

7

VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

FACILITATING RECIPROCAL RELATIONS BASED ON A SHARED VALUE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the importance of the non-profit sector to be cognitively aware of, prepared for and involved in all the processes of engagement with higher education institutions. We reflect on the contextual framework of leaders and staff members of non-profit organisations who are also service providers on behalf of corporate and public sector funders. We also represent the voice of the community as beneficiaries, and at times victims, of community engagement and service learning projects. We argue that the partnerships with higher education institutions should be built on reciprocal relations, dictated by clearly defined and shared values. However, it requires both transactional and transformational leadership qualities from both sides to successfully steer the partnership through the murky waters of unrealistic expectations.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Any coin has two sides” and “it takes two to tango”.

These two well-known slogans illustrate the dynamic present in any relationship. This dynamic can also be illustrated in the gift analogy; most people love to receive gifts. When the gift is wrapped in gift paper, it heightens expectations and we become more excited. Sometimes the wrapping adds to our frustration because it poses a challenge to unwrap the gift. The wrapping could be so tight that you might need a pair of scissors or any sharp knife to cut it open. In trying to open the gift, you might even cut or injure yourself. The process of opening the gift holds a certain element of risk, effort and uncertainty. You could also be pleasantly surprised or very disappointed at the discovery of what the package holds. When starting any relationship or partnership, it is like opening a wrapped package. You are not sure what to expect and will approach it with either enthusiasm or reservation.

The partnership referred to in this chapter is the relationship between the role-players in the third sector, specifically non-profit organisations (NPOs) and higher education institutions (HEIs). In partnerships of this nature there are sometimes uncertain expectations. In this chapter we focus on a reflection of our experiences as the third sector partner in a knowledge enablement project. We therefore endeavour to highlight and reflect on experiences from our NPO context and link these reflections on the relationship to various theoretical perspectives. We explore how to share and apply this practical and theoretical knowledge and turn it to real change, the scholarship of possibility and enablement. We refer to the context of leaders and staff members of NPOs who engage with institutions of higher and further education and training, and who also provide services on behalf of funders from both the corporate and the public sector. We therefore also represent the voice of the community as beneficiaries of the ‘gift’ from these role-players.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the positioning of both the HEIs and the third sector to mitigate and negotiate their desired outcomes pertaining to the intervention in a mutually constructive way. We describe the ideal scenario where HEIs and the third sector share their learning, ideas and experiences. First, we provide the background of our NPO, followed by a discussion of the higher education mandate. The novel angle provided in this chapter is an insight into the perspectives from the third sector partner in the knowledge project. We argue that the negotiating of a shared value system could facilitate reciprocal relations between HEIs and the third sector.

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS**2. BACKGROUND OF THE NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION**

Our organisation is based in a typical South African community that is plagued with societal ills such as economic, health and political issues, and educational and infrastructural challenges. In an effort to address these issues, we are positioned and registered as an NPO that renders social services and developmental interventions to the community. Thus we are clustered under the third sector.

The leaders and staff of the organisation are sometimes community members who contribute with passion and commitment. The notion exists that these leaders and staff members may not have had equal opportunities to attain formal further education in the past.

There are a number of formal and well-established NPOs, but equally so there are also numerous informal and grassroots-level organisations that are rendering services to communities. These organisations are small and might seem insignificant, but the sheer total volume of these organisations amounts to an important contribution made for the greater good in society. Generally the governance and leadership would consist of passionate, caring and honourable members of society, but many of them would only possess indigenous knowledge and wisdom that come from years of experience and have been carried over from previous generations. They affectionately state that they are coming from 'the school of hard knocks'. They subscribe to an unwritten code of values, such as Ubuntu and respect. HEIs should not underestimate this form of knowledge and wisdom. There needs to be a cognitive valuing of civil society and the community's contribution and worth, and their ability to co-address their societal challenges.

