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Realising The Potential Of Community Work In Local Government - A Guide To Evaluation

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of M.A. by Thesis

Durham University
Department of Adult and Continuing Education
Community and Youth Work Studies Unit

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September 1992



16 APR 1993

FOR COMPLETION BY CANDIDATE IF 7(b) ON HIGHER DEGREE ENTRY FORM DOES NOT APPLY.

This is to certify that none of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other university.

Signed

Date

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY WORK IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A GUIDE TO EVALUATION

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REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY WORK IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT - A GUIDE TO EVALUATION

THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis is a discourse on approaches and methods for reliably observing, recording and demonstrating the effectiveness of community work taking place in local government.

Consideration is given to current trends in local government and several key issues facing community work in that setting. A definition of community work is proposed with relevant typologies of community work to establish the context for the remainder of the thesis.

Relevant approaches towards evaluation are examined with ways in which those approaches can be converted into abstract **evaluation models** specific to the programme being evaluated. The discussion illustrates how these evaluation models can be adapted into **evaluation designs**, providing a practical framework for carrying out an evaluation and the methods that will be employed.

The importance of theory is discussed together with the development of relevant, testable hypotheses. This is described as a thinking stage which precedes consideration of appropriate ways of assembling, analysing and reporting the evaluation findings.

Evaluation is presented as an "**improving**" not a "proving" activity, an inventive not a routine process. The conclusions assert that evaluation is beneficial to community work by providing a collection of preferred approaches and methods that can reliably clarify the nature, purpose and outcome of community work. Moreover, evaluation is a collaborative, flexible and adaptive means of instilling the discipline of thinking about community work, and of fostering among community workers a desire to learn from contemporary practice in realising the full potential of their work.

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY WORK IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A GUIDE TO EVALUATION

Introduction

This thesis is written at a time when there is a growing interest in the evaluation of community work. It is true of my personal experience in Middlesbrough, and evidenced by the research visits made throughout this country, Scotland and to Northern Ireland. The following discourse is concerned with the evaluation of community work programmes being undertaken within local authorities.

Research carried out by Professor Maurice Broady and Rodney Hedley for the National Coalition of Neighbourhoods, completed in 1988, estimates that possibly one-third of all local authorities in England and Wales are working in the field of community development. Attention given to this topic by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in their publication "Community Development - The Local Authority Role" also published in 1988, further suggests a evolving interest in this area of work.

Experience in Middlesbrough, Cleveland and St. Helen's shows an increase in employment opportunities for community workers. Their organisation into area teams, and the status of managers and their access to the political and managerial structures of the authority places community workers in positions to influence both policy and service delivery.

At the same time, high profile and adopted functions such as community work are under scrutiny as financial pressures force local authorities to review their spending and to make difficult choices about how they provide services to the local community. Community workers cannot either avoid such scrutiny or be indifferent to the pressures for greater efficiency this is causing.

However, alongside the requirement for efficiency there is also the desire for **effectiveness**. What is a problem, to the extent that community workers may be in fear of losing their jobs, can also be taken as something of an opportunity. Scrutiny of community work programmes is an opportunity to broaden understanding of community development and community work, bringing them in from the margins. It is an opportunity to improve the knowledge and skills of workers, to introduce better strategic planning in their work, and to link their work with the management systems of their host departments. An opportunity also presents itself to empower working class communities. Through no fault of their own, they find themselves "dispossessed" by central government's strict adherence to an economic policy that prescribes austerity in the provision of public services favouring non-interventionist, market-led alternatives to social provision.

How The Term "Evaluation" is Used in this Thesis

It is important to clarify how the term evaluation is used in this thesis. Essentially, it describes the activity of planned, systematic observation and recording of the outcomes of community work interventions. This activity can be informal, subjective and impressionistic; or formal, objective and scientifically reliable in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of community work interventions and those employed or participating voluntarily in the programme.

"Evaluation" can also be used to describe an area of skill in research and analysis techniques. Community workers may have such skills in evaluation and it would be expected that specialist Evaluators would possess those skills. At certain points the term will be used in this way.

Evaluation is most effective as a voluntary enterprise. The degree of co-operation, commitment and openness required from all the parties involved cannot usually be imposed without encountering at least some of the obstacles referred to later in this chapter.

Most importantly, evaluation is aimed at improving social programmes and the theory, practice of, and learning about, community work. It is a series of approaches and methods capable of realising these and many other opportunities that present themselves. The information produced by an effective evaluation is dynamic, stimulating new ideas and innovation out of current practice.

There are other important implications in the use of this information for the agency/employer, workers, the training of community workers, an academic audience and, most importantly, for community members. Furthermore, community workers can acquire "skills in evaluation" that are more than "thought habits" or intuition, and implemented in relevant approaches and methods into their day to day work. All these factors offer stimulating possibilities.

It must be said that occupational survival is a motor in the growing interest in evaluation. However, care must be taken so that occupation survival is not achieved at the expense of accountability to the community and the ability of practitioners to work effectively in their personal and collective relationship with the state and the community.

Evaluation offers a means of realising the potential of community work in the local authority setting by addressing these dilemmas and helping to work out the details of community work as a form of intervention.

The Nature of the Research for this Thesis

To gather material for this thesis, structured interviews took place among fieldworkers, their managers, local residents and academics during research visits to Middlesbrough; Cleveland County; St. Helen's, Merseyside; Bradford; Plymouth, Devon; Stirling, Scotland and Belfast, Northern Ireland. In addition, discussions took place by telephone and by written correspondence with colleagues and contacts in York and Manchester. This was to determine how evaluation is considered, and being implemented, among community work practitioners in local government. The research took place between September 1989 and August 1991.

By way of contrast, the examples and information from York, Manchester and Plymouth relate to experience in the voluntary sector. Interest here lay in the potential benefits the evaluation process has for paid workers in that sector. Also cited is the recent research carried out by Alan Barr in Strathclyde Regional Council from a book published in 1991 (Barr 1991) because of its current relevance to, and treatment of the topic.

The methodology adopted proved to be problematic. In identifying the places to visit and the people to interview, it was anticipated that each interviewee would have some experience of evaluation in their work. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was structured around a ten point questionnaire. This followed the basic structure of the thesis by inviting views from each interviewee about their experience of local government, their understanding of community work and their experience and/or expectations of evaluation. The notes taken during each interview were summarised at the end and authenticated with the interviewee. Relevant information has then been incorporated in the thesis during the discussion of particular issues.

In fact, the visits and interviews identified limited practical knowledge and experience of evaluation procedures. There was, however, significant interest in the topic of evaluation - with surprisingly few reservations - from all those interviewed. There were clear expectations of the evaluation process, the benefits to workers, other participants and community members. Interviewees were generally knowledgeable about the issues involved. Consequently, the approach has been to synthesize those views and ideas, substantiating and developing that feedback by linking it to the relevant literature and analysing examples of evaluation procedures discovered.

A further difficulty is the paucity of literature concerning the evaluation of community work programmes. While gathering material for the thesis, as much relevant material as possible has been collected from books, articles, journals, reports and recordings. In addition, there are many references to a broader tranche of literature relating to more general social research, and to qualitative research in nursing and education.

Moreover, personal experience of evaluation in my present work for Middlesbrough Borough Council as a manager of community work resources - including staff, buildings and special projects, is a significant influence in my interest in the topic. The experience in Middlesbrough is one model - not a prescription - that is in current use as an approach to evaluating community work in local government. First hand knowledge of the issues, obstacles, approaches and techniques is helpful in weighing some of the theoretical and practical issues raised throughout the thesis.

This personal experience, however, reflects a more general interest in community work in its varied styles and approaches. The issues raised in this thesis are set in that context and intended to be of interest and relevance to a wide audience.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STATE AND COMMUNITY WORK TRENDS IN GOVERNMENT

Introduction

Community Work "is one of the more recent occupations to emerge in local government" Barr (1991:113) - a characteristic confirmed in the research by Broady & Hedley (1989). While that is not universally the case, their findings support a view of community development and community work becoming more central to the purpose and function of modern local government.

This evolving relationship is, however, problematic and "places community workers at a crossroads" (Craig, Mayo & Taylor 1990:289). Jenny Sayer (Sayer 1989) describes the dilemma in this way; "the future of community work is inextricably bound up with the state. We must clarify our personal and collective response to that relationship." Community workers must, then, find ways of working within and around new state structures to empower individuals and collective interests. In the current setting, that will also include ways of improving proficiency while remaining committed and accountable to the local community.

Such a view of community work at a societal level, and practitioners at the local level, suggests they occupy a space between the state and the community. This notion of "interjacency" is not new (Henderson, et al 1980: 2,3 and 174). It suggests that community workers are in an isolated position: on the one hand being a catalyst in the process of

transferring power and status to community groups, and on the other trying to avoid becoming the mediator in, or the channel for, changing power relationships between the state and the community. What is crucial is that community workers can establish a working relationship with the local government system that is "neither sycophantic nor counter-productive" (Young in Bryant (Ed) 1978:76). Equally, care must be exercised so that fostering social action and self help does not simply become an alternative to state responsibility and intervention.

Another important dilemma for community work in this context is to resolve the difficult intellectual and practical challenges presented by issue and identity politics against the collectivist values that have been the traditional cornerstone of community work. Community work today needs to protect the rights and freedom of the community as a whole while dealing with issues of race, gender, disability, youth and so on. These problems also need to be addressed at a parochial level. Small neighbourhoods will have interest groups with special needs, the town or city as a whole needs to balance providing for the needs of the many, while also responding to minority or special needs.

Tackling disadvantage and fostering collective action are "twin pillars" of community work. While they may be more important than ever in today's social and economic climate, there has been significant emphasis placed on "identity and issue politics" (Miller and Bryant 1990:324). That is to say an emphasis on particular, often radical, groups and issues of race, gender, disability, age, etc.

This has brought to the fore important racial and cultural policies, highlighting the particular experiences and needs of the disadvantaged (or "dispossessed" Craig, et al 1990) and those discriminated against. To tackle disadvantage it is necessary to deal with both "difference" and "separateness". This can and has caused conflict, and conflicts of interest. The dilemma needs to be resolved between partial concerns and the importance and value of "communality-based politics". That is to say, preserving our own basic rights and freedoms without surrendering the rights and freedom of others.

It is a proposition set out by David Thomas in the early 1980s. "We still need at the beginning of the 1980s to work on this paradox creatively; that is, to develop the basic details of community work as an intervention that can help with specific problems and, simultaneously, to assert that community work is far more than just an intervention concerned with specific interests and tasks" (Thomas 1983:45).

He rightly describes this as one of the more testing intellectual challenges. In practice, it is even more difficult. Building coalitions between communities, trade unions, institutions, professionals and politicians have been espoused as solutions. Perhaps the term "linkages" used by David Thomas (Thomas 1983:180) ^{is} as a more straightforward description of this kind of organising. For example, federations of community organisations, links between community groups and the trade unions and so on.

However, this will not be a smooth and orderly process. Dealing with "separate development" can have adverse effects. Examples of community development from Australia and America have resulted in increased self-interest, lack of accountability and further fragmentation (Meekosha & Mowbray 1990:337-345 and Mitchell-Weaver 1990:345-356).

Other commentators are less concerned. Separatism builds on existing strengths and campaigns. From a position of strength, it is then possible to penetrate the broader issues of collectivised politics. There is some evidence (Mayo 1990:320) that this has happened in the Trade Unions and elsewhere in the recognition of women's issues and black issues. Perhaps it is important for local groups to establish their independence and culture as a basis for tackling issues of domestic, national and international concern.

If there is an answer here, then it probably lies in the continued, flexible and vigorous local organising that will respond to the concern for cultural pluralism. Also, it may be possible to bring these issues in from the margins, to the centre of a broader political debate on public policy.

Community workers in local government can make use of their employment bases and learn the skills required for their interjacent position. This locates practitioners in a sophisticated but uncertain occupation. Community work is a form of intervention in an environment, being with, but not of the community. Such complexity and uncertainty is comparable to the complexity and uncertainty in a changing society as described above. Workers must, therefore, develop the skill to "equilibriate" (Halmos, 1978) between the state and the community. In the local government setting, this often requires professionalising strategies, that translate ideology into the organisational framework (discussed more fully in Chapter 3).

The evaluation of community work programmes offers a set of approaches and methods that will help to decipher the complexities of power relationships and the contribution of community work. This understanding is crucial for community workers generally, but especially important for those working in the state system and adapting to the organisational framework. Moreover, evaluation is itself adaptable and can focus on examples where partial interests are being, or need to be, addressed.

The following description of trends in local government will illustrate the conditions in which practitioners currently find themselves. It is also important scene-setting for the evaluator who will need to understand the relationship of the community work being evaluated to the local state in which it is operating. A resulting analysis will impact on that relationship, identifying the implications and possibly finding ways of dealing with both issues of collectivism and particularism

Overview

Local government is a crucial component of British society. With over four hundred and fifty local councils, around thirty thousand elected Councillors and a potential electorate of approximately thirty million it is a massive institution.

The Conservative Government has targeted local authorities with legislation (at the rate of one piece of primary legislation per year since 1979) and with expenditure cuts. They have diagnosed inefficiency and lack of accountability at the local level, something which has not been satisfactorily substantiated as a fact. Furthermore, this approach has not dealt with the central issue, that being the proper function and funding of the local state.

The local elections in May 1991 came when local government was firmly in the public eye. The Poll Tax was the main reason, but this tended to focus attention away from the more fundamental issues to do with the importance and viability of local councils, and the process of community government.

There is now a powerful tension between efficiency (cost) and democracy (choice) in local government. Boaden et al (1982:2-4) describes this as a "conflict" between the two criteria for local government. At the centre of this conflict is the question of the most "appropriate scale and organisation of local government".

Recent Conservative Government proposals (Department of the Environment April 1991) address the issues of structure, organisation and funding of local government. The opposition parties have made their policies clear in this respect, and the media have speculated at length on the outcome. Clearly, enlightened power brokers in all political parties recognise a need for change.

This change is now upon us following the general election in April 1992. The Labour Party Manifesto (1992:7) described the election as "a choice between values." It remains to be seen how the future pans out in terms of the mode of governance. The immediate future, however, will be based on the principles of meritocracy, consumerism and benevolence compared, it seems, with those of democracy, collectivism and social justice.

A Conservative government with a much reduced majority in the House of Commons, and under the possibly more moderate leadership of John Major, is still clearly set on a course that will continue to perpetuate the principles of the marketplace, privatisation and consumerism.

While there is a promise in the foreword to the 1992 Conservative Manifesto "that you, and not the Government, should be in charge of your life", it is given in the context of a continuing government that has adopted extraordinary, centralised powers in an apparent, but seemingly contradictory, attempt to achieve that objective and where there still exists, through no fault of their own, "innocent victims of change, excluded from its benefits" (Barry 1990:35).

Throughout this century, rapid economic change and the interests of conservatism have worked against the interests of the poor and disadvantaged. This continues to create a "moral confusion" as described by Peter Baldock (in Henderson, et al 1980:30). Community development and community work are legitimate responses to the "degradation of poor people" and the communities in which they live. The implications for community development and community work are, therefore, clear; in fostering enduring collective action that articulates working class needs; in helping to both reinstate the rights and choices of those who are dispossessed; and redistributing the resources necessary to enrich and secure their lives.

The Power of Central Government

There can be no doubt, then, about the current emphasis on rethinking and reshaping the relationship between government and the community, the relationship between people and power. It is a local, national and, now more than ever, an international phenomenon. The shape of local government, in particular, is changing. Existing forms of managing and delivering services are being challenged and changed, along with the institutions that provide public and collective services.

The Conservative Government over three terms of office has committed itself to "rolling back the frontiers of the state" by attempting to restrict governmental activity to certain spheres. Intervention was to be replaced by "arms length government". The government became "dedicated to destroying socialism" (Brown & Sparks 1990) and promulgating the so called New Right ideology.

This set of beliefs asserts that the post war political consensus bred dependence and moral decline that individualism and market forces will resolve. The present government looks to a minimalist role for the state, espousing freedom, personal responsibility, choice and a new culture of enterprise. In reality this has been a rhetorical solution. "The fact is that the Thatcher Government has been one of the most centralising and interventionist governments for a very long time" (Craig 1990:317).

Cynically, (or one might say pragmatically) this can be seen as a prerequisite for gaining and retaining power. Reducing the areas in which the national constituency can be dissatisfied with government intervention would avoid the type of rejection suffered by the Heath and Callaghan governments of 1974 and 1979. The interventionist nature of those governments was rejected by the electorate for not being able to manage the economy or direct powerful groups in society (Bulpitt 1986:39).

This approach also requires a way of restructuring the middle ground (what Harris describes as the civil state) between the state and the "market" occupied by the institutions. The professions, universities, the Health Service, the civil service, trade unions, the nationalised industries and local government are seen as "conspiracies in restraint of trade, if 'trade' be understood as the free play of market forces" (Harris 1989:4). In other words they are regarded as forms of social and economic control and thereby restricting choice.

The government has taken it upon itself increasingly to intervene in the affairs of these institutions and other groups. The "New Right" (led by Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher) has pursued "macro-economic policies" to reduce the public expenditure component of demand and to manage the balance of payments. Tackling the problem of domestic inflation by controlling the money supply - "monetarism" - has led to the control of the public spending institutions and, consecutively, a strategy of reducing their political influence.

In theory, "arms length government" would promote a degree of autonomy for itself and the public institutions. In reality, autonomous institutions can "pursue policies inimical to the successful achievement of it's (the Government's) macro economic strategy and therefore the centre's own relative autonomy". (Bulpitt, 1986:38).

Consequently, in order for the central state to play a minimal role, it has become necessary for the government to become more powerful than the institutions. The past ten years have then, without doubt, reemphasised the power and sovereignty of central government. This, paradoxically, means the assertion of huge central state powers and intervention.

A New Client Role for Local Government

The pursuit of monetarist policies assumes all other economic and social decisions will flow from that objective. The consequence is that cost and profitability becomes a key indicator of social value. This has become the basis for the concerted attacks on key institutions - particularly those that are central government's own clients. Local government is an example where inefficiency has been alleged coupled with lack of accountability.

The main point is that the emphasis being placed on competition, efficiency and value for money has been reinforced by linking cost to choice. The poll tax is the most clear example of that in practice. The basis for the tax is to identify the cost of local government services per individual poll tax payer and specifying that amount as a measure of quality. Central Government has strengthened its case by arguing that local councils spend excessively. Moreover, while the poll tax was intended to introduce an element of local choice, this was taken out of the hands of the electorate with the imposition of the government's poll-tax "capping" measures. Such a measure simply reemphasises that cost has become an essential criterion for value.

Furthermore, "the dominant theme in the reform of sub-central government can be labelled *marketisation*" (Stoker 1990:132). The fragmentation of public sector institutions and the stimulation of private and voluntary sector market-led alternatives to service provision are, in themselves, major considerations for community work into the immediate future. A means of responding to this is suggested later (Chapter 3, page 54). For now, the reform of sub-central government explicitly defines a role for local councils as clients whose function is to specify and oversee a range of service contracts provided by organisations, often unaccountable to the local community.

The Consensus of the 1990's

Coupled with this is the emergence of an "uncharacteristically confrontational style of British political life" (Barry 1990:17). Barry states that this may be a temporary phase in political development. What is important is that the accretion of state power and ideological conflict is deliberately and systematically at odds with the pre-1979 consensus that has dominated post war British politics. That consensus (while tolerating disagreement on the details of implementation) presupposes broad agreement on four main aims of public policy. These are; an interventionist role for government; a balance of public and private ownership of resources; the provision of welfare and the constitution, in particular the involvement of pressure groups (especially the trade unions) in the political process.

The New Right ideology has made a crucial impact on the broad political leadership in this country. This has taken the debate outside those small number of key topics within the consensus which has had an impact on the intellectual foundations of ideologies across the political spectrum. Despite open hostility, this has set the agenda for current political thinking. The rethinking of socialism now going on is at least partly influenced by the force of this new agenda, representing a response to events and ideas of the past decade. Wholesale nationalisation of the means of production and the abolition of the market is now discounted. The adoption of organisational strategies that embrace some privatisation and competition, including an emphasis on function and performance, has been refined to attract much wider agreement.

The link between cost and choice is a powerful notion. It is generating a new form of consensus among public administrations and opposition parties. This embraces, besides political ideology, new organisational strategies that include contracting out, performance indicators, business and service planning. Hood (1990) describes this as the "new public management" and predicts the widespread adoption of these techniques in the next decade. For example, the Labour Party announced at its local government conference in February 1991 its intention to establish a "Quality Commission" to replace the Audit Commission. The Labour Party document "The Quality Commission - A Consultation Paper" (January 1991)

recognises the "rigour" imposed by the Audit Commission on local government operations while being critical of its achievements in this area. However, the outcome is an emphasis on guidelines for good practice, codes of practice, customer contracts, complaints procedures and so on.

In a televised speech on 23rd March 1991, the Prime Minister, John Major, announced his own "Citizens Charter". This has been heralded as a metaphor for "Majorism" - the defining of certain consumer rights principally aimed towards public services, monitoring them and giving "customers" right of redress.

These approaches also impose further disciplines in the public sector and express a desire to modernise and change the nature of the role, particularly of local government.

The Enabling Role

The role of local government is changing, and being changed, to that of an "enabler" rather than a direct provider of services. Part of the Conservative government's programme for local government is a separation of the responsibility for making provision from the process of providing. The enabling role authorises, plans and regulates other direct service providers. Organisational structures are changing and new strategies are being sought to cope with the pressure for these changes. However, while it can be argued that these are primarily a mechanism to control the activities of local government, it is also possible to assert that what was originally seen as a threat can be converted into a series of new opportunities.

Perceiving the need for change was not exclusive to central government. Clearly, organisational and political systems established in 1974 have become increasingly less relevant over time in a changing society. Reforms in the planning, management and delivery of services were inevitable to respond to the wide range of changing local needs. Tony Worthington (MP), a former Councillor and Chairman of the Strathclyde Region Community

Development Committee delivered a poignant keynote speech in July 1990 to a conference on the future of Scottish Local Government. He stated that "one of the consequences of the kind of professional or managerial (including political) imperialism of the 1950's, 60's and 70's was that people temporarily lost the ability to comment with adequate power on what was being done to them. I doubt whether councils or others would get away with this now!"

An example of this can be seen in the provision of more responsive and relevant services conceived in Middlesbrough during the late 1970's. It entailed trying to draw on the wealth of potential in the community to share the problems of resource management. Manifestoes of the controlling Labour Group expressed their desire to move away from traditional, paternalistic and distant forms of local government. Following the 1983 elections, a paper was prepared called "Democracy, Decentralisation and the Community". This examined the options for the council, made comparisons with experience elsewhere and resulted in a programme of "Community Action" in 1985. This has recently been described by the Leader of Middlesbrough Council, Mike Carr, in the councils' publication "Middlesbrough News" as "our own cultural revolution" (Middlesbrough News:October 1990). It had been preceded by local management systems set up in 1980 and the decentralisation of the Housing Services Department in 1981. Community Work was introduced into the local authority in 1979, and the operations reorganised in 1984 and 1988.

In a recent book from the Bristol School of Advanced Urban Studies (Hambleton & Hoggett Eds. 1990), these themes as they broadly apply to local councils are explored and described as the "decentralisation and democratisation of public services". The authors estimate over 40 local authorities are setting up "single or multi-service forms of decentralisation" based on research carried out in 1986 (Kendrick, et al). More recent research carried out for the National Coalition of Neighbourhoods (Broady & Hedley 1989:5) showed that 24% (109) of the 445 local authorities in England and Wales are carrying out "community development work". This couples restructuring with the provision of staff and other resources in pursuit of engaging and empowering local communities.

This is reinforced by Nanton et al (1990) in their description of "the transformation of public service management" based on their knowledge of urban local authorities. They conclude that local government has available a portfolio of options to strengthen representative democracy. They caution that in the light of current changes and trends in local government, "the only option NOT open to a Council is to ignore their implications".

What appears to be happening is that Local Councils are increasingly looking to the community to resolve difficult problems. The community is mobilised to regenerate the local economy, to manage council housing, to combat crime and vandalism, to manage local facilities and to foster partnerships and coalitions that extend services throughout the community. To this end those councils are more frequently pursuing the tripartite aims of participation, responsiveness and democratisation.

Naturally, some writers (for example, Arnold & Cole (1990:152) caution us against being too optimistic about claims for the success of these approaches, though they are more prevalent and do exert an influence on organisational and personal values, and codes of practice. Alan Barr also reminds us that the combined influences of "functional fragmentation", "centralisation of power", "professionalisation" and "remoteness" are still prevalent in some of the larger authorities. Consequently, while this continues to be the context for any form of local government, it remains an issue for politicians, officers and consumers of services - especially those most vulnerable and in need of support.

Local authorities will find it more difficult to make the investment to enable. Continuing financial constraints in the public sector following the outcome of the General Election in April 1992 may squeeze Councils to the point where even statutory responsibilities will be difficult to provide. A reduction in discretionary powers and the contraction of non-statutory services - community work included (but also in terms of leisure, economic development, benefit advice, support for voluntary services and so on) - will severely affect the ability of Councils to enable their most important resource, their people and communities, to help themselves.

One of the dilemmas is that there are significant numbers in our society who are homeless, jobless, poor, disadvantaged, infirm. Whether they are old or young, or vulnerable due to multiple deprivation, there appears to be no practical and enduring solution offered by central government. The public and collective means to respond to these moral and economic imperatives does not appear to exist beyond the rhetoric of the new government. Indeed, "homelessness", for example, is not recognised in the Conservative Party Manifesto, the nearest reference being the undefined term "housing need" and the recriminating designation of "rough sleeping" (The Conservative Manifesto 1992:34).

It is the case that the "enabling role" is still being both prescribed for and coopted by local government. Further changes will occur in the light of forthcoming local government reorganisation and there will be undoubted tension and friction in the process of change. It remains to be seen how the tension between "the enabling role" as a metaphor for reduced local government on the one hand, is resolved with the perception of the enabling role as a dynamic means of providing people with real choices about their life and lifestyle.

Such tensions will manifest themselves during organisational change. It is to be hoped that the inevitable friction will be managed with a degree of propriety and that the political and managerial choices will be just and equitable in support of those most in need. That would be a counterpoint to the self-preserving ethic that seems to have permeated British society in recent years.

Wider Influences

It is relevant to consider how the relationship between local and central government in this country is set in the context of political and social change in Europe and in other parts of the world. In this wider context, three motors add stimulus and interest in changing forms of government in this country. First, there is the reconfiguration of Europe and the democratisation of the Soviet Bloc. Secondly, the proposed Single European Market and thirdly, new forms of participation and 'consumer orientation" in both Britain and Europe, the USA and the rest of the developed world.

Current social and economic policy in this country and elsewhere bear greatly on the scope for local autonomy and responsibility towards the community. The national and international recession are significant considerations. Stricter controls on public expenditure will follow, further legislation requiring the provision of services in the form of contracts (for example in Housing Management), "opting out" will become a more familiar scenario. There will be the tendency towards the erosion of collectivism, a powerful centralist role for the state, market forces and an emphasis on the private material well-being of the individual.

In society as a whole, pluralism in government now increasingly focuses on "power". The new pluralist institutions in Health, Education, and so on as well as Commerce and Industry, increasingly focus on function and performance. They have considerable power over people, service provision and the quality of everyday life; and will continue to have widespread influence national and locally, and internationally, in the next decade.

Community development is associated with, and gaining prominence in the light of, those political, organisational and social changes. Broady and Hedley's research (1990) concluded that this was the case in England and Scotland. However, it is a slow and painstaking process.

This is even more true of the acceptance and growth of community development and community work in Europe (McConnell 1991:104). However, the growing attention to this growth, the research being carried out into the implications of social and economic policy, and the resulting effects - the so-called "new poverty" of the Single European Market (Benington 1991:85-95) seem destined to require both democratising and empowering systems, and the facilitators necessary to achieve it.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities produced policy guidelines and discussion papers in 1988 that set out their views on community development in local government. This attempts to define community development. Moreover, it is a significant instrument that appears to have been widely read in local authorities stressing the effectiveness of community development and community work. Both are identified "as a strategic approach within a local authority to service planning and delivery".

The policy guidelines also embrace the central values inherent in these approaches (AMA 1988:7) - collective action towards social (political) change; equality practices, tackling disadvantage; confronting personal and institutional oppression and negative discrimination. Furthermore, the goals of community development and community work are espoused with methods of facilitating local action and influencing unresponsive institutions. It is a digest of ideological commitments and specific approaches to influence the role of government, nationally and also locally (AMA 1988:6-14).

The next chapter will develop these themes in detail by proposing a working definition of community work, identifying the common elements and describing ways in which community work can be classified. Those classifications or typologies help to differentiate between the various approaches adopted in community work. Not only does this help develop understanding, it is a necessary frame of reference for undertaking an evaluation of a community work programme.

Concluding comments

Following the outcome of the general election in April 1992, it can be argued that it is even more an imperative to act in defence of, and support for, the poorest sections of society who are unable to "compete" in the marketplace. This will only be done by a properly reckoned approach, both strategically and locally, and with the necessary means to enable and facilitate social change.

This chapter has described the determination of the conservative government to diminish the interventionist role of government and permit "market forces" to control resources and supply services. It has been argued that to ensure a minimalist role for the central state, it has been necessary for the government to adopt extraordinary powers to control the local state and other institutions. The consequent effects are the diminishing powers of the local state to intervene. This is coupled with a reduction in resources, exposing further the difficulties for the seriously and multiply disadvantaged in achieving and sustaining a dignified quality of life.

Collectivised responses are particularly relevant. Community development and community work are central to the relationship between people and power. There is a growing emphasis on the individual and communities to resolve their own problems as the process of "marketisation" fragments the institutions. However, those individuals and groups are disenfranchised producing "innocent victims" unable to benefit from such changes. It is a further significant historical change reflecting the interests of conservatism while denigrating the poor.

Evaluation is particularly relevant in this context. As later chapters will explain, evaluation is committed to knowledge development and the active use of that knowledge to produce relevant theories and practices to address the relationship between people to power. The complexities cannot be underestimated, not least the dilemmas for community workers who must maximise their ability to work in their interjacent position to influence change.

This opening chapter establishes the environment in which a particular stream of community work is operating. Chapter two proposes a definition of that work and relevant typologies that classify its practice.

