

Establishing Long-Term Partnership to Achieve Effective Partnering. Is It Necessary?

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ABSTRACT

One of the issues in sustaining collaborative partnerships involves the drivers of change and transformation in the process. In particular to this study, various factors have gradually transformed the collaborative partnership activities in the quest for sustaining the collaborative efforts to empower children in orphanages. The paper seeks to explain one of the factors considering the significant discussion among the stakeholders regarding their perspectives on whether long-term partnership is valuable. Using a qualitative case study design, this study uses two methods of data collection with interview as the main method, supported by document review. The data collected were analysed thematically and the findings from the interviews were compared to the findings from documents reviewed. Later the findings are placed alongside the findings of the previous studies from the literature reviewed in the discussions. Based on the interview responses of 24 participants from five stakeholder groups in this collaborative setting and the review of available documents, the findings mainly revealed that partnerships are mostly pragmatics and programme based. Diverse views are given in considering the importance of partnerships to be sustained over a long period in order to be effective. This challenges the common notion that long-term commitment or relationships are needed for effective partnerships.

Keywords: *Community collaboration, community partnership, sustainability, long-term partnership, corporate social responsibility.*

INTRODUCTION

The potential of partnerships to prosper is often viewed as an indicator to the sustainability of the partnerships (Deigh, Farquhar, Palazzo & Siano, 2017; May & Keay, 2017; Cox & McDonald, 2017). Despite the various debates on the sustainability of collaborative partnerships in the literature, many scholars have emphasized the importance of long-term partnerships in order to sustain the collaborative efforts through time (Alexander et al., 2003; Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2008).

The study examines the importance of long-term community collaborative partnerships in the Malaysian setting and highlights the case study on CyberCare. CyberCare serves as an ICT-based community service organization aiming to improve the life of children in orphanages through the mechanism of multi-stakeholders collaborative partnerships. It is registered as a non-governmental organization (NGO), and serves as the key player responsible for inviting other NGOs, corporate and government sectors to collaborate in the orphanage community service since 1998 (Muda, 2009, 2015, 2017). Collaborative efforts have been carried out based on external funds from various corporations and the government. Considering that CyberCare has been established for more than a decade, it is appropriate to examine the various stakeholders' perspectives on the question: Is the establishment of a long-term partnership necessary to achieving effective partnering?

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

In defining collaborative partnership for this study, the words partnership and collaboration are combined together. This combination manifests the relationships as partnership and the way of working together as collaboration (Gottlieb, Feeley & Dalton, 2005; Carnwell & Carson, 2008). The term “relationship” in this study refers to the merging groups of stakeholders including individuals and organisations to form a partnership, while “the way of working together” involves how the partnership takes an inclusive approach in the planning and implementation of programs (Muda, 2015).

Collaborative partnership: End versus means

The key discussion in the literature is the question of whether a collaboration or a partnership is an end in itself or a means to achieving an end (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). Carnwell and Carson’s (2008) conceptual analysis has indicated that there are many potential barriers to partnerships and collaborations, and they have regarded that such partnerships is worth pursuing. Carnwell and Carson (2008) have suggested that the existing view perceived partnership and collaboration as “*good in themselves, rather than more effective at solving problems*” (p. 21). Due to this end-state perception, the practices of a partnership are often being overlooked. This explains the rather idealistic accounts of collaborations that seem to be common.

Based on Carnwell and Carson’s (2008) study on partnership models, the types of partnership are distinguished by the types of commitment the partners undertake. Commitment in this context refers to the reasons behind the formation of a partnership. The types of partnership which will be explained next provide the basis of discussion and findings in this study.

Reasons for forming a partnership determine the types of partnership

The literature has mentioned that the reasons for parties entering into a partnership could be strategically driven, concerning major long-term issues, or project driven, involving only specific projects (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). These drivers will determine the types of partnership.

According to the key writers in the field, partnerships can be project/program driven on one hand or strategic driven on the other (McQuaid, 2000). A partnership is project or program driven when it involves a single project only (McQuaid, 2000), and the time is limited to the duration of that specific project (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). In contrast, a partnership is strategically driven when it deals with the broad plans and major long-term issues of the organization, such as seeking development strategy for a certain geographical area. This type of partnership is comparable to the ‘problem oriented partnership’ which is entirely formed to develop the appropriate response strategies and effort to resolve publicly identified problems and it can remain as long as the problem persists (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). The problem or issue in this context may also change and develop (Carnwell & Carson, 2008).