However, it could pose a challenge to some community and organisational leaders to interact in the contextual world of Westernised theories and models. Some of these NPO staff members also perceive the people representing HEIs as the advantaged and privileged echelons of society. HEIs, on the other hand, interact with communities and service providers through their community engagement and service learning interventions. These interactions are sometimes typically marked by a 'we know it all' attitude on the part of the academics. They also tend to come from a theoretical perspective with a too narrow focus on appropriate application. The community consists of many role-players that bring and debate their subjective viewpoint and possible solution with regard to a dynamic communal challenge. A theoretical model or blueprint often does not provide the desired outcome, as every situation is uniquely different. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach often proves to be more detrimental than beneficial.

VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

These two parties (HEIs and the third sector) get together to give and receive whenever a service learning or community engagement project is initiated. It is thus important that expectations be clarified through the communication of a possible shared value system which will ensure mutual enablement.

3. THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S MANDATE

The contention also exists that the HEI and its leadership have limited knowledge of the NPO sector, and vice versa. Several HEIs have recognised that knowledge should serve humankind and purposefully make provision for interventions that make inroads into social transformation. This design of intent should take place on a (macro-) level where strategic direction and policies and procedures are determined and developed. Both the third sector's and HEIs' governance must learn how to regulate and formulate policies in ways that enable shared values rather than working against such an approach. Documents such as the *Education White Paper 3* (RSA DoE 1997) and the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* are prime examples. These documents also state that our HEIs' academic expertise and infrastructure are national assets that should be retained in the country's restructuring process and must be made available for the common good. Therefore, HEIs should produce graduates who can contribute to nation-building and the development of a more just and humane society (especially given the country's history of apartheid), and who will apply their knowledge and skills to uplift society. In effect, universities should respond to the social, political, economic and cultural needs of society through their lecturers, students and academic programmes. This is where the idea of service learning as a specific form of academically based community engagement in higher education began (Petersen & Osman 2013:4).

4. THIRD SECTOR AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

In the context of third sector and higher education partnership, facilitation, relationships, reciprocity and shared values are relevant to discuss.

4.1 Facilitation

Unwrapping the 'gift' calls for a carefully calculated, deliberate action, otherwise unexpected 'hurt' could occur in the form of disappointments, betrayal of trust and the like. The 'unwrapping' or, in other words, facilitating or negotiation of reciprocal relations is primarily the responsibility of the leaders and governance of both sectors.

Maxwell is well known for his writings on leadership development and his favourite quote is undoubtedly: "Everything rises and falls on leadership" (1998:225). In

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

his book *21 Irrefutable laws of leadership* he places the success or failure of any organisation squarely on the shoulders of the leader. The ability of the leader to implement and 'obey' these laws will determine the effectiveness and results of the organisation. These laws of leadership include some of the qualities and personal traits that leaders in any organisation should have. These include aspects such as influential leadership determining the levels of effectiveness, as people look for someone to follow who is stronger than they are. A true measure of leadership is that when a leader speaks, people listen. Strong leaders provide a vision, offer motivation for achieving it, encourage accountability and are willing to give away power in order to reproduce leaders. Such a leader displays characteristics such as inner strength, sensitivity, intuition, trust and respect, and is a good listener. Maxwell further contends that leadership is an incremental process and builds up momentum with those around, as the focus is on the process and priorities and not necessarily on activities. The law of solid ground implies that trust is the foundation of leadership and is strengthened by character. A secure leader raises others up and empowers other leaders and so gets their buy-in; first into the person as a worthy leader and then into the vision as a worthy cause. Hence, the leaders of both the HEIs and NPOs have a very important role to play to facilitate and negotiate the 'terms and conditions' of this give-and-take process which must take place to ensure a good partnership. It is also vital for the leadership to be able to transact in both the NPO and academic worlds. Leaders should thus operate in the transformational leadership context which require them to think creatively and in a visionary way to catalyse social transformation and the reinvention of true enablement. We have come to realise that two of the important aspects of facilitation between these sectors are transformational leadership and the concept of boundary spanning.

