Convergent Aims of Collaborative Partnership in a Sustainable Community Service Organisation to Empower Underprivileged Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to address the issue: to what extents do different collaborative partners in a sustainable community service organisation have similar aims? The stakeholders involved in this study including the service organisation (key stakeholder), corporate and government bodies, non-governmental organisations, orphanage administrators, and volunteers. Interviews with the selected participants from each group of the stakeholders were conducted to gain the understanding regarding what they considered as their aim or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with the service organisation. The findings also included a review of the available documents. Based on the responses, this paper discusses various perspectives of the stakeholders which do not provide an agreement across all stakeholders on what they considered as their aims or focus of collaboration but they intersected with the key stakeholder's aims. This challenges the notion that the partners in a collaborative partnership setting have to develop and be clear of the common aim of the collaborative partnership prior to collaboration. This case study was done in Malaysia within the context of a particular community service organisation for children. Future research may be conducted on the similar issue in different contexts.

Keywords: aim, collaborative partnership, sustainability, community service, community service organisation

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Introduction and Background of a Case Study

Community service organisation in this study has been set up as a non-governmental organisation (NGO). For the NGOs, collaborative partnership can be one of the mechanisms to provide services previously undertaken by the state. Yamamoto (1995) views that through collaborative activities civil societal associations are able to nurture opportunities for individuals to pursue their specific interests and societal and institutional linkages to enable community building. Moreover, inherent within the notion of civil society is the principle of civic virtue and an emphasis on rational, co-operative and moral interactions, both among the members of a society and between them and their government (Weiss & Hassan, 2003).

CyberCare, a Malaysian based community service organisation has initiated community collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders to serve the children in orphanages (also being referred as underprivileged children) through numerous programmes and activities to connect the orphanages to their aims and to include them alongside the ICT development in Malaysia since 1998. This site is selected based on its ability to sustain for twelve years (when the research was undertaken in 2010) which made it significant to study about the sustainability aspects of the collaborative partnership. Stakeholders, programmes and activities are taken into account to be studied as they make up the whole of this site. The stakeholders involved in the study of this collaborative partnership will be detailed out in the method section.

Among the programmes and activities of CyberCare are Education Excellence Programme (EEP) and Care4U. EEP refers to the programme to help the children in orphanages to reach their highest level of education by rewarding the children for every distinction achieved in the local government examinations including Primary School Assessment (*Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* – UPSR), Lower Secondary Assessment (*Penilaian Menengah Rendah* – PMR), Malaysia Certificate of Education (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* – SPM), and Higher School Certificate (*Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* – STPM) (CyberCare, 2011). The fund was allocated by Microsoft Malaysia, the key corporate partner at the time, through its Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award (MUPSA). MUPSA was formerly known as Microsoft Foundation Campaign Education Excellence Programme aimed to enable recipients to further their formal education beyond secondary level into university (Microsoft Press Release, 2005). Another programme involving university students is that of Care4U, which started in 2007. Under the Care4U programme, Psychology students from a private university are recruited as interns in CyberCare for a period of fourteen weeks to complete their given assignment. During the internship, the students are trained to be personal trainers and coaches by the professional life coach who is partnering with CyberCare. These interns then coach children in their selected orphanages in life skills, and ICT skills, and guide the children through the completion of the community service project (CSP) of their choice. This coaching or training method is based on the *Mengecapi Aspirasi Diri* - Living My Aspirations - (MAD*)* curriculum, which was first developed in 2008 by the interns from this programme. It was developed to provide a hands-on coaching to interns in particular. At the time of my fieldwork, CyberCare has had recruited five batches of university students for the internships. This is one of the programmes that was still active and seemed to receive high priority from CyberCare and its partners at the time of my fieldwork.

This article is a part of a twelve-month case study research which was conducted to investigate the issue of sustaining collaborative partnership of multiple-stakeholders in the context of community service organisation. The main focus of this article is to explore to what extent do different partners in longstanding collaborative partnerships have similar

aims? This study gained an understanding of the participants from each group of stakeholders regarding what they considered as their aim or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with CyberCare. This study also seeks to understand the stakeholders' perspectives on agreement, and whether it needs to be forged from the start or it can be done along the way. The continuing section review the literature which relevant to the study.