Sustainability

Sustainability is an important aspect that needs to be considered in developing a collaborative community partnership. This is not just about what the relationship can accomplish as a whole but also the whole process of establishing and maintaining the

partnership. It is commonly known that a collaborative process requires “*intense long-term efforts and sustained commitment*” (Kerka, 1997).

The term endurance or durability within the process of a collaborative partnership encompasses not only the capacity of the partnership to constitute or maintain in a long-term but also the ability of the partnership to overcome multiple challenges for its survival. For instance, Perrault, McClelland, Austin, and Sieppert (2011) have described collaborations as durable relationships because of the “*setup costs.*” They have claimed that implementing collaboration is not easy; it requires the cost of participation, commitment of time and resources, and the cost is outweighed by the benefits of the collaboration. In an inter-organizational community collaboration, the process of collaboration is carried out through research, service delivery or policy development (Perrault et al., 2011), in which it will involve difficulties and risks, and careful details. All of those are time consuming, and demand a high level of commitment.

It is debatable that the length of a collaboration is usually associated with positive performance (Alexander et al., 2003; Cropper, 1996; Fraser, Honeyfield, Breen, Protheroe, & Fester, 2017; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008; May & Keay, 2017). Comparing both aspects, time length and performance, Cropper (1996) has argued that in collaborative workings, the behavioural outcome of longevity is distinguishable from the behavioural quality of sustainability, “*longevity indicates past success,*” whereas, “*sustainability is inherently future-oriented*” where sustainability is an “*expression of the value which collaborative working commands and of the processes by which collaborative efforts construct their value*” (p. 83).

This view is supported by Alexander et al. (2003, p. 157S) as they have claimed that “*sustainability may at times have little to do with performance.*” Rather, Alexander et al. (2003) have emphasized the importance of identifying the concerns and value of the community thus the need to ascertain the aims of the partnership and decide how to best position the partnerships to sustain in the long-term to accrue significant benefits for all parties involved (Alexander et al., 2003).

Regardless of the different types and focus of community organizations or partnerships, there are always risks associated with collaborations. The link between risk and ongoing collaborations is emphasized in Takahashi and Smutny’s (2002) case study which explored the formation of three small community-based organizations into a social service partnership that provides social services for persons living with HIV and AIDS and the demise of the partnership. Takahashi and Smutny (2002) have provided some important lessons about the sustainability issues of collaborative partnerships. For example, they have discovered that there is a significant relationship between the ability of the partners to sustain a long-term collaboration with the ability of the collaboration to adapt itself to the changing conditions. They have suggested that the breakdown of relationships and inevitably the termination of partnerships are due to the lack of collaborative partners’ knowledge, skills or interests and the initial governance and managements’ resistance to change. However, their study is limited to a small community-based organization in the social service context whereas a bigger organization in a different context would foster different characteristics. This study employed a similar focus on a small organization.

This study also provides a different way of discovering the rich elements of practice in a collaborative partnership by framing it around the perspectives of stakeholders involved in the arrangement. These stakeholders have diverse expertise, and hold different roles and positions inside and outside of the collaborative setting.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study mainly utilized a semi-standardized interview technique which allows for diversions from the interview guide where appropriate (Robson, 2011). In this technique, the same major questions are usually asked by the interviewer each time, but the interviewer has more freedom to alter the sequence of the questions and to probe for more information (Gilbert, 2001). The researcher drafted the interview protocol and followed the appropriate ethical guidelines including getting consent from the participant before interviewing.

This interview technique was used in this study to get varied perspectives from multiple-stakeholders based on their knowledge and experiences working in the collaborative setting. As summarized in Table 1, the responses are counted from twenty four participants; five respondents from the service organization (SO), four from the corporation (Corp), one from the non-governmental organization (NGO), five from the government (Gov) and nine from the orphanage (OA).

Table 1: Summary of the characteristics of participants interviewed.

Category	Participant	Represent	Involvement
Service Organisation	JN-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	MC-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	MS-SO	Fulltime staff	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	SY-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Service Organisation	YW-SO	Board of Directors	CyberCare Management & Administration
Corporation	*CJ-Corp	PIKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
Corporation	*TH-Corp	PIKOM	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
Corporation	ML-Corp	Accenture	Various programmes/ activities
Corporation	SN-Corp	LifeWorks	MAD Curriculum & Care4U
NGO	SL-NGO	Lions Club	Service Organisation Patron
Government	KJ-Gov	NITC	Grant & policies
Government	*PF-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Government	*CA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Government	RA-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Government	SJ-Gov	DAGS	Grant & policies
Orphanage (administrator)	JS-OA	Orphanage1	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	P-OA	Orphanage2	YLM Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	RAI-OA	Orphanage3	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	SLO-OA	Orphanage4	Camp Vision Singapore
Orphanage (administrator)	ER-OA	Orphanage5	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	AK-OA	Orphanage6	Care4U Programme
Orphanage (administrator)	DZ-OA	Orphanage7	Care4U & other programmes
Orphanage (administrator)	AT-OA	Orphanage8	YLM & other programmes
Orphanage (administrator)	TT-OA	Orphanage9	Camp Vision Singapore

