

SUMMIT PAPER: WORK IN PROGRESS

THE CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE AFRICAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXTS: THE NEED TO PROFESSIONALIZE

INTRODUCTION

People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself by what he does ... by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing, and why; by his own full participation (Nyerere, 1973: 60)

The origin of community development is the origin of humankind and collective activity. However, the origin and purpose of community development as a profession varies in different parts of the world.

In our attempt to professionalise and better understand community development for the democratic context of South Africa, this presentation will cover an overview of the following: a historical perspective of community development in the African and South African contexts; conceptualisation of community development generally and conceptual issues specifically for South Africa; the relationship between community development and the social service professions; and the need to establish a unified professional association for community development.

BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE: CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES

Early history of community development in Africa and Asia was influenced by colonial policies and practices together with the efforts of missionaries. Education as the main community development intervention and conversion to Christianity were intertwined. Mass education was seen as the beginning of the evolution and the progressive institutionalization of community development as an arm of government policy. These early efforts of western education (included health, home life training, industry, agriculture and recreation) as part of community development may be viewed as conversion of the colonized to consumers and market sources for the capitalist economy.

In 1928 at a meeting in Jerusalem for the International Missionary Council, a statement was made which contained what appears to be the first official usage of the term 'community development'. Prior to this the community development process was given a number of different labels such as community consciousness, rural betterment and rural reconstruction.

With the independence of India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma in the late 1940's, the focus fell on Africa and community development became a definite feature of the British government in its African policy. As a function of social development,

community development was adopted at the Cambridge Summer Conference on African Administration in 1948 to describe a method of approach to local administration. Community development was described as a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community.

The colonial administrators realised that community development could only be successfully achieved through the improvement and strengthening of the most fundamental unit of African society, which was, the family. While this sounded fairly obvious, what they were challenged with was trying to understand the place of the family in African society and its significance and influence in the social structure, which was very different from that of the conventional western type family. The notion of institutional transformation as a characteristic of social development during colonization referred to the institution of family and the extended family system of African society was compared to that of the western notion of a nuclear family.

This significant observation of the colonial officials orchestrated the shift from focus on the individual African to the African family in community development in the British colonies. The 'civilizing' process turned to families to replace indigenous practices with western ones, thereby eroding the traditional life of indigenous communities in Africa. Community practice in rural areas focused on literacy, primary health care and credit unions. Social work remained confined to dealing with specific social problems such as caring for orphans, juvenile delinquents or prevention of prostitution in the growing towns and cities. By 1948 the British Colonial office wanted to make a distinction between community development and social welfare. An explicit manifestation of community organization included the establishment of community centres and halls in towns and villages and staff were trained in short courses on community development, thereby influencing its establishment as a profession. The first documented literature of community development as a professional practice and field of study dated back to the 1950's.

However, it is argued that such activities of colonial regimes, and the many similar economic development tactics inaugurated by Third World governments after independence, are diametrically opposed to the community development approach. By definition, the critical characteristics of community development are associated with notions of self-help, ownership and participatory democracy. As these features were lacking as an approach to community improvement, it could not be designated community development.

HISTORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

For the major part of social services in apartheid South Africa, institutional community development was clearly apparent by its absence. While social work officially emerged in the 1930s as the profession of social welfare, it was only in 1984, after two conferences in the latter part of the 70s, that the Population Development Programme was launched with the task of stimulating community

development activities at the local level, and improving the quality of life of the people.

Prior to this community development in South Africa was viewed with mistrust and skepticism in government circles because of its potential for political change. Community work and not community development, viewed as a method of social work, did not attempt a comprehensive analysis and intervention with communities. Community work supported the apartheid social welfare system by giving effect to the residual model and remedial approach in practice. Social Work fostered welfare goals by working with individuals, families/groups and communities in such a way that they served to maintain the status quo of the apartheid welfare system.

In the mid-1980s the welfare sector was urged to move away from remedial approaches to community development by the state. This strategy was never implemented, as finance was not available for development activities and because of the suspicion of local communities that state community development activities were a part of the state's campaign to win over the people for their reform initiatives. And from an institutional perspective, the apartheid government did not establish a formal framework for community development as it did for social work. Consequently, welfare organizations accustomed to function from a remedial perspective of welfare struggled with how the change toward community development was to be managed and implemented.