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CHAPTER TWO

DEFINITION AND TYPOLOGIES OF COMMUNITY WORK

Introduction

"Community work has the opportunity to be an integrating and cohering power in the organisation of groups, the development of services and the determining of policies".
(Thomas 1983:180)

That analysis captures the essential aspects of community work in the local government setting. The opening Chapter addressed the current context of that work. This Chapter will now attempt to do two things. First, to form a working definition of community work for the practical purpose of identifying what is and what is not "community work". Secondly, to differentiate between the various approaches within the general definition by proposing typologies of community work practice appropriate to the setting. In the evaluation of a community work programme, some definition and classification of the work will be necessary.

The stance taken in this thesis emphasises community work as a correlation of employment and social action. It focuses on the setting of political priorities and sharing the problems of managing scarce resources. In addition, community work promotes the participation of community members, with each other as well as with state and other systems.

Towards a Working Definition of Community Work

- ◆ overview

The term "community work" is a title for a broad spectrum of approaches and activities. However, within the local authority setting, a definition of community work will usually encompass the following;

1. the originating set of principles on which the work is founded
2. the expectations of Members, fieldworkers, managers and community members
3. the roles adopted by fieldworkers and the skills employed
4. how fieldworkers spend their time
5. the types of community work practiced

These issues will be addressed in the implementation and reporting of an evaluation. They are, naturally, integrated features separated here only to assist explanation.

- ◆ the originating set of principles

Writers differ in their stance on this issue. Some seek to define community work, others (for example Jones 1977, Norris 1977) approach it by describing what is not community work, avoiding definitions and concentrating on developing typologies.

Alan Twelvetrees (1991) approaches a definition essentially from the perspective of paid workers. Davies & Crousaz (1982) and Rothman (1970) identify a general framework of "work involvements" that could include community work, but without distinguishing what is, and is not, community work.

The main schools of thought on community work describe community work as either a radical social movement, a wider vocation or an occupation. One analysis regards political and social change as the main aim of community work - dealing with political, social and community structures and the issues involved in the redistribution of

resources and the problems of managing those resources. It is specific involvement in these issues that defines the "distributive" function of community work.

There is also a services and resources orientated definition of community work. The "developmental" aspects of community work emerge through these specific involvements in fostering political interaction, local organising and solidarity. In other words, the human processes and organisational procedures elicited by community work.

In addition to the writers already mentioned, the questions of definition are also addressed by organisations such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Association of Community Workers, the Standing Conference for Community Development, the Federation of Community Work Training Groups and in Ireland, the Community Workers Co-operative. Despite their differing stances, there is a surprising degree of similarity in their use of language in describing community work.

For example, while the Gulbenkian Foundation emphasises a structural approach to "social change and social progress" (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1984:5) and the Standing Conference for Community Development emphasises the development aspects of "changes in peoples lives" (SCCD 1987) there is apparent agreement on;

- ◆ i) the involvement of people in social policy decisions that affect their lives
- ◆ ii) influencing the re-allocation of resources
- ◆ iii) a concern for personal well-being, dignity and meeting community needs
- ◆ iv) tackling inequality and promoting equal opportunity

There are other areas of "common ground" regarding the nature of community work relating to;

- ◆ i) the groups with whom community workers are involved - essentially working class groups suffering disadvantage;
- ◆ ii) the aims and objectives of community work, generally and in a given setting;
- ◆ iii) people working collectively,

- ◆ iv) the development of their skills, confidence, personal awareness,
- ◆ v) their knowledge and understanding of problems, issues and solutions is enhanced.

It is relevant to take all of these into account in a definition even though there will not be general agreement about the precise content of each of the areas. (See also Francis et. al. 1984). Where the above is taking place, or where the planned activities are designed to foster these developments, community work can be said to be taking place.

- ◆ the expectations of participants

It is to be hoped that all participants, fieldworkers, Council Members, Managers, other funders and Community Members, share these founding principles. It is also important to note that the inherent principles can be tied back to their conceptions of what community work can achieve. This will be addressed in terms such as "organising and/or servicing community groups", "solving community problems", "promoting self-help", "preventative community care", "encouraging volunteering", "informal education", "anti-poverty work", "information and advice work", "training" and so on. Specific reference is made to them because they are expressions of the likely expectations of Members, non-specialist managers and community members.

It will be important in an evaluation to draw out the similarities and the differences to promote a common understanding of the terms used and then of what is community work is actually expected to achieve in relation to those expectations. Clearly, there is a link here between the expectations of participants and the development of typologies of community work practice.

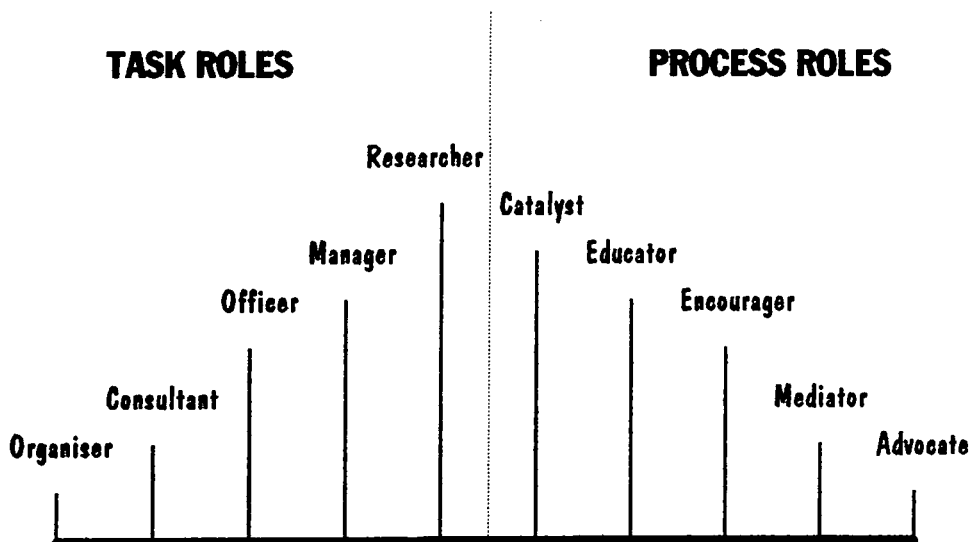
- ◆ the roles and skills of fieldworkers

Local authority workers are expected to have a multi-purpose role - a mixture of "deskbound" tasks with activities promoting local development.

A model proposed by Van der Wetering (1989) is a useful example to illustrate this section. The model requires that a number of roles (say eight or ten) are defined for fieldworkers. This model can be defined in conjunction with community work staff, their managers, Members and local residents.

The ten roles in this case are titled; "organiser"; "consultant"; "officer"; "manager"; "researcher"; "catalyst"; "educator"; "encourager"; "mediator"; "advocate". A description of each role can be constructed in relation to worker's and participants expectations. It is not necessary to do that here, but it will be helpful in describing the main elements of the community work taking place in the programme being evaluated

The following diagram shows not only the roles as depicted above, but the way in which they can be subdivided into "task" and "process" roles.



An evaluation will address these aspects, where the defined roles will be a summation of participants understanding of what community workers are expected to do, and actually do. By ranking how they are perceived by each group of participants it will be possible to show how each group, a) expect workers' roles to be operating; and b) perceive workers' roles to be functioning. The differences and commonalities will be illuminating and show both the content and balance of the current work with areas where strategies for change are required.

It is also important to be aware that each role type signifies particular skill areas in addition to the functions they describe. For example, to be an "organiser" suggests having "organisational skills" and so on.

Not only will an analysis of community work roles define the nature of the community work intervention, it will also define the skills necessary. It will be possible to use this analysis to determine undeveloped areas of skill both in the programme, and among workers and participants.

In Chapters 8 and 10 dealing with Evaluation Design and Data Collection this example could be included in one of the design models as both a method for gathering information and a means of analysing workers' and others perception of community work roles.

- ◆ how fieldworkers spend their time

As a complement to the description and operation of roles in community work, it is important to identify how fieldworkers spend their time. Community Workers employed by a local authority operate at two levels; at the neighbourhood level, and at the agency level.

It is not necessarily true that every activity that they are involved with is community work or associated with community development. It is important to avoid tenuous links between the totality of what community workers do and the aspects of their role that can

be defined as community work. This will avoid the frustration and disappointment that can result from an open-ended analysis of the work that is not founded in the reality in which paid staff of the local authority find themselves. This inevitably involves periods where workers themselves will interpret what they are paid to do as outside of personal or empirical definitions of community work.

This latter point is important. It suggests that in giving consideration in how community workers spend their time, it will require them to focus on personal understandings of community work and the community development process, the nature and content of their work and so on. It is easy to see how this will make a significant contribution to the other elements in constructing the overall definition.

- ♦ the types of community work practiced

To illustrate, or differentiate, the various approaches adopted in community work, "ideal" types of community work are helpful. Both definition and typology are necessary to describe community work. Moreover, there will be a close association between the expectations of participants and typologies proposed for the work. This section deals with the most frequently recurring typologies in the literature - so called "textbook precepts", but it is possible to modify those suggested below or create new ones appropriate to the setting being evaluated.

Illustrations of both distributive and developmental approaches have been proposed and captured in various typologies. In evaluating community work, it will be necessary to establish; i) how effective workers have become in these approaches and ii) how effective the community work process is in relation these approaches.

David Thomas defines "five principal approaches; community action; community development; social planning; community organisation; and service extension" (Thomas 1983:106). These classifications are emphasised firstly, because the terms frequently appear throughout the literature, and secondly, for consistency because they will be used again in the later Chapters of the thesis.

However, other very similar typologies of community work have been produced by the Gulbenkian Working Parties of 1968 and 1973, the National Institute for Social Work, Rothman (1970) and the National Community Development Projects 1974.

Briefly, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (1968) subsumed a variety of work under the title community work. In 1973, this was developed as "community (field) work; community organisation; and community planning". "Community work" was further subdivided into "community development" and "community action".

Following on from the Gulbenkian Groups were writers such as Thomas and Warburton (1977) who developed the primary strands of community work as; "community organisation/community action; social planning; community care and service development". David Jones (1977) describes a variety of activities by voluntary and statutory agencies as "service development".

Rothman's typology of "community organisation practice" is called "locality development, social planning and social action". This was adopted later by Twelvetrees (1982) as "community development" and "social action", and by Davies and Crousaz (1982) as "community development, community planning and social action". The National Community Development Projects added "organisational and service development and traditional community development" under the heading "social change".

The National Community Development Projects produced a typology of "social change" showing the geographical level of the work plotted against their basic ideological assumptions. "Social planning" and "traditional community development" are similar in definition to those given below, whilst "organisation and service development" are similar to "service extension".

There are many other current approaches in which community work can make a contribution. Typologies of the work may be devised specifically for "economic regeneration"; "action on health"; "tenant participation"; "community education"; "informal education" and so on to classify the work being studied.

The typologies proposed by Thomas are;

- ♦ **Community Action** aims to promote collective action to challenge established socio-political and economic structures and processes, to explore and explain the power realities of people's situations and, through this twin pronged approach, to develop both critical perspectives of the status quo and alternative bases of power. It is characterised by; militancy; linkages and campaigns; collective awareness and interpretation of socio-economic trends; and disobedience or direct action.
- ♦ **Community Development** emphasises self help, mutual support, neighbourhood integration, the capacity for problem solving and the promotion of collective action. Three sub-types are identified that include; promotion and maintenance of mutual support networks; self help in the provision of material amenities or benefits; and the organisation of (political) influence.
- ♦ **Social Planning** is concerned with the assessment of community needs and problems and the systematic planning of strategies for meeting them. It is a social analysis of conditions, policies and agency services; the setting of goals and priorities; the design of service programmes and the mobilisation of resources. The method emphasises both rational and technical procedures as well as political ones. It also tends to assume that the resulting participation will then be rationally converted into enlightened political decision making.
- ♦ **Community Organisation** involves the collaboration of separate community or welfare organisations, with or without the additional participation of statutory authorities in the promotion of joint initiatives. There is scope to be pioneering, to be innovative, experimental and to undertake demonstration projects that may eventually be adopted by statutory or other bodies.

- ♦ **Service Extension** seeks to extend agency operations by making them more relevant and accessible. In addition to decentralising strategies, this typology encompasses an interest in greater accountability to consumers of the services; to enhance community control; reinvigorate political systems; and to reduce paternalism and cut across the bureaucracy.

In so-called "mapping exercises" (see Chapter 10), the phases through which the programme evolves can be charted against typologies of this kind. This can provide both a historical account of the programme, and also a theoretical model for its development. Such a theoretical model illustrates progress from the beginning of the intervention to the current point in time, then looking ahead towards an exit strategy. Key et al describe this approach as "critical appraisal" (Key, et al 1976:50), which will be considered later.

Other Factors

It must also be recognised that "there is a tendency to glamorise the nature of the work," and that much of the work is "mundane and routine" (Barr 1991:33). The job carried out by community workers requires a great many "deskbound" tasks in what they actually do for a living. For completeness, a definition of community work must acknowledge the dichotomy between radical aspirations and day to day realities.

It is necessary to draw realistic, not hard or idealistic, boundaries around local authority community work. Being able to distinguish for most practical purposes what is and is not community work becomes the first stage in evaluating it. The terms "contact work" and "non contact work" are used in this thesis. "Contact work" describes the elements of the role that is community work, while "non contact work" describes the miscellaneous tasks and duties that are part of the job.

In developing definitions and descriptions of community work, it is necessary to establish the extent of "contact" and "non-contact" work for staff within the local authority setting. "Non-contact work" is best discarded as a descriptor(s) of community work.

There are several reasons for this;

- ◆ firstly, non-contact work is regarded by Members (the employer) as an important element of the community worker's multi-purpose role they are paid to do.
- ◆ secondly, an amount of work-time and effort within the worker's immediate organisational environment and across departments as well as with other agencies will clearly not be devoted to programmes of local action.
- ◆ thirdly, it is possible through this incremental approach to specify the extent of 'contact' time and effort in the current work at the community level. The approaches and methods identified will be directly related to what a colleague of mine describes as 'pure forms' of community work.

An understanding of these elements will enable workers and their managers to make preliminary judgements about the balance of work effort. It will also lead to a deeper analysis of what is, and is not, community work.

There are other benefits. A starting point such as this provides a framework around which fieldworkers can begin to discuss what they value in their work, the definitions they apply to the use of terms as well their style of practice.

This approach also begins to highlight tensions between fieldworkers, their managers and politicians or other governing body. Moreover, it can expose myths and confusions about policy, politics and the role expected of staff.

Importantly, workers may be empowered to exercise a degree of control over the nature of their job. They can do this individually and collectively. Evaluation methods, which include some of the auditing methods referred to in later sections, are means by which the problems of managing time, resources and effort can be collectivised.

Community work is one of a range of inputs in the development of communities that Thomas describes as a "process of franchisal and social development" (Thomas 1983: 113). Other forms of local organising, the action of individuals and other occupational and social groups impact on the programme. This should be recognised.

Community work takes place at the local level, within the employing agency as well as between the relevant agencies. Community work in the current idiom has adopted similar features in each of these locations. Thomas (1983:125-135) cautions us against applying principles such as 'collectivisation', 'participation', 'process' and 'task' at the agency level. He feels these are less useful in understanding work with agency staff. However, more recent work, for example Barr (1991:78-83), indicates that community work staff with managerial responsibilities value work at the agency level. He concludes that "any local authority department which sponsors community work should behave in relation to all its activities in a manner which is consistent with empowering and enabling community organisations to participate and have influence..." and cannot do so without ensuring that these principles permeate all their activities".

Modern management literature (for example the series of books by Tom Peters (1987), Peters & Austin (1990), Peters & Waterman (1990) and Peter Drucker (1988) that appear to be widely read by local authority managers), management training and practice contain similar themes. Peters stresses leadership, innovation and customer care. Drucker (1988:69) confirms that "decisions affecting the entire business and its capacity to perform are made at all levels of the organisation". This includes values, objectives, policy, technology, markets, products and so on.

"Quality Circles" in industry are practical examples of collectively dealing with problems, identifying solutions and participant control of the production process. (Caplen 1991:112-122) There is a reference elsewhere to the "Quality Wheel" adapted by the Cleveland Council for Voluntary Services (from a model proposed by the National Consumer Council) as an aid for improved practice in local voluntary organisations.

Corporate approaches to "customer care", "putting people first", "public service orientation" and the like are consistent with this reasoning. In Middlesbrough Council, staff participation is the corollary of public participation; staff development the corollary of community development and so on. This is also explicit in, for example, Bradford and other authorities that have introduced "anti-poverty strategies" designed as a corporate response to tackling disadvantage.

As we look ahead towards European integration, the so-called Social Charter ("The Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers" 1989) sets out a fifty point action programme. This is geared towards a common structure of industrial relations and contractual rights accompanying the economic integration of the 1992 project. Clause 17 identifies both democratic rights and rights to financial participation. Central to this are the themes of rights to information; consultation; and participation.

These examples are included because of the influence of new management techniques and management development training. Also because of the wider influences that are present and about to materialise, and because of the relevance of these connections to non-specialist managers of community workers. This concurs with the comments made by Alan Barr (Barr op.cit page 81) that it is likely a lot of managers of community work operations are not specialist in either training or experience.

The linkages in principles and approaches do create common ground and insights for non specialist managers and also received knowledge for community workers operating in a managerial framework. This is also a practical framework in which community work skills can inform and be transferred into other operational spheres.

The application of community work principles in an agency environment familiar with corporate management practices provides a climate for effective communication and "organisational development". That is one of the benefit hoped for in the reorganisation of community work operations in St. Helen's, Cleveland and Middlesbrough. When fieldwork teams were reorganised, a policy development role was included that involves working across departments to increase their understanding of community development and the Council's approaches, helping them to define their position.

The Concept of Community

The focus of community work is in a neighbourhood or a wider constituency of interests or identity. This goes to the heart of defining "community". It is not my intention to address this in detail except to make the following brief comments.

- ◆ "Community" may be used to describe geographical boundaries or shared interests or experiences.
- ◆ "Community" suggests a focal point; "a web of inclusive ties" (Plant 1974:16); a locality; a common purpose, interest or need; (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation *ibid.*); or a collective experience. Cohen (1985) describes "community" as a "relational idea" where people have something in common with each other that distinguishes them from other groups.
- ◆ "Community" also suggests something that is stable and enduring has feeling and structure, is "old" and "new". Ferdinand Tonnies used the classical expressions *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) to convey these notions.

The evaluator will present his/her definition or model of "community" either explicitly or implicitly in the findings of the evaluation. The concepts outlined above will appear, inter-alia, either as an interpretation of experience or recordings of the perceptions of participants.

A Definition of Community Work

Given the nature of community work, David Thomas cautions us that "any attempt at definition must also recognise that community work is an evolving practice: a definition must, therefore, not only be incomplete but be open enough to allow for modification as community work develops its practice, research and theory" (Thomas 1983:119). Having regard to that, the following terms of reference are proposed as a basis for defining community work.

- ♦ Community work is principally aligned with the working class and offers a means in "communities" for self generating change associated with tackling disadvantage and inequality.

- ♦ Community Work can be said to be taking place if it is in accord with certain principles. Thomas, for example, summarises these principles of group participation and worker involvements in this way; "Direct face to face interventions with a group or organisation can be identified as community work if...
 - the group's members join voluntarily;
 - they take responsibility for the work and management of the group, including defining their own needs;
 - have personal experience of those needs;
 - and are working to achieve outcomes which will benefit a wider constituency;

- the worker collectivises people's problems and seeks to understand and work on the external reasons for their existence;
- as such s/he works with a group to achieve specific tasks and goals which are conceived of as an exercise of power by group members;
- conceives of his/her role as one of partnership;
- seeks to promote participative norms and structures;
- and tries to help people acquire confidence, skills, knowledge and a greater awareness of their life situations".

(Thomas 1983:135)

- ♦ Community work has two broad functions, to influence the distribution of resources and to facilitate long term and sustained local development.
- ♦ Community work will be characterised in certain roles and the application of specific skills performed by fieldworkers. Understanding roles and skill areas, and the balance of those roles with the development of skills in the current work is a means of summarising the nature of the current work in the perception of workers and other participants.
- ♦ Typologies of community work describe the discreet approaches adopted within the programme. Consequently, typologies describe specific categories of activity under the general heading "community work".
- ♦ Given the local government context, community work is a form of leadership that assists local organising where that is not likely to happen spontaneously.
- ♦ Moreover, community work will be planned work, associated with policy formulation and service provision in identifying priorities and improving the efficiency and responsiveness of, essentially, public services.
- ♦ Community work takes place at the local level, within the employing agency as well as between the relevant agencies.

- ◆ Moreover, community work "makes both a specific and a synoptic contribution" to the typologies of community work given in this chapter. The specific contribution of community work to these typologies is distinct (ie: community work is a particular kind of intervention) but one of a number of contributions in promoting political responsibility and collective identity in the community.
- ◆ The "synoptic" contribution of community work sets it apart from other forms of intervention as it seeks to assimilate and codify other interventions in this development process.

Concluding Comments

Community work within a local authority is not purely a fieldwork role, this is likely to be the case for other paid workers. In approaching the evaluation of community work, it is important to specify both what community workers do (definition and typology) and the detail of how they spend their time (work effort) and deploy their skills "in contact" with community members as well as completing routine "deskbound" tasks.

David Thomas provides a detailed definition of community work (Thomas 1983:117-135) and the typologies he proposes as "textbook precepts" will be used later in this thesis. Importantly, Thomas accepts that both definition AND typology are necessary to capture the essence of community work, a point not often acknowledged elsewhere in the literature.

This Chapter has attempted to provide an aid to identifying the common elements in the different types of community work. A working definition and the classification of day to day practice will deepen our understanding of what we will be seeking to evaluate.

This chapter has attempted to define the major features of community work in local government, the principles and predominant typologies of current practice in that setting as well as separating the use of work time. Reference is also made to the nature and use of the word "community". This provides a frame of reference to help in "knowing" community work, why and how it exists and the contribution it is making.

The skills of community workers are transferable, and an attempt is made to relate these to other skill areas, particularly for non-specialist managers of community work resources. Community work is set in the wider context of local authority service provision and it is likely that non-specialist managers will be involved in the delivery as well as the evaluation of programmes. Their training and experience is likely to be in other spheres. Some of them are identified in later sections of the Chapter.

The next chapter will complete the scene setting and the environment in which community work and the evaluation process takes place and specifies nature of the work that will be studied. There are several factors that are current issues for community work in the local government setting.

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CHAPTER THREE

SOME CURRENT ISSUES IN COMMUNITY WORK

Introduction

This Chapter will draw mainly on personal experience covering two decades in local government. There are several key aspects of community work in the local government setting that locate the work, shape values, influence theory and practice. Moreover, this will be related to the behaviour of workers making a contribution to the "knowing" of community work.

To acquire "the skills of knowing" (Turner 1988:113), it is essential for the evaluator to be exposed to people and practice in the field. He describes how it is important to "botanise" and to contemplate, thereby enhancing the skills of observation and increasing understanding.

This is important for two reasons. First, explicit "skills of knowing" ensure that the evaluator becomes sagacious and insightful about the context of the community work activity or event under investigation. Detailed observation of, and reflection on community work, using the skills of knowing, enables us to discern all its characteristics. Secondly, the evaluator will gain insights into the community work that is taking place and the key areas in which an evaluation can most usefully contribute to new knowledge and new approaches.

Overview

As ever, there are many demands facing community workers in the 1990s. The editorial introduction in the "Community Development Journal" (Craig, et al 1990:286-290) summarises the global, and the national and local developments community work must address. It is a contrast between pessimism about international economic recession and hope in the energetic continuation of local action.

There will be ongoing problems for community workers and in community work as a whole in this decade. There will be the struggle for identity, for resources and strategies to overcome "particularism and fragmentation". These problems will lead community work to address many dilemmas. For example, how will community work address the local consequences of national and international recession? How will community work foster its collective approaches in an increasingly fragmented and market oriented setting? How will community work address itself to communality and identity politics? How will community work "professionalise" yet still maintain accountability and avoid incorporation into a struggle for power for its own sake?

Moreover, there is the tendency for community work to "promise more than it can deliver" (O'Conneide & Walsh 1990:333). There are three dimensions to this. The first is in the general sense of Harry Specht's much quoted "large hopes and small realities" (Specht 1975) on the likely outcomes of community work. The second relates to the scale on which community work can evoke social (i.e. political) change. The third is in the propensity for employers to demand a high workload and for community workers to take too much work on board.

Community workers should not lose sight of their ambitions. Both community development and community work should offer realisable goals and objectives in the pursuit of social and political change.

While many commentators make a virtue of the open-endedness of community work and community development and its diversity of interests, skills, values, and so on, it is important to have a pragmatic critique of the relationship between people and power. This seeks to support what can, and is, being achieved in community work by setting out realistic expectations; having a realistic vision of what can be achieved; accompanied by sound theory and corroborated evidence. A competent evaluation will not only describe how effective the community work being practiced is, it will also be a means of establishing realisable goals for workers.

At the beginning of Chapter One, two issues were raised for community work regarding its relationship to the state and the need to deal with both issue and identity politics.

There are five other contextual issues which have particular relevance for evaluation;

- i) Ideology, values and practice norms
- ii) Professionalisation
- iii) Process
- iv) Community work roles
- v) Visioning

Ideology, values and practice Norms

Community work is a diverse and heterogeneous movement and its practice difficult to codify. Beliefs (ideology), principles (values) and behaviours (norms) are particular to workers and the different streams of community work practice. They do, however, represent the dominant thinking at any one time and in any given situation.

The evaluator, to carry out an evaluation successfully, needs to tune into this. It should, from the outset, be clear what the originating "set" of ideologies, values and norms (agency, personal, participant, etc.) are - whether they are openly stated or implied.

- ♦ Ideology

Essentially, there are two main arteries of thought on this issue. For example, the Association of Community Workers (1982), Wainwright (1979), Mayo (1979), Baldock (1983), Blunkett and Green (1983) typify a "radical" position in this respect. The aims of the Home Office Community Development Projects of the early 1970's subsequently came to be reinterpreted by their workers into a radical analysis. In that analysis, values and beliefs stem from a critique that sees political change as the main aim of community work. This "structural" or "materialistic" perspective relates to the "distributive" function proposed for community work, in other words assisting people to improve their personal (and communal) material and social situation.

Radicalism, however, "produced a climate in community work in which people were reluctant to share their experiences and ideas with one another in an honest manner" (Thomas 1983:57). It is criticised for damaging community work (Marris 1987:4) with "crude anti-state rhetoric" (Barr 1991:129) and creating a tension between the aims of government and community work rather than "a convergence of social ideals" (Marris *ibid*).

Other writers, for example David Thomas (1983), Specht (1975), Jones (1977), Twelvetrees (1991) and the Gulbenkian Study Groups (1968 and 1973) postulate a pragmatic, task oriented analysis typical of a "professionalised" approach. They describe community work as having "developmental" compared with "distributive" aims. They would describe the distributive function of community work as too limiting, too short term and, of itself, a weak justification for community work as a form of intervention. In addition, it regards the state as a much more complex and sophisticated construction and that community work must be able to form a productive and dynamic relationship with its systems.

There must also be a concern about the "role strain" (Barr:1991:59) experienced by individual workers as a result of a tension between radical aspirations and conservative agencies. The wider consequences of those tensions is significant where the aims of

government (national or local) or other sponsor of community work might be felt to be in conflict with those of the workers. If community workers appear to alienate themselves from their sponsors regarding the means by which social change will be achieved, the sponsors will (as in the case of the Community Development Projects) distance themselves, withdrawing their support and funding.

Nonetheless, the adjacent propositions are able to co-exist. The key lies in achieving a position where there is a common justification for both public policy and community action. This does not fundamentally require a consensus on the methods which will achieve those ideals. Marris (1987 op.cit) argues that community action is capable of influence in the government's own terms, even if that is with an ideological position opposed to the perceptions and assumptions of the government.

Working within local government it is possible to influence the formation of systems that decentralise services and bureaucratic structures, augmenting participation and control and extending the local democracy. However, it is significantly more difficult to underpin this with sustainable development in the locality. This involves local organising, the strengthening of political and social relationships and the networks that spring up from that as well as cultural reform in the sense of communities finding their own standards and what is appropriate in enhancing their lifestyle.

An effective evaluation will lead to an understanding of how the distributive and developmental functions of community work can interact in the particular setting. While the distributive functions are important, the more important questions to be answered in an evaluation will relate to ways of ensuring long term and sustainable local development.

Moreover, an evaluation has the potential to highlight ways in which the beliefs and ideals of the state (central and local) as policy maker and funder converge with those of the community work being practiced. This is pragmatic and offers a means for open dialogue where the details of community work can be developed in a way where "the state.... remains a target for influence but can also be a partner for change" (Barr 1991:129).

- ◆ Values

"The community development process is always value seeking" (Biddle & Biddle 1965:233). It is a system of values that shapes behaviour and informs the judgements made about the worth and effectiveness of community work. Value systems provide both an ethical framework that codifies (either explicitly or implicitly) the responsibilities of workers and agencies towards the public and communities and a general framework for decision making that defines overall roles and specific courses of action.

Values act as a guide - for the practitioner and the participant as well as informing organisational goals. It is, however, important to be aware that the diversity of community work practice, the locations in which it operates and the agencies that sponsor it causes different (occasionally conflicting) sets of values.

The evaluator should be clear in the distinction between values and what is valued.

"Values determine general standards and ideals by which we judge our own and other's conduct; they also give rise to specific obligations" (CCETSW 1976:4). Horne (1987:95) describes two contrasting "forms" of values. One form asserts that values are "absolute imperatives", where something is held to be inherently "right" (deontological values). For example, collective action and mutual support are held to be inherently right.

The other asserts that values are "a means to an end" (utilitarian values), "where the 'end' rather than any moral obligation justifies the act" (Horne 1987). The latter is a more apt description of what is valued. For example, a community group may campaign for family health facilities in its area that results in lower infant mortality rates.

Moreover, the enduring values of equality, freedom, empowerment, choice, self-determination, respect, and so on (see also Timms (1983:43), Butrym (1976, Chapter 3) and Biestek (1961)) are, or are about to be, qualified in modern local government by the greater emphasis on performance, competence, efficiency, professionalising strategies, and so on. In other words, modified by the influence of the

organisation, the so-called "agency function" or "the sanction and auspices for its (community work) practice" (Horne 1987:83).

