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PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS FAITH AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS AS ENABLING FACTORS IN THE FUNCTIONING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS IN THE THIRD SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The religious faith factor in faith-based non-profit organisations plays a critical role in the motivation of an organisation, and in enabling the organisation to help community members by providing much needed social services to them and by assisting communities in developing in various ways. These non-profit organisations rely mainly on their religious faith in the management and decision making of their organisations, and they often struggle to maintain healthy, balanced functionality and sustainability.

This chapter seeks to explore the religious faith factor as an enabling aspect in the functioning and sustainability of third sector organisations, in particular the faith-based non-profit organisations, by initiating a dialogue to gain new perspectives on the topic. While respecting the religious faith foundation and values of faith-based non-profit organisations, the overall goal is to enhance the opportunities for reciprocal partnerships with higher education and other training institutions which can assist these organisations by sharing knowledge about appropriate management skills and governance practices.

It is argued that both religious faith, on the one hand, and management skills and knowledge provided by higher education and other training institutions, on the other, should guide faith-based organisations of the third sector in order for these organisations to be fully functional and sustainable.

CHAPTER 6 • HELLMUTH**1. INTRODUCTION**

Religion plays a significant role in third sector faith-based non-profit organisations (NPOs), but a question is sometimes raised about how well they are managed and governed (Fernando & Jackson 2006:23).

NPOs that are mainly faith-based and mission- and ministry-focused rely heavily on their religious faith to manage and govern their organisations (Bor & Jones-Eversley 2013:1). Religious faith is understood as the need which human beings have to make contact with a spiritual power beyond themselves, in which they find their strength, comfort and passion. 'Non-profit organisation', however, is a very broad term to denote different organisations providing a service to the community. Swilling and Russell (2002:11-12) explain that NPOs "can be categorised in crude terms as developmental, oppositional, and survivalist". Developmental NPOs are those which are engaged directly in improving the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community. Oppositional NPOs help people by organising and mobilising them for various purposes, while survivalist NPOs can be understood as NPOs that focus on communities where the majority of people can barely survive. They serve people with basic needs (Swilling & Russell 2002:11-12). Most of the NPOs in South Africa are examples of a combination of all three categories.

Faith-based NPOs can be defined as religious in nature and they hold faith as a core value that affects their management, governing structures and decision making in order to serve and develop the community (Claassens 2004:25). Most of these faith-based NPOs that rely mainly on their religious faith in their organisations' management and decision making struggle to maintain a healthy, balanced functionality and sustainability. Swilling and Russell (2002:x) affirm this by saying that "the vast majority of employees entering the [faith-based NPO] sector are not particularly suited to civil society agencies, and do not have the required skills for efficient functioning in them".

The 'management' concept itself is very difficult to define, but to fully understand the struggle for sustainability, a basic definition is needed. A broadly applicable definition for management as used in this chapter is that management is "a set of activities, including planning and decision making, organizing, leading, and controlling, directed at an organization's human, financial, physical, and information resources, with the aim of achieving organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner" (Griffin 1990:6). It is important to keep in mind that management is both about "managing things, or resources, where techniques and methods are the primary tools used toward efficiency" and managing people to identify and develop their capacity, skills and inner selves (Oberholster 1993:11).

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Considering that management, or the managers of an organisation, play a key role in the success of an organisation, faith-based NPOs will have to rethink and further develop their religious faith frameworks in order to enhance the functionality and sustainability of the organisation and cultivate persistent passion (Miller & Ewest 2007:5). A possible source of knowledge to assist them in this regard, which will receive attention in this chapter, is to engage with higher education institutions (HEIs) in particular; however, access to management skills could also be obtained from other training providers. For faith-based NPOs to use this source of knowledge, they first need to determine to what extent religious faith influences the management of a variety of role-players in and features of the organisation such as the volunteers, beneficiaries and the structure of the faith-based NPO. A faith-based NPO also needs to define its core identity clearly and, in the final instance, it must be willing to grow in its religious faith framework without becoming secular (Holder & Rollins nd:1).

Having said this, it must be made clear that the importance of religious faith in a faith-based NPO should not be lost in the process, for to them “[f]aith is very important if you must build a successful business” (Martins nd). Religious faith creates the foundation of the organisation and gives the faith-based NPO’s directors, board members and staff the grounding and persistent passion to persevere. The impact of this grounding foundation is explored later in this chapter.

