

School-University Partnership in a South African Rural Context: Possibilities for an Asset-based Approach

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ABSTRACT In this paper the researchers utilised qualitative research methods to investigate possibilities for the asset-based approach to achieving school-community partnership. One partnership between a South African University and a secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal province was studied with the aim of investigating what assets the partners regarded as central in the partnership, the extent to which they utilised these assets and what could be the possibilities for the asset-based approach in that partnership. Through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, the paper reveals that teachers, the school principal's leadership, the experience of the school in partnerships and local community representatives were regarded as great assets in the studied partnership. The results suggest that while the available assets were utilized to some degree in the partnership, there existed several threats against the asset-based approach. The researchers conclude that the asset-based approach has great potential as a way of achieving school-community partnership. They further conclude that focus on strong leadership, greater clarity on the aims and thrust of any partnership, as well as well-coordinated asset-mapping strategies constitute some of the key areas requiring nurturing if this approach is to be useful.