It is necessary for the evaluator to make the distinction between worker and agency values and what is valued. In both cases there may be consensus or tension that it will be important to address.

◆ Norms

"Norms" are reflections of values. Personal, occupational and organisational value systems in the process of community development are reflected in their actions or behaviours. For example, community work sponsored by a local authority is expected to reflect societal norms - acting lawfully, standards of conduct in a community centre or a public meeting, pursuing consensus rather than conflict strategies, and so on.

Norms are of interest to the evaluator. They are "a specific guide to action which defines acceptable and appropriate behaviour in particular situations" (Haralambos & Heald 1980:5). It is possible for the evaluator both to anticipate as well as detect norms of behaviour.

Whether in harmony or in conflict, the relationship of values and norms is crucial. Value systems give the "know-why" of what community work is trying to achieve whereas norms are the actions and behaviours accompanying them. Thus, community work embodies a set of norms that are an expression of the values held.

Understanding the relationship between values and norms provides a framework that enables us to make judgements about the effectiveness of the community work.

Comparing why things are meant to happen, and what participants believe they ought to be doing, with what is happening and being done, helps the evaluator to judge the worth or effectiveness of the event or programme.

Process

Another important issue for community workers is "process". It is important to recognise this on two levels; first that community work is a process of interconnecting strategies, theories, practice, beginnings, endings and so on. Secondly, that community work is a contributory factor in the process of daily living for community members, one aspect of their holistic social experience. That is to say community work itself is composed of a series of associated elements, but is only one of the elements in the daily lives of community members.

The importance of examining process lies in; a) what it tells us about community work and the relationship between the elements of the intervention and b) the influences community work exerts in a given setting and the outcomes at various stages in the daily lives of participants. Similarly, the intervention of community work produces particular outcomes during the various phases of individual, group or social development.

It is easy to lose sight of the processes community work stimulates as it seeks to deal with tangible issues and in the pursuit of goals. Because social programmes deal with people and communities "in the process of becoming" (Biddle & Biddle 1965:2) community workers become part of that process or system in which participants are active, independent and creative.

Consequently, the activities with which community work is associated "occur within a wider social context which both receives and influences the programme" (Key, Hudson & Armstrong 1976:14). There is an intrinsic value in a piece of community work for its own sake, detached from the achievement of any specific goal. This can be described as "consciousness raising" (Lightfoot 1988), relating to personal and social development. In this sense, the community work intervention is interpreted as an educational process.

Kevin Morris describes the model of "community education" to convey this notion:

"Community education within the context of community work is invariably seen as a function of community development....where the principles of participation and involvement are facilitated through education (Morris 1989:74). Writers, though, would argue that the educational process alone is incomplete (for example, Coates and Silburn 1970). They stress that learning through doing is associated with joint action in pursuing the redistribution of power and resources.

Nonetheless, it should be recognised that a community work intervention can foster "dialogue, action, reflection" (Freire 1972), in other words a learning process beginning with, and arising out of people's life experience. It is valued of itself and includes a variety of informal and formal educational mediums or media. The community worker will be alert to these potentials and an evaluation would be expected to address the outcomes of the educational process as well as the extent to which particular tasks are achieved.

There is much potential in community work associated with local authority activities to elaborate the processes stimulated by collective action, and to influence systems that action involves. New organisations, linkages and coalitions create an environment for people to interact in new and often innovative ways. The outcomes in these circumstances cannot be "second-guessed" or framed in objectives - they are the result of creativity and natural development, learned from the act of doing.

Equally, the development of new organisations and political structures - the strategic elements of the community work role - informs and influences other internal and external systems in addressing power relationships and eliciting effective service responses.

An evaluation will need to take account of "process". That is the intrinsic process of community work as a method and the processes stimulated by community work in the locality and at the agency level. There will be detectable effects within the immediate system (the programme) and the wider systems with which the programme interacts.

Certain approaches to evaluating community work are particularly suited to identifying these processes and should be accommodated as resources allow. This is dealt with in some detail in Chapter 6 where "goal models" and "systems models" are discussed. Briefly, a "systems" approach to analysis does not concentrate specifically on "outputs" against planned objectives. Rather, it is a freer approach to investigating the other things programmes and agencies do (such as promoting learning) apart from achieving their expected aims, emphasised in the "goals model" approach.

Professionalisation

The dominant characteristic of "professionalism" in community work is the attempt to translate ideology into an organisational framework "that can be accommodated within existing society and thereby operate in a routine manner over a period of time" (Baldock 1980:43). "Routine", though, should not be interpreted as habitual or without purpose.

For clarity, an explanation of the terms relevant to this discussion will be useful.

- ◆ "Professionalising" is used to mean the emergence and identification of an occupational group that has a discreet area of skill, knowledge and method.
- ◆ "Profession" refers to the "bureaucratic stabilisation" of community work. This will result in a certain status that will evolve over time.
- ◆ "Professional" refers to the attributes of community workers that are complex, not easily learned and practiced with "professionalism".

These terms are, however, also associated with elitism, competition, social control, oppression and so on, and the "practically received opinion that professionalism is the bulwark of conservatism" (Baldock 1980:42). Roger Cartlidge discusses these issues at some length regarding training for community work. He argues, "we are right to be concerned about the professionalisation of community work at an institutional and structural level but there is a need for us to give more attention to how greater occupational expertise can be developed" (Cartlidge 1983:69). Similarly, "professional" community workers must deal with the "tension between being very tolerant about everything that happens and trying to insist that it's done well, done to a standard that we feel confident about" (Derricourt 1990:323).

Miller & Bryant (1990:324) go on to discuss "the destination of community work as an occupation" and highlight "the concerned debate amongst those in paid community posts". The debate is focused on whether community work is an occupation, a radical social movement or a method(s) to be used by other occupational groups in effecting social change. Reference is made elsewhere in the literature (often rather disparagingly) about this debate in various ways, for example, "the old chestnut" Thomas (1983:114); "problematic" Twelvetrees (1991:5); "contradiction" Specht (1975). Such terms seem to echo a sense of frustration about the persistence and prominence given to this issue.

Thomas (1983:45) describes a "crude anti-professional ethic" restraining community workers who are unwilling to define and articulate the basis of their expertise. Contributing to this, perhaps, is the absence of a consistent code of practice, underdeveloped theory, a high turnover in staff and the lack of secure funding. Perhaps, too, because community work is often at the margins and little understood or attributed a low occupational status.

Clearly, though, community work is "actually a very hard job to do well" (Mc. Connell 1990:322). Community workers do offer a discrete set of skills, knowledge and techniques as well as particular worker attributes that are not easily acquired. It is essential in the future to work at the dilemma arising from the debate about professionalisation so that workers can declare and refine their skills, extend their

knowledge, improve their competence and effectiveness. In this way community work can be further legitimized as a method and an occupation in its own right.

This is particularly important for local authority community workers who find themselves operating within a clearly defined framework. Councils are both structured and increasingly concerned with competence and performance. This imposes certain operational characteristics and approaches to community development to which the community worker is inextricably bound. There are expected to be boundaries around day to day working, and the approaches are often prescribed for the community work intervention.

A local Council is also a system, interacting with and influencing other systems. Some of these systems are "internal", for example its political, professional and interdepartmental systems. Others are "external" such as its interjacency with other public, commercial and industrial institutions.

Experience in Middlesbrough, Cleveland, St. Helen's, Kirklees and Plymouth, for example, suggests that the emphasis on function and performance in local government operations is, in turn, exerting a powerful influence on community workers to prove their competence and effectiveness. This is tending to place a greater emphasis on professionalising strategies in community work, drawing boundaries around knowledge, skill and method.

In moving with this tendency, it is important to recognise the implications for community work and community development. "Boundaries", as a term, is not meant to suggest the monopolising of knowledge, skill and method. Rather it is the description of a framework for translating, bonding and integrating the essential enduring and stabilising characteristics of community work. Adopting a stance that supports community work as "professional" and "professionalised" does not mean, therefore, that it should become esoteric, elitist and managerial - and thereby depoliticised.

There is, however, a great deal of scope for misunderstanding and tension about the "professional" role between workers, elected members and officers. As Alan Barr describes in his analysis of community work in Strathclyde (Barr 1991: 92-99), working with disadvantaged groups at the political level requires not only skill but also clarity in the relationship between elected members and other colleagues.

Without "political skills" (in this case it would be an occupational skill as described earlier) , and a relationship between workers, members and officer colleagues that is mutually understood and supportive, there will be tensions that can lead to attempts to curtail community work activities. Barr (1991 *ibid*) quotes the definition of "political skills" by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work;

"Skills in coping with the tensions and crises that arise in the process of intervention, negotiation and advocacy and in the identification of issues involving the use and distribution of power will be used in a variety of situations in formal organisations, in informal meetings with colleagues or with local residents in the neighbourhood" (CCETSW 1974:20)

While "professionalising" suggests a systematic and technical approach to community work, it is important to stress the significance of a recognised value system in that approach. Planned and methodical work does not remove the necessity to make value judgements and decisions. The fundamental values informing the skills and knowledge of "professional" community workers must remain earthed in grass roots practice.

Although a major preoccupation may be in the development of their skills and knowledge and using their status to ensure "a better fit between services and needs" (Twelvetrees 1991:4) community workers must be aware of the dangers of simply reinforcing existing hierarchical and oppressive systems.

Moreover, opting for a "professional" approach in community work should not be seen as deriding radical community workers; who see their role as facilitating change in alternative social movements and methods of organising. Nor should this suggest that

other streams of community work are not concerned with competence. This debate will continue - hopefully constructively and purposively. Thinking and writing about practice is a way to transmit what community work is trying to achieve and to offer other workers support in the various strands of practice.

Opting for a professional stance in community work is not a "sell-out" to the values community workers hold about empowerment and local control. Rather it is a matter of personal choice and a commitment to use that status for the right reasons. Working within a "professional" context within the local government system may modify one's perspective on what can be achieved in community development terms. It may even modify to some extent the values held. However, one of the key challenges is not to allow community work to become institutionalised. It is also important that it remains locked on to the political process as described above.

It also has to be said that an important aspect of professional community work is that it is pragmatic - a means towards ensuring its survival. When other services are being scrutinised in budget cutting exercises, community work will be examined for the contribution it makes. Clarity about the role and function of community work and the skills and methods employed will ensure that it is not regarded as "a luxury" but warrants serious consideration when political and managerial choices have to be made.

There are three factors that consolidate the recognition of community work as a profession. First, community work posts in some areas are increasingly becoming part of the staffing establishments of the organisation rather than being dependant on short term grant funding. This appears to be so in St. Helen's and Kirklees as well as being the case in Strathclyde and the Middlesbrough and Cleveland. Secondly, this fosters a sense of permanency, despite worries about the effects of cutbacks in expenditure and the effect on jobs. Thirdly, discussions with workers and reading accounts of practice elsewhere, demonstrates a vocational pride among staff in their work and their important contribution to improving life in the community.

Moreover, from those discussions community workers employed by local authorities know that they have a difficult job to do - and they want to do it well. They expect sound management and demand high quality training; they seek information and feedback; and they show enthusiasm and commitment to new opportunities. At least, they do not appear to be resistant to the trend towards professionalism.

Evaluation will assist in identifying discreet areas of skill and method. It can contribute to knowledge and theory development and help to stabilise community work as an occupation. It is important, having regard to the discussion on page 50, this also clarifies the working relationship between workers, elected members and officers in dealing with the tensions that can emerge as a consequence of the community work role.

Community Work Roles

There is a very significant benefit when evaluating community work in defining workers roles. Roles are a means for workers to articulate their skills clarify the contribution of community work to a programme or event. Defining roles can also show what workers, agency and participants' expectation of role is.

The local authority community worker is expected to have a multi-purpose role. This role is composed of a variety of "desk-bound" tasks associated with the bureaucratic requirements of the Council, compliance with legislation, maintaining local systems and so on. This is counter-balanced by the "process" elements of the role. In other words the face to face interactions with community members, group development, informal education, and so on.

The point is that in a local authority the role of the community worker will not be purely, or even mainly, fieldwork. The organisational structure of a Council ranks its staff in levels of seniority. There is also a tendency to work in teams. Senior staff have more managerial responsibilities and an increased emphasis on agency contacts in comparison with community contacts.

In practice, this operates in two ways. Experience and knowledge of work in St. Helen's, Middlesbrough, Cleveland, shows that some managers of community workers regard themselves as community workers (interviews with Paul Moppett in Cleveland and Sue Leavesly in St. Helen's). In Kirklees (Leisure) and Strathclyde (Social Work) others are non-specialist managers whose departments are hosts to community work.

Again there arises a potential conflict in the perceptions of community work roles. On the one hand, specialist community workers managing other practitioners might be expected to permit a freer community or issue based role. The opposite case prevailed in Strathclyde, for example, where workers felt that their managers "would wish to impose limitations on their activity... linking them to a client rather than a wider community focus" (Barr 1991:75).

In St. Helens, Middlesbrough and Cleveland this was dealt with by distinguishing the line management structure for community work from the host Department. In St. Helen's and Middlesbrough this was backed up with extensive training in the host Department to increase understanding of community work roles.

Defining roles at the agency level will provide some feedback on how community workers are perceived from within the organisation. This can also be adapted to show the perception or agency expectations of the community workers role at the neighbourhood level.

At the neighbourhood level, it is common in the literature for a variety of terms to be used, for example; "supporter", "stirrer", "ally", "(super) fixer", "clerical support provider" Barr (1991:102) or "trouble-shooter", "expert", "facilitator" (Twelvetrees 1991:12). The choice of terms is flexible and the naming and description of each role can be shared among agency, programme and staff members. At least, this provides a means of concentrating minds around what are the characteristics of community work in a given setting reflecting the understanding of those involved.

For the evaluator, it is a simple and practical way of gaining an insight into the content of the work being evaluated. Also, defining community work roles will produce feedback on the way a community worker (or a small team) makes her/his/their contribution to the community development process. These can be used to develop knowledge and understanding and strategies for change or resolving any conflicts that may exist.

Visioning

Quite clearly, research and evaluation will play an important part in theory development and innovative community work practice. This should be part of the "infrastructure" of community work. The use of the term research conveys a static form of enquiry. That it is the reason for introducing the more dynamic notion of "visioning" that more appropriately relates to the enhancement of new ideas and new forms of practice. This section amplifies the points made in the earlier discussion in this Chapter on ideology.

Two major changes have occurred in the past ten to twelve years that require greater emphasis on the need for innovation. First, the Conservative Government's ideological position, alleging inefficiency and lack of accountability among local Councils, has severely constrained local authority expenditure. At the same time, other forms of Government Funding, for example the Urban Programme, have shrunk in real terms with an emphasis away from "social" projects, particularly those of a revenue nature. There is real scepticism about the resources being put into the mixed economy of Community Care, for example. The supposed benefits of targeting small areas with "highly visible" schemes under the 1991/2 Urban Programme Management and "City Challenge" are another.

Secondly, this has shifted the stance of community workers who are now defending the "financial and political autonomy of local government, when not long ago they saw this as their main target for change" (Miller & Bryant (1990:324). This, of course has implications for the relationship of community work to the local state. It also requires the stimulation of new ideas, structural, developmental and redistributive, about service

provision among those groups who have access to available resources. In other words, innovations and new theories about community development and community work.

New approaches are required in community work that respond to potentially diminishing resources while seeking new ideas for utilising existing and new funding. This resourcefulness and innovation can be described as "visioning", in other words interpreting situations creatively and with renewed enthusiasm. Of course, these notions can be interpreted cynically, and there may be cynical exploitation of new resources and new structures. That is a risk worth taking. Innovation and resourcefulness may be criticised as "unprincipled" or "manipulating the system". They are criticisms that must not be confirmed in practice.

An article by Betty L. Wells (Wells 1991:24) highlights two new approaches being tried in the United States - "multi-community development" and "alternative economic development". The former describes a process of "inter community co-operation" and viable local networks. The latter assumes that many existing resources are neglected, under-developed or wasted. My interest lies in the underlying principles suggested in these approaches - being open to new ideas, creating new networks and wider coalitions and enhancing the use of existing resources.

There is a space for community work to be receptive to these new ideas in which evaluation has a part to play. This will lead to the development of the knowledge base in community work - "practice theory" and "explanatory theory" (Thomas 1983:253) and (Tasker 1980:49 - 67). Understanding "how to do it" and "why things are as they are" will make a valuable contribution to community work - so often criticised for its paucity of developed theory. The key areas have been identified as "policy theory", "political theory" and "sociological theory". In other words, the contribution made by community work to a strategy for social change; to political thinking and democratic systems; and to the social context in which it operates.

Attempts to devise corporate community development strategies (for example in St. Helen's and Cleveland County), together with "thematic" approaches to poverty adopted in Bradford and other Metropolitan Authorities, are attempts to share corporate vision

and commitment to community development. More importantly, where this is associated with moves away from random or unplanned community work a significant step will be taken in gearing community work and community development approaches in an area.

Evaluation, as defined in the following Chapter, is the dynamic mechanism for innovation and vision in future community work practice.

Concluding Comments

To unlock the potential of community work, it is essential to know it. Seven key features of community work in the local government setting have been specified. In some respects, these issues will help in further defining community work in broad terms. They are associated with each other in a dynamic way that provides us with a frame of reference for day to day practice.

In summary, the Evaluator, in developing "knowing skills" and applying the skills of evaluation will make a contribution to community work in local government in the following ways;

- ◆ the Evaluator will come to understand the relationship of the community work being evaluated to the local state in which it is operating. The resulting analysis will impact on this relationship and identify the implications: i.e. "role strain" and potential areas of conflict between workers, managers, Members and participants.
- ◆ the Evaluator will develop an understanding of how the "distributive" and "developmental" functions interact in the particular local government setting. While the distributive functions are important, the more important questions to be answered in an evaluation will relate to ways of ensuring long term and sustained local development.
- ◆ the Evaluator will clarify the distinction between values and what is valued in the current work. The resulting analysis will highlight if, and how, worker and agency values differ and interact: addressing the tensions that may exist.

- ◆ in understanding the relationship between values and norms, a framework will be provided for comparing why things are meant to happen, and what participants believe they ought to be doing, with what is happening and being done.
- ◆ the Evaluator will assist in identifying discreet areas of skill and method; contribute to knowledge and theory development; and help those seeking to stabilise the occupation through professionalising strategies.
- ◆ the Evaluator, in defining community work roles, will gain insights into the content of the work being evaluated. Also, roles will produce feedback on the way a community worker (or a small team) makes her/his/their contribution to the community development process.
- ◆ the Evaluator will consider the community development process. This will be in terms of the methods used and the various programme outcomes. This latter aspect is particularly useful when programme objectives are broad or have not been pre-formulated.
- ◆ the Evaluator can focus on examples where partial interests are being, or need to be, addressed. It may then be possible to find means of dealing with issues of particularism and collectivism.
- ◆ evaluation, as defined in the following Chapter, is the dynamic mechanism for innovation and vision in future community work practice.

These opening three chapters have concentrated on the current issues and features of community work in the local government setting. A working definition of community work has been proposed and several relevant typologies of community work have been introduced. What is described is the particular environment in which the evaluator will be active.

The material presented so far can be regarded as a contextual framework for the remainder of this thesis. Community work sponsored by local government orientates fieldworkers and their managers in a particular way to community members and the local state. An effective evaluation will help towards realising the potential of community work in that setting. It will consider the issues that will assist workers to resolve the difficulties of their interjacent position and suggest ways in which they can most effectively intervene in the relationship between people and power .

Having discussed the setting in which an evaluation will take place, the next Chapter begins to study the concept of evaluation in greater detail. A definition of the term is proposed together with a description of what can be expected in undertaking an evaluation and, importantly, the obstacles that can be encountered.

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CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

Evaluation "is not to prove, but to improve" (Stufflebeam 1983:118).

Defining and classifying community work is not evaluation, per se. This does, however, represent the first steps in putting together knowledge about the theory and practice of community work in given settings. Evaluation is a continuation of that process, committed to knowledge development but also, importantly, the dynamic use of that knowledge in theory, practice, management and training.

The theme of this Chapter is, that whilst research and monitoring might be described as "proving" (ie: evidence gathering) activities, evaluation is best understood as an "improving" (developmental) activity.

This raises certain expectations about what can be gained from the evaluation of a community work programme. Consideration is then given to what evaluation means for individual workers, before the description of evaluation is completed by discussing the broader contextual issues.

These descriptions of what evaluation is, are developed into a discussion on why evaluation is important. The general approach is to express evaluation as a positive, purposeful activity. However, this is not always the case and the final section deals with the obstacles that can be encountered.

Towards a Working Definition of Evaluation

The premise adopted in this thesis is that evaluation strategies and methodologies should be pragmatic (ie: practically attainable) and that being too preoccupied with epistemological concerns is disabling rather than enabling when evaluating community work programmes. This is not to dismiss epistemological issues in the evaluation process. The strategies and methods are tools to produce knowledge. My point is, the more practical these are the more appropriate they are in relation to the evaluation of community work. However, the status of these "tools" is ultimately dependant on epistemological justification. They "cannot be divorced from theory; as research tools they operate only within a given set of assumptions about the nature of society, the nature of human beings, the relationship between the two and how they are known" (Hughes 1990:11).

One thing that will become clear is that the methodological problems in evaluating social programmes are enormous. Because the problems far outweigh the solutions in this respect, it will be necessary to opt for preferred approaches and methods that are competent and will produce worthwhile and useful results for the evaluator and the programme.

Evaluation describes a process that reliably examines the quality of an "activity".

Evaluation is an examination of the worth or usefulness of an "activity" - that being, in this case, a planned intervention with people, in a local community or relevant wider constituency. It is important to note that unplanned events occur that can be evaluated, but it is most likely the starting point will be those events or activities that have been planned or preformulated in aims and objectives.

"Evaluation" can also describe the specific skills of workers or the skill of the evaluator. Such worker traits relates to the application of knowledge and experience to develop further understanding, increase their areas of competence and contribute to the development of the programme.

An evaluation will ultimately combine both qualitative and quantitative information. Managers and fieldworkers will tend to favour the former, being more interested, perhaps, in the progress and processes of the programme. The latter is likely to be more acceptable to funding or managing bodies as well as academic institutions interested in the outcome of the evaluation. Quantitative data may also be necessary to establish the credibility of the method and the information collected.

Evaluation establishes reliable benchmarks or indices of significant events and circumstances. This permits us to both establish the condition of a programme or event at a given time and/or reveal the longer term consequences of our actions or strategies. "Evaluation begins and ends with knowledge" (Ball 1988:7). It is common in the literature for evaluation to be seen as extending knowledge. Evaluation is, therefore, synonymous with words such as "judge", "monitor", "research", "appraise", "review", "feedback" and so on. Evaluation begins at a certain point of knowledge that experience shapes into new knowledge and therefore learning about the impact of community work.

The important notion to communicate is that evaluation is not static - it is exploratory, it is dynamic, it is about discovery and change. Moreover, a sense of perspective is being created. A sense of "coming from" to "going to", in other words a sense of evolution that fits perfectly with the notion that evaluation is an ongoing phenomenon, continuously recycling new knowledge and learning from past and current practice.

Learning through evaluation builds up the theory-base, the knowledge base and meets the information needs of community work. New knowledge contributes to an understanding of the purpose of community work, the attributes, motivation, values and behaviours of workers, the methods used and the effectiveness of various strategies for bringing about social change.

Evaluation is also part of the process of empowering communities. It is valuable internally to plan and manage service delivery, but valuable also externally fostering and informing the partnership between service providers and the community to ensure services are not only well managed, but relevant and responsive. That can only happen when the community can make choices: choices made from an analysis of a broad range of information and knowledge.

Some Expectations of Evaluation

Chapter One attempted to show how local government is changing in its emphasis towards function and performance, and how a new political consensus is emerging on this point. Consequently, the scene is changing, although slowly, which is establishing a new culture in which evaluation is increasingly important.

Evaluation is done for a reason. Evaluation is a powerful tool for the organisation "by providing more sensitive methods for controlling and monitoring their policies and practices" Craig (1989).

Evaluation is also a means of empowering the community by declaring the aims, resources, service commitments and results of the agency working in the community - whether that be a local authority or voluntary project. It is essential that this involves "a three sided dialogue: between local people and practitioners, between practitioners and agencies, and between local people and agencies" (Gordon et al 1988). This includes elected members, funding bodies, management committees, managers, fieldworkers, clients and other beneficiaries of social programmes. Brawley (1988:395) describes them as the "stakeholders". An evaluation, therefore, provides information and points of access to the agency, and thereby a degree of influence in its future shape and direction.

Resources of people, buildings, time, money and so on have to be organised and managed. Evaluation, therefore, can be regarded as a management tool and a decision making activity - a systematic review of information and conditions. Effective evaluation provides a means to make informed decisions about programme changes necessary to continue efficient use of resources in the pursuit of programme goals.

Warren Feek summarises very clearly what evaluation seeks to achieve. First, "there is little point to evaluation unless it results in improved practice"... and that it should be " a never-ending process... and needs to be part of any organisations work". Secondly, as a result of evaluation, "the organisation needs to change the way in which it works in order to;

- ◆ Either: a) adopt more effective work methods in order to better achieve its objectives
- ◆ And/or: b) adopt more efficient work methods in order to make better use of its resources
- ◆ And/or: c) reallocate the resources available in order to be more relevant to the nature of the problems and issues it is confronting"

(Feek 1988:42-43)

This tends to overlook the specific worker benefits. Evaluating personal effectiveness provides important feedback, and skills in evaluation are necessarily part of the totality of skills a community worker should possess. In addition to self-awareness, evaluation can motivate staff - an aspect of the dynamic function of evaluation in finding new solutions to old problems. Evaluation can also help to improve competence and performance, responding to influences (such as professionalising strategies) on individual workers.

From this perspective, evaluation is a fundamental aspect of human growth and will specifically benefit the individual. For example, the development of our "sense of self" (Hargreaves 1972:9) is the result of our interaction with others and our social environment. Although it is more difficult to be objective (honest with ourselves!), we use the feedback we receive to make judgements about what we are really like. This example not only to indicates the diversity of situations to which evaluation applies, but

to make the point that new knowledge gained assists personal growth as well as the development of work associated "activities".

It is relevant to briefly consider the contribution of evaluation and research in the training of community workers. This contribution will be to training in its widest sense, from formal courses, though apprenticeship schemes, other uncertificated training as well as providing information and learning from experience. Again, evaluation will make a practical contribution to the expansion and exploration of the knowledge base in community work, communicating its principles and practice as well as enhancing the skills of workers.

Evaluation from a Worker Perspective

It is appropriate to recount the first rudimentary notions of evaluation dealt with in my professional training during the early 1970's. It took the form of a cartoon sketch of a "community worker" devised by fellow students and composed of jigsaw-like pieces each containing an appropriate attribute.

This model was largely based on the "ideal type" suggested by Fred Milson (Milson 1972:49-58), at the time Head of the Community & Youth Work Section at Westhill College of Education, Birmingham. He identified eight categories of community work skill, one of which became a jig-saw piece in the model called "analysis".

Milson describes this as the "ability to assess and interpret, by more than guess work, what is happening in different human situations and with individuals, groups and communities". The basis of this description is that analytical skills are built on a sound knowledge of psychology and sociology, group work, community structures and processes - a knowledge of people, organisations and issues.

In addition, Milson points out that not only is it necessary for the community worker to have the ability to evaluate situations, but also the ability to facilitate the involvement of others in the "learning process". He cites several simple methods such as surveys, community profiles and written recordings for gathering information upon which to begin an analysis. This he classifies in two forms; "hard information" and "semi-documentary" (or what others have called "soft") information.

Consequently, "evaluation" (ie: skills in evaluation) came to mean at least an important attribute in a worker; that some specialist background knowledge and experience is required; that it is a learning process involving others; which results in judgements based on "hard" and "soft" information.

Evaluation, for me, was personal and in a narrow context, a skill or a certain "mentality" to be acquired - what Thomas (1983:266) describes as "thought habits" - and nothing more.

There are limitations, however, in the way Milson deals with evaluation in that he treats it as essentially subjective - an attribute of, and internal to, the worker: what Key et al later called "impressionistic enquiry" or the use of "textbook precepts" (Key et al 1976:16-17) and is therefore only partially satisfactory. That is not to say it is invalid, rather that it only emphasises one facet of the approach to evaluation in community work.

The Concept of Evaluation

Whilst evaluation is a decision-making activity and concerned with research, discovery and new knowledge out of current practice, evaluation is also about developing new theories and new solutions. It is this improvement through practice learning that forms the conceptual framework of evaluation.

The concept of evaluation is conveyed in this thesis as a practical, flexible and adaptive system of benefit to community workers, their managers and the agencies who fund resources of people, buildings and programmes. That, however, is not a universally shared point of view, and a later discussion will address some of the obstacles that will be encountered.

Buchanan, et al, reinforce the notion that an evaluation and the accompanying methods should be pragmatic. They continue; "the ultimate goal of any research enterprise is to gather empirical evidence on which theories concerning aspects of behaviour in organisations can be based". (Buchanan, et al 1988:67). The evaluation will not be carried out in a laboratory or library, but in the field in a live social context. The evaluation will, therefore, essentially be "practical".

The evaluation will deal with both the "theoretically desirable" and the "practically possible". In other words, evaluation is the "art of the possible" whereby the desirability of the "scientific" approach is constantly compromised by the practical realities encountered when carrying out the evaluation. On the one hand there is the desire for rigour and detachment, on the other there are constraints of time, resources and those posed by the people involved.

Moreover, this scenario is likely to be reinforced by an emphasis on the greater use of qualitative, descriptive and interpretative approaches to evaluation. This pragmatic and process orientated style of evaluation has been described by Parlett and Hamilton (1976) as "illuminative evaluation".

The main features of "illuminative evaluation", as adapted by Miller & Sexton (1984) are as follows;

- ◆ workers themselves do the evaluation;
- ◆ the evaluation process is designed to fit the particular activity; its setting and its context;
- ◆ it is practical and flexible;

- ♦ it is as concerned with making clear what happens in the work, as it is with measuring outcomes;
- ♦ it focuses on understanding the viewpoints and attitudes of the different people involved in the work;
- ♦ a variety of methods can be used, depending on the questions being asked;
- ♦ evaluation is considered to be an integral part of the work.

