in creation, production and consumption of scholarly resources—"creation of new formats made possible by digital technologies, ultimately allowing scholars to work in deeply integrated electronic research and publishing environments that will enable real-time dissemination, collaboration, dynamically-updated content, and usage of new media" (Brown, Griffiths, Rascoff, & Guthrie, 2007, p. 4). "Alternative distribution models (institutional repositories, preprint servers, open-access journals) have also arisen with the aim to broaden access, reduce costs, and enable open sharing of content" (p. 4).

Increasingly, portal-based knowledge environments and global science gateways support collaborative science (Schuchardt et al., 2007). Cyber-mashups of very large data sets let users explore, analyse and comprehend the science behind the information being streamed. The new Web 2.0 technologies and development of data sharing with cloud computing has revolutionized how researchers from various disciplines collaborate over long distances, especially in the life sciences, where interdisciplinary approaches are becoming increasingly powerful as a driver of both integration and discovery (with regard to data access, data quality, identity and provenance).

The economic crisis of Western neoliberal capitalism brought about through the Great Recession has impacted the nature of public knowledge and education institutions, privatization, education and monopolizing knowledge flows. Education and science have always been wedded to principles of free inquiry and to the academic freedoms that are necessary to

sustain the open society and social democracy. The project for revitalizing and restoring the publicness of science and education is enhanced, especially in an era of severe budget cuts to public services, through the utilization of new platforms of openness based on Web 2.0 technologies that promote universal access to knowledge and economical forms of collaboration through file-sharing and the nested convergences in open access, open archiving and open publishing (open journals systems) that have the potential to reconstitute science and education as open and public institutions in the years to come. Partnership in this new environment takes on a very different set of meanings.

NOTES

1. See e.g., http://www.opengovpartnership.org/ and http://www.p21.org/
2. See http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/Pages/UNIPPartnership.aspx
3. See the Opening Remarks of Marcia V.J. Kran, Director, Research and Right to Development Division, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, at above website.
4. http://www.ces.uc.pt/eventos/pdfs/Partnership_governance_and_participatory_democracy.pdf
5. The relevant Cabinet paper is available at http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~/media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/PrimarySecondary/PropertyToolbox/NewsAndEvents/PPP/PPPSchools-Project2CabinetPaper.pdf. On What is PPP? see http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~/media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/PrimarySecondary/PropertyToolbox/NewsAndEvents/PPP/WhatisaPPPFactSheet.pdf
6. See the NZSIF discussion on PPP and the market potential for them at http://www.nzsif.co.nz/Social-Infrastructure/What-are-Public-Private-Partnerships/. See also http://www.infrastructure.govt.nz/publications/draftpppstandardcontract.
7. See the sets of slides from the August 2013 conference at http://www.iscr.org.nz/f884,23447/ISCR_PPP_Conference_29_Aug_Presenters_PPTs_.pdf
8. See http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/research-policy/ppp/2006/06-02/06.htm. See also the position paper of the Auckland Council at http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/SiteCollectionDocuments/aboutcouncil/mayorelectedrepresentatives/mayoralpositionpaperonppps20131127.pdf

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