*Joint interview

The participants from the service organization are four members of the board of directors and a fulltime staff member of CyberCare. They were identified based on their positions and roles in the organization, and their availability. The participants from the corporation, NGO, government, and administrators from selected orphanages were purposely chosen because of their active involvement in the current or previous programs with the service organization.

The interviews were conducted from 28 June 2009 to 14 April 2010, and the findings are believed to be relevant until today. As the data for the interviews were collected in stages, the data analyses were also carried out in stages involving the processes of data transcription and translation, data coding, and thematic data analysis to address the constructed research questions. To add to the trustworthiness of the data, the final transcriptions were emailed to the participants group by group for member checking. The revised versions after the participants' feedback were used for analysis. The interviewee quotes are presented in verbatim format in this paper.

Some of the views from the corporate stakeholders were based on the documents mainly from the newspaper articles (dated from 1999-2006) and press releases (dated from 1998-2005). It is during these periods Cybercare was widely reported in the mass media. Malaysians value newspaper report as it provides thorough, timely and important information for the society (Othman, Mat Nayan, & Tiung, 2013); henceforth these sources would also provide reliable data for this study.

FINDINGS

The findings revealed that partnerships are mostly pragmatic and program based, while some stakeholders agreed that partnerships should be sustained in order to be effective. The government stakeholder viewed the partnership as short-term problem-based while other stakeholders considered their relationship as either long-term or short-term program driven. The following subsections will discuss the multiple-stakeholder views and whether partnerships need to be sustained in order to be effective.

Long-term project/program or strategic driven partnership

This subsection discusses the responses of participants, majority are from the Board of Directors of CyberCare and administrators from the orphanages. However, the views of corporate partners are based on the findings from available documents. All four of the Board of Directors has agreed that the partnerships are based on ongoing programs. However, their individual description of sustainability of the project/program and partners has slight differences.

The first view suggested that the partnership is based on long-term project/program with all long-term partners. In relation to a long-term project (Care4U) with long-term partners such as Microsoft and UTAR, MC-SO viewed the project as permanent long-term. Care4U is a project in which a university curriculum is developed and utilized by UTAR students and Microsoft is the main fund provider of CyberCare. MC-SO considered all partners of CyberCare serve for the long-term and used the word '*continuous*' to emphasize that it is a sustainable project. MC-SO justified his view by selectively highlighting a long-term program and comparing it with other short-term projects:

‘Our projects are continuous; I don’t see any reason why a certain project is short-term. It’s not like when people do a project and it’s a one day or one week program (one-off program), or normally people said one day program (they) go to the zoo, like we said no, no such thing.’

The second view suggested that the partnership is long-term based on the continuity of many different programs, one program follows another program. JN-SO, viewed CyberCare as a project initially designed to become “big project” (which later is developed into an organization). Similar to MC-SO, JN-SO emphasized continuity by relating “big project” as many programs that are conducted continuously. JN-SO mentioned CyberCare’s prior programs such as “Lantern festival, charity concerts or day camps.” Based on these programs, unlike MC-SO and YW-SO (third view), JN-SO has a slightly different idea of what is considered being long-term. MC-SO and YW-SO referred long-term program to a particular program designed to be conducted continuously in stages over the years, while JN-SO referred to one-off programs that are being carried out in succession one after another. The varied views are an indicator that the programs in CyberCare during the early stage were shorter in nature compared to the current programs.

The third view suggested that the partnership is based on long-term projects/programs with long-term partners, but not all partners of CyberCare serve long-term. YW-SO values long-term partnerships. For instance, it was noted that the partnership with Microsoft was a long one and lasted for about ten years (1998-2008) with the succession of two different CEOs. However, partnerships tend to cease when there is a transition. It is clear that YW-SO has the expectation that the long-term partners to sustain the relationship at least for more than a year by further expressing his disappointment and skepticism about the motives of corporations in general:

‘Unfortunately in Malaysia, the long-term is until the next year comes up. That’s the sad part. I think you’ll find that in a lot of developed countries, companies commit to a cause, they commit to eco-friendly, they stick with eco-friendly, they commit to this, they stick to this. Unfortunately in Malaysia, they’ll tend to like publicity, (they) want to be creative, and (they) want to be new, so they tend to change. That’s the sad part.’

