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Collaborating to Develop: A Perspective on Current Chinese Social Partnership
Development

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of social partnership practices among businesses that are designed to carry out corporate social responsibility. As one of the fastest growing economic regions, domestic Chinese business practitioners have begun to adapt their approach, in order to handle increased concerns about their business conduct from relevant stakeholders. Under the influence of a globalised trading environment, Chinese practitioners have started to experiment with different approaches to deliver highly regarded corporate social responsibility and consequently social partnerships have begun to gain popularity among local firms due to their mutually beneficial features.

This research studies the increasingly popular social partnership (SP) between businesses (focal firms) and non-profit organisations (NPO) in a Chinese context. The study examines the selected social partnerships from mainland China and analyses them under the lenses of corporate social responsibility (CSR) theories in conjunction with cross-sector partnership research. The objective of this study was to explore and identify the performance attributes that impact social partnership conduct in the Chinese business practice context, and therefore, progress CSR theory development in Chinese context.

It is essential to have an extensive understanding of the extent of collaboration in general in order to conduct effective social partnerships, and based on the findings from six selected focal firms and their associated SPs, the following points have been deduced. Specifically, both the focal firm and NPO need to share similar values prior to the formation of the partnership. Then, organisations need to have fair expectations about the achievements throughout the conduct, which could be improved by setting up realistic partnership objectives in a mutually agreed fashion. For the focal firm, strategic integration of SP facilitates improvements with interactions with the NPO partner, but would also enhance the productivity of the SP accordingly, due to a greater level of engagement during the value creation process.

The three themes which emerge from this study provide the framework for further studies. These themes focus on the satisfaction of partnership, co-creation of value, and sustainability of partnership.