Similar themes are reflected elsewhere in the literature. Patton (1978) and Austin et al (1982:20) advocate practical, flexible and adaptive approaches. Ball (1988) emphasises the important role of evaluation in extending knowledge, Algie (1975) focuses on the implications for decision-making while others define the benefits for workers, agencies and participants.

It is also important to note that evaluation is essentially concerned with process and outcomes. In other words, the evaluation activity will deal with the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspects of the programme, which Brawley equates with "soft science". Evaluation is an approach that balances the traditionally more dominant "hard" evaluations of social programmes. That is not to deny "scientific rigour" yet "while the quantitative or positivistic paradigm remains in the ascendancy, equated as it is with 'hard' rather than 'soft' science, and with objectivity and neutrality, it is being challenged on the grounds that is not especially useful in answering the kinds of questions that are most important ..." (Brawley 1989 op.cit. page 399).

The factor that gives an evaluation its specific direction is its context. The concept of qualitative analysis is now widely used in the professions, in the public sector, in industry and commerce. Perhaps "attention to context is usually more implicit than explicit" (Bulmer 1988:158) and he is right in saying this deserves more attention. In this paper, evaluation is concerned with social programmes - explaining what is actually happening as a result of community work intervention and assessing how effectively available resources are being or have been used; to what extent goals are being achieved and, where possible, the wider impact of the intervention.

Evaluation has often been regarded as the final stage of a programme of action or planned events. To regard evaluation in this way is to take a narrow view. Key et al, suggest this may be the case in describing evaluation as "studying events that have already happened" (Key et al 1976:10). A broader view of evaluation is necessary were evaluation is regarded as the study of things that are happening besides the events that have already happened. Evaluation is, in fact, both current and retrospective, and about real events.

Why Evaluate?

In addition to understanding what evaluation is, it will be useful to consider some of the why evaluation is important.

Key, Hudson and Armstrong (1976:10) introduce their work on evaluation by posing the questions; "How are we doing?, Are we accomplishing what we set out to do?". Further questions can be asked, for example; How much does what we do cost? How long does it take us to do it? Who benefits? and so on. Such questioning is more than simple enquiry. The questioner is attempting to gather information and organise experiences "so that they determine purposive decisions in a wide variety of contexts" (Algie 1975:298). Thomas (1983:266) identifies four purposes of evaluation:

- ◆ "to aid discovery;
- ◆ to ensure accountability of workers;
- ◆ to help workers clarify goals and priorities and plan their work; and
- ◆ to develop their skills and knowledge".

The following can be added more specifically to this list;

- ◆ identifying strategies and boundaries of the work - particularly important for workers engaged in multiple pieces of work;
- ◆ identifying the key elements and measures of the services provided;

- ◆ to clarify targets and propose performance indicators
- ◆ to determine the relationship between community work and other Departmental or corporate activities;
- ◆ to provide a historical account of progress through the project or programme as a basis for future action.

Evaluation is an alternative to doing nothing, or more precisely to continue what has gone on before. That always remains an option, of course, but the circumstances (such as those identified by Carol H. Weiss quoted in Key et al (1976:30)) would be quite exceptional. The programme would be narrow, without clear orientation and randomly improvised. There would be vast differences in the way goals are perceived. Possibly, there would be insufficient resources to carry out a worthwhile evaluation.

The introduction of new types of decentralised management initiatives in local government involving community work methods have real outcomes regarding staff responsibilities, workload, extent of participation, representativeness and so on. These outcomes can be measured and evaluated.

Secondly, the realisation of goals and the credibility and competences of the participants is contained in the summation of knowledge about programmes and events. This knowledge is important to managers, administrators, practitioners trainers and policy makers in highlighting the special attributes of community development programmes.

Thirdly, this will impact on communities. Hopefully, evaluation can be a key element in breaking down traditional barriers between communities and the agencies that service their interests. Currently, evaluation is a managerial and worker orientated activity. As we learn and become accustomed to the skills and approaches to evaluation, we will share them with the groups with whom we work. The dissemination of this knowledge, reflection and forward planning at the community level will contribute to the wider process of community development - the "holistic process of development" (Taylor 1991:11).

Furthermore, where community work is valued, where agencies are striving to create possibilities for local participation and self determination, evaluation is part of sound management practice as well as contributing to the community development processes.

The Obstacles

So far, the topic of evaluation has been treated enthusiastically and positively. There is, however, a counterpoint to those views that will now be discussed.

To begin with, it would be preferable if there was another word to describe "evaluation". It is an emotive expression, conveying notions of assessment and performance appraisal that threatens to obscure the positive benefits to be gained. This is a significant obstacle in attempting to introduce evaluation systems into an organisation. If the workers feel insecure and threatened then it is impossible to enlist their complete commitment to, and involvement in, the process of evaluation.

One of the most prominent arguments against doing any form of evaluation is that many outcomes of working with people happen as a result of influences or changes outside the scope of the intervention. Whilst the community work intervention may be theoretically appropriate and well implemented, it does not achieve the expected outcome. This may be because of an "external" social or economic policy decision - either at a local or national level. It is also possible that the indicators and measures used to evaluate the programme might not be regarded as the most appropriate by the workers involved.

Two other concerns are frequently cited. The first is that many social programmes are "characterised by a preoccupation with outcomes" (why?) without "commensurate attention to programme organisation and operation" (how?). Consequently it has "often been impossible to account for the results achieved" (Brawley & Brawley 1988:409).

Secondly, evaluation can lead to the routinisation of community work where efficiency is the overriding consideration and where creativity and worker discretion becomes suppressed.

What will also become clear is that the methodological problems in evaluating social programmes are enormous. The difficulties that can be encountered begin to emerge when first considering the evaluation of a community work activity. These are factors that usually act as a disincentive, which must be overcome, understood or rationalised to produce an evaluation of some worth.

Part of the "problem" is that social programmes deal with people "in process of becoming" (Biddle & Biddle 1965:2). Social programmes are as diverse as the behaviours and situations of the individuals and communities they serve. Surely, this does not lend itself to systematic in-depth enquiry - perhaps even more so in short term programmes, so why bother to try?

Local Government is not the most ideal background from which to learn the skills of evaluation. Councils tend to "shoot from the hip" as one Chief Officer put it. Councils act first, then think about it later: reacting in haste and reflecting at leisure, often reacting again without giving time to learn the lessons of that reflection.

This is not intended as a criticism. It could, and should, be argued that this flexible and reactive response to public demand goes to the heart of public service and customer orientation. It may also be the consequence of being pushed around by ad hoc legislation over many years and the struggle to survive and change. Despite that, or perhaps because of it, local government should begin to give greater consideration to "process" rather than "structure" in effectively delivering services.

From another perspective, given the political nature of local government (and this applies equally to Departmental activities) an evaluation of activities can be used for other purposes. That is to say, the techniques of evaluation may be used to produce a largely predetermined outcome. A more understandable "problem" is that a great deal of evaluation done in the local authority context is not disseminated. This is often because it deals with a specialist or confidential area of work.

Ball (1988:14) identifies other "problems" and the fears this can raise in some voluntary organisations that can be regarded as generally true. For example, will the information revealed by an evaluation be used against the organisation by controlling interests, such as funders? Will the information be used politically to destroy or emasculate a programme of work? Of course, these are possibilities. Ball suggests that openness will minimise potential problem areas. In many ways this is true, and one of the ways to foster openness is in the initial presentation of the aims and purpose of an evaluation, referred to again later.

These are, of course, ethical issues - of entry, acceptance, legitimacy and method. If the evaluation cannot gain easy access to participants, where there is suspicion about motives, the method of observation, recording confidentiality and so on there may be little or no useful - or truthful - response. (Benyon 1988:21-33)

There is also an issue surrounding ideology and values. The funder, manager, worker and participant may not share the same ideological or value position in relation to the programme. Social programmes, and particularly community work, are about issues of class, gender, race and so on. Whilst the evaluation method need not lack scientific rigour, it will be committed to change for oppressed or disadvantaged groups. This involves a particular ideological stance and system of values. Conflicts might occur here because the evaluation will never be value-free and the knowledge and "truths" it exposes may not find common acceptance.

It is likely that community workers and managers of community work programmes and resources will want to apply evaluation techniques to deliberate interventions and predetermined goals. However, unplanned activities and events do occur, and of course they can be evaluated. One point of view is that it is best to take a realistic view and accept this will happen from time to time and make allowances for unplanned events; taking account of them to the extent that time and resources will allow. In reflecting on the processes stimulated by community work, it is too narrow a perspective to focus exclusively on the outcomes of planned work.

Although this has been highlighted as a "problem", it is essential to be aware of unplanned outcomes. Some judgment needs to be taken about the importance of these occurrences. If they are significant, time and resources should be specifically set aside to investigate them.

In developing a more general point about resources, it can be very expensive and consume much time, energy and other resources. External evaluations can cost in the region of £250.00 to £500.00 per day. Even if the evaluation activity is internal, there is still a cost as staffing resources are "diverted" away from mainstream activities to complete the work. This should not, however, be regarded as a contradiction, evaluation should be a component of community work, yet time spent on evaluation means less time spent on another aspect of the work.

As a final comment, a major problem can be the time taken in carrying out an evaluation. Not only in the planning and preparation of the evaluation, but in completing the paperwork. In Cleveland, for example, an evaluation questionnaire for local authority community workers covered twelve pages and took over three months to complete. Moreover, the compilation, presentation and analysis of statistics can be complex and laborious becoming a further disincentive to those involved.

Michael Key advise that all approaches to evaluation are subject to criticism, but that "a more practical response seems to us to be to consider if the value of the insights from a particular evaluative approach outweighs the possible drawbacks of using that approach" (Key, et al, 1976:14).

Concluding comments

Evaluation is replacing the more usual, but "snapshot", approach of monitoring within local government. A greater sense of analysis exists, taking a critical view of the service provided local government. Where community work is an aspect of service provision, this trend is impacting directly on workers employed by local Councils. There are other

reasons why evaluation is important in community work, but the employer-led, systematic approach to performance appraisal cannot be overlooked as a major catalyst in committing workers to evaluate their role.

The experience in Middlesbrough has been a positive one. Evaluation has informed community work practice, describing the integral nature of the role of community work to the Council's devolved management structure and encouraging workers to reflect on and plan their work.

From discussions with fieldworkers, it appears common for them to consider the process of evaluation of great personal benefit. It defines the work, the priorities, strategies and so on. As one worker in Middlesbrough in a recent supervision session said "I wish we could have done this years ago, it would have prevented a lot of personal hassle. It helps to focus on what we should be trying to achieve, rather than some of the random things we are expected to do."

A similar view was expressed by the workers in St. Helen's. Whilst the implementation of evaluation systems may have initially been to defend the service, both managers and fieldworkers interviewed were positive about the benefits those systems brought to their work. In Cleveland, however, the opposite view tended to prevail. The indicators and measures used were not generally felt to be relevant by the field-workers, they were not centrally involved in the design and implementation of the evaluation and it took a great deal of their time.

This chapter has further set the scene by describing evaluation from a number of perspectives. Moreover, it has proposed key elements in a working definition of evaluation distilled from a range of thinking on the subject.

The following chapter will add to the discussions in this chapter by considering the qualities and skills of the person or persons who will be engaged to carry out the evaluation.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE EVALUATOR

Introduction

Evaluation, in the manner in which it is described in the preceding Chapter, is a specific rather than a general area of activity. It is concerned with approaches and methods that examine all or some particular aspect of a community work intervention in particular ways. A person, or persons, will be identified to carry out the evaluation who will be either currently involved in the programme in some way (an internal evaluator) or brought into the programme (an external evaluator). The issues surrounding the choice of an evaluator are discussed later in this section.

It is necessary to begin, though, by discussing the style and characteristics of the Evaluator(s) and the relationship s/he establishes with programme participants. The evaluator is, essentially, an ethnographer - an observer of human behaviour; someone who has "fidelity to the phenomenon" (Hughes 1990:144) or the ability to access the day to day experience and knowledge of participants.

It is essential, therefore, that the evaluator be "placed" in the programme rather than marginal to it. In other words s/he will tend to become involved in, rather than detached from, the programme. The Evaluator is described as a "human instrument" in the evaluation process and as an "opportunist", in the sense of being flexible and creative. Moreover, s/he will also be a consultant and a connoisseur, appreciating the complexities and subtleties of community work theory and practice, with the experience and skills to competently deliver the evaluation and present its findings.

This short chapter will consider the qualities of the evaluator and identify some of the key issues s/he will need to address. These are relatively straightforward, but very important, considerations to be given to both the participants in the evaluation and the audiences subsequently receiving the findings

The Evaluator

The Evaluator is a specialist with a complex mixture of talent and skill. Those attributes can be set out as follows;

- ◆ as an ethnographer

The ethnographic style has one implicit feature and that is its concern to become involved, or integrated, with the group being studied. In the evaluation of community work, the evaluator is more likely to become "attached to rather than be "detached from" the programme.

It is essential for the evaluator to be exposed to people and practice in the field and to negotiate entry to the programme and its participants in such a way as to "botanise" (Turner 1988:109) with the setting. "There will be an overlapping and partial fusing of the horizons of knowledge of at least three parties: the observer, the observed and the scientific audience. Evidently, the role of the observer in such a relationship cannot be a passive one" (Turner 1988:114), nor can it be detached.

- ◆ as an opportunist

This requires the evaluator to be "opportunistic" as well as systematic, approaching an evaluation creatively, as well as competently. This does not advocate an approach that appropriates whatever data or evidence it can, by any means it can. There is a need for both "controlled, systematic, morally justifiable methods" and "scientific rigour" (Buchanan, et.al 1988:67) but not in such a way that the evaluator is simply carrying out purely mechanical tasks of recording.

- ◆ as a human instrument

The implementation of a model for evaluating community work will require the use of a variety of "instruments". The instruments will vary from simple pens and pencils, to the use of computers, "blue ribbon committees", reading, surveys and so on.

Evaluation, however, is more than collecting, measuring and recording facts and figures. The most important instrument is the "human instrument" Fetterman (1991:90). In other words, the evaluator! The values, sensitivities, skills, knowledge, attitudes, commitment and passion of the evaluator tunes into the environment being evaluated. It is the human instrument that synthesizes the knowledge and initiates the new action arising from the evaluation process.

- ◆ as a passionate participant

The motor for the skills of the evaluator is what the philosopher Michael Polanyi terms "intellectual passion" and "connoisseurship". (Polanyi 1958) .

"Purely descriptive grounded theory, purely descriptive qualitative analysis, that which plays back one everyday account of the data collected, has little to offer" (Turner 1988:115). The evaluator, then, must be a connoisseur, "passionately participating in the act of knowing and at the same time appraising the quality of that which is known".

Furthermore, the personal attributes and passionate involvement of the evaluator will shape the outcome of the evaluation, often to the benefit of the client and participant. The evaluator is a complex mixture of culture, emotion, experience, knowledge and training. Clearly, this is a critical influence on the outcome of an evaluation yet highlighted as "the greatest unknown in ethnographic research" (Agar 1980:44). Whilst the exact parameters might not be known, a skilled and committed evaluator will add a new dimension to the programme and it's continuing process.

- ♦ as a consultant

On a practical level, the evaluator will have the necessary skill areas and experience to carry out the evaluation in a given setting. For example, training or group work skills may be required, research skills or experience of management consultancy or information and financial systems, previous (or indeed current) work experience in similar programmes are all relevant considerations in determining the characteristics required of the evaluator.

Choosing an Evaluator

There are four options for choosing or appointing an evaluator.

- ♦ Local Authorities may have their own research sections, either within the Department or elsewhere in the organisation. In some cases both exist.
- ♦ It is possible to appoint an "external" evaluator, for example, Allan Barr's secondment from the University of Glasgow to undertake the study of community work in Strathclyde (Barr 1991).
- ♦ It is possible for "programme staff" - usually a combination of managers and fieldworkers - to carry out the evaluation.
- ♦ The fourth option involves a combination of the other three.

Essentially, the choice is between an "internal" evaluator and an "external" evaluator. In the examples researched in Cleveland, St. Helens, Plymouth and Middlesbrough the evaluation were carried out, or were planned to be implemented, internally.

If the organisation is fairly relaxed about the likely outcome, it may be good for "the image" to undergo external, independent scrutiny. If there are some worries about the outcome, or how the information will be used, or the evaluation is being used to "confirm the truth" then the choice may be internal (and possibly confidential) scrutiny.

Remembering that the manager and the fieldworker are potential evaluators (and the benefits to them of developing research skills and insights into everyday practice) also makes the choice of agency staff an attractive proposition.

There are advantages and disadvantages in both these approaches. Internal or "self-evaluation" appears to be more favoured in the voluntary sector (Martin & Milburn 1985), and was selected as the starting point for the St. Peter's Icthus Society, Plymouth (Fr. Harris, interview March 1990). Mog Ball also appears to weight her analysis of the two options in favour of the "internal" evaluator or "do it yourself research" (Ball 1988:42-56). She summarises the relevant benefits of both types of approach and quote from her book below. This captures the essential elements to be found elsewhere in the literature; for example, Feek (1988:7), Key, et al (1976:25-27)

"External researchers are most likely to be used;

- ◆ a) where the programme is widespread, involving several organisations, and the information and judgement must be co-ordinated
- ◆ b) where the programme, though based in one place, includes a variety of provision, separately staffed, and where co-ordination is a major element to be evaluated
- ◆ c) where the research method chosen requires specialist skills
- ◆ d) where the researcher will cost little or nothing
- ◆ e) where several organisations are involved in the project or its short term nature does not allow the establishment of monitoring systems
- ◆ f) where the voluntary sector is part of a programme which also involves other sectors

In relation to internal evaluation;

- ◆ i) a large organisation can self-evaluate widespread and differing projects
- ◆ ii) a confidential report on management priorities is best carried out internally
- ◆ iii) workers... find that doing so improves their work

- ◆ iv) where a project is research-based the division between the work and the evaluation lessens
- ◆ v) information collection and analysis can become part of a continuing process when all staff take part
- ◆ vi) testing ideas by practice requires the use of evaluation methods"

An evaluation also costs in time, money and other resources. Ultimately, the balance of those factors, and the factors set out above, in relation to what is to be evaluated will determine whether the evaluation will be carried out internally or by an external evaluator.

Taking Staff into Account

The degree of solidarity and the extent of morale among staff working in a local authority department must be taken into account. Community work is a sensitive and sceptical occupation. It is, naturally, concerned for the people and programmes worked with, but also about its "identity and affiliations" (Thomas 1983:47) - both internally and amongst other occupations. Scrutiny can heighten a sense of concern, suspicion and insecurity!

In order to maintain morale, as well as enlist the co-operation of workers, an "internal" evaluation, sensitively managed may be the only initial option. This point is reinforced below.

Presentation and Openness

The relationship between the evaluator, staff and other participants in the evaluation process is crucial from the outset. The purpose of the evaluation must be clear as well as the motives behind it. There is scope for this even when the evaluation is imposed - by a Chief Officer, a Council Committee or a managing body, for example.

Evaluation is likely to be a new experience for most participants, and for some an exposure to new skill areas. With a heavy, and potentially increasing, workload or perhaps a threat to jobs, or the possibility of criticism, staff and other participants have to be convinced it is in their interests as well as the employers and participants interests.

There is a particular skill associated with presenting significant changes in approach or direction within a local authority or other organisation. My own experience has, fortunately, been in a management system that values team building and encourages openness and trust. Even so, there is a characteristic scepticism and reservation amongst staff.

This also extends among client departments and other organisations involved in evaluation, who may go so far as to try to discredit the evaluator and/or the method. Huw Benyon calls this "the process of corporate defense" (Benyon 1988:25). In local government, any resistance will be much more subtle. If the approach is not generally acceptable, the evaluator will have difficulty gaining access to information or key people, the finding will be deferred and so on.

There are, in fact, few rules guiding a proper approach to presenting an evaluation. Perhaps being aware of the potential difficulties is the first step. It is also essential to allow scope for participants to modify and develop the method. "Allow for this to take time. Use non-threatening language when explaining the nature and purpose of the study. Deal positively with respondents' reservations with respect to time and confidentiality. Offer a report of your findings" Buchanan, et al (1988:56). In other words, the evaluator must respond to the feelings and dispositions of the "client".

Who is the Evaluation For?

Naturally, the evaluator must take into account the audience who will subsequently receive the evaluation - the client. The client will be a Council Committee, an officer monitoring group, a management committee a funding body or, possibly, an individual worker or manager. They will want material presented to them that they can understand and easily assimilate.

Choice and complexity of language is important, as is the kind of detail. For example, Mog Ball states "in one authority, a research officer has been developing a 'business ratios' system to measure voluntary activity. It is something which appeals to the Businessmen who make up the bulk of his committee" (Ball 1988:10).

Local Authority Committees are driven by their reports. Each Council has its own format, style and presentation but a number of common themes remain true. Reports should be as concise and precise as possible; the design of the evaluation should be clear and the results presented in an unambiguous way. Council Members are most likely to welcome a reminder of the objectives they agreed and a summary of what was achieved and how much it cost. It appears to be generally true that Members will have a view on these things and they will welcome the opportunity to express it.

This is not meant to demean the thinking process - some of the issues will be quite complex, but the aim should be to present a report that is attractive enough to be read by Members and provides information that they can respond constructively to. Moreover, an evaluation will deal with a number of abstract issues or generalisations, that if not carefully handled, will result in them being dismissed as woolly.

The choice of Council Committee is important - if not crucial in this respect, to the extent of the need to establish a specialist sub-committee or working party. The evaluation will then be reported to an audience focussed and more able to concentrate on the findings presented to them.

Concluding remarks

The role of the evaluator is, of course, central to the successful implementation of an evaluation. This short chapter has considered the main characteristics of the person (or persons) engaged to carry out an evaluation of a community work programme; the issues around choosing the evaluator(s); the way in which it will be implemented and how the findings will be presented.

The Evaluator is presented as an ethnographer, an opportunist, a "human instrument", a passionate participant and a consultant to those involved. S/he will be chosen "internally", often the preferred option, or recruited from outside the organisation. Workers must be involved in the process, and the evaluation presented in a way that is meaningful to the audiences receiving the findings.

Significantly, this chapter does not set out to list the specific knowledge and skills required of the Evaluator. Instead, it concentrates on the style and characteristics expected to deliver an effective evaluation, where participants co-operate voluntarily and the accent is on building trust and acceptance. The specialised knowledge and the practical skills in evaluation are implicit in the following chapters. For example, it is necessary to have knowledge of a range of relevant approaches in order to choose an approach suitable in a given setting. Similarly, skills in using and interpreting statistics, using computer technology and so on are also implied. It is a deliberate emphasis, consistent with the notion that evaluation is a creative process and "not just about methodology and technique. Intuitive thinking is essential because it helps researchers arrive at solutions that are not merely conventional and routine" (Kerlinger 1986).

When identified or appointed, it will be necessary for the evaluator(s) to consider how the evaluation is to be implemented. This is presented as a lateral series of stages involving; i) the overall approach that will be adopted; ii) the construction of a conceptual framework, or evaluation model and iii) the detailed evaluation design. The separation is, once again, to facilitate analysis. In practice, these stages must be inter-related and the following Chapter begins by focusing on the most relevant approaches to carrying out an evaluation of a community work programme.

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CHAPTER SIX

CHOOSING THE APPROACH

Introduction

If the preceding chapters considered the question of "what" evaluation is and "who" will carry it out, then the following pages will attempt to discuss the first of the issues concerning "how" the evaluation will be implemented - in the sense of the general, and most relevant, approaches that can be adopted.

There is, however, a paucity of literature dealing specifically with the evaluation of community work programmes. It will be noted that most of the examples used so far, and in the following Chapters, are drawn from more general social research literature. The Community Development Journal has recently published a series of papers dealing with the issues and methodology surrounding programmes that "focus on qualitative processes of change (rather than on physical products)" (Marsden & Oakley 1991:257). The reader may find this useful reading in the context of this and the following Chapters.

It is, then, necessary to think through, at an early stage, the type of approaches that will be embraced. Essentially, there are three broad models applicable in evaluating community work programmes. These are; the "goals model", the "systems model" and the "action research" model. In other words, will the evaluation examine the programme in relation to its goals, or will the evaluation examine the systems with which the programme interacts? It is helpful to visualise these approaches as being detached from or "outside" of the programme looking in.

"Action research", sometimes called "evaluative research", is described as being attached to or "inside" the programme. This approach is particularly suited to community work programmes where the evaluator is directly involved in devising, implementing and subsequently monitoring and evaluating the outcome of the programme.

Hard Line - Soft Line Approaches

There is a notional continuum commonly described as "hard-line" to "soft line" approaches. "Hard line" approaches mirror classic social research techniques where objective procedures and systematic activities are to be used. Alternatively, if the evaluation is to be of a freer form, that is more subjective and less systematic, so-called "soft-line" approaches, including "descriptive research" or "explanatory research" may be preferred.

One type of approach is not to be favoured above another. As stated in the working definition of evaluation in Chapter 4, "it will be necessary to opt for preferred approaches and methods that are competent and will produce worthwhile and useful results...."

Goal and System Models of Evaluation

The project or programme is part of a historical process, a process that is not isolated from its social, economic and political environment. This can be seen from two points of view; first, as an internal environment unique to the programme and secondly, as an external environment in which the programme is a sub-system, encompassing or interacting with other environments.

The difference being that, on the one hand, the programme creates a discreet, "internal" social, economic and political environment in working towards its objectives. On the other hand, the programme potentially achieves other things, or is changed during implementation, by "external" factors that may not have been anticipated.

The "goal model" of evaluation is applicable to an evaluation of outputs against planned objectives, whilst the "systems model" of evaluation is especially useful for analysing the wider pattern of events or influences acting on, or responding to, the programme.

The Goal Model

In a "goal" model of evaluation, described elsewhere as "objective based" and "outcome based" evaluation (Stronge & Helm 1991:9) what is to be evaluated will be determined by the degree to which stated aims for the programme have been achieved. Key et al describe this as "the classical model for evaluation" where "a programme of action is assessed in strict relation to stated general aims and to the objectives that are specified in order to contribute to the achievement of those aims" (Key et al 1976:11-14) .

This "model" is particularly suited to programmes or projects with clearly defined or narrow aims. It assumes that the aims, or goals, are set in advance or that it is possible to establish the current aims and objectives if the programme is underway when the evaluation takes place.

Some care needs to be exercised in the application of "goal" models of evaluation. This approach depends on being able to convert programme goals into specific objectives. Programme goals may need to be flexible to facilitate innovation and, in the later stages of a programme, it may be difficult to establish what the current set of goals are. It is also possible in the use of the "goal" model (especially in complex short term programmes), to apply an evaluation that is too rigorous and too early in the life of the programme. Consequently, the results produced will most likely not relate to the ultimate outcomes of the programme.

The "goal" model of evaluation has certain uses in community work programmes. In the local authority setting, projects will have reasonably clear aims and objectives as a basis for securing political assent and resources. This approach is simple to understand and implement. If the objectives are clear, it will be relatively straightforward to extrapolate criteria that can then be measured.

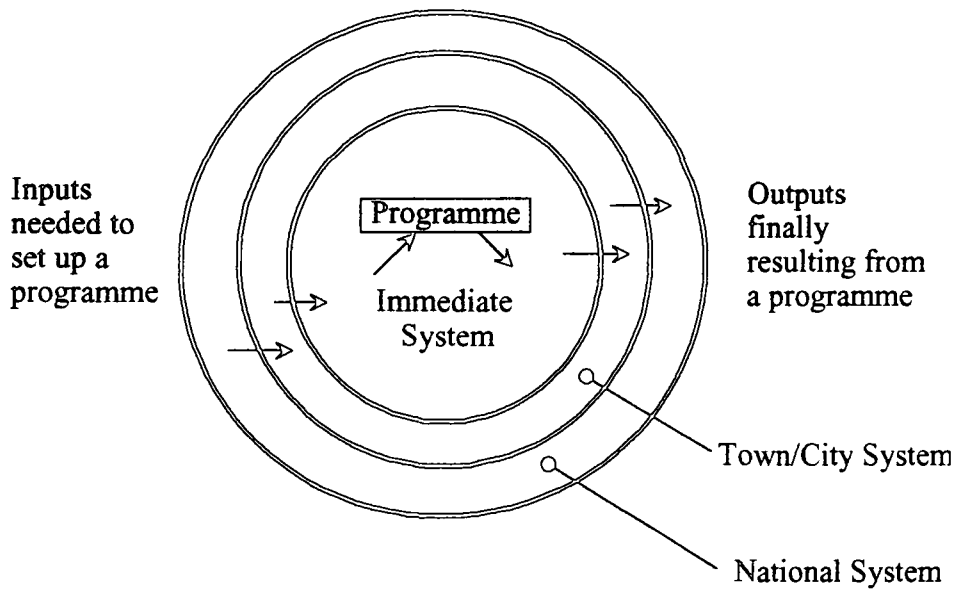
However, community work programmes can achieve more than their planned goals. To capture this, a "systems" model of evaluation may be appropriate.

The Systems Model

A "systems" or "context" model of evaluation is concerned with the processes that are responsible for the outcome(s) of the programme. The wider social context or environment within which the programme occurs "both receives and influences the programme" (Key et al 1976:14). A systems model requires a decision to be made on which two or more corresponding systems are to be appraised. For example, a system of Equal Opportunities practices within the local authority can be expected to impact on, say, training and employment elsewhere in the local community, town or city. The evaluation method(s) will illustrate how these systems interact, the effect generated and possibly identify the new systems they create.

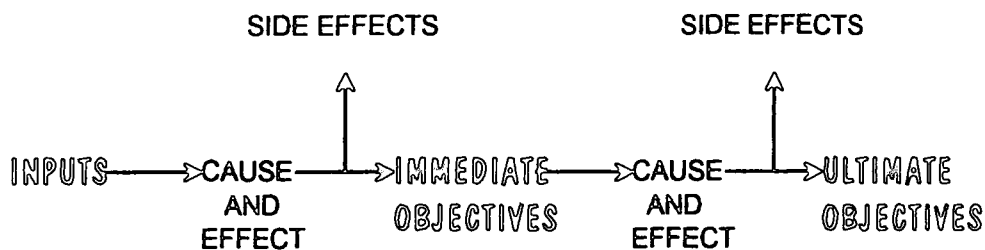
Another example is of a "Community Planning" approach adopted in South Middlesbrough, as modified from practice in other parts of the country. The Community Plan itself is not an entity, but a means of engaging local people with "external" service and resource providers elsewhere in the town and the county. This involves individuals, a variety of community groups, local and central government agencies and so on, in attracting resources and providing solutions that address local needs, but in a way expected to have a wider impact.