Against this backdrop, this chapter explores the gaps in terms of religious faith and management, between faith-based NPOs from the third sector and HEIs, with a view to reaching the point where it can be accepted that both religious faith and higher education management skills and knowledge should provide guidelines to the third sector. In that way the functioning and sustainability of faith-based NPOs might be improved and a reciprocal partnership between these NPOs and HEIs might be created.

In this chapter the research context is presented followed by a discussion of the findings related to the religious faith factor in faith-based organisations.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

Research was conducted to explore the impact and influence of religious faith on the decision making and management of faith-based NPOs. Managers of five faith-based NPOs in the immediate vicinity of the researcher were interviewed individually using an interview guide of 17 questions to gain first-hand and in-depth knowledge to supplement the information collected from the literature.

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The five managers were chosen randomly. However, these faith-based NPOs are connected as reciprocally sharing partners in knowledge, food and clothing resources and filling gaps where needed. These NPOs, which are situated in Bloemfontein in the Free State province, will be referred to as NPO#1-5. NPO#1 focuses on providing clothing and food to people living in rural areas in the Free State. NPO#2 provides shelter to the homeless in Bloemfontein. NPO#3 provides a variety of services to the children, elderly and disabled in a township outside Bloemfontein. NPO#4 focuses on decreasing the number of children living on the streets in Bloemfontein. NPO#5's focus is on the vulnerable people living in the inner city of Bloemfontein by caring, serving and developing the community. The research in general will be called 'the Bloemfontein study'.

These organisations are very diverse in their management styles and have different ministry foci. The major challenge faced in the research process was that although there are books and other publications on the operations of faith-based organisations, literature on the actual management of such organisations was difficult to come by.

3. THE RELIGIOUS FAITH FACTOR

In referring to Berger (2003) and Tyndale (2006), Moyer, Sinclair and Spaling (2011:4) note that

[faith-based organisations] are motivated by a distinctive set of values, have particular modes of operation, and hold a unique place within communities and the larger society. They also tend to adopt an approach which goes beyond basic economic advancement or environmental protection, incorporating the social, the environmental, the spiritual, and the ethical in one complete package.

In conducting and analysing the interviews with managers of the five NPOs, it became clear that the motivations and values of the religious faith factor were the major driving forces in all the organisations. This observation is confirmed by the confession of the managing director of NPO#3: *"My faith is the carrier of our vision, to give hope, to give attention to the children, the elderly, to everything, my faith helps me to see the need in Mafora"*. To a greater or lesser extent religious faith plays a role in each of the five faith-based NPOs' core foundations.

To comprehend the essence of the religious faith factor in these NPOs the participants were asked to what extent their faith had influenced the establishment and the core foundation of their organisations. The participants were subsequently asked questions about the management, the structure and daily programmes of their organisations. The third part of the interview shed some light on the role of the religious faith factor

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in how these NPOs dealt with volunteers, donors and beneficiaries from religions that differ from their organisation's core faith, or with non-religious volunteers, donors and beneficiaries. The three aspects discussed are referred to as three elements of a faith-based NPO.

The following diagram (Figure 6.1) depicts the elements of the faith-based NPOs that were involved in the research.

FIGURE 6.1 Three elements of the faith-based NPO

The foundational core is the most important element that infiltrates the other sectors. These three elements are discussed.

3.1 The religious faith factor in the foundation of faith-based NPOs

In the establishment of the five different organisations the founders noted that in their immediate environment there was a great need for help and hope. These organisations emphasised that they all care for people and want to help by serving and empowering people. They also emphasised that this need to help and create hope is solidly based on their personal religious faith.

A street worker from NPO#4, who had been a street child that had been assisted by a religious grouping during his time in prison and was thus able to make more of his life, is a good example of how his faith influenced his need to help and create hope for street children. He emphasised the great need street children have for security, attention, food, clothing and health. For him the persistence to make a difference and help street children is not external, but driven by his personal experience and his personal faith. The managing director of NPO#5 also stressed this point by saying: *"Yes, I care about people, but my care of people comes from my faith"*.