4.2 Transformational leadership

The concept 'transformational leadership' was initially introduced by leadership expert and presidential biographer James MacGregor Burns. According to Burns (1978:20), transformational leadership is evident when "leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation". Through the strength of their vision and personality, transformational leaders are able to inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions and motivations to work towards common goals. The Burns (1978) model also includes an ethical dimension, by focusing on morality and values. Echoing this view, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999:181) argue that to be truly transformational, leaders must be grounded in ethical and moral considerations. In this style of leadership the leader identifies the needed

VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group.

Such an example was the leadership of the late Nelson Mandela who made this statement at his inauguration as president:

The time for the healing of the wounds has come. The time to build is upon us. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. The time to build is upon us ... We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world (Mandela 1994:1805).

He was able to inspire South Africans to unite around the possibility of a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy.

Mamphela Ramphela writes in her book *Conversations with my sons and daughters* (2012:209):

We need to stretch our imaginations beyond the comfort zones of today's realities. We need to root out those approaches and practices that hold us back from openness to new and different ways of tackling our ongoing challenges. First and foremost we need to change our mindsets and embrace the values of our democracy and learn to live them out in our daily encounters: at home, in our communities, in our workplaces and wider society. The "I am because you are" – Ubuntu – should be the touchstone of our social relationships and we should distance ourselves from those who use Ubuntu as a slogan to market themselves in both the private and public sector without any intention of living its values.

Leaders and students of such calibre, vision and tenacity are needed to take on the challenges that our society is facing today.

In an article on Jonathan Jansen and transformation at the University of the Free State, Mandy de Waal (2011) from the *Daily Maverick* wrote the following:

"I went in June one afternoon to try to figure out the place", says Jansen explaining how he had been mentored to listen. "I was trained by someone who himself was trained by Milton Friedman and Theodore Schultz, Nobel Prize winners of economics". As part of his instruction Jansen was advised to not speak when moving into a new organisation, but rather to just listen, taste, hear and feel for the first six months. Eventually Jansen, whose notion of leadership is servant leadership, asked them a question that he would continue asking students, staff, alumni and the community surrounding the university for six months. The question was: "What do you want me to do for you?"

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

When reflecting on the past years of colonialism in the country, Jansen further contemplated how the process of transformation happens. He noted that transformation is “not an arrival, it is a journey” (De Waal 2011). He also noted that setbacks and difficulties are part of organisational change and the nature of social changes in society – especially in the South African context. He furthermore highlighted that if change is needed in an organisation then two things are required: one is to make firm decisions about difficult issues and to make good moral choices; the second is to love the people you lead unconditionally. He noted how vital it is to make sure the people you lead feel central to the process (De Waal 2011). The same is true for leadership that contributes to transformation in society. The above-mentioned visionary South Africans set an example to leaders in the country. In the context of this study, our organisation has recently undergone an administrative transition which severely tested our ability to initiate and manage visionary change. In any process of transformation, the leader could play the role of boundary spanner.

4.3 Boundary spanning

A boundary spanner is viewed as someone who is building bridges between organisations and external agents, and in the case of this chapter between campus and communities (Friedman & Podolny 1992:706). These spanners negotiate power and balance between the organisation and external agents to achieve mutual objectives, and they also represent the perceptions, expectations, and ideas of each side to the other. Such spanners facilitate teaching and learning functions to promote mutual understanding among the institution and community organisations. The HEI facilitated opportunities for capacity building and networking with other NPOs, with the aim of reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience. At the organisational level boundary spanning roles may be more accurately viewed as composite entities that subsume multiple types of relationships with external agents (Friedman & Podolny 1992:708). Therefore, boundary spanning is not confined to an individual job description; rather, it refers to broader institutional strategies to engage with external partners. Furthermore, Friedman and Podolny (1992) suggest that boundary spanning is a complex activity not confined to a single entity in an organisation and that it may manifest in multiple ways to reduce conflict and facilitate spanning goals. This is therefore not only a managerial task performed by the leaders of the collaborating organisations and institutions, but also a role that could be played by anyone who is involved in the relationship and, ultimately, the fully-fledged partnership.