Definition of Collaborative Partnership

In terms of defining collaborative partnership, Gottlieb, Feeley, & Dalton's (2005) book, *The collaborative partnership approach to care: a delicate balance* can serve as one of the examples of collaborative partnership in human service which is applicable to community service. In their definition, they refer to the relationship as a partnership and the way of working together as collaborative. This account of partnership is similar to how Carnwell & Carson's (2008) distinguishes between the term "partnership" as meaning "*what something is*," and "collaborate or to work together in a joined-up way" as "*what one does.*" Combining the terms together, Carnwell & Carson (2008: 16) describe collaboration as the verb refers to "*what we do when we engage successfully in a partnership*," in which "*partnership being the noun.*" Gottlieb, Feeley, & Dalton (2005) and Carnwell & Carson (2008) view collaboration as a way of working together which include both people and organisations as the key actors.

Adapting the definitions to my study, I use both terms partnership and collaboration together to include both relationship and the way of working together. The term "relationship" in my study refers to the groups of stakeholders including individuals and organisations that come together to form a partnership, while the way of working together involves how they plan and implement the programmes. However, I do not differentiate between partnership and collaboration based on contract or agreement. The next section reviews about the aim, goal, objective, or focus (will be used interchangeably in this article) and agreement of forming partnerships.

Reaching Common Aims and Agreement

Various examples in the literature emphasise the importance of reaching agreement on common aims prior to the setup of partnership and collaboration. For examples, Frank & Smith (2006), and Carroll & Steane (2000) require the partners to have agreement between actors to do something. Wildavsky (1986: 242) also presumes the partners "*to have agreed on the project, a rough outline, and division of labour*" as well as motive prior to collaborating. Melaville et al. (1996) assert the need to establish common goals and mutual agreement to share power and resources to achieve the goals prior to collaboration.

What kind of agreement is necessary? Frank & Smith (2006) clarify their view that partnerships require some official or formal agreement. They assert that the agreement does not have to satisfy legal requirements, but that it is enough to ensure that all parties involved know what the partnership is all about: who is doing what, and what outcomes are expected (Frank & Smith, 2006). In contrast, Carroll & Steane (2000) are more rigid in their expectations of agreement. They believe that agreement is very important as the basic terms of agreement are one of the essential forces influencing the partners' beliefs about what should constitute a partnership. They argue that the agreement also determines the norms of behaviour that influence how the partners should behave within the process.

However, in practice, the varying values and interests held by different people or/and organisations may create difficulties in the process of attaining agreement on the goals of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). Many partnerships have reached agreement on the broad aims but the partners may not have the same understanding of the meaning of the goals due to the lack of

details. This lack of clarity may raise the perception of other partners having a "hidden" agenda (McQuaid, 2000). Besides that, Carroll & Steane (2000) do not exclude the fact that when the agreement is practically no longer adequate, the terms of agreement can be modified or the agreement is terminated with a new one coming into effect.

In a theme-based collaborative advantage theory, Huxham & Vangen (2005; 2008) and Vangen & Huxham (2014) categorised the aims as collaborative, organisational, and individual aims. This theme-based collaborative advantage theory is paradoxical in nature and structured around collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Vangen & Huxham, 2014). The advantage of collaboration is assumed when the organisations come together, and it may seem that the stakeholders only need to be concerned with the collaborative joint aims. In fact, the organisations also bring with them different reasons for involvement as well as the aims of individuals within the organisations. These varying aims can prevent agreement as they may cause confusion, misunderstanding, and conflicts of interest. Huxham & Vangen (2008: 30) summarise this conflict as "*We must have common aims but we cannot agree on them.*"

This notion is parallel to that of Wood & Gray (1991) who suggest that both common and differing interests between stakeholders may exist at the start of a collaborative venture, but as the collaboration proceeds, the interests may change or be redefined. Wildavsky (1986: 240) claims that "*the feasibility of the collaborative effort need not be evident from the start but may emerge over time,*" and Thomson & Perry (2006: 27) suggest that "*forging commonalities out of differences can yield highly satisfying results*" further support the suggestion. Wildavsky (1986) explains that collaboration may start with one initial interest in something, communicated to others which later leads to collaborative work. Thomson & Perry (2006) suggest that collaboration starts with differences and progress through negotiation process, and the ability of collaborators to reconcile their self-interest and collective interests can contribute to better collaboration. However, it may challenge some debates that required collaborators to agree on common aims prior to partnership or collaboration.