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The personal and inner religious faith factor that drove the founders to establish these faith-based NPOs are also supported by scriptures, passion and intervening or a calling from their god (Moyer, Sinclair & Spaling 2011:15). The managing director and founder of NPO#3 believes that her god gave her the name Matshidiso, meaning 'giving hope to people', with a purpose. This purpose was to establish an organisation that focuses on helping and giving hope to people who are suffering from HIV and Aids, children who are orphans and vulnerable, old people and families affected by poverty.

The impact of the founders' religious faith is vital in the establishment of their organisations, for, as Martins (nd) states: *"Every great business venture is preceded by an undying faith on the part of the entrepreneur. Without faith it is impossible to go beyond mediocrity"*. This view was supported by participants in the Bloemfontein study, who claimed that their faith prompted them to begin these organisations and is also the motivation for them to keep going no matter what happens. Their faith was the driving force for these organisations to endure and advance in their work. The manager of NPO#1 confirmed this with his words: *"We as God's children have the responsibility to be like him (God), who is good and perfect, so in our work at [NPO#1] we must strive to be good and perfect in everything we do. We have to live and act according to his word, which asks everything of us"*.

The major role faith played in the establishment of each of these organisations became the foundation, the core of the organisation on which the organisation is based. This faith foundation has an impact on the rest of the organisation's management and how people from different religious faith groups or people with no faith are managed.

3.2 The religious faith factor in the management of faith-based NPOs

The term management refers to the way the organisation is managed, the structure and the daily programmes of the organisation. This is the second element which is directly influenced by the faith foundation of the organisation.

In researching this sector, three groups or categories of organisation types emerged from the Bloemfontein study. The first group comprises the organisations of which the establishment and foundation are solely based on the founder and managing director's religious faith. This implies that there was no or very little assistance from

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HEIs in either a direct¹ or indirect² way to establish or lay the foundation of the organisation. This group currently also has no management guidelines or structures. In this group relevant interest groups from within HEIs, which might be able to assist in providing management guidelines and structures, are not involved. Two of the five organisations that formed part of the interview study are part of this group, which focuses mainly on praying and trusting that their god will provide. But there is little evidence of structures or management skills that can support or carry the vision and the mission of the organisation.

This tendency to focus mainly on the religious faith factor is risky and could result in the organisation having to close down; thus, such “organisations should be managed according to basic management principles and practices” and not just rely on the religious faith factor (Sebastian 2010:85). This group can be referred to as solely faith-based organisations, with no room for anything else (Miller & Ewest 2007:27).

The establishment and foundation of the second group of organisations from the Bloemfontein study are more balanced between the religious faith factor and good management guidelines and structures, but the main focus remains on the faith factor. The organisations that form part of this group have management guidelines and structures, and relevant HEIs interest groups were involved, directly or indirectly, in the establishment of these organisations. Staff members of two HEIs with relevant management expertise are also currently assisting this group of organisations at different levels. But still, this group’s safety net is perceived as their religious faith, not good management guidelines and structures. Two of the five organisations in the Bloemfontein study can be categorised as belonging to this group. In the literature this group is referred to as the faith-safe group, which has a more balanced approach but falls short of totally embracing the needed management skills and knowledge that can be gained from secular training (Miller & Ewest 2007:27).

In the third category, which is the smallest and consists of only one of the organisations in the Bloemfontein study, management guidelines and structures, as well as the religious faith factor, are practically integrated in the organisation. HEIs are also more involved in the organisation and initially formed part of the process of establishing and building the foundation of the organisation. Thus there is a

1 A direct influence is evident where an HEI as an institution or faculty is formally part of the process of founding an organisation.

2 An indirect influence is evident where HEIs are not formally or primarily part of the process of founding an organisation, but individuals who are currently or were previously part of HEIs, are part of the founding process of an organisation.

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healthy balance between good management guidelines and structures as well as the organisation's core religious faith.

The NPO representing the last category demonstrates through their formal contract-based and informal partnerships with HEIs that there is a formal structure and well-defined management guidelines. In the study a good example was observed: the religious faith factor and higher education knowledge worked together well in the organisation that comprised this last category. Some members of the organisation's board of trustees, which are all driven by their religious faith, are also well qualified in different fields such as law, arbitration and financial management, and are staff at HEIs.