This excerpt shows that the service organization expects that the corporation stay in the relationship in order to sustain the project/program. The importance of having long-term partners is closely related to the ability of CyberCare to have long-term project/program planning which is considered very important in community service by YW-SO. Based on YW-SO experience, it is regarded that short-term planning is “*damaging the community service*” as they cannot plan well ahead of time. YW-SO further threw the light on “*corporations’ immature level of understanding their roles in serving the community*” when they constantly change their programs each year just so “*it looks fresh*” in the name of publicity. YW-SO’s disappointment may be due to his view that the partnership process is almost an end in itself. The behavior of the corporation itself may also lead to such conclusions. In this instance, YW-SO argued that corporations merely prioritized publicity over commitment to a cause, and viewed that the corporations only concerned with their extrinsic motives.

In relation with future partnerships, YW-SO viewed that the current partnership with a private institution, UTAR, will last longer. YW-SO did not provide a clear reason for this but the anticipation may be due to UTAR's commitment through their participation in the internship program with CyberCare every year. As for the rest of the partners, especially the corporations, YW-SO believed that they did not serve long enough to be regarded as long-term partners. This is different from the first view (MC-SO) who described that all partners serve as long-term partnerships.

The fourth perspective is drawn from two different views of the enduring nature of partnerships (or otherwise) obtained from the findings of available documents and interviews based on long-term campaign. In this subsection, only the first view of long-term partnership is highlighted. The analysis of available documents showed that most of the partners were seeking to become involved in long-term collaboration in the first few years after the initial establishment of the service organization. This was demonstrated in the collaboration with two corporate partners, Microsoft Malaysia as a founding corporate sponsor of CyberCare (Microsoft, 2000), and Hitechniaga as a corporate promoter. RA-Gov and KJ-Gov informed that the corporate promoter was required by the government to join CyberCare to qualify for the government grant, Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS). Like CyberCare, these two main corporate partners (Microsoft Malaysia and Hitechniaga) viewed long-term commitment as important. This is particularly evident in many reports and newspaper articles about the partnership which Microsoft had emphasized that the corporation's involvement in the collaborative partnership with CyberCare was a *"long-term commitment."* For instance, Benedict Lee, the managing director of Microsoft Malaysia at the time mentioned, *"Microsoft's long-term involvement with CyberCare is made viable through the Microsoft Foundation Campaign which is the corporate philanthropy arm of Microsoft Malaysia"* (Ching, 1999).

The fifth view is from one of the orphanage administrators based on the online linking system where the partnership is viewed as continuing as long as the orphanage is listed in the system. Unlike other orphanage administrators who viewed the program as short-term, TT-OA considered that their collaboration with CyberCare is a long-term partnership. This relationship still maintains coalition and partnership for more than ten years; the partnership was formed since CyberCare first started the organisation. TT-QA identified that the partnership as ongoing considering the fact that the partnership shall continue as long as CyberCare maintains the online link with the orphanage. Similar to other stakeholders, TT-OA also values the continuation aspect when describing long-term relationship but the relationship is based more on documentation than practice.

The sixth and final perspective is based on long-term strategic driven partnership from the aspect of the nature and duration of involvement of the partnership. The NGO (Lions Club) considered the partnership as a long-term partnership with CyberCare. The partnership began when CyberCare approached the Lions Club to join the network, and it was first formed as an organization under the Lions Club umbrella, and they are carrying the Lions Club name since then. However, not much detail can be provided to explain the situation, as the Lions Club did not mention clearly if the club was seeking for a long-term collaboration in the beginning. This shows that the NGO stakeholder does not consider that the partnership as a long-term partnership right from the start.

While all stakeholders relate long-term partnerships to long-term projects/programs, the view on the types of projects/ programs differs according to different stakeholders. For example, CyberCare views it as a continuity of many different programs, while the corporations' perspectives are based on corporate campaigns, and the orphanage perceives it from the online linking system.

Short-term programme driven partnership

Partnerships with CyberCare is a short-term, and program driven, this was the response from the majority of orphanage administrators and corporate stakeholders interviewed. These unions were usually formed for the purpose working together in a certain program to achieve a common goal and some of them considered that the coalition may disband after achieving its goal or when the programs ended. The corporate stakeholders also stressed on the limited nature of their projects in term of time, and their corporate focus.