While institutional community development struggled to gain a foothold, the unofficial version of community development implemented by popular movements as part of the liberation struggle was utilized as an effective development mechanism within the black majority communities in the townships and rural areas.

In the case of South Africa the struggle against the apartheid regime ... was taken up by a very wide range of progressive organizations and individuals both within the country and beyond ... the need to remove an oppressive and racist regime and the need to provide services and resources to communities came together. The political struggle and the struggle for improved quality of life and access to resources became one (Taylor (1998:292).

The Black Community Programmes (BCP) was one outstanding example of the spirit of sacrificial service necessary for community development. The establishment of the Zanempilo Community Health Clinic initiated by Steve Biko, while banned, in 1974 at Zinyoka, five miles outside Kingwilliamstown in the Eastern Cape Province exemplifies this spirit of community development.

The prioritization of community development in contemporary South Africa highlights this lack of a referential framework for community development both from civil society (non-government) and institutional (government) perspectives. Community development's emergence as a significant human service profession in South Africa post 1994 is to address poverty and past inequalities. The adoption of a social development framework not only for social welfare but the broader development of democratic South African society has critical implications for the way in which community development is conceptualised and implemented in South Africa.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

- **Social Development: differentiating between a unified and a unitary approach**

The developmental approach embraces policies and programmes which integrates social objectives with economic development. The roots and conceptualization of social development in the colonial period for the newly independent ‘developing’ states in Africa and Asia were presented with a unified approach of social and economic development.

A unitary approach to social development as the original conceptualization of social development is offered by Omer (1979). To achieve full social development, economic development is seen as just one very important aspect that needs to be given the utmost consideration. An acceptance of the unitary philosophical basis removes the distinction of the economic and the social. Omer’s premise is that philosophically and semantically the term social development conveys the ultimate goal and all strategies and programmes have or should have as their goal the well being of the community or society as a whole. A unitary framework of social development encompasses all aspects of community life such as the economic, moral, physical, political and spiritual. The economic aspect is just one, perhaps, a very important but still one aspect of that well-being. Hence, it is or should be part of social development.

Figure I: The Prevailing Notion of Development (Unified Approach)

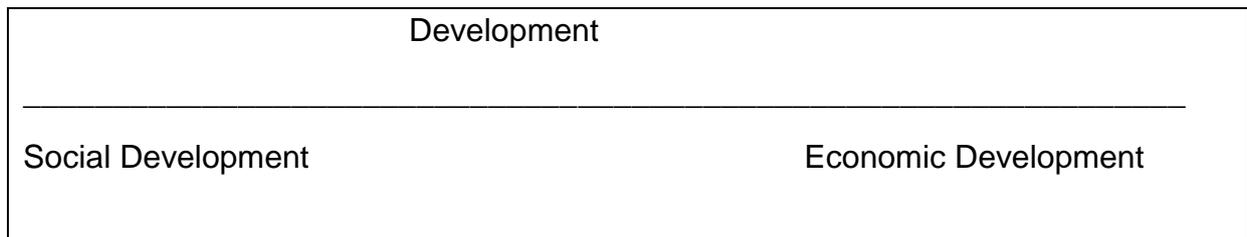


Figure II: Representation of Omer’s (1979) Unitary Approach to Social Development



Source: Omer (1979:20) in *Social development*.

- **Community Development**

Community development has a wealth of definitions depending on the context and history.

A familiar and often cited definition of community development is the definition of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1963). This definition states that in community development the efforts of the people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and integrate these communities into the life of the nation to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. The complex processes are made up of two essential elements: the participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve the level of living with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative; and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self help and mutual help.

In contemporary South Africa, the term community development is conceptualized broadly as an umbrella concept referring to different intervention strategies that combine the efforts of the people themselves with government to improve the economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions of communities (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). This conceptualisation of community development is similar to the above.

Community development may be referred to as the intervention strategy that translates the broader social development policy into practice. Community development is comprehensive, multisectoral and multidisciplinary. From a multisectoral perspective community development could comprise of practitioners from the sectors of health, education, agriculture, housing and social work (social welfare). As an emergent professional discipline in South Africa, community development draws its knowledge from a multitude of disciplines such as economics, sociology, agriculture and community psychology.