Thus, this last category demonstrated that both the religious faith factor and the relevant knowledge gained from HEIs have a role to play in enabling the organisation to have a better functionality and sustainability. The article "Closing the skills gap through integrating faith and learning", by Weber and Houghton (nd) confirms that faith, and knowledge and skills to be obtained from training providers such as HEIs are needed for a faith-based NPO to succeed in the 'business' or economic world.

The exceptional factor that was found to play a decisive role in all the faith-based NPOs that were interviewed is the inner motivation derived from their religious faith to manage the organisations in the best way possible and manage it according to their religious values. This principle was substantiated by the managing director of NPO#5: *"My personal faith and belief that made me who I am today, asks of me to manage [NPO#5] according to the best of my ability by developing and managing a variety of processes and interventions whereby vulnerable people can realise, through the grace of God, their god-given dignity"*. This view echoes Fernando and Jackson's (2006:24) claim that "the significant role that religion plays in shaping some leaders' desire to make 'right' decisions" is prominent.

3.3 The religious faith factor and different faith groups

In all the interviews there was agreement that all people are welcome and that the organisations will respect people's personal religious faith or other faith-related choices. 'People' can be divided into three main groups, namely beneficiaries, volunteers and donors.

Beneficiaries from a different or no religious faith are welcome at all the organisations which were interviewed and respect from both the organisation and the beneficiary plays a critical role in their acceptance. However, in the Bloemfontein study three of the five organisations' managers also saw an opportunity to proclaim the

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organisation's religious faith to the beneficiaries from a different or no religious faith. This tendency was confirmed by the manager of NPO#2: *"Every person coming through the doors of [NPO#2] is an opportunity to pray for them and to teach them about God"*. NPO#1's manager strongly agreed with NPO#2's manager with his comment: *"It is our mission to proclaim the word to all the nations. We must sow the seed"*.

Volunteers from a different or no religious faith are also welcome as long as these volunteers do not proclaim their faith or lack thereof. Thus, volunteers from a different or no religious faith will be asked to show respect for the organisation's religious faith and not to make attempts at proselyting the organisation's beneficiaries. Therefore, these organisations will first have a conversation with volunteers to determine their main reason for wanting to help or assist the organisation.

The money and material donated by donors from a different (or no) religious faith are accepted by all the organisations which were interviewed, unless these donors are prescriptive about how these donations should be used. Although all the organisations agreed that they would accept such a donation, they agreed that this might be a very complex situation, especially if donors would want acknowledgment and to benefit from making a donation.

The religious faith factor that forms the core of the foundation thus also has a major impact on how these faith-based organisations manage people from a different or no religious faith.

4. THE IMPACT OF THE RELIGIOUS FAITH FACTOR

There are always two sides to every matter. Thus, both the positive and negative effects that the religious faith factor has on third sector faith-based NPOs were explored.

Faith-based NPOs have a firm foundation grounded in their religious faith identity. This religious faith identity is put "into practice in different ways, with different strengths, through different partners, with different visibility and with different results" (James 2011:110). The motivations of faith-based NPOs are reflected by their "faith-based values, such as equity, compassion, tolerance, dignity, helping the poor, and caring for creation. These values can be derived from the organizations' understanding of God" (Moyer *et al* 2011:15). Therefore, the religious faith identity of faith-based NPOs gives them the necessary fuel to start serving and developing the community.

These faith-based NPOs' religious core pushes them to get out of their comfort zones and serve where the need is felt most. Accordingly, these organisations "often serve

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remote and rural areas where governments have the greatest difficulty in attracting and retaining health workers” (CapacityPlus nd:1).

Where the government and other organisations struggle to address new needs or to change course in order to serve the upcoming needs of the community, faith-based NPOs have a history of flexibility and innovation in management (CapacityPlus nd:1). Faith-based NPOs’ core business is to serve and care for people. This core business, to serve and to care, was emphasised by all of the managers who formed part of the study in Bloemfontein. This was emphasised by a street worker at NPO#4: *“To serve and care for the community, especially for these street children, is my calling. My faith calls me to serve and care for these children”*. As most NPOs are rather small in size, they can more easily adjust and renew their strategy to serve and care for the community more efficiently (CapacityPlus nd:1).