The orphanage administrators regarded that their collaborative partnership with CyberCare is based on the program or activities organized for the children by CyberCare. All nine administrators regarded that the programs or activities as short-term in nature. All administrators, except one administrator (TT-OA) from the orphanage⁹, referred to the short-term program in which the children had participated as a short-term partnership. For example, ER-OA mentioned, *"CyberCare involvement was very short. Short in the sense, I think for about two years, if I'm not mistaken."*

Another participant (AK-OA) referred to the ICT programs in which the children participated. AK-OA perceived the many different one-off programs as a one-time charity work, rather than seeing them as part of a long-term partnership:

'...It's like a certain program, one time program and that's off and another program came in. First was training for the children – a few times computer training, usually they linked with other institutes. I remember three or four times. After that, creating website with UTAR – that is almost one year. After that, software and hardware for two or three times. These were all one-time charity works.'

AT-OA argued that the orphanage did not have a long-term partnership based on the short-term programs:

'Actually it's not a long-term program. It's all mostly I see that they take them out for training. The involvement I can see that they came here to visit the children, and take them out. I don't know if you call this long-term or not.'

Overall, CyberCare's intermittent programs and visits have provided the administrators of the orphanages with the view that the partnerships with CyberCare are temporary. All orphanage administrators define long-term partnership as a continuous involvement with CyberCare's programs. They want to be included in the programs continuously as they believe that a short-term or a one-off program is unlikely to have much impact on the children. For instance, SLO-OA asserted, *"I wouldn't see any solid impact in changing them (the children). No. Just a two-day or two-night thing, it would not change"*

them.” Overall, programs are seen as the main linkage between CyberCare and the orphanages.

The corporate stakeholders’ responses in regards of their short-term program-driven partnerships are mainly based on their corporate social responsibilities or corporate focuses. The analysis from the available documents, mainly newspaper articles, also showed that some partners collaborate for a short period only. For example, an ICT company, Samsung, came into the partnership based on its corporate focus. The corporate focus of Samsung was “to encourage the use of technology as a tool to enrich the lives of the disadvantaged,” and it was carried out under its DigitAll Hope program. Based on its corporate view of the effective ongoing or planned project, Samsung selected and granted CyberCare to start its Youth Leadership Mentoring (YLM) program for the children in the orphanages, and the partnership was to be maintained for the year of the award period.

In contrast to the reported articles which mostly conveyed the message that corporate sponsors are committed to long-term programs or partnerships, it became clear through the interviews that none of the corporate stakeholders regards their partnerships with CyberCare as long-term. Their responses appeared that they did not see long-term partnerships as necessarily essential or desirable. Two of the participants clarified that their partnerships with CyberCare were for specific purposes that their organization/project were looking for at the time. For instance, CJ-Corp described how they came to collaborate:

‘When we started project ‘MAINPC’ we had a group of partners, like I mentioned. We have already designed to make sure that every part of the things that we can think of we already have a partner to contribute to each part. We are not going forward to recruit any fresh partner since then. So, when we put the whole project team under MAINPC altogether, each partner is supposed to contribute and play a role. From CyberCare, I think at the end of the day, we have a pretty good curriculum.’

CJ-Corp further explained that the working structure was designed with the specialization of role of each partner with CyberCare focusing on the curriculum development. He mentioned:

‘Once that is done (curriculum development), let say we want to create a new centre, we get somebody to donate some PCs and we give the curriculum and hopefully they can hire good instructor and they can go on. So the need for CyberCare will be at the minimum. That is why we could stop it at that point in time and then we just continue to give out a few PCs and the curriculum.’

This instance showed that the corporations value short-term relationships based on the needs and focuses of common practices, and they prioritize practicality. Similar understandings were expressed by ML-Corp from Accenture Malaysia. She viewed Accenture’s partnership with CyberCare as more of a partnership for a specific focus when she mentioned, “I think our partnership with CyberCare was like once a year event but that’s just what we were looking to do at that time.”

Both participants emphasized that achieving what their organizations aim to do is what matters the most. At the time of the interviews, both corporate organizations have ceased to collaborate with CyberCare. It may be possible that their responses were retrospective justifications of the fact that they were no longer in the partnership.

However, similar values - that long-term partnerships are not particularly important - were strongly shared by the current corporate partner, SN-Corp from LifeWorks, who is still in collaboration with CyberCare at the time. SN-Corp did not specifically relate the partnership to the focus of the organization, but she strongly opposed the idea of sustaining partners over a long period. In one of the instances, SN-Corp argued that sustaining stakeholders demands commitment and loyalty from the partners:

‘...I think, it is very unrealistic to have a loyal partnership and I don’t think my partnership with CyberCare demands that kind of commitment and loyalty. We are two free enterprises, we are free to grow and learn.’