The following is reproduced from Key, et al (1976:15) and shows a simplified systems model. It illustrates how inputs from national and town/city wide systems feed into the programme in the "immediate system." Programme outputs can then be expected to influence the town/city wide system and the national system.



Modified "Systems" Model

This example is proposed in the HMSO guide to Policy Evaluation (HMSO 1988:20). The reason for its inclusion is that it shows more explicitly that unplanned events, or "side effects", outside of the immediate system are to be expected and addressed.



Action Research

Action Research (or "evaluation research") is another approach that is in many ways suited to community work programmes. This fits with the notion that the evaluator is involved with, rather than detached from, the programme as described a little later.

Action research is the third element of what David Thomas describes as "service research" (Thomas 1983:264). The other two elements are "investigative research" and "informative research", the former relating to the gathering of "guarded or privileged information", whilst the latter "helps community workers to make decisions about goals, priorities and strategies in their work" (Thomas *ibid.*). It is a particularly useful approach to evaluation that can be said to be "inside" the programme.

Action research is a "tool" in community work practice where the evaluation activity is concurrent with the development of the community work activity. Moreover, the evaluator and practitioner have a reciprocal and contiguous relationship with the programme. It is an approach that was extensively used in the National Community Development Projects of the 1970's and in the Educational Priority Areas following the Plowden Report of 1967 for example. Action research is also described, appropriately, as "evaluative research" (McNeill 1990:10) or "collaborative research" (Boyle 1991 273-4).

It is valued as an approach when the evaluation concerns sensitive areas of work. In such contexts "action research has a number of attractions which are both strategic and emotional" (Benyon 1988:29). Entry to the programme and acceptance of the evaluator are achieved by the recognition that evaluation is valuable to the organisation or programme, and that the "research role" is a positive aspect of the evaluator's relationship with participants.

Action research may be most applicable in situations where the evaluator and the programme participants share the same interests. This approach may be particularly suited to lone workers or small teams who are responsible for devising and implementing programmes and then evaluating their outcomes. For example, a Team Leader may work with colleagues to solve a problem or change a programme in which they are jointly involved. This is especially true in new programmes where experience is limited or the direction is unclear at the outset. The evaluation is more immediate and more immediately connected with the management model for the programme or host organisation.

Action research is related to more strategic and long term concerns. Also, in opting for and supporting this approach it needs to be accepted that it is "value saturated" - in other words the new knowledge gained will be strongly linked to the values and interests of the group or organisation of which the evaluator is a part. In this sense action research can be criticised for not being "scientific".

Moreover, it requires the same strategic and exploratory attitude to be adopted by participants and audiences for the evaluation. For them, action research will not tend to produce immediate results or unambiguous findings. This can create problems in maintaining coherence between the aims and assumptions of the action research approach and, consequently, tension between the evaluator and the participants. The evaluator, taking a longer term, strategic approach may not in the eyes of participants be producing information they can understand or use quickly. This can cast doubts on the validity of the approach and the motives of the evaluator.

Other Approaches

Alternative approaches to evaluation, such as participant observation, surveys of opinion, testimonials and so on are "soft-line" approaches revealing important insights. These type of approaches lack the "scientific rigour" and objectivity of "hard-line" approaches, but they have an important place in the evaluation of community work programmes.

Such "descriptive research" or "explanatory research" (McNeil 1990:9) explains the condition of the programme. This answers basic questions such as "how are we doing?" and "what is happening" rather than "why!". Again, the answers to these question are essentially subjective and value laden. They will embody the views and opinions, impressions and value judgements of the evaluator, participants, funders and managers.

Another point to consider is that these approaches can often (but not always) be implemented quickly, inexpensively and might be just as useful in the long term as the more sophisticated methods of enquiry.

A note of caution is required once again. Critics would argue that simple documentary accounts of programmes is not evaluation. Moreover, as Key, et al note, that merely claiming that "something is being done" or "at least one person has been helped" or that a particular set of values are being promoted is not evaluation. A disposition to this kind of approach might claim that a programme is worthwhile, but says little or nothing about the efficiency or effectiveness of the programme.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has identified the first stage in moving towards the implementation of an evaluation exercise - that is, determining which type of approach is applicable. Due to the general paucity of literature dealing specifically with the evaluation of community work programmes, most of the examples used are drawn from more general social research literature.

However, the approaches discussed are the beginning of the planning stage. This determines whether the evaluation will concentrate on the originating or current set of programme **goals**, or the way in which the programme is influenced by, or influences, the **systems** with which it interacts - or possibly both. A choice of "hard line" or "soft line" approaches is involved, involving a choice between methods that favour "scientific rigour" in generating information or more "value saturated" lines of enquiry.

These are not mutually exclusive choices. It is likely that a combination of approaches will be found to suit a given community work programme. Moreover, it may be preferred to opt for an "action research" approach in which the evaluation is implemented as part of a strategy for devising and executing the programme.

Some balance has to be struck between the approach adopted and the aims and assumptions of those involved in the evaluation. The degree of objectivity and subjectivity needs to be gauged to ensure that the findings are both authoritative and of practical benefit to the programme.

Having thought through these issues, the planning of an evaluation continues with the formulation of an "evaluation model". Such conceptual models provide a framework that enables the various important elements of the evaluation to be linked together. This is the topic the next chapter .

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CHAPTER SEVEN

MODELS OF EVALUATION

Introduction

There is no prescription for carrying out an evaluation. It is a process that requires adaptation to answer a specific question about a specific set of circumstances and relationships. The discussion in the previous Chapter is a guide to the most appropriate ways of beginning to think through the ways of approaching the evaluation of a community work programme. The next step is to contemplate how those approaches can be placed in a rational sequence.

This can be done initially in an abstract way by using models. This stage of the process often tends to be implicit. For example, a "Study Context" (Barr 1991, Part 1) or "Action Plan" (Leavsley 1988:4) can be written to link the various important elements of the evaluation. It is helpful, however, to specify the model more explicitly. Several models will, therefore, be presented that will help to broaden understanding of using this technique in the evaluation of community work programmes.

Evaluating community work will not work without a high quality framework or model being conceived. The model is tailored to the programme or event being evaluated. By devising the model with the participants, the evaluator can be assured that it will be credible and accepted.

The evaluation model is a means of plausibly integrating the approach and the method. It is also has the advantage of integrating the evaluation with the management model of the programme or project or host organisation. Moreover, the evaluation model adopted for a community work programme provides the benchmarks by which it will be judged to have been successful or not - a means of evaluating the evaluation.

A Broad Model for Evaluation

A rudimentary model for evaluation, covering the key themes, is adapted from a model proposed by Jurgen Karlsen (1991:150), the key stages are as follows;

- ◆ It is necessary to decide what is to be evaluated. This simple statement should not be underestimated. The focus of the evaluation needs to be clear. It is also necessary to be selective to maximise the benefits of the evaluation. This also makes the best use of time and resources and helps to manage the information collected. (This is considered more fully in the next chapter).
- ◆ An approach needs to be adopted that is appropriate to the programme or event being evaluated. Who is the evaluation for? Who will be the evaluator? How will it be carried out? What will it cost? How will it be presented? A clear idea of these factors needs to be considered. In addition, a decision is required about the type of evaluation - will it relate to the goals of the programme or project, the systems it influences or is influenced by, or both?
- ◆ Information and Data needs to be collected. Methods of data collection have to be established, and the measures and methods of measurement need to be considered. Sources of the information and data also need to be worked out.
- ◆ The analysis of the data and information is the next stage in this general model. The analysis will draw certain conclusions based on the findings of the evaluation that will then require judgements to be made.
- ◆ The fifth and concluding stage of this model is concerned with making those judgements. It is a period of reflection and interpretation. It is a highly subjective stage in many respects and will influence greatly our perceptions and detailed knowledge of the programme or project being acted upon, and the systems with which it interfaces.

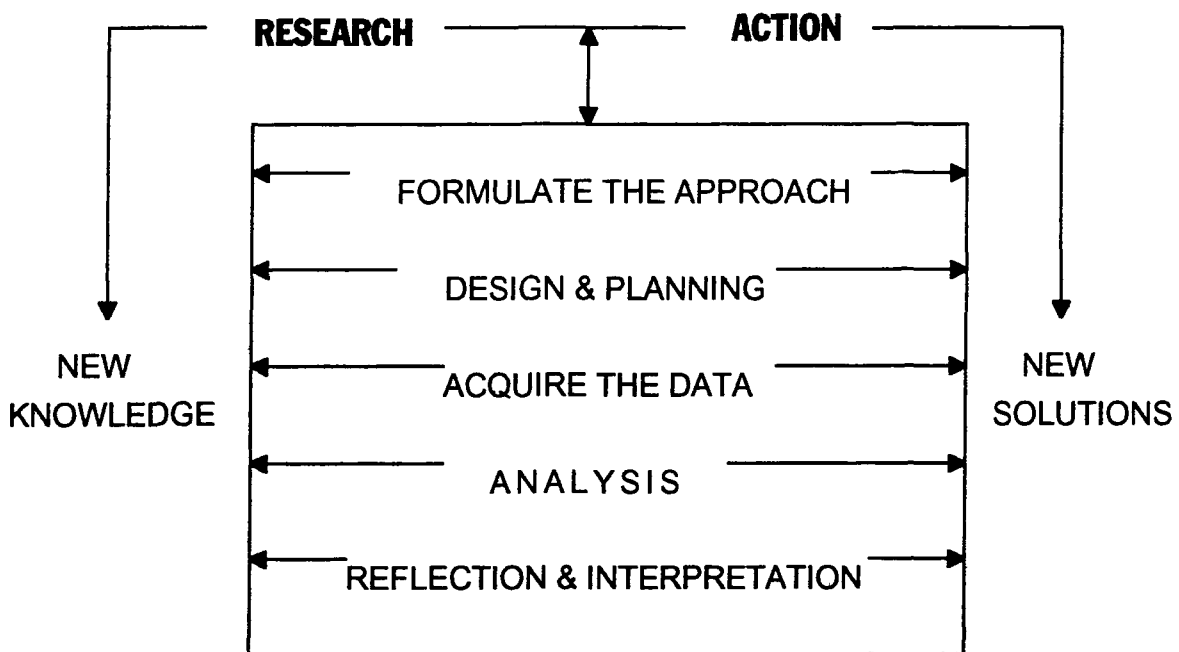
This general model is a cycle of events and procedures rather than a linear series of stages. In other words, it confirms evaluation as an iterative and overlapping process; it informs itself and leads into repeating or further evaluations. In practice, this is rarely the case. An evaluation is often regarded as a programme or project phase and often the last element of a community work intervention to be carried out.

Karlsen's model refers to two crucial elements contingent to this general approach to evaluation. The first is "research" and the second "action".

The former is a reference to the need for method. The method (or methods) defines valid and reliable means of being systematic and achieving precision both in the investigations and in the way the results are communicated. This produces knowledge, and it has previously been explained how evaluation acts on our current knowledge and understanding of a situation and produces new knowledge and understanding.

The second element is descriptive of the purpose of evaluation under discussion in this thesis. Evaluation is only worthwhile if it is directly associated with change. There is a tacit commitment to change in undertaking an evaluation. A clear approach to evaluation coupled with a sound research method can invoke change - new solutions to problems and new practices.

Karlsen's model is reproduced below and can be shown thus;



Although basic, Karlsen's model captures the essentials in mapping a research or evaluation exercise. This is not simply a replication of an evaluation "design" discussed in the next

Chapter. The evaluation model is composed of carefully selected criteria that are critical factors in the evaluation methodology. This is important for several reasons.

Perhaps the most important reason is that the model provides a specific framework for the programme being evaluated. The model should be constructed openly, with the participation of those affected by the evaluation. Consequently, it inherits credibility and acceptance and avoids any need to import or impose a model from elsewhere.

The other main feature of the evaluation model is its systematic and integrative nature. This has two crucial facets; i) in integrating varied evaluation and practice theories; and ii) in integrating the evaluation model within a total model for the management of people. In other words, the key factors selected in the evaluation model will bring together contrasting approaches to evaluation in a congruent way. This is, perhaps, best shown in the "programme goals" model that follows a little later.

Evaluation is also seen to be built in to the day to day systems of knowledge development, personal and group development. This fits our understanding of evaluation as inherent, and a cyclical feature of a programme or an event.

The evaluation model serves both "formative" (improvement) and "summative" (judgemental) purposes. "Despite the apparent polarisation between the formative orientation and the summative orientation, these positions need not be construed as mutually exclusive" (Stronge & Helm 1991:40). They contend, and there is a broad measure of agreement elsewhere in the literature, that it is desirable to include "the best of both worlds" in an evaluation (Stronge & Helm *ibid.*).

A similar logic holds true for the inclusion and status of quantitative and qualitative data, or "hard-line", "soft-line" approaches. The contention is that the emphasis in evaluating community work will be on the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. In other words a tendency towards the gathering and interpretation of "soft line" or subjective information. This does not avoid the need for relevant quantitative data, and quite clearly the two can be successfully integrated in the evaluation model.

The basic premise is much more simple than discussions on the divergent epistemologies (theories of method) would suggest. Evaluation is not about grand theory, or knowledge that is universal in nature. Rather, it is about answering specific questions about specific events that relate to the real experience of the people involved. Evaluation models can, therefore, be used flexibly and constructed as a "one-off's" or directed at a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes.

Although the focus of this thesis is the evaluation of community work in a local government setting, quite clearly the development of an evaluation model can apply to a broad spectrum of qualitative research. The "ideal" type would be an evaluation that is integrative in the manner described above.

The Committee Report

In local authority terms, perhaps the most straightforward method of presenting the evaluation model is in a report to a Council Committee. The most frequently encountered method will be a list of the relevant topics that "constructs" the evaluation model - perhaps described as its "terms of reference" or its "action plan."

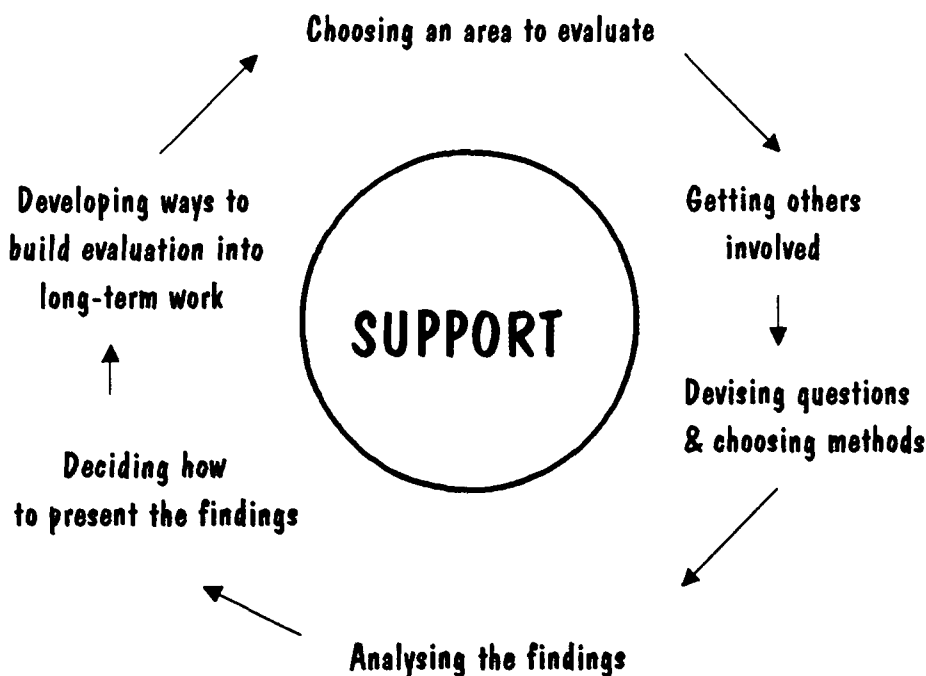
In St. Helen's, for example, a report to the "Community Strategies Task Group" (Leavsley 1988) is a list of nine elements in an "action plan" providing a framework for the study and evaluation of community development work. This describes a "communications strategy" within the authority and at the neighbourhood level, the links with "neighbourhood working", other activities such as "community enterprise", training and so on.

Perhaps a more explicit model is needed, and the approach above can be improved by grouping the elements in a more coherent way as in the following examples.

"Illuminative Evaluation" Model

In Chapter 4, reference is made to the concept of "illuminative evaluation" as adapted by Miller & Sparks (1984). Interestingly, the worker's experience (although unique to each individual) suggested several common themes that it is possible to convert into a model for this form of evaluation.

The central feature of this "model" is support. This creates the conditions for learning from the evaluation, both the experience of the evaluation process and the implementation of each block of activity. This model is shown in the form of a diagram, which shares some of the features of the "programme goals" model that follows. However, the particular interest here is that this is not an abstract model, but a model shaped by personal experience of "working through their [worker's] confusion" (Kelly 1986:11).



"Programme Goals" Model

The evaluation model can be expressed in several ways. An interesting, and relevant, approach is adapted from the work by Stronge & Helm in evaluating Professional Support Personnel in the Education field.

- ♦ the core theme

There is a core theme to this model. Because we are evaluating a social programme, where people are the actors as either funders, managers, agency personnel or clients, the central theme can be described as "communication". This is the feature that connects the other elements the model. It emphasises the proactive relationship between the evaluator, the organisation and the participants, throughout the evaluation cycle, in effecting a quality evaluation. The other elements fall into the following categories;

- ♦ programme goals

The first will be described as "programme goals". The programme being evaluated has particular needs related to its goals that are met by the personnel engaged to achieve those goals. This prerequisite step clarifies both the aims and purposes (originating or current) of the programme and the actions and behaviours expected of the people involved.

Programme goals are met when the programme reaches its desired state. "This future state will may reflect moving from a discrepancy status (i.e., difference between where the organisation is and where it wants to be) or simply maintaining the status quo" (Stronge & Helm 1991:78).

Also, programme goals can be seen to be met when there is unity of purpose among the people implementing the programme. This also requires relevant sub-goals to exist for the organisation and the individual. Clarifying aims and purposes, or programme needs, of the organisation or programme is essential in informing the remaining elements of the conceptual evaluation model.

- ◆ programme expectations

The second element is described as "programme expectations". These arise out of the programme aims and determine the job responsibilities, the roles, attributes or behaviours expected to attain those aims. What does the organisation expect and what do the participants delivering the programme expect? In most cases this tends to be implicit rather than explicit in an evaluation model. It is helpful if this step is explicit, a good example being in the evaluation carried out by Alan Barr in Strathclyde (Barr 1990) where he specifically equates these two factors.

- ◆ programme indicators

The third step is to devise "programme indicators". To examine if programme expectations are being achieved, "programme indicators" or "performance indicators" need to be established. These are the observable criteria we use to measure achievements and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

- ◆ programme performance standards

Fourthly, "programme performance standards" will be established, i.e., the levels of results acceptable in the programme will be predetermined. In so far as "programme expectations" describe WHAT is required to achieve the programme aims, "programme performance standards" determine HOW WELL the programme and participants are doing, and HOW MUCH is being achieved, or if it is not being achieved at all.

- ◆ programme documentation

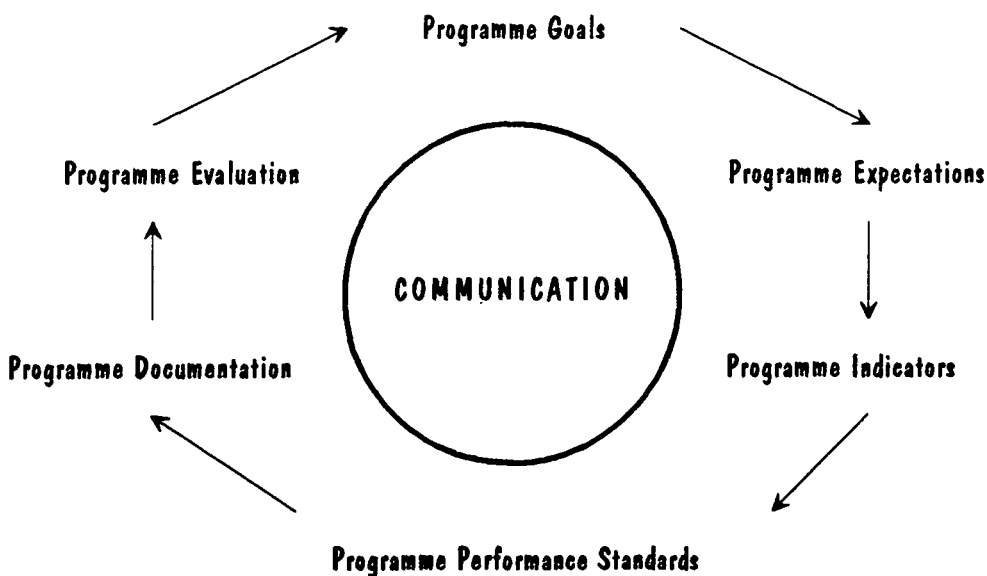
The penultimate step is "programme documentation". This is the recording of the evidence supporting the evaluation and illustrates the quality or worth of the programme. The more obvious methods include observation, questioning, self-assessment and so on, but this should also take into account recordings, correspondence, and systems unique to individuals in the

programme. The recording and outcome of supervision or staff development session can also be considered here and contribute to the data being collected.

- ♦ programme evaluation

The final step is "programme evaluation" and is the culmination of the preceding steps. This assumes not only the execution of evaluation methodology, but also the forum for "the audience" to whom the evaluation is relevant, to hear and discuss the findings. The "audience" - a funding or managing body, a Council committee or even an individual, will consider the outcome of the evaluation and recommend future strategies for improvement.

This model can be shown in the following way;



This model is shown as a cyclical, iterative activity. This conceptual model can be modified to the specific programmes or events being evaluated. The evaluation design, discussed later, is the vehicle that translates this conceptual framework into an executable method.

"Critical Appraisal" Model

Key et.al. (1976:48) operationalise their approach to evaluation in a method they describe as "critical appraisal". This is a model conceived in two "phases". Presented as a diagram (Key, et al, *ibid.*) the process seems quite complicated. As text, however, it is much simplified, the "first phase" having four stages as follows;

Stage A

- ◆ collecting the story material, history and data of the project, chronology of events and the principal actors
 - * reading agency records
 - * making chronology of events
 - * present workers in the agency should write down from memory stories of their involvement in the project
 - * gathering stories of past workers
 - * gathering stories of constituents

Stage B

- ◆ considering theoretical perspectives
 - * reading around in theoretical works
 - * preparing written summaries of the ideas contained in these works

Stage C

- ◆ selecting material and deriving patterns
 - * looking for patterns
 - * key elements
 - * key assumption
 - * theory grids

Stage D

- ◆ building the programme model, relating data patterns to selected theory grids
 - * to highlight particular events that are important from both the historical and theoretical point of view
 - * to indicate the sorts of questions that should be asked about those events in the application phase of critical appraisal

This is followed by "phase 2", the implementation itself, that also allows for fresh data to be collected. "Critical appraisal" then takes place. This is written by the evaluator(s) as "the operation of working out the analysis of the data on the programme in terms of the framework established as the programme model". In other words, conclusions.

"Research Contact" Model

Mog Ball (Ball 1988:37-39) approaches the construction of an evaluation model, which she interprets as a "research contract" between the parties concerned. It is referred to here because this alternative approach is to construct a model out of a series of questions.

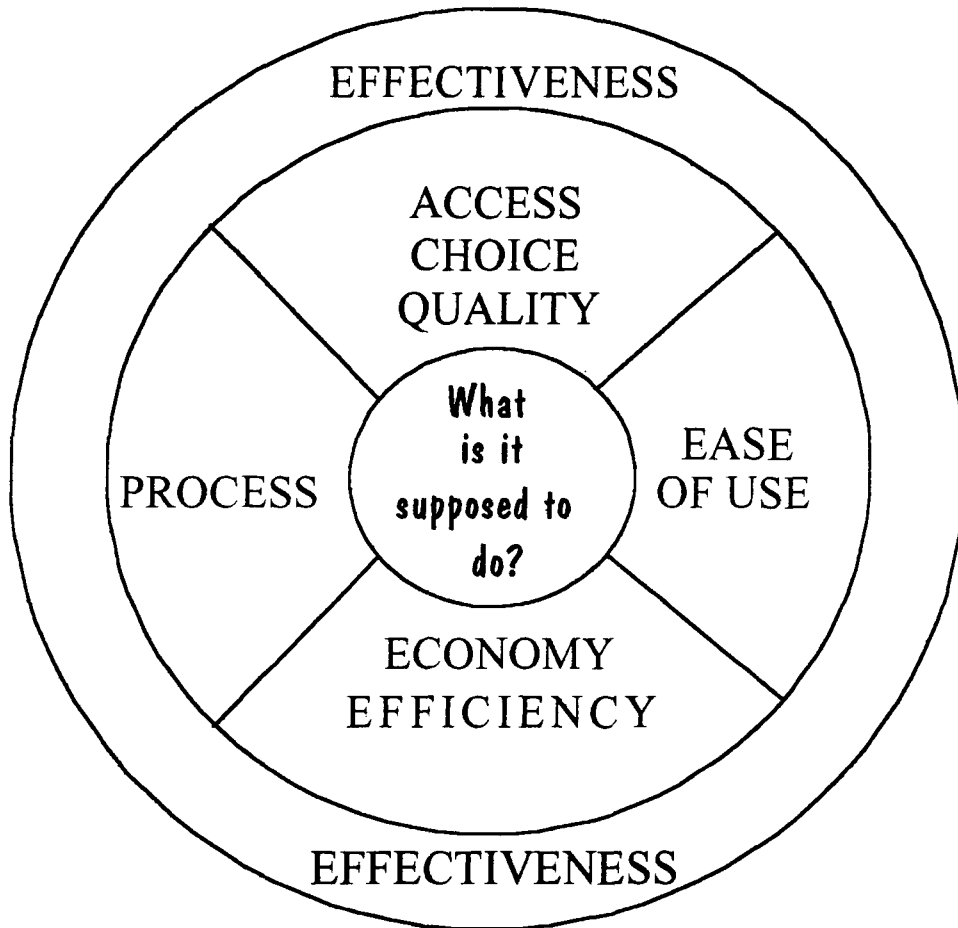
- A. What are you evaluating?
- B. Why are you evaluating?
- C. When are you evaluating?
- D. Who wants the evaluation?
- E. How wide an area are you evaluating?
- F. What is the style of the evaluation?
- G. How will you carry out the evaluation?
- H. How will you present judgements and/or information?
- I. Who will do the evaluation?
- J. What will be produced at the end?

The answers to these questions will form the component parts of the evaluation model. Some readers may find this approach helpful.

The "Service Wheel" Model

Another form of evaluation model used in the voluntary sector is the "Service Wheel" proposed by the Cleveland Council for Voluntary Service adapted from the model produced by the National Consumer Council (CCVS 1990:Section 4). It features a series of concentric circles, the circle in the centre asking the question "what is it [the programme] supposed to do?". Radiating outwards are a series of further qualifying questions, for example "what does it cost" and "what is it like to use?" leading to relevant categories relating to performance and users. The "wheel" is encompassed by the principle of "effectiveness".

The limits of the technology producing the following diagram prevent the full model being illustrated, but the diagram indicates the form such a model will take.



The diagram shows a sequence of events working outward from the centre, identifying the key elements of the programme to be analysed. Although quite rudimentary as shown above, the model can be very comprehensive but still be attractive enough to use.

The Service Plan Model

The final model referred to is the "Service Plan and Workprogramme" devised in Middlesbrough Council (Service Plan 1991). The model stems from the Council's mission statement through to the setting of areas of service and performance targets. The model is structured as follows;

- ◆ Council statement of political and corporate aims.
- ◆ Each Council Department has specific objectives, or "strategies". For example, in the Housing & Community Services Department there are eight strategy statements.
- ◆ Each Division within the department identifies "Key Service Areas" under each strategy heading. These reflect political and managerial priorities for the current year.
- ◆ The fourth stage is to devise "Key Service Commitments" for the coming year. These are operational commitments, the things that the public can expect.
- ◆ The fifth element of the model is a workprogramme that says how the service commitments are to be put into practice.
- ◆ finally, there is an implementation and monitoring stage.

This model is one method being employed by a local authority to integrate community work with other operations of the Council and the management systems of the department. The model is provided here to illustrate how the Council's aims are converted into community work practice relating to the management model for the host department.

Evaluating an Evaluation

The evaluation model is specific to its purpose and will be devised by the evaluator, with the participants. The model also serves for evaluating the evaluation. How the subsequent implementation of the evaluation occurs and the effects it produces can be judged against the model, and its integrative factors.

Furthermore, the model itself requires a set of criteria against which it can be judged. Castetter, for example, approaches this by citing three impediments to effective evaluation that can be used as benchmarks for the evaluation exercise itself. They are "administrative irrationality", "technical irrationality" and "environmental irrationality" (Castetter 1986:326-330).

- ◆ it is administratively irrational not to accept evaluation being linked with results, behaviour, individual, group and system objectives thereby missing the benefits for job performance and work content.
- ◆ it is technically irrational if evaluation techniques, equipment and material are used improperly;
- ◆ and environmentally irrational if the evaluation is subject to broad political influence thereby constraining development or affecting morale.

In other words, if the model is logically constructed the subsequent evaluation will create the climate for change and improvement, effectively use resources in carrying out the evaluation and be immutable.

Validity, Reliability, Representativeness and Utility

The other pertinent means of "evaluating the evaluation" is in testing for the attributes of validity, reliability, representativeness and utility. Writers and practitioners stress the need to take these factors into consideration throughout the planning and implementation of an evaluation - for example, Clegg (1990:137), McNeill (1990:14-16), Morse (1991:215-221), Stronge & Helm (1991 32:36). These are benchmarks for evaluating the methodology and should not only be borne in mind, but included in the evaluation model.