The reviewed of the literature demonstrates that the scholars show disagreement over the need to have a clear joint aim from the initial stage of the collaborative partnership or to let it develop along the progress. The scholars also offered a different stance on what the details and influence of agreement have on the partnership relationships. My research explores what has initially driven the stakeholders into partnership and how different stakeholders regard their aims in participating in this collaborative partnership. This study also seeks to understand the stakeholders' perspectives on agreement, and whether it needs to be forged from the start or if it can be done along the way.

Methodology

This qualitative case study was done in Malaysia within the context of a particular community service organisation for children. Creswell (2007: 122) mentions that a researcher can include the site(s) which is a bounded system, "*such as programmes, events, processes, activities, individual or several individuals.*" For my study, I chose CyberCare, an NGO, focusing in community service aiming to improve the life of the children in orphanages through the mechanism of collaborative partnership between various stakeholders.

The findings of this study are based on the data from the member-checked interviews with multiple-stakeholders, and the review of available documents, mainly newspaper articles and press releases. The objective of the interviews is to get varied perspectives from multiple-stakeholders from their knowledge and experiences working with CyberCare. Overall, the

participants selected for interviews included five CyberCare, five government, four corporate, two other NGO, nine volunteer, and nine orphanage administrator representatives (refer Appendix 1).

Interviews with the selected participants from each group of the stakeholders were conducted to gain the understanding regarding what they considered as their aim, goal, objective or focus in carrying out their collaborative efforts with the service organisation. Findings from the interviews were compared to the findings from documents reviewed, and later placed alongside the findings of the previous studies from the literature review in the discussions. The next section begins the findings of this study.

Convergent Aims in Longstanding Collaborative Partnerships

The overarching finding around aims in a sustainable collaborative partnership is that most stakeholders came into partnership with different objectives but they intersected at some point with CyberCare's objectives. For example, the service organisations' main objective was to empower children in orphanages which were also shared by the volunteers and orphanage administrators. The government's aim was to carry out its national agenda with emphasise on ICT; corporations' aims to pursue their corporate focus; and NGOs' aims to carry out their organisations' interests. On the whole, orphanage administrators provided child participants (the target community) for the programmes and they welcomed volunteers to help their children.

Based on the responses, the research findings discussed the various perspectives of the stakeholders and similarities and differences between their views. Responses have been organised around participants' comments on CyberCare's objectives, merging objectives between stakeholders, perceived common aim, organisation focus, and government agenda as perceived collaborative partnership objectives, aims or focus.

Service Organisation Objective as Collaborative Partnership Objective

The findings showed that the majority of participants from the groups of service organisation, orphanage administrator, and volunteer regarded CyberCare's aims as the aims they wanted to achieve in working together. All five participants from the service organisation interviewed shared the same view on the objective of the collaboration, which was to improve the lives of children in orphanages. They normally referred to the programmes that they participated in. For instance, SY-SO mentioned:

> Actually at the end of the day, for CyberCare, it's voiced (it comes) down to the improvement of the children basically on the practice. Even like Care4U project, for the past two or three times, it's about believing in themselves …

Here, SY-SO referred to the final outcome of the programmes, emphasising the aim of CyberCare to give positive impact on the self-development of the children through collaborative programmes. In addition, YW-SO looked at the ideal change for children, as embedded in the vision of the organisation, "*to let the children dream and to realise their dreams.*" He justified what he was doing with CyberCare at the moment in relation to the results that he wished to achieve in the long-term:

> Ideally, CyberCare would like to see a future where there are no orphans. That means we would not like to see homes being formed artificially to house displaced children or to house single parented children or to house orphans. I like to see a future where all children will have a home, a real home. This means that if anyone is to be orphaned, he will be adopted into another home. That will be the idea …

Instead of envisioning a long lasting existence, YW-SO appeared to anticipate the end of their collaborative efforts once this long-term aim had been achieved. This will possibly happen when orphanage no longer exists because in the current structure, CyberCare's main role is to link orphanages with other stakeholders.