In serving the community, faith-based NPOs also focus on the importance and omnipresence of religious faith to have “holistic approaches which incorporate the spiritual, the physical and the communal [that] correspond with the African psyche and worldview” (Moyer *et al* 2011:26). This creates more functionality and sustainability of development in people and in the environment, especially in the African traditional worldview and culture (Mbiti 1991:15). Therefore, it can be rightfully said that faith-based NPOs “are communicating with people on a plane which touches them deeply and which resonates with their way of engaging with the world” (Moyer *et al* 2011:28). NPO#2’s manager accentuated the omnipresence and importance of religious faith by stating: *“People are so lost and broken when they come to us, for [NPO#2] is the last place you get to, before you go to sleep on the street and then people need something to hold on to and that is faith. Faith gives them security and hope, to pick up the pieces of their life and try again”*.

A final strength for both the staff members and the beneficiaries of these faith-based NPOs is that religious faith gives hope. This is confirmed by all of the managers who took part in the Bloemfontein study. The managing director of NPO#5 confessed: *“[W]ithout my faith I would not have been able to endure and cope with all the situations that the brokenness of the inner city presents”*. Hope is something that no one can take away, for it is a gift, and it changes both the staff member and the beneficiary from the inner identity of a person to where it manifests in that person’s daily life. This unflinching hope helps with maintaining sustainability in the faith-based NPOs’ staff and management, for “this sense of calling and purpose, the knowledge that the work is not being done by human power alone, and the powerful bond of communal prayer serve as defences against despair and sources of hope, enabling people to persevere” (Moyer *et al* 2011:29).

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Most important is that people's everyday lives are influenced by organisations that are based on faith, because it results in transformation of their lives by shaping their values, beliefs, behaviours and self-understanding. By shaping people's values, beliefs and self-understanding, they are enabled to gain knowledge about themselves, about the broader society and, as the manager of NPO#1 said, *"to become people that have a positive impact on society"*. Therefore, these organisations serve as a source of knowledge on various issues that affect society (Muturi 2007:308-309). Hope, meaning and purpose are facilitated in people by faith-based NPOs that make a significant contribution to the development of individuals (James 2011:111, 113). In discussing the change they had seen in community members with whom they work, the staff members from the faith-based NPOs in the Bloemfontein study were in agreement with Emmons (2003:134), who argues that *"people construct a life story often rooted in religious ideology that gives a unique meaning to their life"*.

Consequently, faith-based NPOs, as well as the organisations forming part of the Bloemfontein study, have the potential to add value to the community. They strive to do this by providing efficient development services, reaching the poorest in their environment, having a long-term and sustainable presence, being legitimate and valued by the poorest, providing an alternative to a secular theory of development, eliciting motivated and voluntary service, and encouraging civil society advocacy (James 2011:111).

To summarise: religious faith in faith-based NPOs can enable and provide the required inner motivation to endure and overcome all challenges and failures. The religious faith factor has the impact to *"break through obstacles"* and help faith-based NPOs to achieve their goals by knowing that *"with faith nothing is impossible"* (Martins nd).

Unfortunately there is another side to this matter. Faith-based NPOs often greatly lack basic management and governance skills. The occurrence of this problem results in inadequate funding to carry out projects and programmes effectively, struggling to attract qualified personnel and building a sustainable and growing organisation (Sebastian 2010:7; CapacityPlus nd:2). In the researcher's personal experience most faith-based NPOs are founded, managed and governed by people who have little or no experience in managing and governing staff, other people, beneficiaries and resources. They also lack the required knowledge of management, governance and basic business skills, because their primary focus is on serving and caring for people, since their religious calling urges them to do so. In this study conducted in Bloemfontein all of the organisations that participated displayed this tendency. This

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creates an additional problem as such organisations often fail to deliver regarding accountability to their donors.

Other problems of poor management are a lack of skilled personnel, low literacy levels and remuneration levels that demand voluntarism to a certain extent (James 2011:111). Volunteers also struggle to serve as efficiently as required, often because of a lack of involvement, structures and effective communication from the organisation's management (Claassens 2004:113). This leads to another concern, for volunteers make up 47% of the workforce in NPOs (Swilling & Russell 2002:18). To add to this concern, there are also only a few faith-based NPOs that have sufficient monitoring and evaluation systems for personnel, volunteers and the overall structure and governance of the organisation. None of the organisations that were interviewed had sufficient monitoring and evaluation systems to enable the organisation to sustain and function to satisfaction. All these organisations, to a lesser or greater extent, trust in their religious faith to pull them through.