- ◆ If the method is valid, the data collected will be a true picture of what is being studied and the method will measure what it is intended to measure.
- ◆ If the method is reliable, it can be said to be consistent, dependable and repeatable producing the same kind of results.
- ◆ Representativeness becomes important when we extrapolate from the findings to describe other groups or situations. In other words, we can generalise from the example being evaluated if we are certain that the group or situation being evaluated is typical of others.
- ◆ Utility refers to the practicality of the method. The method that is practical will be durable and will require less investment of time, training, equipment and finance to implement.

Some Concerns

It is necessary to provide a note of caution concerning these attributes. First, a valid evaluation method is always reliable, but a method that is reliable is not always valid. A method that is valid always produces consistent results, if not it cannot be said to be measuring what it was intended to measure. On the other hand, consistent results do not always imply validity, for example, the results of the evaluation could be consistently wrong!

Moreover, there must always be a doubt about claims for the representativeness of an evaluation method. Even in large scale, carefully constructed sampling methods (for example, social surveys) there is a question mark about the representativeness of the responses. Evaluating community work interventions will be around small scale activities and care must be taken in claiming the results are typical of other situations.

Concluding comments

Evaluating community work will simply not work without a high quality framework or model being conceived. The model is tailored to the programme or event being evaluated. By devising the model with the participants, the evaluator can be assured that it will be credible and accepted.

The model is also a means of plausibly integrating the research methodologies; moreover of integrating the evaluation with a model for the management of the programme or project or host organisation. Furthermore, the evaluation model adopted for a programme or event gives the benchmarks by which it will be judged to have been successful or not - a means of evaluating the evaluation. The key attributes of validity, reliability, representativeness and utility will be continuously applied to substantiate this judgement.

Several examples are provided in this section of ways in which a conceptual model can be produced, either in a written form or as a diagram. Each is currently in use in the local authority setting and the voluntary sector and they are;

- i) The Committee Report
- ii) The Illuminative Evaluation Model
- iii) The Programme Goals Model
- iv) The Critical Appraisal Model
- v) The Research Contract Model
- vi) The Service Wheel Model
- vii) The Service Plan Model

The important features of each evaluation model is in how they establish with participants the context for the particular evaluation. This is done by identifying the core theme and then by sequencing the key elements of the evaluation. Once constructed, the model will inform the development of the more detailed and task orientated evaluation design, the subject of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

EVALUATION DESIGN

Introduction

The evaluation process is being discussed in the context of the preceding Chapters that have set the scene by describing the nature of local government (the setting in which community work is then described and defined) together with the role and skills of the Evaluator(s). The most suitable approaches are presented and followed, in the preceding chapter, by conceptual models for sequencing and integrating the evaluation methods.

The evaluation design is the task oriented phase of the process and provides a means of identifying the data to be collected, the methods, sources to be used, the resources required, who is to carry it out and in what timescale.

In the examples discussed in this chapter, there are potentially six audiences for the evaluation findings. The community members, a council committee, senior management, other supervisory staff, community work staff. There may also be an "academic audience" interested in the findings - in which I would include educational establishments or other local authority or community work programme.

The interests of these groups is likely to fall in two categories;

- ◆ the committee, senior management and supervisory staff will tend to be more interested in the service delivery aspects of the evaluation.
- ◆ The community workers will be more interested in the power relationships.

Community Members and the "academic audience" will be interested in both while subsequent recommendations for changes will be related to these two areas.

To summarise, in the context of the issues raised thus far in this thesis, an evaluation will be designed to address the following;

- ◆ What programme, part of a programme or event will be evaluated?
- ◆ What indicators can be measured to show change, how are they to be measured and the necessary data collected?
- ◆ What has changed as a result of the programme or event?
- ◆ The extent to which community members are able to achieve their individual and collective goals.
- ◆ The types and nature of the community work practiced, the programme phases and key events.
- ◆ How fieldworkers spend their time and with whom they work with
- ◆ The impact on the programme of the roles and skills (inputs) of workers and the input of other resources.
- ◆ The relationship between the participants - community members, elected members, managers, other funders and fieldworkers, at both the neighbourhood level and the agency level.
- ◆ How the findings will be presented and to whom
- ◆ Unplanned events and the impact on the programme, and the impact of the programme, outside of its immediate system

It is misleading, however, to suggest that the evaluation is a neat, linear activity from beginning to end. The evaluation, because it involves people, becomes a new social process, a new set of relationships and interactions that influences its implementation and direction. The implementation of the evaluation is subject to modification as a consequence of these influences.

Evaluation Model to Evaluation Design

As the evaluation model is the conceptual framework, the "evaluation design" is the operational framework of the evaluation process. It is the framework around which is hung the mechanics, the crucial "nuts and bolts" of an evaluation exercise that "finalises the practical and fine details" (Herbert 1990:40). It is here that the practice takes over from the theory and there is a commitment to a series of actions

The design stage of an evaluation is the first real opportunity to "step outside" the programme. The evaluator and participants are about to consider specific aspects of the programme in which they are involved, and ask searching questions about how to demonstrate its effectiveness. It may have been assumed there is a common understanding of many issues. The design stage is where such issues converge, and it may be the first time they have been thought through objectively and under scrutiny.

Evaluation design is a systematic and selective approach to enquiring into the events or activities we wish to scrutinise. When complete, it identifies all the factors that need to be considered and forms a workprogramme for the evaluator and other participants. Of itself, the design of an evaluation does not produce an analysis of the programme being evaluated. Rather, the design establishes the method(s) and produces the data upon which judgements will be made.

Ethical Issues - The Responsibility of the Evaluator

In setting out to design an evaluation, the complexity of the value dilemmas and value conflicts is realised. In identifying the aspects of the programme or event that are to be evaluated; as questions are asked about measuring; about qualitative criteria; about participants expectations of the programme and each other; about the timescale and resources for carrying it out; about who should carry out the tasks and so on, the difficulties to be encountered will become clear.

Most importantly, the evaluator must have a positive regard to the participants. "As a researcher, your first responsibility is to the individuals you study, and your research must not interfere with their physical, social or mental welfare" (Kane 1990:212). Key et.al. go on to point out that "the ultimate purpose of our work on evaluation has always been to improve the situation of people in communities by helping improve the quality of the community work intervention... that the people with whom we have worked deserve to be treated with respect. It follows then, that the role of our constituents in the critical appraisal of our community programme is an important one..." (Key et.al 1976:46).

McNeill (1988:13) also reminds us "that the choice of topic is affected by the power of the subjects of the research to resist the investigation." The evaluator will be working with and evaluating programmes that involve both the relatively powerless, and the relatively powerful. Herein is a warning both about the sensitivity to be employed in choosing and applying the method as well the resistance we may encounter from powerful vested interests elsewhere.

Another point to make here is that not only has the evaluation to involve and have regard for participants, it will have to make sense to them in one form or another - in concept, method or outcome. The evaluator will have to deal with this in pragmatic and morally justifiable ways.

Openness in attitude, approach and presentation is crucial. The ethical issues surrounding the value-laden processes of evaluation must be properly addressed. The responsibility for that can be properly directed to the evaluator, who is also responsible for the integrity of the method. Constructing the evaluation design will only highlight these issues, dealing with them is not so straightforward.

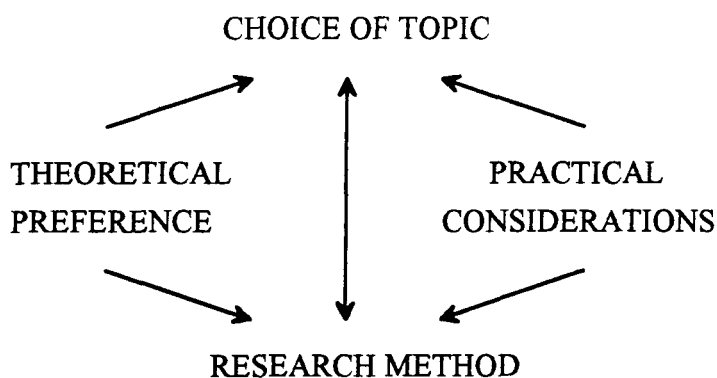
Robert Burgess concludes that whilst statements of ethical principles can be made providing a framework for the evaluator to work within, this "cannot provide 'answers' to problems that vary with the researcher, the researched and the research context.... This highlights the central issue that all field researchers must address, namely the extent to

which their activities are unethical. For it is only by constant self evaluation and reflection on our research experience that we are most likely to understand the moral dilemmas and the compromises that we are required to make in the conduct of field research (Burgess 1990:207).

The Topic of the Evaluation

What is to be evaluated is the first consideration and, of course, the scope for choosing a topic is endless. This not the same as proposing a hypothesis (which will be considered later). The evaluator, or the organisation commissioning the evaluation, will be guided initially by their theoretical or ideological stand-point, and the practical issues of time, money and other resources required. These considerations will influence the evaluation method which in turn will shape what it is possible to achieve.

Patrick McNeill (1990:125) provides a useful illustration of this four-cornered relationship;



The evaluator and those commissioning the evaluation will have (but not necessarily in every case) some disposition towards the values and beliefs inherent in community work practice discussed in Chapter 2. This will have a bearing on the approach to, and specific focus of, the evaluation and the "research method".

All evaluations come at some cost in terms of time, money and other resources. Another practical consideration may be the body funding the evaluation. The evaluation will have to conform to their criteria in order to secure resources.

Furthermore, it is almost inevitable that the choice of topic will be related to the policy objectives of the organisation running the programme, or those of the sponsoring body. Moreover, it is possible that current priorities in the academic world or issues currently in the spotlight may provide a stimulus for choosing the topic.

For example, a local authority will choose an operation relating to one of its policy areas - for example, an evaluation of tenant participation initiatives sponsored by the Council. It so happens that "tenant participation" is currently receiving national attention as a means of diversifying the management of rented housing. The present general interest in the evaluation of community work programmes will, no doubt, stimulate other evaluation activities, and so on. A number of other factors come to bear here; time, cost, availability of up to date information, the point of time the evaluation falls in the programme, as well as the motives for calling for such pieces of research.

This suggests that the evaluation will be driven by interest in a broad area of policy involving the activities of, perhaps, many people. However, it is possible to focus on smaller scale activities - the work of one area team or local project, for example. In fact, whilst large scale evaluations will continue and have their place, selecting particular topics is an efficient way of, initially, addressing the most important issues and then gradually building on that body of knowledge. This is also an efficient way of using scarce resources for maximum benefit and to build up skills and experience of evaluation procedures and techniques.

In choosing the topic for an evaluation, it is essential that the likely results will be worth the effort and be meaningful, "to the extent that it is theoretically, methodologically or technically relevant" (Herbert 1990:8). In choosing the topic, it is necessary to identify the issue or problem that is broadly recognised as an appropriate and relevant starting point, in that way, access to people and information will be easier to achieve and there will be genuine interest in, and response to, the findings.

At first, this is a seemingly complex procedure - similar, for example, to the formulation and refinement of a "research statement" relating to a piece of social research. It is a matter of sitting down and thinking things through. Eileen Kane suggests that the broad area of interest is gradually refined until a clear definition of the topic is reached and captured in a single, explicit statement (Kane 1990:16-20). As an illustration of this, in his study of community work in Strathclyde, Alan Barr summarises;

The research "examines the dynamic relationship between the sponsors and their policies, the workers themselves, the managers of the service activity in which they are based and the consumers of their activity... primarily from the perspective of the community work staff, but also seeks an objective view of the work undertaken". (Barr 1991:25)

In Middlesbrough, for example, an evaluation of tenant participation initiatives was called for by Members of the Council. As the starting point it was decided to work from the key question in the minds of Members, Staff and residents involved:

"Do the various tenant participation activities actually improve decision-making and service delivery?"

Another example from the evaluation of Community Employment Development Officers in Cleveland states;

"This report aims to evaluate the impact of the Community Employment Development Officer (CEDO) Initiative and to identify those factors that have enhanced or constrained that impact." (Williams 1988:1)

Content of the Evaluation Design

The evaluation design will specify;

- a) the focus of the evaluation;
- b) the amount of time and resources available;
- c) the availability and collection of the data that will inform the evaluation;
- d) the extent to which it is possible to impose upon the people and groups who will supply the data ("getting in", etc.);
- e) the scope of the evaluation;
- f) how the findings will be reported and to whom;
- g) some provision, if possible, for unplanned events.

♦ a) The Focus of the Evaluation

This is, quite simply, what question(s) will the evaluation answer (see above). This may be to do with the achievement of the aims of the programme or related to the systems with which it interacts. The evaluator or a group "steering" the evaluation exercise (that should include those participating in the evaluation) will meet to discuss the topic and how the different phases of the evaluation will relate to one another. This suggests the topic will be a single issue, but it may be a whole programme that is to be evaluated.

♦ b) Time and Resources

Time, money, equipment and other resources needed to complete the evaluation are finite. Any one of these may be a reason for the scarcity of research and evaluation in community work. What is true in a general sense may also be true in specific ways. For example, there may be plenty of time, but not enough money (and vice-versa). The participants in the evaluation may not have equal or similar measures of time to give and so on. The design model will take specific account of these factors.

- ◆ c) Availability and Collection of Data

The results of the evaluation will be based on the data or information collected. The availability of the data will depend on several factors; on the degree of access the evaluator has to participants and relevant information; whether the data required is confidential or not and also the recording methods used as well as the accuracy of the recorded data. The skills of the evaluator are also a factor (see Chapter 5).

- ◆ d) Getting in, Getting on, Getting Out and Getting Back

Evaluation has been previously described as "the art of the possible". What is possible depends to a large extent on the availability, dependability and good will of the people involved in the evaluation. The evaluator has to gain access to people and to build relationships and trust. S/he needs to work to timescales - in relation to interview appointments as well as ending, or "exiting" the evaluation. Moreover, there may be a need to go back for further information or clarification. David Buchanan and his colleagues discuss these issues at some length in a chapter titled "Getting In, Getting On, Getting Out and Getting Back" (Buchanan et. al. 1988:53-67)

- ◆ e) Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation design needs to take into account the scope of the evaluation. Is the evaluation specific or broadly based? Is it about a one-off event or series of events? Is it locality specific, agency specific, group specific and so on.

Also relevant here is the number and the selection of people involved in the evaluation - the "sample". In quantitative research methods, a number of quite specific rules have been developed for calculating the sample size. This is commented further on this aspect in the next chapter.

- ◆ f) Reporting the findings

Who is the evaluation for? How will the evaluation findings be communicated? A variety of complex social interactions will be recorded and analysed that may be read by a variety of audiences with different degrees of interest in the outcome.

Eileen Kane provides sound advice in presenting research papers that holds true for the evaluators of community work programmes. First, she cites clarity - "unintelligibility does not convey accuracy... most people today are too busy to waste time wading through jargon". However, "professional organisations have shared vocabularies and conventions for presentation of material" (Kane 1990:176-177) . In other words, it is important the findings are written to suit the reader.

Secondly, "honesty and accuracy" - the same attention to detail is required whether the findings are reported to a local residents association, a council committee or a university. "People like to read short, clear, modest, truthful reports".

Thirdly, "length" is an important consideration and the paper should only be long enough to cover the relevant findings. Finally, "organisation", or the form and structure of the final presentation is vital.

In the evaluation design, it will be possible to identify the audience(s) for the evaluation. It is also possible to specify any interim reporting arrangements - such as who will consider the first draft prior to final submission. In a local authority this may be more especially true, and can be either a senior officer or, perhaps a monitoring committee.

- ◆ g) Unplanned events

One of the most prominent arguments against doing any form of evaluation is that many outcomes of working with people happen as a result of influences or changes outside the scope of the intervention. Making allowances for this in the evaluation design is possible to the extent that time and resources will allow.

It is essential to be aware of unplanned outcomes (see page 94-95 regarding "systems models). Some judgment needs to be taken about the importance of these occurrences. If they are significant, time and resources should be specifically set aside to investigate them.

Pragmatism in Evaluation Design

The evaluation design is a fundamental and necessary feature of the approach to evaluation. Michael Key and his colleagues describe the design stage as "primarily an intellectual, planning stage in the evaluation programme" Key, et.al. (1976:20). They are, in fact, merging evaluation models and designs into one, whereas separating them is more accurate and helpful. Their definition more aptly relates to the "knowing" phase and the development of a typology of the community work being studied. Evaluation design is about narrowing the intellectual concepts and establishing the evaluation method.

The theme that consistently applies is that of pragmatism. The evaluation design, when complete, has to be practical, workable, efficient and produce results that can be used.

Design as a collective exercise

The design framework allows each topic to be resolved around "live" issues. It is task orientated rather than theory dominated, and there are added benefits if the design becomes a collective exercise. The group involved with the evaluator will need to reach a consensus on each aspect of the design. This further underpins the collectivised and open approach stressed in this thesis, and recognises that the evaluation itself is a social process.

The features of a design model will be presented in a moment, but a note of caution should be emphasised from personal experience, and often mentioned in the literature. The decisions that need to be taken in finalising an evaluation design will rarely be

absolute. It will be necessary to agree a reasoned compromise to resolve important questions, for example, in deciding on what subjective criteria to use in judging a given topic. The evaluator will also be required to come to an agreement about the standards and the indicators that will be used.

That is why a collective approach should be favoured in refining both the criteria and the qualitative measures (in particular). Patton (1978:284) calls this "utilization-focused evaluation".

"There are only two fundamental requirements of this approach;..... First, relevant decision-makers and information users must be identified and organised - real, visible, specific and caring human beings not ephemeral, general and abstract audiences, organisations or agencies. Second, evaluators must work actively, reactively and adaptively with these identified decision makers and information users to make all other decisions about the evaluation - decisions about research focus, design, methods, analysis, interpretation and dissemination".

The importance of this approach to evaluation is emphasised by the inclusion of ALL the people who have a stake in the programme and the evaluation, at the outset through to the end. Mog Ball reminds us that "only with the co-operation of those actually doing the work can the information be collected..." Ball (1988:14). More fundamentally, this approach is also being consistent with our community development principles.

Dizy Martin of Manchester Council for Voluntary Services, in discussion described how a forum called the "Evaluation Self-help Network" was established by Manchester C.V.S. in conjunction with Manchester University. The self help network facilitated a number of projects "to meet and work out together how to provide their evaluation needs and obligations within a participatory framework" (Hood 1986). Furthermore, the network provided support for individual workers in addition to help with problems of design, method and implementation. The collective approach can, therefore, be applicable between programmes undergoing evaluation.

The approach should always be through collective activity of varying kinds, not only within the programme but external to it in the process of evaluation. For example, a group of officers may give initial consideration to criteria and measures that they may

then discuss with ward councillors. The resulting proposals can go on to be considered by other participants - an Area Subcommittee, the residents involved and so on until a compromise or consensus is reached.

This is, in fact, much easier to do in the initial stages of an evaluation. Evaluation is more often introduced during, or after the programme or event. Consequently, there is likely to be quite an open-ended view about what should be evaluated and the range of information that will be gathered. Perhaps this is because the outcomes are largely unknown at that time, or because the approach satisfies a basic inquisitiveness or sense of accountability. Perhaps initially, no one feels too threatened....

This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. The relatively relaxed attitude promotes confidence and interest. However, it is a stage that can be abused by taking people further than they want, or need, to go. Furthermore, Suchman (1982) cautions us that there can be "covert purposes for undertaking research" where the intention is to close down or delay action. The evaluator should be alert to these eventualities.

The Design Stage as a Management Tool

There is another dimension to evaluation that requires some elaboration from the previous chapter to do with the integration of the evaluation with the management systems of the host organisation. As a manager of Community Workers and Community Work resources, the collective involvement of staff is crucial in motivating staff and achieving the healthy evolution of the organisation. This as another application of community development principles within the organisation, in this case to maintain effectiveness. When involved in an evaluation exercise with staff the design stage becomes a management tool.

Peter Drucker describes a system for "managing service institutions for performance" and proposes a six stage "system" that forms an evaluation model, in this case for a commercial setting. "The institution must impose upon itself the discipline of thinking through its mission, its objectives, and its priorities, and of building in feedback control from results and performance on policies, priorities and action" Drucker (1988:150).

The interaction of staff in the design of an evaluation is that discipline in practice. They convert the things they learn from evaluation into new theories and approaches and on into their working practices.

The structured and systematic approach inherent in the evaluation design also enables the group to construct a work programme, and therefore a thorough and logical procedure for each topic considered. The workprogramme is simply a method of determining who will do what, and when. Moreover, responsibilities and tasks are allocated against a timescale - helpful when many people are involved. Individuals, line manager(s) overseeing the evaluation and the evaluator benefit from this explicit co-ordination of activities.

This activity can thus be linked to systems of personal and professional support as well as performance appraisal, programme and Departmental management systems.

Examples of Evaluation Designs

It is necessary to repeat an earlier statement, that there is no prescription for carrying out an evaluation. It will be useful, however, to compare four different approaches applied recently to the evaluation of community work in the local government setting. The evaluations are, of course, deemed appropriate to the discreet circumstances in which they have been applied although these examples have been chosen to represent differing degrees of sophistication, focus and complexity.

a) Performance Appraisal (Input, Output, Outcome)

Perhaps the most straightforward example of an evaluation design is that constructed by the Opportunities Division of the Community Leisure Department in St. Helen's, Merseyside. This is described as "Performance Assessment" and contains the following elements;

- ◆ Project Title:
- ◆ Activities/Issues: (the topic/programme being evaluated)
- ◆ Performance Assessment:
 - a) Input (staff and other resources)
 - b) Output (what was achieved as a result of (a))
 - c) Outcome (what happened)
- ◆ The Community Development Process: (the effectiveness of the intervention)
- ◆ Group Assessment: (Subjective worker appraisal of group function)
- ◆ Objective: (what the worker will seek to do next)

The advantage of this approach is that it is simple, direct, not very difficult or time consuming for the worker. Each "performance assessment" fills two A4-size pages and, for each project provides an ongoing record of key phases and activities. Although rudimentary, this approach will provide perhaps the most relevant and up-to-date material on the progress of individual Projects.

However, this method is not based on a preformulated model. It does not provide for any objective measurement or assessment, or the evaluation of the total programme of community work intervention (although the information generated could be used for that purpose). There is no clear link to the goals or management systems of the host department, and the emphasis is on the goals and activities of the worker rather than the participants - especially the community members.

b) Neighbourhood Work Evaluation

This design was formulated for the evaluation of Neighbourhood Work within the Social Services Department of Cleveland County Council in a three month period commencing November 1989. This was linked to a pay and establishment review. The main elements of the design are;

1. Time Sheet Codes
2. Time sheets
3. Project Action Plans
4. Worker Report Forms
5. Progress notes on aims set for the programme
6. Casework/Community Development Recordings
7. Case Studies
8. Worker comments on meeting, supervision, etc
9. Workprogramme for next three months

◆ Time Sheet Codes and Time Sheets

Initially, the tasks of the Neighbourhood workers were defined and agreed with them. Examples of the 16 categories (called "Time Sheet Codes") are;

- Section 1 1 - Work with Groups;
 2 - Work with Individuals;
 3 - etc. etc.
- Section 2 5. - Inter Agency Work
- Section 3 8 - (a) Personal Training;
 - (b) Group Training; 13
 9. - Supervision, etc., etc.,

These codes were transferred onto a "Time Sheet" with the amount of time allocated to each "Time Sheet Code". Also recorded on the time sheet are the total number of hours worked (morning, afternoon and evening) each week, the amount of lieu time accrued and taken.

◆ Project Action Plan comprising of;

- a) Group Description and Aims
- b) Workers' Objectives
- c) Start and End Date for objectives
- d) Target Outcomes

◆ Report Forms comprising of;

- a) Worker/Project details
- b) Long term worker aims (completed with line manager)
- c) Specific worker objectives for period of evaluation
- d) Relevant changes occurring in area over three month period
- e) Contacts with outside agencies (statutory)
- f) Contacts with outside agencies (non-statutory)

- g) Progress on aims set
- fully, largely, partly or not met
 - what changes influence that decision
 - work involved in achieving those changes
 - remaining problems to be overcome
- h) Casework/Community Development
- percentage of casework in 3 month period
 - casework examples
 - difficulties of making casework referrals
- i) Qualitative description of two case studies
- j) Comments on Team Meetings, Supervision, Training, Personal and Team Development
- k) Other comments
- l) Objectives for next three months
- m) Guidance Notes

There is some attempt to collectively classify the content of the community work role, how workers spend their time, who with, their objectives and so on. Theoretically, this design could cover most of the necessary elements to effectively evaluate the intervention including unplanned events and events outside the immediate "system".

Once again, this is largely subjective and worker centred. It is also very complex, largely subjective and time consuming approach. The amount of detail required and effort in filling in the twelve pages of the "Report Form" meant, in practice, that very little other work was done. This dispirited the workers involved.

Moreover, the purpose of the evaluation is not clearly defined, the integrative model is not clear and the findings inevitably cover a vast area of ground. This approach is more of a "snapshot" of the work being done than the previous example, and the lessons learnt are related only to the intervention in the short term.

♦ Programme Review

This example is more focused than the example above and relates to the design of an evaluation of tenant participation initiatives in Middlesbrough. At the time of writing this is ongoing, but began in October 1991. The main elements are;

a) The evaluation model:

This was reported to a Member Working Party who agreed the various elements of the evaluation. It was similar to the "programme goals model" presented in the previous Chapter, addressing all the elements given there.

b) Topic:

This was agreed by participants who wanted to know "how effective the tenant participation programme had been". They selected, in their view, the key objective for the programme; "Do the various tenant participation activities improve decision-making and service delivery?"

c) Typologies of "Tenant Participation" & Community Work

This involves defining and classifying programme phases and the nature of the work being done, first in terms of "tenant participation"; "consultation"; "involvement"; "participation"; "control".

In addition, typologies of the community work input will be defined based on those suggested in Chapter 2. Both sets of classification will be used to define a theoretical model for the intervention, and a "map" of the programme phases and key events. (Mapping exercises are explained in the following chapter).

The reason this is done in two parts is because the programme involves inputs other than community work - the housing management service, for example.

d) Key Indicators

Decisions were then made about what criteria could be used to answer the topic question. The chosen criteria define quite specifically the characteristics the activity must have if the objectives are being realised. In this case, it was decided that (i) the extent of local decision making; (ii) how much control over decision making tenant felt they actually have; and (iii) the level of tenant satisfaction with decision making affecting their estates would be the three most important indicators.

Monitoring information was used to provide supporting evidence such as attendance at meetings, the input of staff and other resources.

Interestingly, this proved to be a two stage process. Because the whole programme is several years old and this the first attempts at a thorough evaluation, the first stage determined the "performance standards". In other words, the standard to judge if the programme is successful. These standards should have been set at the beginning, but were not. The second stage is to apply the same measurements to show change.

e) Measuring

Decisions had to be taken about how to measure the criteria to derive, initially, the standard measurement and then to show change during the development of the programme.

Some of this is straightforward quantitative data from points in the programme's history; the amount of staff time derived from records, the amount of money spent on minor works, the number of properties in each estate, the number and type of model in a given area and so on.

Other measures were taken using qualitative methods; opinion surveys using "ordinal scales", narratives of tenants experience, Member and worker expectations and so on.

f) Sources of Data

This material was derived from committee reports, minutes, local records, participants memory, interviews and so on. Comparisons will be made with comparable programmes elsewhere.

g) The Workprogramme

This identifies who does what, in what timescale, the form of presentation and to who it will be presented. In some cases this is the group of Officers or a senior officer involved (as an interim stage) or the tenants representatives or the Member Working Party.

h) Conclusions

Essentially, this will be seeking to report the finds of the evaluation of planned work. The discussion of the findings by the participants - in some form of panel - will begin the process of drawing conclusions and making recommendations for future action.

There is scope for other discoveries to be made about unanticipated events, but the extent to which they might be followed up has not been determined.

This approach is comprehensive and is faithful, as far as practically possible to the principles portrayed throughout the thesis. It is expected to reveal important insights into the specific approach to community development embodied in involving tenants in the management of their homes and estates, historically, currently and into the long term future. Comparisons will be made of similar programmes elsewhere. Moreover, it will specifically address the community work input in relation to other inputs, and separately.

Again, however, it is a major undertaking involving many staff and residents. A great deal of learning and skill development in evaluation procedures and techniques is taking place and the quality of the results might be affected due to this "in house" approach. Moreover, the evaluation is currently proceeding at the time of writing and the outcome is not yet known.

- ◆ Programme Audit

The three examples illustrated above are approaches currently in use in the local authority setting. Each has been tailored to the situation, each has merits and disadvantages. The other key point is that they all involve "internal" evaluators - programme staff and managers or internal research units.

The evaluation (or "audit") of community work in Strathclyde was undertaken by Alan Barr, who was seconded from the University of Glasgow. The evaluation has been published by the Community Development Foundation (Barr 1991) and is in four parts;

- a) an historical overview of community work in Strathclyde
- b) the nature of community work
- c) workers views of their practice
- d) reflections

The evaluation was designed to;

- i) produce descriptive material focused on three distinct elements of practice;
 - a) the characteristics of community work practitioners

- ii) determine the ways in which workers spent their work time and;
 - a) their relationship with other people involved in community work
 - b) the value dispositions of workers towards their practice and their employers
- iii) produce data in three distinct ways;
 - a) a closed question questionnaire for workers
 - b) the character of the work and the networks of contacts involved
 - c) an open-ended questionnaire to establish attitudes and values

This "audit" was also compared with a previous piece of research carried out in 1983 and the process was collaborative, involving meeting with each of the thirty community work staff involved.

This approach says much about the nature of community work in a given setting. Alan Barr claims that many of the lessons learnt are broadly applicable to community work operating in the local authority setting. It also demonstrates a benefit in engaging a specialist, authoritative external evaluator and the wider use to which the findings can be put.

The Experimental Design

The experimental design is considered here as an approach because the inherent logic of the experimental procedure is quite sound, although there are problems in the application of this technique to a social programme, as will be discussed.

An experiment is designed to establish in fact that an action or event (x) causes another (y). The essence of an experiment is that the programme or event being evaluated is compared with a "control group", not subject to the "treatment" applied to the first group.

The internal logic of the experimental design is sound, and follows these stages;

- a) the topic (or phenomena) to be investigated.

