Chapter 13

Public–Private Partnerships (P3s) between Businesses and Adult Education Providers

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ABSTRACT

This chapter defines and examines public private partnerships, often referred to as P3s, between the business sector and education sector. In particular, the focus is on economic and workforce development benefits that ensure the successful connection of these partnerships and the added incentives that aid adult learners in developing new talent and provide opportunities for different career paths. Best practices are discussed through a literature review and information from partnerships that have taken place throughout the United States. Recommendations for future trends and future research are offered.

INTRODUCTION

Trends in adult education have included public private partnerships between businesses and the education sector over the past three decades in order to create a skilled workforce and economic competitiveness throughout the United States. These partnerships have helped adult learners, businesses, education institutions, and communities build their knowledge to increase the United States' competitiveness in a world of globalization and the era of technology. However, they have not come without sacrifice, hard work, and effective leadership.

Due to the downturn in today's economy, the current workforce must develop advanced language skills, technological literacy, and excellent communication skills in order to obtain and maintain jobs. Therefore, educational institutions can enhance their programs for adult learners by partnering and collaborating with local businesses and seeking community involvement. The private

sector, as well as community agencies, is critical in these partnerships because it offers the talent and knowledge of business leaders, managers, and personnel that are equipped to help schools prepare students for the changes taking place in today's workforce (Sanders, 2003).

This chapter will discuss the definitions of key terms such as public-private partnerships, social capital, adult education, collaboration, economic development, and workforce development. It will examine different methods for building innovative partnerships that have successful and sustainable outcomes. Also included are best practices for building these partnerships including continuous and open communication, gathering input from various stakeholders, short and long term planning, financing, determining clear goals and objectives as well as student outcomes, co-creating a shared mission, and implementation and evaluation of the partnership. In discussing several examples of public private partnerships, key trends in adult education and collaboration will be examined. Strengths and weaknesses of these partnerships will be discussed in order to help future business and educational institution leaders create sustainable partnerships. Another focus of this chapter will be on economic and workforce development benefits that ensue from public private partnerships and incentives for adult learners to develop new talent and gain access to opportunities for different career paths.

Key trends in public private partnerships and adult education will be highlighted, including innovative learning, the age of technology, globalization needs, and lifelong learning for continuous change. It is important for leaders across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to understand these trends and be able to create successful collaborations in order to enhance local and national economic development and workforce development in order to be competitive in our global society. Finally, future trends and recommendations for public private partnerships will be provided.

BACKGROUND

Adult Education and Learning

Adult learners have become the focus of the new era of global economies and information society. This community of learners and those involved in adult education must focus their efforts on the needs and principles of adult learning in order to establish successful programs and the partnerships that create them. According to Malcolm Knowles (1989), principles of adult learning include autonomous and self directed learning, using the foundation of life experiences and knowledge, understanding that adults are goal oriented, relevancy oriented, and practical, and believing that adults need to be shown respect throughout their learning process. Furthermore, sources for motivating adult learners include social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, personal advancement, stimulation, and cognitive interest (Lieb, 1991). These aspects of motivation have led many adult education institutions to collaborate with the private sector in order to develop innovative and diverse programs.

The adult learning community is focused on lifelong learning in today's society to better themselves and their communities. According to the World Bank (2003), "lifelong learning is education for the knowledge economy," (as cited in Kasworm, 2011, p. 104). The knowledge economy is being driven by an increase in knowledge through technology, the idea of knowledge as a commodity for economic development, and the increase in globalization in technology and economic activities (Kasworm, 2011). Critical to this movement is continuing education activities and on the job training. In 2007, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development released survey results stating that within the 12 months of that year, thirty- five percent of the populations in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and the United States participated in some type of job related continuing education and training (as cited

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