Similar to the view of the service organisation, all of the orphanage administrators referred to CyberCare's focus when they discussed the objective of the collaborative partnership. They generally showed an understanding of what the collaborators did to bring awareness and improve the lives of the children in orphanages. An interesting finding emerged from an interview in which SLO-OA, the orphanage administrator from Orphanage4 where she showed her support for the objective of CyberCare programmes. She believed that the orphanage children who were normally viewed as "*underprivileged*" because they were being placed under the care of the institutions could become "*privileged*" children by offering them more opportunities to get involved with "*good programmes*" like CyberCare programmes. As CyberCare envisioned, the orphanages regarded the opportunities provided by programmes with "*good objectives*" as ways to develop the children in orphanages and improve their living condition. Other orphanage administrators like P-OA from Orphanage2 also shared a similar perspective, but were not as certain as SLO-OA when she based it more on her assumption. Even though both participants (SLO-OA and P-OA) showed different degrees of certainty, both assumed that there was something good in CyberCare's objectives based on the programmes that CyberCare has done with the children at their orphanages. The differences from the service organisation's view can be seen in the way both stakeholders view the functions of orphanages. While CyberCare members portrayed their dissatisfaction with the orphanage structure, the administrators perceived it as providing a better place for child development, better perhaps, because of the opportunities provided by projects like CyberCare, even than some "ordinary" homes.

Similar to the service organisation and orphanage administrators, most of the volunteers interviewed related the objective of the collaborative partnership to the vision and mission of CyberCare which says "*every child has the right to dream, and every child has the right to fulfil their dreams*." A majority of volunteers also linked the collaborative objective to the objectives of particular programmes of CyberCare. However, very few volunteers clearly showed their knowledge about partnerships in CyberCare, and those who did were mostly senior volunteers who had gone through the internship programmes earlier.

Despite CyberCare's main intention to equip the children with both self-development and ICT skills, and instil their awareness to contribute to the community, what was more apparent to the orphanage administrators was the objective of changing the children's sense of self-esteem through the programmes. In contrast, the volunteer group seemed to describe CyberCare's aims holistically, to include all aspects of personal development, ICT skills, and community service aspects as in the Care4U programme. Such differences may be due to the degree of involvement of the stakeholders with the children's programmes. Volunteers who have gained both theoretical understanding from the curriculum, and practical understanding from their involvement in the implementation of the programme from the beginning until its completion may be able to provide a wider interpretation of CyberCare's objective compared to the orphanage administrator group who just based their findings on what they had been informed of, and their distant observations. Nevertheless, all three stakeholders discussed here seemed to value child participation for empowerment by explicitly mentioning "*improving children's personal development*" and "*self-esteem*," "*giving rights to children to achieve their dreams*," and "*encouraging children's participation*" as CyberCare's related objective. Besides recognising CyberCare's aim as a collaborative partnership objective,

some stakeholders were also aware of the differences between various partners, as discussed in the following subsection.

Forging Commonalities out of Differences as a Collaborative Partnership Objective

Some of the stakeholders discussed differing objectives held by various stakeholders. In dealing with these various objectives, CyberCare showed their tolerance of different views by trying to unite all objectives of the partners in collaboration. One of the corporate stakeholders, and a couple of volunteers also seemed to believe that a collaborative partnership objective can be achieved by forging commonalities out of differences. These will be shown in the following discussion.

Besides emphasising the aim of CyberCare itself, YW-SO at the same time realised that the partners in the collaboration may have different objectives to CyberCare, "*So, the collaborative partnership in other words will be trying to marry the objectives of the corporate sponsors, right, the partners, and us*." Here, the objective of the collaborative partnership can be viewed as the objective of both CyberCare and the other stakeholders, which are viewed by YW-SO as being closely linked. This is in contrast to the other two corporate stakeholder (CJ-Corp and ML-Corp) perspectives, which focus on the needs of their own individual organisations, as will be discussed in the next subsection.

SN-Corp from LifeWorks perceived the collaborative partnership objective through a macro lens. She recognised the diverse values and objectives of different stakeholders in the collaborative partnership that they have in CyberCare, but did not believe that this prevented them from continuing their collaborative work under one objective of CyberCare. SN-Corp clarified:

> I guess if you look at the context, they all have got different values and objectives but do they come together to meet the one objective that CyberCare wants to achieve? Yes! They do that, and they work very nicely in that way.