Objectives of Community Development

The objective of community development is to build healthy functioning communities. This is achieved through social change as identified and driven by the community themselves and to the extent that is required, support through the provision of resources and services in ways that serve the holistic developmental needs of the community. Community development is distinguished by application of a holistic, rather than a sector, point of view.

Descriptions of Community Development

- A **dynamic process of change** resulting from the **collective actions/efforts** of individuals and groups of people identified as a community who come together to propose, plan and participate in the development of their own lives; external assistance is sought for the provision of resources and services that are not locally available.

- A commitment to **collective ways of addressing problems** and seeks to **build collective capacity** by improving skills, confidence and knowledge for individuals and the community as a whole.
- Viewing the community as the **source of its own development** and not as passive recipients of development.
- **Changes in the awareness, motivation and behaviour** of individuals and in the relations between individuals as well as between groups within a community; these changes must come from **within** the individuals and groups, and cannot be imposed from the outside.
- Particularly **concerned with the needs of those who have been disadvantaged or oppressed**, whether through poverty and/or discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality, age or disability.
- A process of creating or **increasing solidarity and agency**: building the capacity of a people by encouraging and/or teaching them to create their own dreams, to learn new skills and knowledge.
- **A natural process** (development processes are ongoing) **and a method of working or a form of intervention.**
- A **process of development** at the community level that **practically follows particular phases**, all of which incorporates the **participation of community members** for the end result of the process to be achieved : preparation; assessment, which includes planning; implementation; systematic evaluation and sustainment.
- **Focuses on the notion of power and participation**; a shift in power occurs when the development process enables the community to change from a condition where a few individual elite within or outside the local community make decisions for the rest of society, to **a condition where people themselves make decisions about matters that concern them.**

Characteristics of Community Development

There is a generally recognized set of characteristics that differentiates community development from other forms of community-related activities. Its distinguishing characteristics include:

- i. Focus on a unit called “community.”
- ii. Conscious attempts to induce non-reversible structural change. It is generally understood that once structural change takes place in a community system, that system cannot return to the original configuration.
- iii. Use of paid professionals/workers to facilitate community development.
- iv. Initiation by groups, agencies or institutions external to the community unit.

- v. Emphasize community participation.
- vi. Use a holistic approach (Cook, date unknown).

Community

The term community also has a number of meanings.

- A community is a group of people who identify with one another and have a common need and often reside in the same geographic locality.

- A community is a particular type of social system distinguished by the following characteristics:
 - i) People involved in the system have a sense and recognition of the relationships and areas of common concerns with other members.
 - ii) The system has longevity, continuity and is expected to persist.
 - iii) Its operations depend considerably on voluntary cooperation, with a minimal use (or threat) of sanctions or coercion.
 - iv) It is multi-functional. The system is expected to produce many things and to be attuned to many dimensions of interactions.
 - v) The system is complex, dynamic and sufficiently large that instrumental relationships predominate. This does not imply the absence of affective relationships.
 - vi) Usually, there is a geographic element associated with its definition and basic boundaries (Cook, date unknown).

Careful attention must be paid to geographic characteristics. Everything and every person within the geographic area are not associated with the community system. Communities of different scales may overlap in a geographic area. Further, all the people available to perform roles, and all the roles and structures operating as part of the system may not be located in the referenced geographic area.

Development

In the context of community development, development as a concept could be associated with improvement. There are no objective measures of what constitutes improvement. That which constitutes development is a judgement that can only be made by people according to their own values, aspirations and expectations. In the case of a community, this must be a collective evaluation. The community system must provide itself with a process by which to make assessments as experience accumulates and is processed. Since people are different in many ways, the chances of finding unanimity about what constitutes improvement in a community could be challenging.

Responsibilities of a community development practitioner

- Community development practitioners do not bring or deliver development, but intervene in a development processes that already exists.
- Community development practitioners intervene into the life of communities in ways that facilitate its development, requiring an understanding of the different elements, organizations, and functions that collectively result in the healthy functioning of communities.

