Composing a Team: Considering Power and Process

3 HOURS

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*Adaptation note: The protocol linked here was adapted with permission from the protocol **"Building a Local ACESSE Team to Support Equitable and Coherent Implementation in Science Education"** created by Tiffany Neill, Melissa Campanella, Bill Penuel, Deb Morrison and the ACESSE Team.

Activity Rationale and Aims

Aims

01.
To support researchers to think critically about how and who they invite to participate in a collaborative design or implementation team

02.
To think critically about how team members will work together in collaborative and equitable ways

Activity Summary

The initial team will spend time in initial reading to help develop operational ways of considering collaborators' identities and lived experiences. They will then engage with a team composition protocol. Upon engaging with the team composition protocol, they will then be encouraged to think about risks and challenges of team composition and develop suggested strategies to mitigate those risks and challenges.

Rationale

The impact of participatory design research depends greatly on who is doing the work (Teeters & Jurow, 2018). When considering who is doing the work, it is important to situate identity and expertise in cultural, historical, and interactional systems so as to mitigate the risk that identity and expertise are treated as static categories (e.g., "educator," "researcher," "Spanish-speaking," "woman"). This helps to illuminate the complexity and fluidity of power and positionality and how they play out in collaborative work (Teeters et al., 2021). This protocol is intended to help teams engage in a process of deciding what voices and perspectives are currently represented, and which ones need to be incorporated.

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In Person Steps

01.

When composing a team, it is important to consider the elements of collaborator's experiences, identities, skills, and expertises that matter for the design. In doing so, it is important to develop frameworks for thinking about collaborators' identities and backgrounds in ways that do not essentialize their identities or lived experience. As an initial step to support this, it is suggested that the individual/initial team engage in a shared reading of Gutiérrez and Rogoff's (2003) article: *Cultural Ways of Learning: Individual Traits or Repertoires of Practice*. This article provides theoretical and practical tools for mitigating the risk that identity, experiences, knowledge, and skills are seen as static, and instead suggests a framework of repertoires of practice to underscore the dynamic nature of identity and practice. Some discussion questions may be:

• What is the difference between individual traits and repertoires of practice?
• How might an emphasis on individual traits result in the generation of static notions of identity? Why is it important to avoid this?
• What are your repertoires of practice? How might they be consequential in our collaborative work?

02.

Engage with the "Composing a Team Protocol," adapting it as best fits the specific context of the focal project.

03.

Engage in reflective writing to respond to the questions:

• "What are the strengths and assets of our current team?"
• "Who is not currently included in our team?"
• "What voices and perspectives are we at risk of excluding?"

04.

If working with others, discuss your responses and then discuss and document strategies to mitigate those risks and challenges.

Modifications and Virtual Adaptations

• This process and protocol is intended to be modified to meet the specific needs of emergent projects.
• If doing this remotely, it is suggested to use break out rooms if the group is larger than 4-5 people to make sure that all voices are heard. Have small groups work to complete the protocol in break out rooms and then report back to the whole group.

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Facilitator Preparation

IN PERSON MATERIALS

- Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003)'s article: *Cultural Ways of Learning: Individual Traits or Repertoires of Practice*

HANDOUTS OR SLIDES

- Team Composition Protocol

Facilitation Tips

- This is a process intended to be engaged at the beginning of a project and then again throughout the course of a project. The needs and realities of teams change over time; it is important to be responsive to changes and to regularly revisit this activity to consider the ways that the team composition may need to be altered.
- It is critical to consider the kind of culture that may already exist among collaborators and how open collaborators are to having their goals modified by including new team members with different aims, values, and positionalities.

Example from the field

A research-practice partnership between the Council of State Science Supervisors and university researchers at the University of Washington and the University of Colorado used the protocol to help state-level science leaders create broad teams to support equitable implementation of practices emphasized in A Framework for K-12 Science Education (NRC, 2012), which was used to develop the Next Generation Science Standards. Historically, state leaders have either not had implementation teams, or their teams were composed principally of science educators within their own networks. The purpose of this protocol was to broaden those teams to better support science teaching that would be meaningful to students of color, neurodiverse students, and emerging multilingual learners. State team leaders said using the protocol helped them attend to issues of power in science education reform and identify needs for their own growth with respect to creating broad and inclusive teams.

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Commitments to Equity and Wellness

Composing a team that will both support team members' wellness as well as create processes and products to enhance equity for communities and stakeholders relies on the thoughtful composition of the team and the design of structures and processes to ensure authentic participation and shared power. Authentic representation of the community members most impacted by focal design dilemmas supports the enactment of equity and makes possible opportunities for innovation (Fine, 2016; Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016; Shea & Sandoval, 2020). When composing a team, it is critical to consider how the group will collaborate, how decisions will be made, and how trust will be built so as to ensure that there are structures to support equitable participation; whereas, diverse teams without structural processes oriented towards equity do not support the enactment of equity and justice.

It is important to consider the ways that the team will continue to revisit shifting structures of power and positionality, asking: "What other voices need to be present? What other structures need to be created?"

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Additional Reading

Anzaldúa, G., & Keating, A. (Eds.). (2002). *This bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*. Routledge.

Davis, A. (2013). Feminism and abolition: Theories and practices for the 21st century. Lecture. The University of Chicago, May.

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hooks, b. (1990). Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness. *In Yearnings: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, b. hooks (Ed.), 145–153. South End.

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