Besides these problems, faith-based organisations also have limited collaboration and partnerships with governmental organisations and HEIs, which might enhance their efforts (Muturi 2007:316) through provision of assistance and training. Four of the managers who took part in the Bloemfontein study affirmed that there were no formal or informal partnerships with governmental organisations. Although there are generally better collaborative partnerships between faith-based NPOs and HEIs (ie in cities where HEIs are present), these are not nearly as efficient as they could be, for most of these partnerships are not formal contract-based partnerships. The Bloemfontein study confirmed that all of the organisations have some sort of informal partnerships with HEIs, but only two of the organisations had formal contract-based partnerships with some of the faculties at HEIs. The relationship in such a partnership is often inherently limited. Therefore, many faith-based NPOs, including all of the organisations that formed part of the Bloemfontein study, are still left with deficiencies and a lack of formal partnerships that could enhance the organisations' performance and add value to the organisations. All of the managers in the Bloemfontein study stressed that their organisations are based on collaborative partnerships and would profit from formal contract-based partnerships with governmental organisations, and especially with HEIs and other training providers.

These deficiencies firstly include that many faith-based NPOs "do not routinely prepare and share publications highlighting their accomplishments, results, and lessons learned" (CapacityPlus nd:2); therefore, many faith-based NPOs do not seize the opportunity to make an important contribution to global knowledge and promising practices. Secondly, on account of these limited partnerships, faith-based

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NPOs are unable to scale up production to meet growing demands and therefore struggle to overcome challenges such as inadequate numbers of personnel, and lack of space and resources (CapacityPlus nd:2).

Moreover, religious faith is seen as a negative force by many individuals; especially if the religious faith of the individual and the organisation differs. James (2011:110) explains five reasons for the negative view of religious faith by saying that religious faith first brings division and conflict between parties of different religious faith orientations. Second, in some instances religious faith maintains and promotes regression and injustices such as colonialism, segregation, and caste and gender inequalities. Third, religious faith can be irrelevant in the development of communities where the communities' core foundations are not based on the same principles and values as the religious faith of the faith-based NPO. Fourth, faith-based NPOs often have the conviction that their personal religious faith is the only viable faith and therefore they may be insensitive to other cultures, religious faiths and worldviews. The last matter builds on the previous one and goes to the next level, where the religious faith factor encourages the faith-based NPO's personnel to seek to convert others to their faith, which limits people's choice and violates their dignity.

This trend to seek converts was strongly visible in most of the organisations that formed part of this study. First, three of the managers said that the beneficiaries from a different or no religious faith must convert to the organisation's religion. Second, four of the organisations' policies are that volunteers are not allowed to be of a secular persuasion, or of a religion that differs from the organisation's. However, four of the managers confessed that they would accept a donation from anyone, including donors that are from a different faith than the organisation or from no religious faith. Thus, there appears to be a tendency to discriminate against people from a different or no religious faith, except where donations and donors are concerned. This creates difficulties to develop and serve the community, and it also tends to create a false or misleading perception to donors about the religious disposition of an organisation which might not be what a specific donor wishes to be associated with.

Given this trend, faith-based NPOs have to rethink their management and governance situation, but in this process of rethinking there is not a one-size-fits-all solution (McClusky 2007:540). In finding solutions for different organisations, a variety of aspects should be taken into account, but all of these organisations need to focus on management and governance, on planning effectively, securing resources, developing strong internal management and governance structures, networking and

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building collaborative partnerships, as well as providing the necessary information to the beneficiaries, volunteers and donors (Sebastian 2010:82-83).

5. FILLING THE GAPS BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS FAITH FACTOR AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

As seen in the previous section, the religious faith factor can be enabling in the functioning and sustainability of third sector faith-based NPOs, but these organisations tend to have a lack of appropriate and sufficient management skills and knowledge.