SN-Corp did not consider having a short-term relationship as unconstructive. In fact, she regarded change as *“natural and organic,”* drawn on the same positively evaluated environmental metaphors as the concept of sustainability. She also repeatedly mentioned having *“no strings attached”* or an unbound relationship as something she highly values in the partnership of the organization with CyberCare. For example, she mentioned, *“And there are no strings attached, in which our partnership is so open and very respectful towards each other.”* This shows that the commitment is clearly related to a long-term relationship. LifeWorks regards the requirement of commitment as a threat in a collaborative partnership as it can result in one partner is bounded to the other partner in the long run.

Overall, the findings from the documents seemed to represent the corporate stakeholder, Microsoft, strongly values long-term partnership but in contrast with the interview findings with other corporations, different views were obtained. However, these differences cannot be used to compare the credibility of the sources, because the data were collected from different stakeholders with different ways of collaborations throughout the duration of the partnership.

Other stakeholder group, the orphanage administrators emphasized the need to have long-term programs for long-term partnerships in order to provide a more lasting impact on the children. However, throughout their experiences, these participants, with one exception, did not consider the partnerships with their orphanages as long-term.

Short-term problem-oriented partnership

The government stakeholder described the relationship between the government and CyberCare as a problem-oriented partnership. RA-Gov, the government official who was responsible for monitoring the DAGS funded projects, noted that there were many available government grants but DAGS is considered unique, and the closest match with what CyberCare was doing at the time. Because of the restrictions of the DAGS funding regime, the partnership had to be focused on a problem, and designed to be supported by the government for one year.

However, the government realized the need to sustain the partnership over a longer term, as RA-Gov explained:

'...Any promoter, when they come over to DAGS, they must identify clearly what are the problems, are the problems being solved using ICT, and the tri-sectoral partnership that must be presented with proof: letters, support...because the issue will be sustainability...'

The above response showed that the government shares an explicitly articulated value that effective partnerships are longer than the provided grant, and understands that it is difficult to sustain such partnerships. RA-Gov and KJ-Gov further explained that the government has made the effort to ensure that the project could be sustained by looking at the ability of the project to generate revenue channels and able to sustain after the provided grant ended. On the government's part, DAGS provided support by linking partners to other relevant authorities and ministries. RA-Gov gave this example:

'...Some of these ministries for example they wanted the wireless (internet), that something should be done, and ICT can be leveraged, but they do not have budget. So, DAGS actually provide the avenue to pilot.'

RA-Gov also anticipated the evaluation of the piloted projects achievement that can be used by the DAGS committee to justify the request of future budgets from the ministry, and to help in financing future programs. SJ-Gov also clarified that the government had assisted the community to pilot, and roll out the project, but they should get other partners to fund further developments. These instances showed that DAGS was not designed to support the project for an unlimited time, but it provided a structure to ensure that the project is able to sustain.

These findings mainly revealed that partnerships are mostly pragmatic and program based, while some stakeholders agreed that partnerships should be sustained in order to be effective. The government stakeholder is the only group that viewed the partnership as short-term problem-based, while other stakeholders considered their relationships as either long-term or short-term program driven.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

What mainly drives the partners to come into a partnership can be associated to the type of partnerships. Types of partnership are conceivably recognized by the type of commitment the stakeholders undertake (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). It is commonly stated in the literature that partnerships can be considered to be driven by project or program (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000), or to be strategic (McQuaid, 2000) or problem-oriented (Carnwell & Carson, 2008). The latter is considered to involve longer term relationships compared to the former (Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). However, this association of partnership types with duration of commitment is challenged in this study. The types of partnership identified by the participants did not match the longevity of the partnership, as classified by the reviewed literature (e.g: Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). The findings revealed that partnerships are mostly pragmatic and program based. Some stakeholders agree with the literature, which suggests that partnerships should be sustained in order to be effective. The government stakeholder is the only group that perceive the partnership as short-term problem-based, while the other stakeholders consider their relationships as either long-term or short-term program driven.

In the literature, a project/program oriented partnership is normally regarded as dealing with short-term issues (e.g: Carnwell & Carson, 2008; McQuaid, 2000). Conversely, in this case, the majority of the participants from CyberCare claimed that they have a long-term partnership based on long-term programs. This view is supported by an orphanage administrator, and CyberCare's long-time corporate partner. Lions Club is the only partner that can be considered as having a long-term partnership with CyberCare, which is more strategic rather than project/program driven. The findings showed that this relationship is based on the nature of the partnership in which the Lions Club has helped in the structuring of the service organization and also based on the duration of its involvement. This finding is consistent with the literature which reckons that strategic driven partnership should involve longer term relationships (McQuaid, 2000) than other types of partnerships. However, the partners' long established commitment could not guarantee that the partnership can be sustained, as the Lions Club in this case has finally separated from its long-term partner, the service organization.