For examples, I will refer to the "programme review" model of tenant participation earlier in this chapter.

b) the variables will need to be established and quantified

The variables in the example are; i) local decision making; ii) tenant control over decisions and iii) tenant satisfaction. "Local decision making was quantified as "type 1" (powerful decisions) and "type 2" (other lesser or advisory decisions).

c) the theory or "hypothesis" has to be stated

It is necessary for the evaluator to hold a theory about the effect of the "treatment" or action intended for the "subject group". The theory in this case could be that "when tenants are active partners, better decision making takes place on housing management issues, promoting greater tenant satisfaction and more effective service delivery".

d) appropriate methods of analysing the data need to be chosen

It would be wrong to assume that the data collected provides answers. If a group took, say, fifteen "type 1" decisions last year, it will be necessary for a panel of some kind to decide what value to place on that finding for the given situation.

e) the level of "significance" needs to be determined

The term "significance" in statistical terms has a specific meaning. In this case, the findings would be "significant" if the evaluator (and hopefully the participants) have confidence that the results show that the programme activities did actually evoke change.

f) the "sample" will be selected,

Half of the sample will be the "subject group" and the other half the "control group". The subject group might be a "Neighbourhood Management Project" and the "control group" an estate of nearby housing with similar characteristics.

g) the "subject group" would be studied and compared with the "control group"

Both groups would be measured in the same way using the variables identified. First this would establish the "standard" or "base line". At a later date the measures would be repeated. The "before" and "after" differences would be compared. The "subject group" would be expected to change while no difference would be expected in the "control group".

h) collect and analyse the data

In this example, the minutes of meeting would be trawled to determine the decisions taken by tenants. These would be grouped as "type 1" and "type 2". The panel reviewing the findings would evaluate the number of each decision type against predetermined "standards".

j) accept or reject the hypothesis

Based on the evaluation of the findings, the theory or hypothesis would be accepted (proven) or rejected.

(adapted from Clegg 1990:63)

However, in relation to social programmes, experiments raise serious epistemological, philosophical and methodological issues. Whereas in the "natural sciences" it is possible to conduct experiments in "closed systems" or controlled circumstances, the nature of human behaviour requires acceptance of a "lesser degree of precision" and a "serious relaxation of the criteria for determining causal relationships as exhibited in the natural sciences" (Hughes 1991:86).

Should people be expected to act as a control group? Secondly, given the diversity of human interaction, can there be two groupings identical in every way? Key, et al (1976:21) elaborate on these issues that threaten the validity of the findings. However, they go on to say that the experimental design has both a "high potential for establishing if one event has caused another.... In the setting of a social action programme it is less likely to be of use but may be relevant for evaluating specific and measurable elements within such a programme" (Key, et al , 1976:22)

Other Forms of Experimental Design

In developing this theme further, the reader is referred to the relevant specialist literature. Experiments have to be designed. Key et al discuss these in some detail and identify three categories;

- ◆ a) experimental design - similar to that outlined above
- ◆ b) quasi-experimental design - which emphasises accuracy, but does not depend on controlling the variables
- ◆ c) non-experimental designs - where data is correlated, and when change occurs in a significant number of cases a causal relationship is indicated

The underlying importance in the concept of experiments and experimental design in community work programmes is that they allow comparisons to be made. "Of course, for some evaluative purposes comparison of programmes is the major task. But even where it is not, comparison can be illuminating" (Key et al, *ibid.*).

Concluding Comments

The design stage is a necessary phase in the evaluation process. The key elements of the design stage have been highlighted and four examples have been discussed that illustrate how these elements can be adapted and combined in ways suited to specific circumstances.

The ethical issues that will be encountered are referred to in this chapter rather than elsewhere to emphasise the dilemmas that will be encountered in beginning to put an evaluation into practice. Furthermore, the specific aspects of the programme that will be encompassed by an evaluation are summarised.

In addition, it is suggested that the design stage of the evaluation process is best carried out as a collective exercise. It is also described as a management tool within the organisation and, importantly, that the evaluation should be practical, workable and efficient. The translation from Evaluation Model to Evaluation Design is also discussed.

What this chapter and the examples do not immediately identify is the detail of the methods used for establishing the kind of data that will be used and how it will be collected. The next chapter will briefly consider some of these techniques.

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CHAPTER NINE

REACHING CONCLUSIONS - PART 1

THEORY AND MEASURING

Introduction

It is important to remember that evaluation answers questions about "process", how and why things happened. Consequently, it is necessary to be clear about both the line of enquiry and the ways that measures and measuring quantify information, not only as symbols of input and output, but also outcome - ie: the value or worth of an activity.

The information, or data, that will be assembled is the crucial component upon which judgments will be made about the quality or worth of the community work programme being studied. This is presented as a four stage process;

- i) Thinking;
- ii) Measuring;
- iii) Data Collection & Comparison;
- iv) Judgement, Reflection and Conclusions

The relevant issues in stages (i) and (ii) will be discussed in this chapter with stages (iii) and (iv) in the next, and final, chapter.

i) The Thinking Stage - The Use of Theory

Information or data is not collected indiscriminately. The modelling and designing of an evaluation process is constructed so as to focus on the specific areas and questions that need to be answered, and the techniques appropriate to providing the best data. Even though the topic of the evaluation has been specified, a further dimension is required to define the context of the line of enquiry.

This is presented in a rather formal way, influenced by more traditional research techniques. It is concerned, initially, with the use and development of theories and the testing of hypotheses. The intention is to describe the nature of theory and its particular relevance to evaluation procedures. There is obviously a strong connection of a more general nature between this and the use and development of theory in community work. That connection is emphasised, but the place of theory in evaluating community work represents the quite simple steps that convert what we; a) think about the programme or event into; b) a proposition that; c) can be examined.

Once the theoretical line of enquiry and the hypothesis is clarified, it is then possible to proceed with the evaluation using the "craft of data collection" (the subject of the next chapter 10). First, consideration needs to be given to the issues around measures and measuring; establishing performance indicators; performance standards; choosing the extent of quantitative and qualitative data to be used and so on.

The Nature of Theory

Both the practitioner and the evaluator need to be comfortable in the use and development of theory. In general, theory in community work can be regarded as either abstract or proven ideas that lead to an understanding of what we do, why we do things and what happens as a result. In terms of evaluation, theories can be regarded as starting points, "an attempt to provide a predictive and systematic explanation of an event which is open to test and retest" (Selfe, 1981:297).

Abstract ideas may also be called propositions. The evaluator (and practitioners) will use their knowledge and experience to describe a set of circumstances and propose the likely effects or outcomes of those circumstances. Proven or tested theories (from empirical study) are also relevant and can be applied to the specific line of enquiry encompassed by the evaluation.

Although this seems to suggest a formal approach in identifying and applying theories appropriate to the programme being evaluated, in practice it is much more simple. Of course, the evaluator or participants may want to start with a "grand theory", but the literature espouses a more practical approach. "Theory which cannot be utilised as an aide-memoire, a guide to practice, is viewed unfavourably. Grand theory commands little attention. Interest focuses on the construction of relevant, applicable, middle-range theories" (Henderson, et al 1980:231).

Theory, then, is a basic thinking tool. To some it is "a source of guidance and enlightenment" (Thomas 1983:252), to others theory is "pretentious and unnecessary" (Tasker 1980:49). Moreover, community work is often criticised for its "paucity" of theory (Thomas 1980) and lack of developed theory (Pringle 1981). Perhaps this is because theory is seen as "academic" and not "practical" (Mitchell 1987). Perhaps, as Pringle suggests, we are narrowly preoccupied with neighbourhoods and single issue work. Perhaps we do not feel we have time to think about our work or that the discipline of thinking is "too hard" to acquire (Nelson-Jones 1989:10).

In evaluation, theory is both a tool in carrying out the evaluation and a means to establish plausible and developed ideas about community work practice - essentially the purpose of evaluation. The most relevant types of theory in community work relate to the social, political and structural context of the work. The main elements are described by Lawrence Tasker (1980) and David Thomas (1983) as;

- ◆ policy or explanatory theory
- ◆ sociological or contextual theory
- ◆ political theory
- ◆ practice theory

Policy Theory can be described as theories that explain how community work fits into an overall pattern of welfare and political activity. Moreover, policy theory helps us to argue convincingly for recognition and resources.

Sociological Theory is not the "static analysis" of the science of sociology, but rather dynamic thinking about class, and the potential for community change. Critically, it is of importance in developing our knowledge of the experience of working class life.

Political Theory is that associated with influencing the distribution of power and resources. It is an inevitable and necessary reflection of the political sensitivity of community work (especially within the local state) and its contribution to political thought.

Practice Theory is a set of theories that describe how community work is done. It is developed out of experience and has been described as "how-to-do-it theory" and "practice wisdom" (Thomas 1983:253).

The evaluator will need to be conversant to some degree in these areas as part of the "knowing" of community work at the operational level discussed in an earlier chapter. In addition, the evaluator will need to be conversant in the relevant technical theories; "systems theories", "group dynamic theories", "role theories" and "network theories" cited by Key et al (Key et al. 1976:51) from the work of Wiess and Rein (1972).

An example may be helpful. A "starting point" for the evaluation of the effectiveness of Community Councils in Middlesbrough was that women are under-represented, not numerically, but in positions of influence and control (a sociological theory). This led the officers steering the evaluation to consider the degree to which other groups in the community are represented - young people, people with disabilities, single parents with small children and so on. The introduction of equality practices into the organisations is thought to bring about change at the community level that will modify Council wide equality practices (a systems theory). Moreover, it is believed that community work will make both a specific contribution in assisting these interest groups to organise influence, and also contribute to the modification of equality practices at both the local, departmental and organisational level (policy theory).

This brief overview of the ways in which relevant theory types can be categorised is only to note them. Reading the relevant literature is recommended to develop an appetite for greater knowledge about theory in community work. "Workers [and indeed evaluators of community work] need recourse to theories and ideas that provide some structural understanding of local issues, but they also need a framework for understanding the actors, including themselves, in the local situation". (Henderson, et al 1980:13)

Tasker (op cit) adds that "theorising is important because it moves practice out of the realm of random speculation and into that of properly reckoned strategy and planning". Whilst, for various reasons, community workers may dismiss or avoid theorising, theory informs our everyday actions and is vital to the evaluator. I agree with Guy Mitchell's candid observation; "fact is you are either in control of your theories, or they are in control of you - they are never irrelevant to you". (Mitchell 1987:3)

Where the evaluator is concerned, s/he will be equipped to think more deeply about the aspects of the programme or event being evaluated. The evaluator will then make propositions on the likely outcomes of the programme in relation to each of the key theory areas - formally described as "hypotheses".

Hypothesis, Criteria, Indicators and Performance Standards

The hypothesis becomes the line of enquiry for which data is produced. It is a prediction about what the programme or event is capable of achieving. The characteristics of the programme or event are described as "criteria", that can then be quantified in the form of "indicators". The provisional values applied to the indicators are called "performance standards".

This can be illustrated using the example of the "programme review" from the previous chapter regarding the relationship of tenant participation to improved decision making in the management of council housing. From that can be derived a statement or "hypothesis" that is subject to some means of testing. For example, "tenant participation improves housing management decisions".

In defining the hypothesis, it is then necessary to propose, quite specifically, the characteristics an activity or event must have if the objectives for that activity or event are to be realised. These characteristics, or criteria, are then quantified to provide "indicators" (sometimes called the "quantification markers") which can be given provisional values and later measured using a variety of measuring techniques.

The use of indicators is an "indirect" method of measuring of social programmes, but often the only method available. Remembering that the evaluator is dealing with qualitative information, several indicators may be derived to show change in the whole programme. "The indicator is likely to be a sub-event more simple and observable, but which has a known relationship to the larger event. Changes in the indicator are measured in order to discover, by implication, changes in the main event" (Key et al 1976:25).

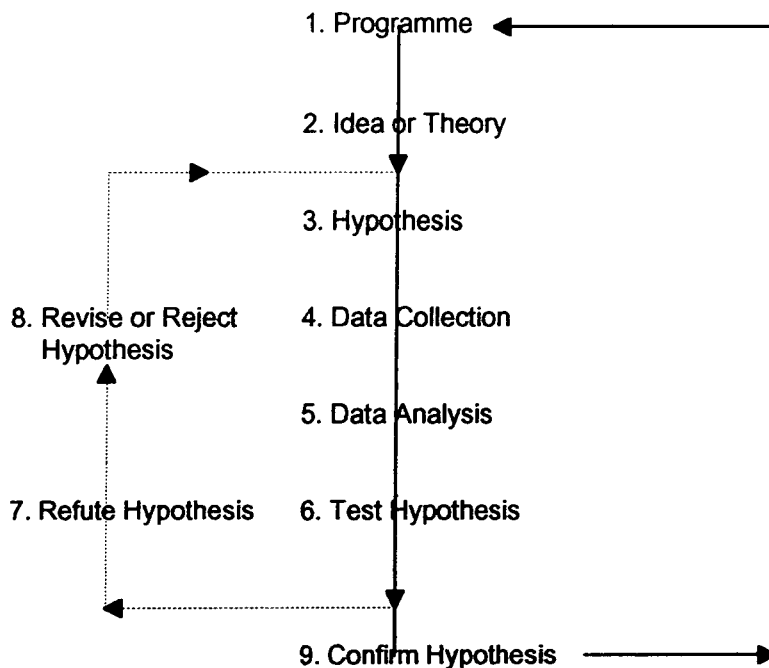
For example, a "key indicator" of tenant involvement in decision making was defined as the "extent of decision making". This comprised "type 1" and "type 2" decisions. In other words, "type 1" and "type 2" decisions are "indicators". In this case, they are indicators for the qualitative feature of "the extent of decision making". This is one of three indicators used to show changes in the whole programme.

Whether or not criteria and indicators are derived at the beginning or part way through a programme, the minimum initial values applied to the indicators then becomes, if required, a "performance standard". Thus, if in the agreed definition of "type 1" and "type 2" decisions in the programme, participants make at least five "type 1" and ten "type 2" decisions, that is the standard for judging if the programme is successfully meeting its objectives. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The evaluator will then implement techniques to produce data that will either discredit or lend support to the hypothesis. In other words, s/he will test the hypothesis measuring the key indicators and comparing the difference between the performance standard and the new measurements.

If the hypothesis is proven to be wrong, it can be rejected or revised. When the results confirm the hypothesis, this forms the basis for making judgements and drawing conclusions about the programme or event. The new knowledge, or developed theory can then be fed back into the programme.

This can be shown as a cyclical diagram. This is adapted from a model proposed by McNeill and Townley (1986).



This, again, is a formalised approach to a relatively straightforward thinking and analytical process. The model above is a guide to be used creatively in developing and testing ideas with the data collected to confirm or refute what we think is happening in the programme.

However, in addition to that process, it is necessary to take measurements to test ideas. The evaluator will need to understand some of the features of measures and measuring and the type of measures appropriate to community work programmes.

(ii) Measures and Measuring

Measures are the number symbols or the word symbols used by the evaluator to test or express reality. However, whether we use numbers or narrative, measures organise and classify our experiences. In evaluation, measures provide the basis for judging the extent and the quality of our activities.

Measures enable the evaluator to gather information - or data, or we may even call them statistics - that describe programmes or events; their typical characteristics and how they vary; as well as showing how actions or "treatments" of a particular kind causes one situation to be different from another.

Furthermore, measures provide a means that assist the evaluator of social programmes to formulate criteria, or the standards used to judge an activity of event. Measures are also used to define indicators that show the extent to which the objectives of the activity or event have been achieved. Later in this chapter I will describe some of the more common mathematical concepts that will be encountered and the "thought processes" they give rise to.

It may also be helpful to consider measures in the following ways;

a) Measures also determine "thresholds". These are the points (or boundaries) when one undesirable state begins to turn into another, equally undesirable state. For example, the lack of organised facilities on an estate can be overcome by committing volunteers to give some of their time. How much of their time can they give without affecting their home life, health, personal finance, etc.

The answers to the question "how much" delineates a threshold measure beyond which the resolution of one problem begins to create another.

b) Measures can also be used in scales. Scales will be explained in more detail, but they do offer the simplest and easiest way of portraying qualitative data. Scales can also be used to rank ordinal data on a) "situations" ie: the degree of severity of a given problem, and b) "performance" ie: the extent of the benefit achieved by the worker or agency input.

c) Measures can also be used to define or specify a situation in explicit terms. This a refinement of broad quantitative descriptions for example, a project may seek to provide grant aid to 100 community organisations in the area during the course of a year. It is possible then to specify, say 15% Ethnic Minority Groups, 25% Sports Clubs, and so on in the Inner City.

d) Measures can be used as measures of measures - "meta-measures" Algie (1975:305). This is an evaluation of our evaluation system, a check on the weighting or significance of a value we attach to the numbers and descriptions we use. In other words the sophistication of the measuring process used: for example, the degree of accuracy of the information used.

Devising and Using Measures

Measures will be used rather like a "tool box" is used. They will be devised with regard to their appropriateness to the situation and the degree of precision required. This is both a logical and semantic task for the evaluator. It is a task that requires consistent and accurate reasoning, as well as interpretation, of information. Measures so devised are taken at stages as the intervention or project proceeds so that changes can be detected. The explanation of these changes is the fundamental basis of evaluation.

There are a variety of methods for deriving measures as well as methods of measuring that frequently appear in the literature. For example, Key, et al 1976, Algie (1976:305); Haralambos (1984:492), Ball (1988), Kane (1990), Clegg (1990) and others. The writers refer to interviewing, observation, reading and questionnaires, and also to our values and objectives, experiences and sometimes even our best guesses. In turn, further specific methods are identified. Some of these will be discussed in more detail later.

Measures are quantitative - that is the size or the amount of whatever is being measured. This implies measures are numerical, but in the context of a programme of work with people it is important also to be able to set them down in a form of words, as descriptive measures. Whichever method is used to derive measures, it is necessary to produce numerical values for both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative measures are both numbers and descriptions of the characteristics of an activity and the conditions under which it is operating.

Qualitative measures go on to explain the differences in this recorded material. To do so, qualitative measures must have some tangible form. Consequently, each qualitative measure must have ascribed to it a "quantitative descriptor".

This is an aspect of the evaluation procedures that is often left incomplete. The reason is most likely due to the apparent incompatibility of numbers to processes involving people, but also because of the reluctance of workers to apply a quantity to their work. This is referred to later, but there is also a difficulty in finding the right kind of quantity to apply, because there are no general "standards" - as there might be in a manufacturing industry, for example. However, the earlier example in the discussion on "indicators" and "performance standards" shows that this can be done.

Measuring

When the process being measured is subject to influence and change, which is particularly true of social programmes, measures allow information to be adjusted. In

other words, with measures "we map data, and draw pictures about it (the programme or event), and we try to see how it moves and changes" (Stern 1991:149).

When we place measures together in a logical and explanatory sequence, the relationship created is called measurement. Thus, "measurement is a method through which we are able to assert that 'x' has a property 'y' under conditions 'z' at time 't'" (Algie 1975:299).

For example, a Voluntary Project costs £50,000.00 per year, employs two full-time and one part-time Member of staff, counsels between 300 and 500 volunteers per year, organises 10 training events in the same period and produces monthly information bulletins. I can go on to tell you about the population served by the Project, the number of other Voluntary bodies that benefit, the scope of work covered and so on.

Here we can see the numerical measures describing the Voluntary Project ("x") which has characteristics ("y" - costs, staffing) and the conditions ("z" - population) under which it operates. The addition of a further perspective, that of time ("t"), to these events will enable us to make further comparisons from one time phase to another.

Descriptive measures (words) are employed to illustrate the relevant scope of work, the beneficiaries, and so on. If we had information on a variety of similar projects - regionally or nationally - we could then make statistical and descriptive comparisons between the projects.

Assuming the relevant and necessary statistics and descriptive material are selected, it is then straightforward to establish the time scales at which the measures can be repeated to show change.

In summary then, by combining numerical and written information it is possible to measure an activity. By carrying this out at specified time periods change can be shown.

Quantitative Measures

Quantitative measures are important, but only describe a piece of work in one dimension. They report statistics and record events. Quantitative measures show the amounts or "raw numbers" involved, but this only goes part way to helping us arrive at a judgment about the value or worth of a programme.

In the example of the voluntary project above, the information is quantitative only. It is necessary to go beyond these numbers, to consider the relationship between numbers in order to determine the quality or worth of the activity they represent. To this end, qualitative measures are used.

Qualitative Measures

As quantitative information provides what are described as a "one-dimensional" set of criteria, so qualitative measures provide the multidimensional data describing the quality or worth of the activity being measured. Consider this statement about the quantitative data compiled for an Advice Centre evaluation;

"By itself, however, this would neither reflect the special nature of the Clients, nor indicate the relative satisfaction of the clients with the service received.... Quantitative data is useful but it has its limitations."

(Law Centre Federation 1988:No1:18).

In other words, the numerical information only shows the project in one plane and how it compares statistically and descriptively over time with other similar projects. We still do not know how "good" or effective a project it is.

What is required is a set of "qualitative" measures. Such measures explain the differences between data recorded for similar activities eg: the number of volunteers counselled, the kinds of issues dealt with, the effect of training, why particular activities predominate at given times, measures of levels of client or customer satisfaction, etc. etc.

Compared with our first tenet, that measures are symbols of reality, qualitative measures take us into an area where what is judged to be "real" is a matter of "politics, conscience or good (gut!) feeling" (Key, et al 1976:17). Such measures relate to our experience, opinions, intuition and so on. They are undoubtedly difficult, perhaps controversial, but not impossible, to set down.

An example may help to describe this. It is taken from an evaluation of the Cleveland County Youth & Community Service (Cleveland Education Committee 1986) that begins by counting the numbers of all people using the sixteen centres in the study. The attendance at each morning, afternoon and evening session for seven days was counted. The highest attendance was 1364 and the lowest 57. These raw numbers tell us very little, but the evaluators decided to represent the quantities as proportions of the highest attendance as an aid to interpretation. Thus, 1364 was defined as 100% and 57 as 4% of that figure.

The evaluators chose to use the highest attendance as their "yard stick" or "performance standard" and relate other attendances to that figure. Although the choice of "yard stick" can be criticised, the use of proportions makes comparison much simpler (it is much easier to relate 80% to 100% than 1092 to 1364), adding a useful dimension to the raw data to enable a judgement to be made.

In making any kind of comparison, it always begs the question "why?" Is it to do with the type or age of user, their reasons for using the centre, their likes and dislikes and so on. Each of these elements add perspective to the raw data and permit reflection on the benefit of the provision for users.

Value laden as this approach is, it is necessary to at least prompt the debate on what is "good" or "bad", "desirable" and so on. In the words of Alfred Adler "It is not the facts of our lives that counts. It is the opinions we form of the facts of our lives".

Quantitative or Qualitative?

Whatever the approach to a particular evaluation, there will inevitably be a debate on the balance of quantitative and qualitative information required. I think we must accept that both types of material are necessary.

Jane Lethbridge advises us that the question of balance is "directly related to who is asking for the evaluation" (Lethbridge 1989:6). She goes on to point out that "judgements made by a funding agency may be based on different values to those working directly on the project".

Perhaps we should not try to struggle with this too much. A great deal of time and effort could go into converting numbers into judgements, and vice-versa. The issue is "not whether one approach is better than another, but what approach is appropriate for answering a specific question, or more commonly, what combination of techniques can produce the most useful information about a policy, programme or service..." (Brawley & Brawley 1988:400). Be practical is the message!

The Language of Mathematics and Working with Statistics

Whilst measures can be determined by using the kinds of exercises described above, other more "formal" methods will need to be employed to both devise measures and use them in the act of measuring and computing results. It is necessary to draw attention to these factors in terms of implementing an evaluation, but it is not the intention to discuss them in detail. The relevance for now is in being familiar with a little of the language of mathematics to capture some of the important concepts involved in computing the results of an evaluation.

In summary, this involves the evaluator in exposing what is both specifically and generally true for the programme being evaluated. The techniques involved will broadly require, within certain parameters, an "average" or "normal" value to be determined - either a calculation or a written statement of generalisation.

It is also necessary for the evaluator to adopt logic, caution, selection, and accuracy as characteristic thinking patterns in the process of gathering data. The purpose being to realise authoritative and reliable answers to the questions posed in an evaluation.

Working with statistics is not "maths", but a branch of mathematics involving relatively simple mathematical operations. A problem for many is a dislike or even fear of mathematics. Perhaps this also causes some "to worry and feel inferior" about its apparent complexity (Clegg 1990:7). However, for the evaluator, it is essential that s/he is confident and conversant with the main operations and formula.

Reference to specialist literature on statistics is recommended, and there are several referred to in the bibliography.

Concluding Remarks

Evaluation is a creative process, concerned with answering questions about "process". The evaluator should be flexible and open to whatever technique will produce the most useful information, with the caveat that s/he should be practical and selective. We are dealing in community work with human beings interacting with one another that will produce endless behaviours and outcomes, and therefore infinite variations of numerical data. "There is no need to attempt everything at once" Willis (1988)

It is essential that a thinking process exists to determine starting points (theories) for the particular line of enquiry. This leads to the formulation of testable propositions, called hypotheses. Confirming or refuting hypotheses is a means of deriving useful "mid-range" theories contributing to both our understanding and development of the programme.

Measures symbolise reality as we know it in terms of both quantity and quality. This provides us with a yardstick for experiences and a means of comparison between the situation being measured and other situations in which we are involved or are similar in nature.

Deriving and balancing quantitative and qualitative measures or indicators resolves a variety of evaluation problems. This also takes into account the differing values systems that may exist between, say, funders and fieldworkers. It is necessary to set down tangible "descriptors" of both quantitative and qualitative measures, firstly in numbers or descriptions of characteristics, conditions, etc. and secondly as "quantitative descriptors" of qualitative measures.

The application of measures is the act of measurement. Measurement classifies outcomes and organise experiences to show results. Validity and reliability should be sought in the measures chosen. The evaluator(s) and also needs to be courageous and prepared to set down those measures.

There are thought process involved in assembling, analysing and reporting data that stems from the use of statistics and mathematical operations. It is helpful, to exploit the logic of analysing and comparing data and determining "norms" or typical patterns in programmes or events.

The next chapter is an extension to these aspects of evaluation and will focus on some of the key methods used to evaluate community work programmes and a discussion of the issues in reflecting and interpreting the results.

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CHAPTER TEN

REACHING CONCLUSIONS - PART 2

DATA COLLECTION AND MAKING USE OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This final chapter is concerned, initially, with presenting methods of collecting information useful and appropriate to the evaluation of community work programmes, and then the process of interpreting the findings.

Among the more commonly used methods for gathering data for use in an evaluation are Scales; Surveying as a general technique, and specific procedures such as Job Content Analysis including the "story material"; Time Budget Studies, Worker Contacts and the use of Theory Grids. Case studies embrace all or some of these techniques.

When interpreting the results of such data collection methods, it is necessary to be focused. That is to be selective, critical (in the sense of being cautious) and being able to deduce the most relevant and reliable features of the programme as an aid to decision making and future change.

The Craft of Data Collection

"Field research predominantly involves the use of observation, participant observation, unstructured interviews and documentary evidence, all of which have to be applied to a specific social setting" (Burgess 1990:31). Such skills are learnt and used as a craft. "In short, it is to treat research skills as a technology" (Hughes 1991:11).

Other specific skills are relevant. Today, those skills extend to the use of computers and other forms of information technology that assists storage, processing, retrieval analysis and presentation of the findings. The more sophisticated and vital the evaluation is, the greater the emphasis on the craft of data collection and the fine judgement required in the selection and use of the research "tool" to provide that data.

Some of the more useful and most commonly used "tools" or procedures for collecting data in the evaluation of community work programmes are considered.

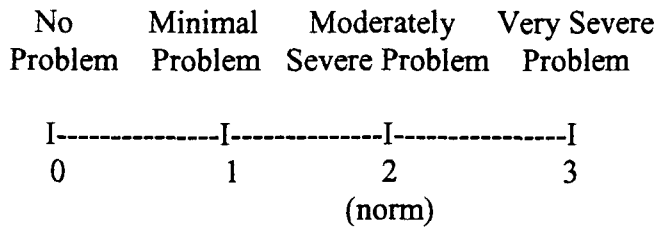
Some Appropriate Methods

◊ Using Scales

"Scales" are, perhaps, the simplest way of collecting data. They are used extensively and in a variety of forms; as a line, a matrix, concentric circles, tables and so on. The value in the use of scales is that they go beyond simply counting how many people express a particular view, as they would in response to a questionnaire. Scales allow "attitude measurement" (Moser & Kalton 1979:350), that is how the attitudes of respondents are weighted on a particular issue or belief and then averaged to remove idiosyncrasies to form a more realistic and complete picture of several related responses.

Typically one point in the scale would describe "the norm" for the phenomenon being measured. Points would be added to the scale showing the degree of change to be expected - for example, either becoming very much worse or very much better than at the time the "norm" was measured.

If this were applied to, say, measuring the effects of low income on a Housing Estate, we might use the following scale;



The words are the "qualitative measures" of the degree of poverty on the estate, whilst the numbers (0, 1, 2, 3, etc) are the "quantitative descriptors" of each measure. For this situation the "qualitative measures" would be defined in each case that would result in a value of 0,1,2 or 3 at the time measures are taken.

Types of Scales - Nominal, Ordinal, Interval and Ratio Scales

♦ Nominal Scales

The crudest form of scales is called a nominal scale. These are usually numbers that classify individuals or items into two or more groups. Words could be used, but are cumbersome and lengthy. Taking the earlier example of "type 1" and "type 2" decisions. If there were more categories than this, say "type 3" and "type 4" decisions, they could be shown in a nominal scale.

♦ Ordinal Scales

Ordinal scales are more sophisticated in that they "rank" the variables or characteristics in the scale. The numbers in an ordinal scale refer to relative size, zero being "smaller" or "less than" one. We can also use verbal labels to infer the ranking in an ordinal scale, for example, higher, lower, good, bad, and so on.

The example of the scale above referring to the effects of low income is an ordinal scale. However, calculations using the numbers in ordinal scales are not feasible.

◆ **Interval and Ratio Scales**

Interval and Ratio Scales will be dealt with together because they have the same characteristics - with one vital difference.

Interval scales have equal units of measurement so that position 1 and 2 are exactly the same distance apart as points 6 and 7. However, the zero point of the scale is a matter of convenience and does not affect the form of the scale. Interval scales are not easily comparable with other scales.

Similarly, whilst two individuals are the same distance apart if they are at positions 1 and 2 and 6 and 7, it is not true to say that a person at point 10 has twice the strength of feeling about something as the person at point 5 on the scale.