One of the options that were explored during the interviews was the existing partnership between the faith-based NPOs and HEIs. All of the NPOs that were part of the Bloemfontein study have a direct or indirect collaboration with HEIs, which creates the opportunity for both the religious faith and higher education management skills and knowledge to make a contribution regarding guidelines for the management of these organisations. For NPOs to use this source of knowledge they need to stand firm in their core religious faith foundations, define their mission and vision, and set achievable, specific short- and long-term objectives. After doing that, these NPOs should seek to identify what they need to achieve these objectives and goals by planning effectively, securing resources, developing strong internal management and governance structures, and networking by building on already existing collaborating partnerships with HEIs and other training providers (Sebastian 2010:82-83).

The existing partnerships that the interviewed NPOs have with HEIs should be amplified by making use of the resources and knowledge these institutions might be willing to offer. These resources and knowledge will have to be focused specifically on capacity-building, giving training and emotional support to NPO personnel, helping to create meaningful systems to highlight the accomplishments and results of the organisation and lessons learned, and creating a structure to secure sustainable and functional balance and growth in the organisation.

One of the requests from the managers who participated in the study was for students and staff of different faculties and departments at HEIs, such as theology, psychology, economics, management, business, marketing, health sciences, agriculture and engineering, to share knowledge of their fields and get involved by volunteering on a regular basis at the organisations. This would build capacity for the organisations and give the students and staff of the HEIs practical scope and experience of their theoretical work, which could also result in NPOs reaching higher levels of management and governance efficiency. In turn, NPOs can add value to the HEIs by creating research and service learning opportunities in different study fields.

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HEIs could provide the management skills and knowledge that faith-based NPOs need. One example is the provision of management development programmes (MDP) by the University of the Free State Business School in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. This is a one year part-time course and some of the modules are offered as a short learning programme or certificate course. The knowledge to be gained through this course includes: general management and communication; financial management and cost accounting; entrepreneurship and innovation; project and programme management; economics and banking for managers; business and information technology; and developing internet marketing strategies. It also focuses on skills such as people management; strategic and change management; formulating a strategic vision and mission, as well as long-term objectives for a business; marketing; leadership development; effectively managing diversity in the workplace; labour relations; operations and logistics management; and ethics and governance (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences nd).

In my opinion such courses could fill the gap in lack of management and other skills and knowledge for faith-based NPOs. Unfortunately the cost of these courses is often very high and thus unreachable for faith-based NPOs whose budgets might already be very tight.

A specific example of where an HEI is involved in assisting NPOs in gaining management skills and knowledge is the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in the United States and Canada with its particular Christian faith-integrated approach in a Master of Business Administration (MBA) course (Ridington 2010:96). Ridington (2010:97) states that this MBA addresses the faith-based NPO's "mission-related needs for faith-integrated personnel as well as the importance of religious understanding" in their workplaces and contexts, in addition to a wide range of skills required for the management and administration of NPOs in particular.

My contention is thus that collaborative partnerships between faith-based NPOs and HEIs could contribute to filling the gaps and address deficiencies in management and governance, and in doing so enable such organisations to be sustainable and functional within their religious faith framework without having to become secular (Holder & Rollins nd:1).

6. CONCLUSION

Faith-based NPOs provide critically needed services in communities and also assist with basic required community development. In fact "50% of health and education services in sub-Saharan Africa" are rendered by faith-based NPOs (James

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2011:112). As mentioned previously, the majority of employees entering this sector do not have the required skills for efficient functioning, which creates a “serious problem, especially when one takes into account that civil society agencies employ more people than the major economic sectors” (Swilling & Russell 2002:x).

A considerable challenge during this research was an apparent lack of literature and other publications on the operations of faith-based NPOs, on the impact of the religious faith factor on these NPOs, and how this affects the management of such organisations. It is evident that there is a great need for further research in this field.

Faith-based NPOs “have both potential strengths and inherent weaknesses through their relationship with religions, but more contentious is the notion that more than being just the institutional vehicle, faith provides a spiritual fuel for development” (James 2011:113). Although faith is the constant stimulus and retaining factor in faith-based NPOs’ existence, relevant literature and experience have shown that no organisation can operate effectively and efficiently without sound management and governance structures and skills.

The struggle to manage and govern such organisations will only be resolved if faith-based NPOs urgently and seriously consider the fact that both their religious faith and sound management skills are required to provide them with guidance and guidelines towards becoming fully functional and sustainable.

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