Although the findings demonstrated that the long-term partnerships are based on the program they shared, there are slight differences in terms of how the participants describe the type of project/program, length of commitment, and partners that they are involved with. The program is described as a program that consisted of projects that are designed to be conducted continuously in stages over the long-term with all long-term partners only, or to include either long-term and short-term partners, or many one-off programs that are conducted continuously. Projects or programs are also referred to as campaigns, or online linking system. The stakeholders who claimed to have a long-term project or program driven partnerships also provide diverse views on what they considered as long-term commitment. Their common value of long-term commitment is in the continuity of the programs, the network (online linking system), and the campaigns. Only one stakeholder from the service organization was more specific in mentioning that the long-term partnership has to be more than a year. This stakeholder specifically referred to the relationship between CyberCare and the corporations. This particular corporate stakeholder only stayed in the partnership for a year had conveyed the disappointment in the partnership which focused on the prioritizing of publicity rather than the commitment to a cause. This is regarded as the old dilemma in pursuing strategic corporate social responsibility (CSR) where there would be possible compromises between material profit and normative morality (Babatunde & Akinboboye, 2013).

The stakeholder's perspective is an illustration of an understanding of the corporate aims as driven by extrinsic, rather than intrinsic motivations. Commonly, motives of a corporation may be attributed by the stakeholders as extrinsic wherein the company is seen as attempting to increase its profits. CSR motives can also be seen as intrinsic, wherein the company is viewed as acting out of a genuine concern for the central issue (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). The service organization's perception of corporations which seemed to value publicity over commitment to a cause explained that the corporations are seen to be driven more by their extrinsic motives rather than intrinsic ones. It has been argued that this view of corporations as merely serving their extrinsic motives could be a threat to constructive partnerships (Du et al., 2010). The stakeholders are more likely to make constructive inferences on the underlying character of the corporation, and react more positively towards it if they have stronger attributions of its intrinsic motives; otherwise the stakeholders will show less favorable attitudes and behavior towards the corporation if they perceive its motives as predominantly extrinsic (Forehand & Grier, 2003;

Y. Yoon, Gurhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006). In this case, the behavior of the corporations themselves may disappoint other partners which may lead them to draw such a conclusion. After all, as has been agreed by Ismail and Ahmad (2015), what matters the most in CSR relationships is building trust and good relationships with strategic public, and the corporations should take an interest in not just the society but also the stakeholders (Babatunde & Akinboboye, 2013).

The study also showed the corporate view of long-term commitment as being based on long-term campaigns. In considering initiatives, Falck and Heblich (2007) have argued that short-term actions like donating money for social activities or sponsoring popular events is not the most effective practice. Rather, they suggested a long-term proposition such as producing more effective outcomes from CSR. Their view is that “if it (the company) treats society well, society will return the favor” (Falck & Heblich, 2007: p. 253). In this study, Microsoft is one of the corporations that claimed to have a long-term commitment with CyberCare. Microsoft’s long-term involvement primarily involved financing, which was channeled through its CSR campaign for the society to react in support of its anti-piracy efforts. As Falck and Heblich (2007) have suggested, this kind of campaign requires a long-term commitment to be effective. However, it is not something new for corporations to come out with such statements of commitment, especially in a press statement, as commitment towards social issues is what’s expected from CSR practice (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Such statements are seen as indicating their valuing of CSR, or their need for the public to perceive them as valuing CSR by stating what they think people want to hear about long-term commitments.

The findings showed that the majority of the orphanage administrators and corporate stakeholders interviewed regard their partnerships with CyberCare as being of a short-term program-driven. In line with McQuaid (2000) these stakeholders normally came to form partnerships because of certain programs. This view also supported Carnwell and Carson’s (2008) view that such partnerships are limited in the span of a specific project where the partnerships would cease to exist once the funding ceases and the aims have been achieved. While both groups of stakeholders shared a similar view of the type of partnership between CyberCare, they defined the length of commitment differently. The orphanage administrators used the words “short-term” to describe the intermittent programs involved with CyberCare. Some of the administrators were more specific and defined “short-term” according to the occurrences of the programs (two to four times; a few times; two-day; and two-night). Two other views also regarded one-year and two-year programs as short-term relationship. However all of them valued highly of the long-term or continuous programs for their children.