These spanners are the 'glue' that do not only bring the players together, but literally keep these relationships in tact.

5. RELATIONSHIPS

The question that needs to be asked about the HEI and a third sector partnership is: Who are we relating to in this partnership and how are we doing it? Considering the aspect of power is crucial as it influences both the community response and the role of the gatekeepers in the relationship.

5.1 Community response

Knowledge is power. Power and knowledge are interrelated and mutually dependent on one another (Babbie & Mouton 2011:40). At times the community members who also from part of the third sector (NPO) might feel powerless, as the students and lecturers from the higher education partnership come with a theoretical background which gives them a position of power. The question then could be asked by the community members: Do we as the community really know what we need? Or is it a matter of the doctor (in this case the HEI) who best knows the cure? How could the doctor make a diagnosis without getting the symptoms from the patient? People's cognitive participation (Berger 1973) – their perception and knowledge of the problems – may be dismissed as irrational (Chambers 1983). In many cases HEIs endeavour to create platforms for mutual conversation, but the community falls short in the engagement process due to their own inadequacies in the form of emotional, mental and verbal restrictions.

Petersen and Osman (2013:11) make an important assertion in reference to the higher education students: "Our learning may remain inadequate, insufficient and too one-sided to help us to prepare properly for the challenges of our fields. Moreover, it may prevent us from recognising hegemonic social structures and practices." Gramsci (1971) discusses the concept of hegemony and how power is maintained in society. He notes that through hegemonic relations, one group can promote ways of operating as if it is common sense or part of the natural order. In this way groups are excluded from discussions. Petersen and Osman (2013:11) further note that this process reinforces unequal structures in society (intentionally or unintentionally), so perpetuating the oppression without people realising they are being oppressed.

There is a further element of shame which is relevant to this discussion. People in communities are ashamed of the stories and labelling of poverty, HIV/Aids, crime, substance abuse, illiteracy, unemployment, child abuse, domestic violence, teenage

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

pregnancies, school drop-out rates, and other societal ills. All of the above can contribute to the internalisation of shame (Bradshaw 1988:48). To add fuel to the fire, communities are also facing failure of the local government in terms of service delivery. These negative sentiments – and sometimes truth – infringe the power to negotiate what services and interventions the community can bargain for.

Community members may feel bad about who they are and then they think they are not deserving of good things; they become very negative about themselves and feel small, flawed, and never good enough. It is like when a hungry person is offered food. He or she 'should' be happy with whatever is offered and pickiness would be perceived as ungratefulness on the side of the receiver. Shame encourages the 'handout' mentality and breaks down the sense of self-worth, dignity and identity of people in the community. Shame can also turn into anger and resentment and bitterness, which sometimes lie at the core of our community's 'cancer', for which there seems to be no cure.

There is a saying that goes "once bitten, twice shy". Communities that have been disappointed in the past by researchers who made empty promises are very sceptical of being subject to and participating in action research and service learning projects, especially, when fear and anger are mixed and evoked by historical racial connotations. They do not want to feel as if they are being 'experimented on', as if they are guinea-pigs. Development research, for example, is frequently what Chambers (1983) calls extractive. The researchers extract information from people who merely act as passive reservoirs of information, with no role in designing the research agenda or in the research process. Members of communities are in such distress due to the sociological, emotional and economic challenges they have to face from day to day, that it seems to be an extra burden to them to assist the academics with their agenda as well. In our South African context we also have a divide between the uneducated poor and the educated rich. The marginalised communities consider individuals with a university degree as part of the elite of society. Some community members perceive academia with high expectations to have all the means to their disposal to 'save' the community from their misery. Other community members treat them with indignation and animosity, perceiving students and academics as part of the problem and refer to them as capitalists. These perceptions can be challenged and positively changed by the transactional and transformational role that could be played by leaders from both HEIs and NPOs.

