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Homelessness and Service Provision: a case Study of Johannesburg Organisation of Services to the Homeless (JOSH).

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2019

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29339

Mlauzi, Kate Mercia, (2019). Homelessness and service provision :a case study of Johannesburg Organisation of Services to the Homeless (JOSH), University of the Witwatersrand, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29339

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ABSTRACT

Over the years Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been providing a variety of social services, ranging from improving the skills of homeless individuals to helping prevent homelessness. This paper shed light on the current efforts by the Johannesburg Organisation of Services to the Homeless (JOSH), a Non-Profit Company (NPC) providing services to homeless individuals in Randburg. The study aimed to bridge the knowledge gap that exists in understanding the experiences of CSOs in service provision by exploring JOSH's experiences in providing services to homeless individuals. The study asked the following research question: What are the experiences of JOSH as a CSO in providing services to homeless individuals in the City of Johannesburg? And the following three sub-questions: What services are provided to homeless people by JOSH? What informs the approach taken for service provision by JOSH? How does JOSH understand their experiences of service provision?

I adopted a qualitative methodology and administered 15 face to face semi-structured interviews with the Directors, volunteers, and the staff at JOSH. This approach presented the opportunity to listen to the ideas, experiences and stories of people engaged with social action at JOSH. I used participant observation to collect data. I found this valuable as it gave me an opportunity to participate and observe the settings at JOSH in a way that provided a nuanced understanding of the services provided at JOSH. Thinking critically about the parameters of my research, I used purposive sampling to select my interviews. I chose people who worked closely with JOSH, whose knowledge and experiences would enable me to answer my research question and sub-questions.

The fight to end homelessness has brought a new strategic de-instutionalised model of community engagement that addresses issues of social justice through spaces of engagement. According to Cloke (2011) these new spaces of engagement that emerge are known as 'rapprochement'. This concept is developed in the literature review. It provides a framework of how non-statutory agencies uses a post-secular approach to engage with the homeless population through community-based social action.

Five major themes emerged from data analysis: (1) A snapshot of JOSH's homeless services, (2) Defining JOSH's homeless services (3) JOSH's view on homelessness, (4) Approach taken by JOSH, (5) A culture of support at JOSH and (6) challenges faced by JOSH. The first theme describes the different types of services that are provided by JOSH. This study has revealed that JOSH offers food services, skills assessment as well as counselling services to persons experiencing homelessness. JOSH does this by using a social entrepreneurial model, which is an example of rapprochement. This social enterprise model allows JOSH to put agency, innovation and hope at the heart of their

approach. This approach has enabled JOSH to create a space that is a transformative form of hospitality and a leadership style that allows different stakeholders to develop and acquire a sense of agency. The second theme demonstrated the model JOSH has adopted to provide services to homeless individuals. The third theme described the different terms JOSH uses to conceptualise homelessness. The fourth theme illustrates that JOSH uses a case management and service integration system to identify individuals who are homeless. The fifth theme describes how Directors, volunteers, and the staff at JOSH support homeless individuals. The final theme describes the different challenges JOSH faces in providing services to homeless individuals. The findings of the study revealed that JOSH's soup kitchen was more successful because food services were the most accessible and reliable service to homeless individuals. JOSH also indicated that there is a need for an overnight shelter which was currently not JOSH's focus of service delivery. Recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.