Commitment is clearly relates to long-term relationship. The corporations in this study regarded their short-term relationships as being based on their current CSR or corporate aims. They did not see the need for their corporation to commit longer than their corporate aims require at the time. One of the corporations regarded the requirement of commitment as a threat in a collaborative partnership, as it can result in one partner being bonded to the other in the long run. This kind of belief is what Masterson (2002) has argued that commitment is a factor that may lead to failure in some partnerships. Masterson (2002) has suggested that part of a shared commitment is shared identity, but the partners’ perception of existing professional boundaries may cause the creation of a shared identity difficult. Although there are always certain constraints in getting partners’ commitment to

the collaborative setting, some writers in the field relate high levels of partner commitment to high levels of collaborative partnership success in meeting the collaborative aims and vice-versa (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Conversely, the corporate partner who did not value long-term commitment did not see short-term relationship as conducive to a collaborative partnership, and ironically, the partner is still very active in continuing collaborative efforts in CyberCare.

This study showed that the government stakeholder is the only group who described the relationship between the government and CyberCare as a short-term problem-oriented partnership. This is incompatible with Carnwell and Carson's (2008) view that problem-oriented partnerships "*will remain as long as the problem persists*" (p. 9). However, the government shared the explicitly articulated value that the most effective partnerships are longer than a year regardless of the fact that DAGS is not designed to support the project in the longer term, it has provided a structure to ensure that the project is sustainable. As in enforced cooperation (McQuaid, 2000), the applicant must adopt a tripartite model of partnership to receive DAGS funding. The requirement of the collaborations to adhere to the government model of partnership above supports the claim of Vangen and Huxham (2014) that government organization may often influence and shape the collaborations. The DAGS funding model matches the recommendations of some scholars of collaborative partnerships such as Gray (1985) and Gray and Wood (1991). Gray (1985) has suggested that the pooling of resources in collaboration will allow partners to explore what different partners can do beyond what a single organization can in working alone (Gray, 1989; Gray & Wood, 1991).

Overall, the study showed that stakeholders referred sustainability to long-term commitment. The definition of long-term as a "continuous commitment" as implied by all stakeholders involved in this study is consistent with most of the previous research which have tended to consider long-term partnerships as continuous relationships (Alexander et al., 2003; Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2008).

Many writers have suggested that sustainability is a main requirement for the success of partnerships (Alexander et al., 2003); sustainability in collaborative relationship is usually associated with performance (Cropper, 1996; Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2008); sustainability is closely associated with collaboration (Perrault et al., 2011); and unsustained partnerships leave a legacy of mistrust and pessimism that erodes the basis for collaboration among community entities in the future (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Nevertheless, the perspectives offered by stakeholders in this research were at variance with the literature on sustainable partnerships. Although some stakeholders were in congruence with some other stakeholders in mentioning that they were driven by projects or programs or problems to form the partnerships, they have provided diverse perspectives on the requirement of commitment to sustain the collaborative efforts. These findings support Takahashi and Smutny's (2002) research, namely that there is little or no relationship between the ability to form partnerships and sustaining the collaboration.

In conclusion, long-term partnerships are not necessarily more effective partnerships. The findings of multiple-stakeholder views showed that there is a difference between sustaining collaborative partnerships and sustaining partnership with particular stakeholders. This case study suggests that the same stakeholders need not be maintained in order to sustain collaborative efforts. However, maintaining the same stakeholders is an advantage.

The way that the corporate stakeholders mentioned on how they came to connect with, and later disconnect from a collaborative partnership with CyberCare has exposed the corporate practice of short-term commitment based on corporate focus over long-term commitment needed by the collaboration to serve the community. It is difficult to obligate corporate partners to stay in the relationship over a long period. Requiring the corporate partners to have a long-term partnership may be at odds with their corporate foci. The reluctance to engage in long-term partnerships may require other partners like the community organization to adapt to the practice, as has been done in this collaborative setting.

Additionally, the work from Deigh et al. (2016) was the only literature that has mentioned the length of time for the relationships between stakeholders to be considered as long-term in a specific number which begins from three years. In this study, some stakeholders have specifically associated the length of commitment with the specific number of time, duration or occurrence of programs. Those who value the duration of commitment provides diverse perceptions of how long is considered as a long-term. While the majority of participants regarded one year as short-term relationship, they were not in consensus in perceiving the duration of more than a year as long-term or short-term relationship. I suggest that future studies can be conducted to provide a clearer sense of what defines “long-term” in partnership settings. This might be helpful in terms of defining effective partnerships in future.

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BIODATA

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