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An ethnographic study of a community-business partnership in Triomf, Gauteng

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, communities and corporates have been encouraged to initiate partnerships with one another as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative in South Africa. Historically, community-business partners have experienced tensions in their working relationships, and sought ways in which they could deal with these tensions to create a beneficial community-business partnership. The purpose of this study has been to gain insights into a particular community-business partnership in Triomph, namely, the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre, and Landelahni Recruitment Services partnership. In this qualitative ethnographic study I explore three central questions related to community-business partnerships: What is the nature of a community-business partnership? What factors promote and inhibit a community-business partnership? What kinds of adult learning happen within a community-business partnership?

This study presents a case study for adult educators who are interested in community-business partnerships. An ethnography was used to gain insight into the partnership. Data have been collected from documents, interviews, and observations within the context of the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre and Landelahni Recruitment Services.

Results reveal that the nature of the community–business partnership was characterised as a mutually beneficial cooperative relationship. This beneficial relationship was influenced by the following: the socio-economic context particular to this partnership, a formal Corporate Social Responsibility agreement, which emphased development and empowerment, and finally the role of financial contributions by Corporates. The factors that promoted the partnership were an awareness by both partners of power and how power plays out, the community organisation's ability to understand their circumstances and negotiate and make decisions, and the partner's ability to assist one

another, while accessing each others networks through trust and reciprocal assistance based on shared norms and values. A factor that inhibited the partnership was the assumption that the partner with the most resources was the most powerful. Another factor that inhibited the partnership was when partners' emphased social capital as being more important than other forms of capital in the partnership. There were two forms of adult learning present in the partnership, namely, nonformal learning which aims at empowering people in both organisations, as well as incidental learning that occurred through interaction with each other at an unconscious level. Both these forms of learning were not isolated from the influence of power.

This study concludes by recommending certain principles, to guide a community-business partnership. Recommendations relate to:

- The nature of an ideal partnership
- Enhancing factors that promote a partnership
- Mitigating factors that inhibit a partnership
- Achieving the benefit from nonformal and incidental learning within community-business partnerships

Key words/ terms: Partnerships, Corporate Social Responsibility, Power, Social capital, Nonformal and Incidental Learning.