Typically, community development practitioner's tasks involve some combinations of the following:

- making contact with individuals, groups and organizations in a community
- developing a community profile, assessing community strengths, resources and needs
- developing a strategic analysis, and planning aims, objectives and targets with communities
- facilitating the establishment of community groups
- facilitating the maintenance and effective development of groups
- working productively with conflict, within and between groups and organizations in the community
- collaborating and negotiating with other agencies/role players and professions
- relating effectively to policy making and implementation, including local politicians
- communicating orally and in writing, with individuals, groups and organizations
- working with individuals and families and making referrals
- managing resources, including time and budgets
- supporting groups and organizations in obtaining resources, e. g. funding applications and proposal writing
- monitoring and evaluating progress, and the most effective use of resources
- research and report writing

This is by no means an exhaustive list. But community development practitioners should be competent to carry out all of these tasks if they are to function effectively, in a variety of settings. In order to do this, community development practitioners need to have knowledge of the relevant policy areas, including the general and specific appropriate legislation e.g. housing, health, education and agriculture. Community development practitioners need to have knowledge of the socio-economic and political backgrounds of the areas in which they work, including knowledge and understanding of political structures, and of relevant organizations and resources in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

The community development practitioner operates at the interface between an organisation/institution and the community. The community development practitioner then ideally is a person who is sensitive, conscious and should have a deep insight about the dynamic nature of the journey and the process of social transformation of the community. The practitioner assists the community to organize itself effectively to access the resources of the state, and assists the state to organize itself to engage developmentally with communities. This helps the community to articulate the required changes and exercises its authority over the organs of the state to

ensure that the unique and individual developmental process of each community is enhanced.

THE INTERDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL WORK/ COMMUNITY WORK AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SOCIAL WORK/COMMUNITY WORK	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Social worker	Community Development Practitioner	Higher education students and academics
Carnegie Commission which investigated the cause of the poor white problem in South Africa in 1932	During apartheid community development was viewed with mistrust in government circles because of its immense potential for the development of human capabilities and specifically for political change	Higher education transformation post 1994 CE was introduced and formalised as part of the transformation agenda to make HEI's more responsive to the socio-economic problems of the country. CE now positions HEIs as one of the institutions of social development.
1937 rapid development of courses for social work training at South African universities, and the professionalization of social work	organizations aligned with the anti-apartheid movement and a small emergent social service voluntary sector which was ideologically distinct from the mainstream	
social casework as the dominant method of social work; European and North American literature influences Community work: technicist approach, meaning an approach which focuses upon the	Part of the broader social development framework post 1994. Social development is intended to be inclusive, comprehensive, integrated and holistic and aims at collective empowerment and the facilitation of processes that help the	CE is defined as "initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and learning and research are applied to address issues relevant to its

<p>application of community work techniques, regardless of wider debates about values and underlying social relations.</p> <p>Community work and not community development was, and to a large extent, continues to be taught as a method of social work by schools or departments of social work in higher education institutions</p> <p>The majority of social workers, who were trained during apartheid, were not given the opportunity to practice community development as a result of apartheid control measures on the development of Black communities.</p>	<p>majority to regain power and control over their lives.</p> <p>Transformational: Community enabling, with more focus upon democratic participation and community empowerment for social transformation.</p>	<p>community. Community Engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes addressed at particular community needs (service learning programmes)” (HEQC, 2004a: 26).</p>
<p>Past: ‘Any act, activity or method directed at diagnosing, eliminating, preventing or treating social malfunctioning or problematic functioning in man, or at promoting social stability in man, and includes any process which is calculated to promote the efficient performance or application of such act, activity or method.’</p>	<p>Intervention strategy to combat poverty. Community development is seen as being multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary and should consist of practitioners of various fields and/or professions that work together in the upliftment of communities.</p>	<p>individual HEIs are influenced by their particular context and history in conceptualizing CE and its practical implementation</p>
<p>Current: International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). The IASSW in 2001 conceptualized the social work profession</p>	<p>community development as part of the broader social development paradigm needs to be considered as a new field</p>	

<p>as promoting social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environment. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.</p>	<p>of study in the democratic context of South Africa</p> <p>Emergence of community development as a profession and discipline of its own, lends a degree of urgency to knowledge development on community development for the South African context</p>	
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While social work and community development education and practice may forge separate paths, it is important to remember the interdependent relationship between social work and community development. They are not mutually exclusive as interventions contributing to the improvement of the well being of individuals, families and communities in South Africa.