Here, SN-Corp view can be categorised as the individual organisation objective and a collaborative partnership objective they shared in common. However, other corporate stakeholders in my study did not appear to have similar agreement on what leads to satisfactory outcomes.

What is also interesting in SN-Corp's view is that, besides emphasising the commonality they shared, she also valued the sharing of differences. SN-Corp further explained how various partners can work with their differences:

> … It is like, "Okay, let us see what we can do or create, let's see what we can do differently." I bring some new ideas, and we share and figure out what we can create and do differently, this is the most important.

Similar to SN-Corp, two volunteer participants who have been coached by YW-SO and SN-Corp in the recent Care4U programme, related the focus of the collaborative partnership to what the founder of CyberCare, YW-SO and his partner, SN-Corp from LifeWorks, shared and wanted to do. For instance, RN-Vol looked at how the two can complement their foci:

> … She's (SN-Corp) from the coaching line and Mr. YW-SO is from the technology line. So they have the same mission, they have the same vision to contribute back to the society with the children. So they collaborate and use their expertise to contribute to society.

These extracts showed that despite all of the members in the service organisation and volunteer groups' agreement on the objective of CyberCare to be the objective of their collaborative partnership, they were aware of the potential differences, but those were the differences they could deal with. YW-SO simply mentioned that the different objectives will be combined but did not specify how it can be done. However, both SN-Corp and the volunteers provided clearer discussion on how the differences that the two partners have can be combined to work for what CyberCare aimed for. While SN-Corp emphasis combining different ways to achieve their aims, the volunteers' emphasis combining different types of expertise to achieve the same vision.

Corporate Focus as Being in Common with the Aim of the Service Organisation

This section discusses the corporations' perspectives of what was in common between their own organisations' aims and CyberCare. The analysis of the corporate statements in the media showed that these stakeholders appeared to regard their aims as in common with CyberCare's objective. For example, the newspaper article (Ching, 1999) reports Benedict Lee, the managing director of Microsoft Malaysia as saying, "*CyberCare mission is absolutely in tune with our own thinking and mission and we are proud to be part of it*."

In contrast to SN-Corp, who emphasised achieving CyberCare's aim out of differences, the analyses of the available documents showed that the partnerships with other corporate partners, as with Microsoft, were being set up with the common objectives and beliefs between the key corporate stakeholders and service organisation. The findings showed that the corporations were looking for a partner that can fit with the focus of the programme of the corporations. However, this is only based on the statement in public documents.

As the founding corporate sponsor to CyberCare, it was no surprise to find out that Microsoft, through its Microsoft Foundation Campaign, shared common objectives and beliefs with CyberCare. The shared beliefs within the collaborative partnership between Microsoft and CyberCare were acknowledged by Bill Gates in his speech during a brief interaction session with children during his visit to the country. He stated as follows:

> CyberCare and Microsoft share a common belief that every individual, regardless of their economic, religious, and cultural background, be empowered with IT skills and knowledge to excel in life by having access to learning tools, such as the Internet (Microsoft, 2000).

The emphasis on the word "*excel*" here shows a different set of language to "*dreams*" which may illustrate a more skills-based aspiration. It stressed on an achievement as opposed to a process based focus. Besides this, the underlying objective of the Microsoft Foundation Campaign itself was to let people know that protecting intellectual property rights will bring benefits to the community as Microsoft was returning a portion of anti-piracy settlements and damages to the communities in which it operates via charitable organisations (Ching, 1999). Another corporate partner, Samsung, awarded the grant through its DigitAll Hope programme for CyberCare to continue its collaborative work aimed at "*enriching the lives of the underprivileged through technology and technological advancement*" (Yoon, 2005). This statement's use of "*enriching*" is an interesting choice of word, as it literally points towards money as well as figuratively implying other things. It also showed a slightly different emphasis here as Microsoft emphasised providing information access through the usage of technology while Samsung stressed how technological advances can better contribute to children's lives.