We have found that NPOs and communities can derive value from the partnership with the HEIs. We have experienced that opportunities for networking facilitated by collaborative partnerships have improved the profile of these NPOs. The impact

VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

of the contributions and involvement from the HEIs improved the capacity of the NPOs to provide better quality services to the needy beneficiaries. The fact that our organisation has close relations with the HEIs also contributes to the higher levels of confidence that corporates and other funders display towards us. This association indicates the relevance of services and interventions provided by the NPO, due to the knowledge acquired by research and benchmarking done by HEIs.

5.2 Gatekeepers

NPOs' leaders and staff are sometimes faced with a double dose of the same challenges: their own and those of the people they serve in the community. Typically in our situation we act as gatekeepers to the community and have to coach staff and students regarding community sensitivities, use of language, and behaviours appropriate for the partnership. After orientating institutional partners and students, we have to make introductions into the community and provide continuing guidance on how to do community-based work. In addition to these roles, we demystify research among community partners and guide the process toward the articulation and understanding of the collective needs of the neighbourhood. This is achieved through university representatives and community partners who have the well-being of the community at heart. These university representatives and community partners help local organisations to participate in the partnerships as well as to increase their own capacity for learning. Community and university partners indicate that these leaders are crucial to the success of such partnerships. In our experience it is vital not only to create platforms for dialogue, like discussion forums, but to facilitate real action and interventions that will move the partnership forward. This should result in communities that participate in looking for solutions for their particular challenges with the support of the relevant HEI. It should be the goal of the partnership to move from dependency to interdependency.

6. RECIPROCITY

It is vital that the notion that everything has a currency applies regarding reciprocity. Both the third sector and HEIs have needs and challenges. Furco (2002) developed an institutional self-assessment rubric to assist higher education leaders in measuring the progress of service learning institutionalisation efforts on their campuses. One key dimension of Furco's rubric addresses the degree to which community partners are aware of campus goals for service learning. His rubric also gauges the extent to which campus and community partners are aware of each other's needs, timelines, goals and resources. HEIs might perceive societal needs as a burden and a cost

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

to their institutional success – such as distracting their human capital towards ‘irrelevant’ projects, involving financial implications (for instance travelling costs) and heightening their risk accumulation. It is also true that HEIs have commendably taken on the challenge to demonstrate social responsibility and make available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes in the commitment towards the common good. They are committed to promoting and developing social responsibility and awareness among students, and to enhancing the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes. HEIs strive to engage students in various projects and programmes that will prepare students for their future roles in society. Over the past few years our community centre has hosted students involved in service learning and community engagement in various fields of study like medicine, nursing, optometry, psychology, education, agriculture, human movement science, architecture, as well as economic and management sciences. Students are also exposed to the realities of the social and human dynamics in our communities. Addressing these societal ills does have the potential of bringing value to the HEI arena, if approached in an innovative manner.

Participation is vital for reciprocity in the relationship between the third sector and higher education. The principle of participation means inclusion, not merely in the electoral process or in endorsing decisions, but in deciding the agenda for debate and decision; it means inclusion in the processes of defining the problems to be solved and how to solve them. We witnessed instances where equipment and projects were more or less dumped at NPOs with ‘good’ intentions, but without proper consultation and support towards implementation. At a more important level, it means countering the domination and repression of positivist reason in its various manifestations, be it the state, the scientised politics, the industrial production process, or the culture industry. It thus is important to look at the underlying values in the partnership.

7. SHARED VALUES

Shared values are what engender trust and link organisations together. Shared values are not social responsibility, philanthropy, or even sustainability, but a new way to achieve societal reform, and should be at the centre and not on the periphery of what the HEIs and the third sector are doing (Porter & Kramer 2011).

