Enabling Equitable Knowledge Building in Research-Practice Partnerships through Community White Paper Routines

The Big Question
How can the process of knowledge building within a research practice partnership be extended to substantively involve practitioners and deliberately build on their expertise?

Topic Emergence and Selection: Identifying a Persistent Problem of Practice
In the case of the two white papers developed by HRL, issues that eventually became topics of PWP emerged from four sources:
- basic research activities
- informal conversations with practitioners
- community events run by network administrators
- collaborative design activities facilitated by HRL

Leveraging Community Contexts for Participatory Knowledge Building
Open community contexts acted as key sites of deliberation, debate, brainstorming and identification of key themes that would eventually go into white papers.

The research team utilized the following as contexts for knowledge building:
- Topical working groups facilitated by HRL
- Existing Hive community meet-ups
- Existing Hive community calls
- "One-off" special events facilitated by HRL

Integration of Research Data & Existing Literature
Parallel to the process of enabling community contribution and knowledge building described above, the research team works to integrate both empirical findings from the RPP team’s research as well as broader relevant literature that might help to ground and situate the contributions from the community.

Feedback, Synthesis and Dissemination
A key aspect of the white paper development process involves the research team soliciting community feedback on drafts of a paper through utilizing either collaborative editing tools like Google docs or more traditional forms like track changes on documents. Ideally, actors that have been involved in the process up to this point are now able to concretely see how their ideas were instantiated within an artifact and its associated argument(s), but are also able to examine the whole of that artifact and argument and further weigh in on how it might be strengthened in terms of shifting frames, clarifying arguments, and giving certain issues more or less attention.

Context of Investigation: Hive NYC Learning Network & Hive Research Lab Research-Practice Partnership
"Mozilla Hive NYC Learning Network is a city-wide laboratory where educators, technologists and mentors design innovative, connected educational experiences for youth. Together, these institutions create an ecosystem of opportunities for young people to explore their interests and develop key 21st-century skills."

Outcomes of Participatory Knowledge Building in RPPs
- Develop shared language and orientation around key concepts among stakeholders in an RPP
- Foster a collective knowledge-building orientation and position practitioners as experts in an RPP
- Surface practitioner knowledge and expertise around issues relevant to an RPP and link it to research findings and existing literature
- Implicitly renegotiate or iterate on the focus of joint work in the RPP
- Produce "catalytic" knowledge that can help practitioners develop new initiatives and implement changes relating to a problem of practice

Recommendations for Utilizing Participatory Knowledge Building in RPPs
- Consider whether enabling conditions are present
- Triangulate topic selection through multiple sources
- Engage in ongoing narration and context setting during the knowledge-building process
- Utilize existing community structures
- Create opportunities for meaningful contribution and participation

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