Community development models and language

This is a draft paper to promote discussion about community development models and language.

http://www.mapl.com.au/ideas/

Paul Bullen   DRAFT
March 2007

Introduction

Talking about community development is not an easy task because it is difficult to agree on what we are talking about.

In Australian in the 1960s and 1970s "community development" had a political action orientation and was associated with "movements".

In the 1980s with the development of the Area Assistance Scheme "community development" had the flavour of "community self help".

In the late 1980s and early 1990s with the rise of economic rationalism there was a demise in government support for "community development".

In the late 1990s government started to re-focus on "whole of government"outcomes and place management and also to re-focus its interest on community, for example through social capital being put on the policy agenda.

This led to new language including "community building" and "community capacity building" which were used to both give a new orientation and also avoid the political connotations of the use of "community development" from the 1960s and 1970s. Added to this has been the emphasis across government on "community engagement" in the planning process and an emphasis in local government on "social planning" with its attendant community consultation and community development.

There is not consensus in the community services sector on whether "community capacity building" is the same as "community development" or is qualitatively different from it. Some people focus on the similarities; others focus on the qualitative differences.

The net result is that there are a multitude of terms with overlapping meanings used in different ways in different settings. For example "community development" terms currently in use include: community of place, community of interest, community development, community building, community capacity building, community organizing, community engagement. In addition, other related terms are: social capital, asset based, strengths based and social planning.

To talk about community development it is useful to have an agreed conceptual framework. My suggestion is to make four key distinctions:

> *A. Community development* (incorporating 7 community development models/approaches)
>
> *B. Direct services with a community development orientation* (incorporating three service models)
>
> *C. Direct services* (with no specific community development orientation)
>
> *D. Service planning and development* (driven by organisations, for example government departments, local government and larger non-profit organisations in planning and developing services and incorporating six approaches).

Models, language, distinctions

In order to develop a conceptual framework for exploring community development concepts some of the key issues are:

a)   What is the umbrella term? For example, is community capacity building a part of community development? Or community development part of community capacity building?

In this paper "community development" is the umbrella term. (Some people would use community capacity building as the umbrella term.)

b)   What are the distinct approaches to community development that can fit within the umbrella term of "community development". For example "community action" and "strengthening community connectedness". These approaches are separated so that there can be conceptual clarity, however in practice a community development process may incorporate several community development approaches.

c)   What are the approaches to community development that can be used within the context of direct service delivery? Community development is usually seen as a separate process to direct service delivery. However direct services can incorporate a community development orientation. Some approaches to community development are more appropriate for this purpose than others. For example direct services are often able to build community connectedness as well as provide the direct service.

d)   What other concepts and processes would it be useful to include in the model so that clear distinctions be made between these processes and community development. For example "social planning" and "community engagement" are both included in the model below as part of "community service planning and development" not as part of "community development".

The framework

The conceptual framework makes four key distinctions:

A. *Community development* (incorporating 7 community development models/approaches)

B. *Direct services with a community development orientation*

C. *Direct services* (with no specific community development orientation)

D. *Service planning and development* (driven by organisations, for example government departments, local government and larger non-profit organisations).

For each of these there is a concise statement of:

Model name
Goals and processes
Examples
Notes including, where appropriate, language used, values, driven by and role of worker etc.

The framework is being put forward to help make useful distinctions. The framework is simplify complexities. At the same time it is import not to over simplify complexity. For example in practice:

- Several community development approaches can be used in one community development project.

- Even the distinctions between "direct service" delivery and "community development" can become blurred because in a larger community development project a direct service could be a strategy for making connections with people in order to do further community development work. In this case the direct service is both a direct service and a community development strategy.

Umbrella	Model/approach	Goals and process	Examples	Notes
A. Community development *Communities of place* *Communities of interest*	1. Proactive people	People work together (eg babysitting club, book club)	Babysitting club Book club	Values: citizen, contribution Worker: None
	2. Leadership and skill development	Goal: Leadership and skill development of community members Adult education and/or Participation in community development processes	"Opportunities & Choices" a 12 week program for women	Language: Community education Concepts: human capital Worker: Providing training and/or facilitation
	3. Community action	Goal: action Aware of need Identify what's wanted Plan Action	Bus route changed Action on global warming	Language: Community development (70s); community organising Values: participation, rights empowerment, democracy, Driven by: people in community Worker: facilitator
	4. Strengthening community connectedness	Goal: connections between people Building connections Developing community identity	Street garage sale Community fair Participation in other community action activities	Concepts: social capital Worker: facilitator
	5. Building service networks and organisational infrastructure	Goal: strong services network Network building Service systems, eg, referral Staff skill development Development of the network as a whole (rather than one organisation's or service's connections with the network)	Interagencies Multi-lateral partnerships Staff peer support project Restructuring roles and responsibilities across organisations	Language: capacity building Concepts: institutional capital Values: Coordination, integration, efficient, whole of government Driven by: organisations Worker: Facilitator
	6. Community building through community-services partnerships	Goal: building community through partnerships Learning Gathering Identifying issues and community assets Dreaming to planning Action and outcomes	Eg Independent learning centre for young people Includes both people connections and services connections.	Concepts: partnerships Values: participation, shared power Driven by: organisations and community equally
	7. Economic development	Goal: economic well being Process can be business driven and/or community driven and so different processes will be at work	Shopping centre development coordinated by local council Employment cooperative	Concepts: economic capital, economic growth, justice Driven by: business and/or by people Worker: negotiator and/or facilitator