Establishing collaborative relationships is not always easy, particularly when people have different backgrounds and viewpoints. However, when there is a shared basic set of values or standards, collaboration becomes easier. Both parties begin with a common understanding. Both hold the same expectations for how they will be treated and how they will treat others. Discussions begin from a shared knowledge of how

VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

problems will be addressed. When both parties hold the same values, collaboration works more effectively, relationships grow stronger and everyone benefits: the organisation, the community and the HEI.

Therefore, we need to know what our values are and keep in touch with them. These values will guide us in making the right choices and help us not to get lost along the way. Passion is only the fuel for the journey, but values guide towards the destination. Shared values create communities out of individuals. Values enable transactions to take place and bridge the intergenerational divide (Serageldin 2011). We constantly ask ourselves what we value from the opportunity of engagement and whether we can apply it. In the context of our organisation, we had to learn to ask hard questions when the benefits for the organisation and the community were not always crystal clear. Determining whether any project was really feasible and sustainable or not proved to be quite challenging. We need to be able to say “no” when we don’t want to be involved in a particular project.

We can create shared value by reconceiving the intersection between ‘performance factors’ and all sectors of society. Yet our recognition of the transformative power of shared value is still in its genesis. Realising shared value will require leaders and managers to develop new skills and knowledge – such as a far deeper appreciation of societal needs, a greater understanding of the true bases of knowledge creation and sharing, and the ability to collaborate across profit/non-profit boundaries. Governance must learn how to regulate in ways that enable shared value rather than shy away from collaboration. The concept of shared values recognises that societal needs, not just conventional economic needs, also define markets. It also recognises that societal harms or weaknesses frequently create internal costs for firms – such as wasted energy or raw materials, costly accidents, and the need for remedial training to compensate for inadequacies in education (Porter & Kramer 2011). Addressing societal harms and constraints does not necessarily raise costs for firms, because they can innovate through using new technologies, operating methods, and management approaches – and as a result increase their productivity and expand their markets. In the context of the third sector–HEI partnership, various values are important to note: trust, service, partnership, ownership and integrity.

The value of *trust* is illustrated by the notion that only through respectful, honest, loyal and healthy relationships can mutual trust be built in any partnership. Development of effective university–community partnerships in these settings requires a high degree of trust and the development of sustained relationships (Maurrasse 2001; Miron & Moely 2005; Zlotkowski 1998). Trust is the belief and confidence in the integrity, reliability and fairness of a person or organisation. Trust is an essential human value

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

that quantifies and defines our interdependence in relationships with others. Trust is a choice we make toward someone when we are convinced that they have either earned our confidence or are by some other means worthy of it. It is difficult to acquire, and when fractured even harder to redeem, so perhaps the lessons of trust are not how to earn it, but what it takes to keep it. And perhaps the greatest value of trust is not the accomplishments we make with it, but rather what trust accomplishes in us in our quest to become people who are worthy of receiving it.

The value of service is illustrated in the statement: 'Strive to do things right the first time and value all clients and partners'. This value is applicable to the service that both the HEIs and the third sector are rendering to the greater good of our society.

The value of *partnership* has been amply alluded to in this chapter. Society is a network of relationships and initiatives must be based on sustainable, structured partnerships among institutions and organisations. It requires that any conflict should be handled appropriately and be quickly resolved to enhance overall effectiveness. Both parties should seek to maximise individual and collective wins. We were afforded an opportunity to travel abroad for networking, whilst doing research and fact-finding with the HEI. Various other fruitful partnerships were formed during this trip.

Ownership is a value that is important in the community setting. It is imperative for communities to be involved in decision making and in taking responsibility for their own decisions. Furthermore, communities should own the outcome and do whatever it takes to get there, by showing a determination to deliver and never giving up, despite obstacles. They should also be encouraged to take the initiative, not wait to be asked or told, but to identify what needs to be done. This value is also contrary to the rising phenomenon of a false sense of entitlement where communities believe they are entitled to have whatever they want when they want it, without regard to what is fair or reasonable to others.