The findings, mainly from newspaper articles and press releases, showed that the majority of corporate participants relate their collaborative objective in the partnership with

CyberCare with the ways they wanted to pursue their collaborative works. Overall, Microsoft was the only company that really highlighted both firm-serving (combating anti-piracy) and public serving (contributing to community) motives. The other corporate partners appeared to place greater emphasis on their public-serving motives, demonstrated in the Samsung statement of aim above. However, the findings could not confirm whether that seeming transparency contributed to the Microsoft long-term partnership with CyberCare.

Partner Organisation Focus as Collaborative Partnership Objective

While the analysis from the available documents showed that the corporate stakeholders clearly emphasised common aim between partners, interviews with recent corporate participants provided different views. When asked about the objective of their collaborative partnership with CyberCare, the two corporate partners, PIKOM and Accenture merely linked the partnership with their own programme needs or corporate objectives. For example, CJ-Corp from PIKOM suggests that CyberCare was brought into partnership to help PIKOM to achieve its own aim in MAINPC project which is *"to bring the ICT credibility to the poor and the underprivileged."* This shows that CyberCare was important at that time to accommodate the needs of the corporation. In this kind of relationship, it seems likely that the collaboration continues as long as the need continues, with both partners in need of each other. ML-Corp from Accenture viewed that the change in corporate objective (e.g. from child focus to environmental focus) may also lead to a change of partners.

These two corporate participants show that partners came to have different objectives. Moreover, their responses reveal different findings from the statements of different corporate stakeholders in the available documents. What is apparent here was that the stakeholders who emphasised more on achieving their own corporate objectives were in partnership with CyberCare for a shorter duration, compared to the corporate stakeholders who make explicit their common aims with CyberCare.

The partners' emphasis on their own organisations' foci could also be seen from the interviews with NGO participants. When describing the objective of their collaborative partnership, both views of NGOs are relative to the focus area of their organisations' movements. SL-NGO looked at how CyberCare was functioning as a part of the Lions Club and emphasised community inclusion in the process. SL-NGO made it clear that the aim of the club's partnership with CyberCare was to bring its expertise and available resources to work together to raise funds and invite community participation rather than to supply direct monetary assistance. The connection of the collaborative partnership objective to the organisation's movement can also be seen from JF-NGO who leads an environmental organisation. He regarded the objective of the specific Community Service Project (Bamboo Planting) to preserve the environment as the collaborative partnership objective. JF-NGO also acknowledged the uniqueness of the programme which attracted him lay in the element of research during the planning, where both interns and children did some research before they decided to plant bamboo.

These findings showed that both corporate and NGO stakeholders emphasised the importance of the collaborative partnership to carry out the aim of the corporations or to match with the organisations' movements. This condition may link to what they can do with their available resources, and expertise. The final subsection will look at the perceptions of the government officials regarding what constitutes the objectives of government partnership with multiple stakeholders.

Collaborative Partnerships' Objectives as Set by Government

All government stakeholders insisted that the partners adopt a government agenda in carrying out their collaborative efforts. RA-Gov mentioned the purpose of the collaborative partnership in which government funded the piloted programme was used to justify future budgets and programmes plan based on the piloted project. KJ-Gov emphasised that the grant required the partners to carry out the long-term government agenda which is the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA). He explained that the Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS) is used to carry out the agenda by covering 70% of the project cost. In return, the promoter has to show commitment by having good vision and noble project with good actors. KJ-Gov further stressed that this structure will benefit both promoter and the community.

The government through DAGS was meant to encourage more community participation with the provided fund, and created an avenue for the community to work with the corporation. The NITA aims for Malaysia, eventually, to develop into a values-based knowledge society where physical development will go alongside spiritual development by the year 2020. This aim supported government officials' emphasis on "*tripartite partnership*" (government, corporation, and community) in DAGS model as a working structure of this collaborative partnership.

In the implementation, KJ-Gov who referred to the government through DAGS as the "second party" to the agreement emphasised two important criteria of DAGS: the requirement for the presenter of the project as the "first party" to be a promoter, and requirement for the partnership to bring the partners as the "third party" in the projects during the presentation. In the case of CyberCare, he referred the "third party" to the orphanage community. He repeatedly mentioned that the "*government required the partnership to include third party participation from the design stage.*" KJ-Gov considered the "third party" to be represented by the managers, orphanage administrators, or the volunteers during the project proposal presentation.