Umbrella	Model/approach	Goals and process	Examples	Notes
B. Direct services with community development orientation *Communities of service users*	1. Direct services to **individuals and families** with community development orientation	Goal: individual and family needs met and people connected with other service users, neighbours, etc	Preschool with a meeting room/space for parents	Common community development orientations will include skill development and or connectedness with community
	2. Direct services to **groups** with community development orientation	Goal: groups needs met and people connected with other service users, neighbours, etc	Playgroup with a community worker	Common community development orientations will include skill development and or connectedness with community
	3. Direct services to **organisations** with community development orientation	Goal: organisational needs met and strong service network developed	Staff training for other organisations in the area	Common community development orientation will include restructuring of the services network
C. Direct services (without a community development orientation)	1. Direct services to individuals, families, groups and organisations	Goal: services to meet individual, family and group needs	Direct services without community development orientation	
D. Service planning and development	1. Social planning	Goal: To identify social needs within the community and ways of meting those needs	Local council social plans	Driven by: organisation (in consultation)
	2. Service planning and development	Goal: to plan and develop services to meet individual, family group and organisational needs	Planning a specific new service	Driven by: organisation
	3. Building service networks	Goal: strong services network Network building Service systems, eg, referral Staff skill development Partnerships	Interagency participation and partnerships development	From the perspective of the organisation or service provider. Development of the service network as a whole (not just from one organisation's perspective) is in Community development point 5.
	4. Infrastructure planning and development	Goal : to have community infrastructure in place to meet community needs	Building the physical facilities for a new service.	Driven by: organisation
	5. Policy development and advocacy	Goal : to have a view on what is appropriate social policy and to advocate for it.	Advocacy on behalf of aged people for changes to funding for aged care services.	Driven: by an organisation on behalf of others
	6. Community consultation and engagement	Goal: consult with the community re plans for services etc Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower	Consulting with the community in relation to a particular project	Driven by the organisational agenda.

Sample definitions

The following are a sample of definitions in use. They are not intended to be representative. Nor are they recommended definitions.

Community development

"The deliberate attempt by community people to work together to guide the future of their communities, and the development of a corresponding set of techniques for assisting community people in such a process (Bennett, 1973)

"The active involvement of people at the level of the local community in resisting or supporting some cause or issues that interests them. (Ravitz, 1982)

"Many community development efforts are essentially efforts to help community residents understand what is happening and recognise some of the choices they face in order to achieve the future community they desire. (Shafer, 1990)

"The capacity of people to work collectively in addressing their common interests" (Maser, 1997)

Building community capacity

The degree to which a community can develop, implement and sustain actions which allow it to exert greater control over its physical, social, economic and cultural environments (Littlejohns and Thompson, 2001)

The ability of individuals, organisations and communities to manage their own affairs and to work collectively to foster and sustain positive change (Howe and Cleary, 2001)

Engaging community members in identifying challenges and building on the strengths that exist within their community (Communities for Children, 2005)

Community organising

Organizing is the process of bringing unconnected people together to to work for a common purpose (The Citizen's Handbook, 2006)

Community organizing is one of the few strategies working to build grassroots leadership, community initiative and constituent influence in neighborhoods and communities that are often forgotten or ignored by those in power (Community Organizing Toolbox)

Community building

Community building works by building community in individual neighborhoods: neighbors learning to rely on each other, working together on concrete tasks that take advantage of new self-awareness of their collective and individual assets and, in the process, creating human, family, and social capital that provides a new base for a more promising future and reconnection to America's mainstream. (O. Gibson, G. Thomas Kingsley and Joseph B. McNeely, 1997)

Community building is a field of practices directed toward the creation or enhancement of community between individuals within a regional area (such as a neighbourhood) or with a common interest. It is sometimes encompassed under the field of community development. (Wikipedia)

Community engagement

The public processes in which the general public and other interested parties are invited to contribute to particular proposals or policy changes. Community engagement has the potential to go beyond merely making information available or gathering opinions and attitudes. It entails a more active exchange of information and viewpoints between the sponsoring organisation and the public, however the public is defined. (Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System, Planning NW, 2003)

Social capital

Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Social capital can be understood quite simply as networks of social relations characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity. The essence of social capital is quality social relations....Thus, social capital can be understood as a resource to collective action, which may lead to a broad range of outcomes, of varying social scale. (Stone and Hughes, 2000)

Strengths based

There are many forms of strengths based processes such as; asset-based community development, strengths-based practice, narrative therapy, appreciative inquiry and brief solution-focused therapy. (Australian Family and Community Strengths conference, 2003)

Asset based community development

Asset based community development is an approach to community-based development, based on the principles of:

● Appreciating and mobilising individual and community talents, skills and assets (rather than focusing on problems and needs)

● Community-driven development rather than development driven by external agencies (Cunningham and Mathie, 2002).

Social planning

To systematically identify the social needs within the community and ways of meeting those needs that will enable the Council's long term goals to be achieved (Liverpool City Council, 2005)

A social/community plan describes the local community, summarises the key issues facing it and recommends strategies that council and/or other agencies could implement to address identified needs. (Social and Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines published by the NSW Department of Local Government, 1998)