Finally, the value of *integrity* lies in always knowing what the right thing to do is, and then doing it; striving to maintain the highest ethical standards of conduct, and pursuing and advancing professional responsibility in everything we do. We saw this in action when a Fulbright student was placed at our community centre via the HEI, and his involvement led to the US Embassy funding a major initiative in the community, which led to other projects as well.

8. CONCLUSION

We experienced our partnership with the university positively and pleasantly surprising as we journeyed together through uncertainty, excitement and, increasingly, fulfilment.

VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

As Henry Ford once said: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success” (Managed Integrity Evaluation 2013). The question can then be asked: How do we keep working together?

We refer to the quotes in the introduction to this chapter: “It takes two to tango” and “any coin has two sides”.

The tango

In couple dancing, there are two roles: that of the leader and that of the follower. The leader, who is traditionally the man, decides what steps to do, shows the follower what to do via body cues, navigates around the room, and usually moves forward in a counterclockwise direction around the dance floor. The follower, traditionally the woman, allows the leader to direct the couple around the room, performing the steps requested by the leader.

The tango is a couple dance in which the two people remain facing in a circular embrace during the entire dance. It consists of walking steps, turning combinations and footplay (contact between the feet and legs of the couple). Although there are many styles of tango, the space is so limited in most dance clubs that usually people dance a body-to-body style with small steps, many short turns, rock steps and pauses.

Partner connection is the heart of the tango. It is probably the biggest source of enjoyment in this dance. Good partner connection opens the way to an unlimited evolution of this dance, while inefficient partner connection creates some of the biggest corruptions of it. Leading and following are the basis of the language of tango. Good leading and good following keep this dance honest and spontaneous. Transcending leading and following is possible at higher levels of mastery.

Closeness of the connection and individual freedom of movement may at first appear to be in conflict with each other, but ultimately turn out to serve each other. Closeness of the embrace may be sacrificed for training purposes, but is ultimately a necessary attribute of evolved tango dancing. The main challenge in partner connection is to unite as fully as possible with the partner, while at the same time keeping the freedom and the integrity of individual body movement.

Good partner connection progresses in the direction of effortless. Good partner connection is balanced. Any leaning on or pushing against each other is a gross (and unfortunately all too frequent) corruption of the dance. Good connection has a quality of stillness. Good partner connection is synchronised, which means that the partners’ rhythms and transfers of weight are attuned to each other (Wartluft 2002).

CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

Bringle, Officer, Grim and Hatcher (2009) refer to relationships as follows:

We posit that relationships become partnerships as their interactions develop closeness. Closeness ranges from unaware through transformational and is a function of three components: frequency of interaction, diversity of activities that are the basis of the interactions, and strength of influence on the other person's behavior, decisions, plans, and goals.

We experienced how our staff, the volunteers, the children at the centre, their parents and siblings in the community, students and staff from the university were reciprocally enabled by sharing knowledge and values within partnerships where both unity and personal freedom were respected.

Both sides of the coin

As both sides of any coin are equally important, the same can be said when each partner plays an equally important role to ensure reciprocity. The quality of equity exists, even when the inputs and outcomes are unequal, to the degree that outcomes are perceived as proportionate to inputs and those ratios are similar. Equitable relationships are also more satisfying relationships (Hatfield, Utne & Traupmann 1979). Morton (1995:28) suggests that relationships with high levels of integrity possess deeply held, internally coherent values, match means and ends, describe a primary way of interpreting and relating to the world, offer a way of defining problems and solutions, and suggest a vision of what a transformed world might look like.

The principle of shared values involves creating benefit in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges. We suggest that we could benefit from revisiting our values, and having a thorough knowledge and understanding of values in order to apply them effectively. Higher education institutions and the third sector must reconnect their success with social progress. We believe that this can give rise to the next major rejuvenation of social reform.

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VIEWS FROM INSIDE A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

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CHAPTER 7 • KAARS & KAARS

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