This implementation model was what KJ-Gov considered to be a uniquely new effective design which he considered different from common government funding practices in Malaysia at the time. He believed this multiparty, participatory structure was a way of promoting transparency and accountability. Participants of the service organisation agreed with KJ-Gov's analysis. MC-SO acknowledged that the transparency in their collaborative structure resulted from the monitoring process required by the government, as also discussed by the government officials.

Government participants in this collaboration seemed to imply control in various situations. For example, KJ-Gov's explanation also showed that, CyberCare was being set up by the community which involved a bottom-up approach and process where the initiation began from the community members. However, the financial management during the award period was controlled by the government which involved top-down process in which the government allocated the fund under certain terms and conditions and having its officials to monitor the usage. These findings will be discussed and concluded in the following section.

Discussion and Conclusion

It has been argued that partners have to be clear about the aims of joint working if they wish to execute any strategy or policy. Much of the literature stresses the importance of partners reaching agreement on common aims prior to setting up of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Gottlieb, Feeley, & Dalton, 2005; Melaville et al., 1996; Wildavsky, 1986). However, the findings of this research show that merging different aims

rather than reaching agreement on common aims was more practical in carrying out and sustaining the collaborative efforts.

This case study supports the observation that in practice, the different values and interests held by different people and/or organisations create difficulties in the process of attaining agreement on the goals of partnership and collaboration (Frank & Smith, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2008; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Walsh & Meldon, 2004). The findings of this study support the notion that both common and differing interests between stakeholders exist at the start of a collaborative venture. These common and differing interests may be changed or redefined as the collaboration proceeds (Wood & Gray, 1991). A few cases in this collaborative partnership indicated where the partners had common interests in the beginning, but realised they had differences later on.

As Huxham (2003) and Huxham & Vangen (2000; 2008) suggest in their discussion of practices of partnership, the findings of this study showed that the stakeholders did not wait for total consensus on aims before starting their collaborative programmes. This research also showed that rather than grieving over their different aims, stakeholders in this partnership developed their understanding, and found ways to adapt to the differences. In fact they focused on what they could work on with the resources that they had at the time.

In contrast to Vangen & Huxham (2014), Huxham & Vangen (2005; 2008), and Huxham (2003) suggestions for the collaborators to identify their individual, organisational and collaborative aims in order to focus on aligning their collaborative aims, the partners in this partnership could not identify such three types of aims clearly. Also, they could not mention clearly whose aim is considered as the collaborative aim. Different stakeholders demonstrate different views when describing their collaborative aim. In the context of my study, what made the partners successfully carry out their collaborative programmes was not mainly their clear understanding of different types of aims but what they can do with what they have, and what they aim for. For example, at the time when the corporations have their corporate responsibility fund allocation that can be used to support CyberCare's programmes, they collaborated but when their focus changed and was not relevant with CyberCare's cause, they ceased to collaborate. The active relationship in this collaborative partnership setting appears to be based more on a dyadic interaction between CyberCare and one partner rather than all partners coming together to the table.

Despite the findings from the available documents showing that the corporation which is reported to have common aims with CyberCare demonstrated as CyberCare's long-term partner, it is hard to conclude that having common aims contributes to sustainable collaborative partnership. One of the NGO stakeholders (SL-NGO), for example, who regarded his organisation's focus as the aim of joint working also had a long-term relationship with CyberCare.

This study demonstrates that CyberCare is the key partner that kept this collaborative partnership moving. Regardless of these diverse aims, the findings indicate that as long as the key player can adapt and merge these aims together, the collaborative partnership efforts will be sustained.

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Appendix: Summary characteristic of the 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
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
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	JF-NGO	Kota Damansara Friends	Community Service Project
NGO	SL-NGO	The Lions Club	CyberCare patron
Volunteer	*YY-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	*YS-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	*YYi-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	YLM & Care4U batch 3
Volunteer	KS-Vol	Ex-intern & current volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 4
Volunteer	MG-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5

Volunteer	PQ-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	RN-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	DP-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
Volunteer	J-Vol	Current intern & volunteer	Care4U Programme batch 5
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