Experience so far in South Africa shows that despite the urgent need for developing preventive, community based approaches, in practice, the immediate demands of statutory work for social workers, such as child protection, take precedence in the allocation of scarce resources. Community development can and does also lead to increased demands for statutory services.

An integrated approach to practice is essential because individuals, groups, families and communities do not exist in isolation but in an interdependent relation to each other. A holistic and interdependent approach is radically different to dominant Western thought. The units of analyses are systems not individuals, although the individual is considered an integral part of the system.

The model proposed for the broader social development practice that incorporates the different sectors including social work is one that is comprehensive and dialogical, not compartmentalized, emphasizing the collective needs of community and positioning individuals and groups and families as integral systems within communities.

THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A UNIFIED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development practitioners need a range of knowledge and skills in order to practise effectively. An association as a first step towards the professionalization of community development could provide, amongst others, a space for members interested and involved in community development to support each other, to share knowledge and skills, disseminate information and promote the image of community development as a profession.

The process towards the professionalization of community development needs to be undertaken in three phases: the establishment of an association for community development; the establishment of a unified professional body for community development; and ultimately an independent national council for community development.

WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

A profession refers to an occupation that involves education at the higher institutional level; has both theoretical and practical objectives; has the main goal of serving the wellbeing of society and a generally accepted ethical code which binds members of the profession to certain social values above those of income, power and prestige; includes intellectual work requiring a high standard of responsibility and should involve complex tasks which are performed by skilful application of major principles and concepts rather than by routine operation of skills; and a professional culture sustained by formal professional associations (de Vos et al, 2002).

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: QUALIFICATIONS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Educating a new generation of community development practitioners is an imperative in democratic South Africa. Qualifications in community development at different levels are aimed to maximize the value given to experiential learning, and to maximize community access to further education, training and professional qualifications. Currently, qualifications in Community Development at levels 4, 5 and 8 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) have been registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

ANNEXURE A - Working Document

Community work and Community Development in Britain: influence on South African Social Work/Community Work

	COMMUNITY WORK	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Britain 1883	Focus: Social Work	Focus: Humanity
	State Welfare service	All aspects of collective human development Community health, education, employment, community housing, specific community groups
	Statutory agencies	Voluntary agencies
1969 Seebohm Committee	Community Development Project a wider conception of social service, directed to the well-being of the whole community and not only of social casualties, and seeing the community it serves as the basis of its authority, resources and effectiveness. within the framework of preventive approaches to community social welfare	
1980s	community social work- the personal social services must develop a close working partnership with citizens focusing more closely on the community and its strengths Local Authority- community work and community development more generally, in relation to specific services such as housing, recreation and community education, as well as at corporate level	
1990s Voluntary agencies	closer collaboration between statutory and voluntary agencies, with greater emphasis upon the role of informal, community based care, self-help, mutual aid, and user involvement	
		CD as 'radical'

	<p>'technicist' approach, meaning an approach which focuses upon the application of community work techniques, regardless of wider debates about values and underlying social relations.</p> <p>promote self-help, and to improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of service delivery, within the wider framework of existing social relations rather</p> <p>geared towards the promotion of self-help, to rolling back the state, and substituting for public responsibility in service provision</p> <p>professional values, knowledge and skills are essential for community work practice, regardless of the theoretical perspectives of particular practitioners</p>	<p>community work: emphasizes the potential contribution of community work to shifting the framework of existing social relations, empowering the powerless to question the causes of their deprivation, and to challenge the sources of their oppression, with a focus upon anti-racist and anti-sexist work (Twelvetrees 1991).</p> <p>focuses upon the potential relationship between community work and wider strategies to promote the empowerment of those who have been disadvantaged through the social construction of race, class and gender relations.</p> <p>Community Development as 'transformational' has the advantage of implying a practice which is geared towards empowerment, development and liberation. The term has been applied in both first and third world contexts, emphasizing the importance of democratic methods as well as objectives in community development (see Hope and Timmel 1984).</p> <p>Community enabling, with more focus upon democratic participation and community empowerment, for social transformation.</p>
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