The ratio scale on the other hand does have a fixed point of zero, comparable with other ratio scales. These scales also permit comparisons between different points of the scale and the relative magnitude of scale points.

The "Theory Grids" illustrated later in this chapter are examples of interval and ratio scales. The "developmental sequence" matrix is an interval scale, where there need not be a fixed point of zero, but where the various developmental stages are equally spaced. The "agency programme scale" is an example of a ratio scale where the introduction of "time" provides a fixed starting point and the various programme elements are related to that fixed point.

The less ambitious interval scales, together with nominal and ordinal scales, are the most likely form of scales the evaluator will use when testing for attitudes, perceptions or comparisons of given topics. This broadly agrees with the conclusions drawn by Key et al (Key et al 1976:25) about the use of scaling techniques.

◆ Surveying

Surveys is a general terms for presenting questions to a selected group of respondents. In relation to evaluating community work programmes, this is most likely to take the form of a questionnaire. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this method in detail and would refer the reader to the specialist literature, for example Eileen Kane (Kane 1990:72-89).

The main value of surveying is in generating opinions and attitudes about the current state of a programme. Assuming that most evaluation will take place when a programme is well under way, a questionnaire is a very useful means of establishing a base line or reference point on particular aspects of the programme. For example in the evaluation of Tenant Participation initiatives discussed earlier, one the indicators chosen for the programme was related to the changing attitudes of tenants to the decision making process. This was determined by using a questionnaire using simple attitude (ordinal) scales.

Questionnaires can demonstrate the breadth of opinion that exists about the strengths and weaknesses of a programme. Moreover, the responses can verify observations and be used as a basis for demonstrating generalisations made about the specific aspects of the programme.

Surveying techniques, however, can be quite complex and costly. There are also issues of confidentiality, the representativeness of the sample and the relevance of their opinions, the honesty of the respondents, and so on.

Perhaps the most important factor is that, of themselves, survey results do not change anything. That should not, however, dismiss the use of these techniques as part of an evaluation strategy.

- ◆ **Job Content Analysis**

This heading covers methods that investigate what is involved in the work of paid or voluntary staff. The technique involves; i) collecting and reading "the story material" relating to the programme; ii) analysing how workers spend their and iii) who they spend their time with. The fourth element is producing "theory grids" or diagrammatic representations that compare and relate programme stages and development.

- i) **The Story Material**

The first method relates to the personal experience written or told by participants. This will begin to assemble "the story material" (Key et al 1976:48), in other words records, recordings, correspondence, recollections coupled with the chronology of events. This will help to establish the main current and historical community work elements of the programme and the programme phases.

In the previous chapter the use and development of theory was discussed. Relevant theories, both hypothetical and proven, will be established for the programme and technical aspects of the evaluation. It will be necessary for the evaluator to be conversant with both. This can be time consuming and involve a great deal of study and searching. However, this corresponds with the "knowing" phase of the community work being practiced and, as discussed in detail earlier, it is an essential requirement at the beginning of the evaluation process.

- ◆ **Time Budget Study**

The second method is called a "use of time study" or "time-budget study" (for example Barr 1990:34). In other words, the amount of time devoted to each work activity - whether or not that is of a "contact" or "non-contact" nature.

This is a much more sophisticated exercise than it would first appear. It is necessary to identify the community work and line management staff concerned and ask them, over a predetermined period, to log what they do and the time it takes to do it. The specified period could be a certain day each week for a month, a whole week, a month. The longer the period the more accurate the data is likely to be. This requires a daily diary, kept at the worker's side, and completed after each task. (This could also be a survey form). An example follows;

Worker's Name _____	
Job Title _____	
ACTIVITY	TIME IN MINUTES
Sorted through In-Tray	5
Telephone call to councillor	7
drafted letter for typist	17
made coffee	2

This is followed up to agree categories into which the activities can more easily be accommodated. For example, "meetings", "telephone calls", "reading", "travelling", "personal time" and so on. The total amounts of time spent on each activity under each of these headings is calculated from the record sheet(s). This is reported as both a number and a percentage of the total amount of time spent on all activities, thus;

ACTIVITY	TIME	%age	RANK
Meetings	1875 mins	33%	1
Telephone	260 mins	5%	7
Reading	50 mins	1%	12
Travelling	604 mins	10%	3

The final column ranks the activity for the worker involved. Clearly, the amounts of time for each activity will vary for each grade of staff. The ranking assists analysis in comparing the job content of staff with different job responsibilities, say between fieldworkers and their line managers.

There are a number of ways of developing this analysis. Alan Barr in his study of community work in Strathclyde (Barr 1991:39) identifies 20 work activities for four grades of staff. Two of those work activities are identified as "non-planned" and "pre-planned" contacts. In personal experience of the exercise, this was omitted. Rather, the whole of the analysis is broken down into "contact" and "non-contact" work. In other words, what was regarded as "community work" and what was not.

One very important benefit of the discussion generated by this analysis is in defining worker's perceptions of what is, and what is not community work. It is most important and illuminating. The outcome can inform a great deal of the evaluation process and modify various aspects of it, such as the typologies that will be used in a later exercise called "theory grids".

iii) **Contact and Non Contact Work**

The third method, which in reality is a variation of the time budget study, is to investigate the range of people with whom community workers have contact in their day to day activities. This particularly useful for community workers employed by a local authority where, firstly, they will have a multi-purpose role - some of which will not be regarded by them as community work. Secondly, it might be expected that their range of contacts will be many and varied.

It is also possible to analyse the number of workers of each grade who participate in categories of activity relating to the variety of people or groups with whom they are in contact. For example, the categories may be "councillors", "community group members", "local residents," "team members", "departmental staff", and so on. This analysis will show how patterns of work vary or are similar. However, the list of categories can be very long and it is worthwhile defining a smaller number of categories.

For example, Alan Barr defined three broad categories of "professional contacts", "members of the community" and "politicians" (Barr 1991:55) contrasting the pattern of contacts for the four grades of staff involved in his study.

Together with the time budget study, these two approaches provide an analysis of the kinds of activities undertaken and the content of those activities. Alan Barr describes this as "the character" of the community work practice (Barr 1990:41) - what aspects of the work are considered important, most time consuming, most valued and so on providing valuable comparisons with what expectations the agency and workers have of their role.

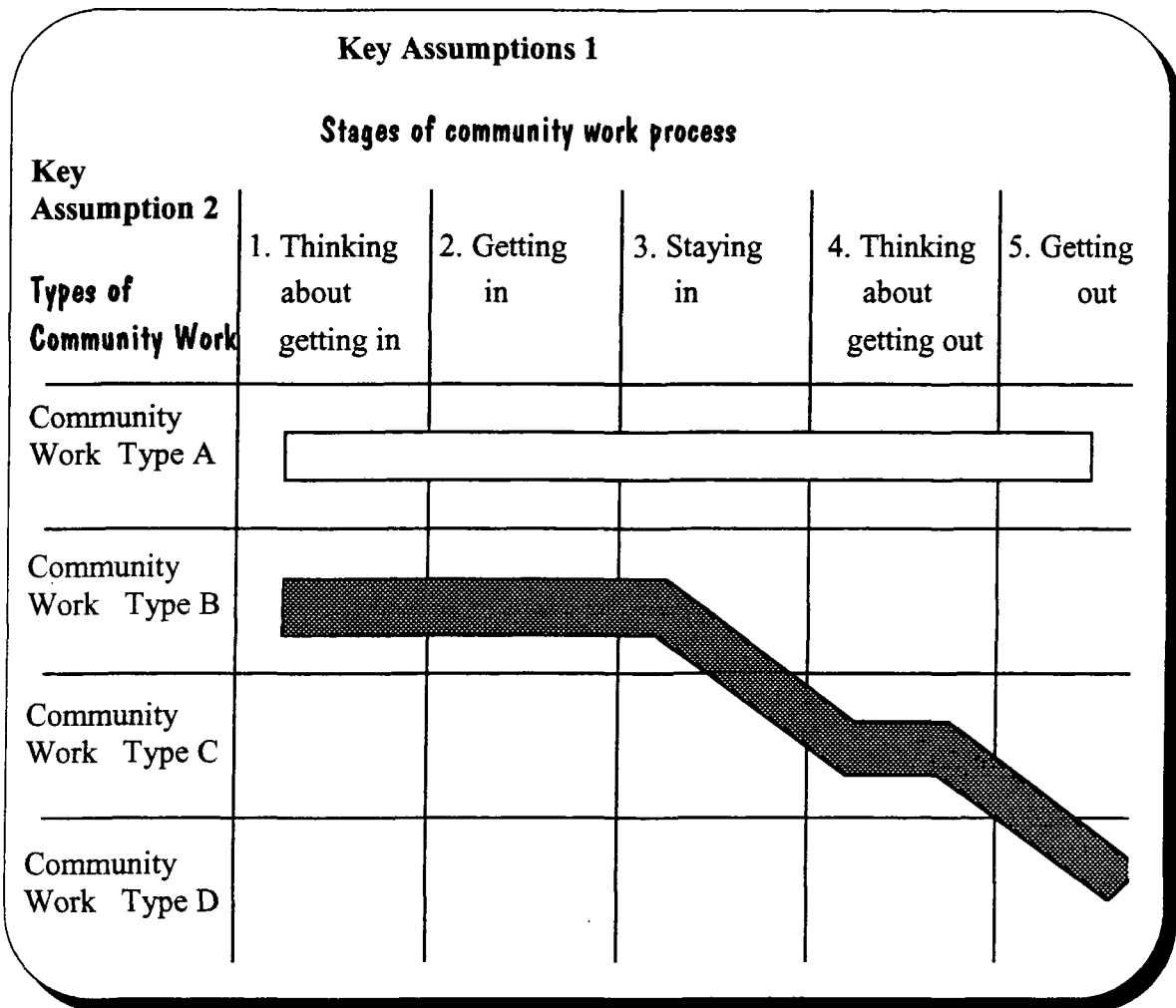
iv) Theory Grids

The fourth method is the creation of "theory grids" (Key, et al, 1976). This is essentially the construction of a further model comparing; i) "key assumptions" - based on the worker's ideological position and methods coupled with other broad theoretical positions; ii) "task phases" - entry, remaining, exiting and, perhaps, returning, and iii) the types or models of community work being practised

The "critical appraisal" process suggested by Key, et al, uses "theory grids" (Key, et al 1976:52) to plot either the development of individual projects or the whole agency programme. In the first type of grid they specify the areas of relevant theory (or "key assumptions") and define them as A, B, C, D.

These categories can also be described as typologies of community work. These are referred to in Chapter 2 and become more practically relevant at this stage. Secondly, these categories are plotted against identified "task phases" in the following way;

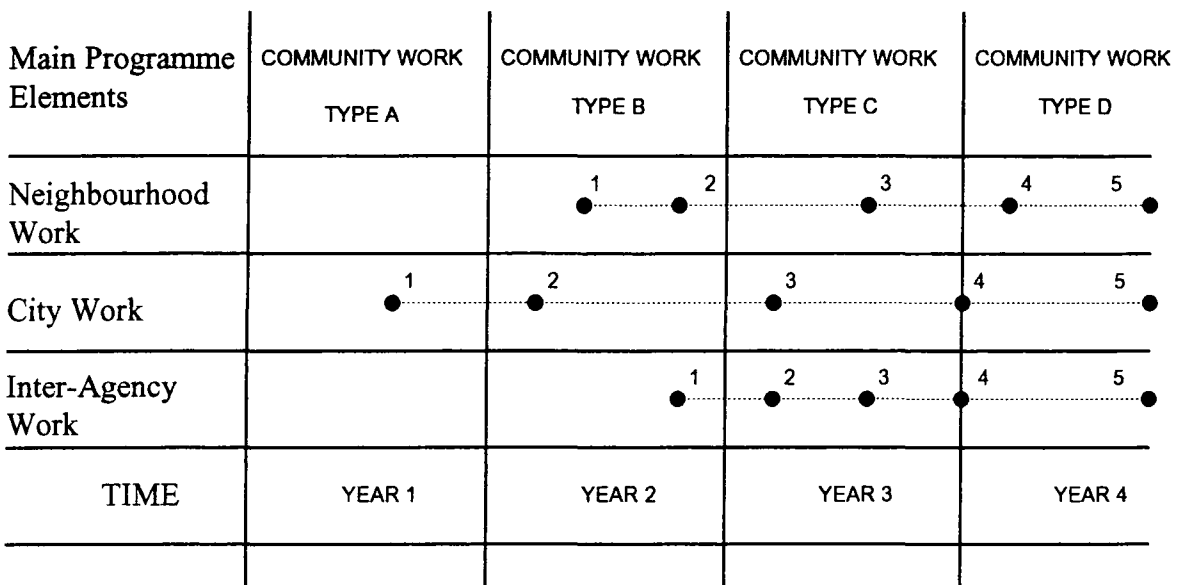
Figure 1: Developmental sequence of programme



This approach is useful in comparing two programmes in relation to the type of community work practice. In the example above, one programme has evolved from beginning to end and is defined as a singular type of community work practice. The shaded line illustrates that another programme has evolved through stages of differing community work types, and at what stages the changes occurred.

The second model they propose identifies the "main programme elements" plotted against the timescale for the whole programme, and divided into the five "task phases" (1,2,3,4 and 5 above). The "key assumptions" or typologies of community work (A,B,C and D) are identified against each programme element at the time they occur. The following figure illustrates this;

Figure 2 - Whole agency programme



NB: The numbers 1 to 5 represent the stages "Thinking about getting in" to "Getting out".

Michael Key and his colleagues adapted these theory grids from works by Weiss and Rein (1972) and John Dearlove (1973). This model was devised as an aspect of the "critical appraisal" process concerning the Young Volunteer Force in Stoke between 1969 and 1975. Clearly, this could be adapted to take account of the approaches adopted in this thesis. Of course, the programme elements would change to those of the programme being evaluated, and the "community work types" could be specified in accordance with the assumptions or theories pertinent to the programme. The task phases can remain the same.

In summary, the main advantages of this model are to encourage broader thinking about programmes, the identification of the most relevant theories and the isolation of key stages in the evolution of a programme.

♦ **Case Studies**

A "case study" could be described as embracing all or some of the above techniques. Essentially, a case study is a complete picture of the programme being evaluated at a particular point in its evolution. It is a "snapshot" of the programme at a given time and may contain a variety of information gathered in the ways described above.

Case Studies are also useful when the programme is, perhaps, innovative or experimental, where aims are broad and the objectives not clearly defined.

In local government, case studies are invaluable. They focus on experience in a way that participants can easily relate to, adding weight and meaning to the findings with references to readily identifiable places and events. Importantly, case studies are a means of identifying problems in the programme or with implementation.

In their way, case studies are a phase of reflecting upon or interpreting the data generated by the evaluation process and, in fact, may be the most useful way of presenting the findings.

In summary, these techniques together are a palette of ideas for eliciting the most useful information upon which to base an evaluation. While the case study may be a way of presenting and interpreting the findings, there are several other issues to take into account.

Interpretation and Reflection

In approaching an analysis of the findings produced by the evaluation, it is necessary to interpret their meaning and then reflect on the implications for change.

Remembering that evaluation is both a creative activity and "the art of the possible", it is necessary to balance those two factors by being selective in the elements of the programme being evaluated and striving for accuracy (truth) in the results obtained. This will facilitate analysis.

♦ Selection, Accuracy and Analysis

First, the evaluator(s) need to be as selective as possible. The number of elements to be evaluated, therefore, should be kept to a minimum. Even if an evaluation on a large scale is required, the evaluation should be phased over a period of time. In this way, the evaluation will be "crisp" and staff and others involved will find it easier to fit into their routines. Moreover, the results will be much easier to analyse and absorb.

If the evaluation is carried out "internally", then it is more likely than not our skills as evaluators will be undeveloped. Proceeding in small increments, even on a large scale evaluation, assists us to develop our skills as well as informing the progress of the implementation.

There are three particular aspects that need to be taken into account. The first is that any measures chosen should be from an explicit range. This reinforces an earlier point. Clearly, any amount of data can be made available - numbers abound and any amount of words can be found to describe activities.

Key, et al quote Carol H Weiss from her work on "Evaluation Research" and decision making based on evaluative material. The point Weiss makes is that "unfortunately, the findings from evaluations are more often than not unsuitable for decision making purposes...." because they don't accurately reflect operations, procedures and so on, and that "...approaches and methods frequently cannot produce clear and dependable information" (Key, et al 1976:31).

Secondly, the evaluator(s) need accurate data. Measures and monitoring systems need to be reliable. Accurate records need to be taken on detailed costs, numbers of clients, range of issues and so on. This is also true of qualitative measures, and some work needs to be done here to define, redefine and refine measures so that they can be considered to be generally true for the situation being measured.

Thirdly, the evaluator(s) require a structure for analysis to determine what is "generally true" about the activities within the community work programme. It is necessary to make judgements about patterns of human behaviour that will include such things as detectable norms in a given situation, agreed perceptions, etc.

This process can be conducted either by a "panel of competent observers who together go through certain procedures which render their judgement more consistent, coherent and (in a sense) *expert*" (Algie 1975:304). This process is also described as "analytic induction" (Burgess 1984:179), or the "hypothetico-deductive model of scientific explanation" (Hughes 1990:50-58). This involves the definition and redefinition of a phenomenon, reformulating the hypothetical explanation of that phenomenon and testing it until a universal relationship is established.

In other words, if a measure is determined by a number of competent people, and tested to be true over a range of experiences and over time, then it can be said to be reliable. Incidentally, this process should not imply that only scientists or other "experts" can be involved. Clearly, the people involved in programmes - management committees, staff and also users can validly and reliably deduce what is generally true for their situation.

Although this approach to analysis may seem crude, in practice that need not matter. There is a tremendous amount of inertia going on around us in both institutional, cultural and personal behaviour. Whilst the validity or reliability of infinitely detailed observations and data on subtle changes is not questioned, this is often no better than a simple five or six point scale that is discriminating enough to detect and illustrate the variations we are concerned with.

◊ Making Use of the Findings

And so to the ultimate purpose in the evaluation process - using the results to bring about change in the programme being evaluated. The techniques that produce information and the interaction of participants with the evaluator will interpret that information to produce new knowledge about the programme.

This knowledge will centre on the processes and the outcomes of the programme. In turn this requires a period of reflection in two senses. First, about the implications and recommendations for programme development and thereby change; and secondly, about the methods and procedures and wider impact of the evaluation.

Many of the procedures and methods portrayed in this thesis can appear very structured and pedantic. When it come to analysing results and interpreting the findings, the degree of thought and organisation that goes into the preparation of these procedures proves their worth. The better the model, the better the design and implementation, then the better will be the data produced. If the basic material is good, then the processing of that data, the recognition of patterns and relationships, is so much easier and authoritative.

This suggests that the answers and explanations almost present themselves as a result of sound methodology and implementation. That is true to an extent, but it is the exercising of minds on the information and explanations by the evaluator, the participants and the recipients of the findings that will determine the gravity of the findings and if they are to be accepted and acted upon by decision makers.

Perhaps the key, then, to using the results of an evaluation is that they "provide a description that is faithful to the world-view of the participants in the social context being described" (Mc.Neil 1990:83). In other words, the results and explanations have to be presented in a way that is acceptable and recognised as a true account of the participant's experience.

A more general consideration is whether or not the results of the evaluation are perceived to be favourable or unfavourable, by whom and in what way. If tenants, say, are not involved in a significant degree of decision making affecting the homes and the estate in which they live it may be determined that organisational structures are inappropriate, that the tenants themselves have insufficient knowledge or training or that they have insufficient delegated powers.

The tenants might regard that as a favourable outcome, the community workers and the Housing Committee and the Department might not - especially if there is personal criticism, resistance to organisational change, changes in the political structure or the degree of power-sharing required is felt to be unacceptable. Moreover, if the results are found to be unacceptable, it may be in the way the findings are derived or explanations made.

This kind of criticism may be valid, or it may a way for the aggrieved party to reject the findings. This is one of the possible dilemmas for the evaluator to face on the one hand producing, in his/her terms, accurate and revealing insights that may then be rejected by one of the parties receiving the findings.

Whether the results of an evaluation are regarded as favourable or unfavourable, there is a further dilemma facing the evaluator(s). To what extent should the evaluator draw conclusions and make judgements about what is appropriate for the programme and participants? It could be argued that the evaluator is the instrument that studies the programme and produces findings for the participants to assimilate and make judgments on their own behalf.

On the other hand, the evaluator, as described elsewhere, is likely to be attached to rather than detached from the programme. Consequently, s/he will have a unique and intuitive view of all the data and all the elements of the programme and in the best position to make judgements and advise on course of action.

If the evaluation is "internal" and an "action research approach" is adopted, then the evaluator will very likely be in a position to facilitate change. If the evaluator is "external", then that proactive role would have to be stipulated as part of the contract under which s/he was engaged. In the local government setting, the former is likely to be the case with the evaluator being the fieldworker or manager attached to a programme and therefore in a position to help formulate, implement and manage change.

The mechanism for influencing the programme, either directly or indirectly, is in the way the findings are reported and presented. "People like to read sort, clear, modest, truthful reports. They do not often get all four in one" (Kane 1990:177). Structure and organisation is again important, as is the use of language, tables, diagrams and so on.

Local authorities, driven as they are by reports, will expect relatively simple explanations of the findings, responding to the recommendations rather than the analysis of the findings and the methodology. Members tend to be parochial and opinionated and willing to make their views known. Their perspective will tend to be more organisational than personal, as custodians and funders rather than lay participants.

Community members involved in the evaluation are likely to welcome the perspective the evaluation gives on their own performance. For them the evaluation will be more personal, and emotional.

"The existence of these tensions means that the final product of an evaluation will come out of a field of competing interests, values and feelings. Its content will be determined by political, structural and emotional factors as well as by theoretical and methodological ones" (Key, et al, 1976:32).

The Law Centres Federation (1988) summarises very well four effective ways of making most effective use of the evaluation findings. The first is to ensure that the findings are fed into the policy making machinery of the programme as "decisions, choices, priorities, etc."

The second method suggested is to ensure wide distribution of the findings so that interested groups can have access to the material produced "to negotiate the priorities, courses of action and conclusions to be drawn from the evaluation".

Thirdly, requires an appropriate structure to disseminate the findings. Appropriate committees, subcommittees, working groups, open meetings. Significantly, it is suggested that these structures should be properly suggested by the evaluation itself.

Finally, as much as that relates to an analysis of the programme, there is the second area of reflection. Evaluation is a cyclical process, and each "ending" marks a new set of starting points either for further study, developing theory or on the wider implications for other programmes locally or elsewhere. The thinking and inquisitiveness of the evaluation process should not end. It should always be seeking to improve the method, the quality of the data and the interpretation of the findings - thereby improving the programme itself, and ensuring that evaluation is an integral part of the programme.

Concluding Remarks

To refer to an earlier chapter, there is no single method of evaluating a community work programme and no preferred method for gathering information. However, good organisation and a systematic approach makes data collection easier and lends weight to the findings.

A number of appropriate methods of data collection are discussed in this chapter that, in summary, are a means of examining the character and content of the programme and community work input.

In drawing conclusions and putting the outcome of the evaluation into effect, it is most likely the evaluator will be the person to make initial judgments and feed them orally, in the form of reports to working groups, committee and so on. This will instigate the discussions that will either accept or refute the findings, and agree or disagree to implement change.

Irrespective of this outcome, involvement in the process is to countenance the process and, hopefully, to embed it into the systems of the programme. The programme is not an abstract concept, it is people interacting in a social setting. It is dynamic and personal, and it is this "personal factor" that Patton (1978) stresses will enhance the likelihood that the evaluation findings will be used in policy and decision making.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This thesis has considered the context, concept, planning and implementation of the evaluation of community work taking place in the local authority setting. The aim, therefore, has been to guide the reader through the nature, style and stages of the evaluation process. It is a complex and undeveloped area of practice and where there is relatively little authoritative and specialised literature.

The research carried out in Middlesbrough, Cleveland County, St. Helen's, Merseyside, Bradford, Plymouth, Manchester, York, Stirling, Scotland and Belfast, Northern Ireland found a significant and growing interest in evaluation. However, only in some cases (including references to the work of Alan Barr in Strathclyde Regional Council) is there an active commitment to evaluation procedures. Examples of the approaches used in St. Helen's, Middlesbrough, Cleveland and Strathclyde are cited throughout the thesis.

What is also clear is that evaluation is gaining prominence at a time when funding for community work programmes is under scrutiny, especially within local government. As local authorities face financial constraints, evaluation of community work is regarded as being helpful in demonstrating its role and contribution and a significant factor in ensuring occupational survival.

There are wider influences acting as motors for a growing interest in evaluation. Central Government policy has systematically and determinedly aimed to reduce the power and influence of the institutions, including local government. Economic policy focuses on efficiency with a strong association between cost and value. Significantly, notions of competitiveness, ownership and enabling, together with an emphasis on function and performance is becoming more broadly accepted in a "new consensus" across the political and managerial spectrum.

Community workers on local authority payrolls are not exempt from these influences. A pressure is being exerted for community workers sponsored by local authorities to authenticate their role as both an effective and efficient method of intervention in the relationship between people and power.

Community Work in Local Government

Community work occupies a space between those who experience need and the state whose obligation it is to respond to those needs. In this interjacent position, community work is a catalyst in the process of social (i.e. political) change in pursuit of an effective redistribution of resources and long term, sustainable local development.

This is at a time of national and international recession. There continues to be rapid change in society, set in the context of unprecedented global political change. In this country, economic policy drives social policy. In turn, that favours capitalist interests, leaving in its wake "innocent victims" who through no fault of their own are poor, disadvantaged and oppressed and cannot readily benefit from the process of "marketisation". The future portends a contrast between the ascetic consequences of continuing world recession and hope in the energetic continuance of local action.

A vision is presented of community work, aligned with working class communities, which offers a means for those communities to begin and sustain self generating change. Also, it is necessary for community work to deal with the dilemmas of working in the current social and economic environment as well as deal with the details of community work as a method

of intervention. Such a vision raises "large hopes" and expectations, reinforced by a language of community development that proposes "empowerment", "participation", "equality", "collective action" and so on. It is, however, a vision that may not be founded in the reality of day to day practice or in the lives of local residents.

It is argued that to deal with the diversity of skills, interests, values and so on that exist, it is necessary to hold a pragmatic critique of the relationship between people and power. This seeks to support what is achievable by setting out realistic expectations for community work by developing sound theory and producing corroborated evidence of the outcomes.

Evaluation has a crucial part to play in meeting those expectations.

The important implications of these factors are set out in the first three Chapters. Besides clarifying both personal and collective relationships to the state, community work must deal with the paradox of "issue and identity politics" and "communality based politics". In other words, it is necessary for community workers to work within and around state structures in ways that empower local communities. Furthermore, the role of community workers and their relationship with community members is an important concern where tackling inequality and promoting collective action (the "twin pillars" of community work) must be integrated with strategies that deal with issue and identity politics.

There is a need also for clarity in, and a broader understanding of, ideology, values and the consequent behaviours and roles of community workers. A case is made for professionalising strategies, to establish the discreet areas of knowledge, skill and method and to stabilise them within an organisational framework. Furthermore, there is a need to better understand the community development process and for vision in seeking new ways of local organising and drawing down available resources into areas of greatest need.

The evaluation process can generate the information and knowledge that can help deal with these issues and unlock the potential of community work in the local government setting. However, in order to evaluate community work it is necessary to know it, generally and in the given setting. The discussion in the early part of the thesis is a contribution to the knowing of community work and the development of the "knowing skills" of the evaluator. As such, it is important scene-setting for the evaluation process.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the term associated with a set of approaches and techniques that can validate the effectiveness or otherwise of the community development process and the contribution of community work. It is presented in this thesis as an **improving** activity, committed to expanding knowledge, developing theory and improving the practice of community work. In that sense, evaluation is a **dynamic** activity - not the "snapshot" approach of monitoring exercises but committed to ongoing improvement through practice learning.

Evaluation is defined as an activity in which people participate voluntarily; workers can acquire particular skills in evaluation; and evaluation provides a workable set of procedures that examine the **quality** or worth of a community work intervention. The discussion covers both what is expected of an evaluation and what obstacles are likely to be encountered.

Furthermore, evaluation is presented as a practical, flexible and adaptive means of meeting the information needs of a variety of audiences - workers, managers, participants, funders, academics and so on. Consequently, there is no single method of carrying out an evaluation. Each programme or event requires decisions to be made on the preferred approaches and methods that are competent and realise worthwhile results for the audience receiving the findings.

This raises important ethical, epistemological and methodological issues. These are discussed in the thesis. The conclusion to be drawn is that these concerns are important, yet it must be accepted that evaluation is essentially value laden, dealing as it is with qualitative, descriptive and interpretative approaches and methods. Too great an emphasis on these concerns is regarded as disabling rather than enabling in the evaluation process. It is crucial, however, that the evaluator has a positive regard for the participants, that a central aim of the evaluation will be to improve the situation of people in communities as well as the quality of the community work intervention.

The evaluation will be carried out in a social context, not a laboratory. It must be "practical", that is dealing with the theoretically desirable and the practically possible. In that sense, an evaluation is said to be "the art of the possible". Moreover, it is not possible to guarantee the "certainty" of the "new knowledge" that will be produced by an evaluation. A competent evaluation does not abandon the rigorous "scientific approach", but permits flexibility in interpreting how we understand the nature of social relationships. Essentially, if community work is about social (i.e. political change), evaluation provides a means of identifying and developing relevant theories about the process of change. Also, by testing propositions (hypotheses) based on those theories, new knowledge can be generated about strategies for future change.

Evaluation is dealt with throughout the thesis in a positive manner. However, there are obstacles to be overcome, not least the threat that workers might feel at the prospect of their work being scrutinised. Moreover, the community work programme may be influenced by factors outside the control of the programme. Other problems exist, including the danger that evaluation may routinise community work, suppressing creativity and worker discretion. The nature of social interactions and the complexity of "people in the process of becoming" is felt by some to be so diverse as to mitigate against any meaningful study.

It can be problematic if an evaluation is used (by controlling interests such as funders) for unsound purposes. Perhaps this will be for confirming preconceived approaches or at worst to discredit or shut down community work programmes. There can also be difficulties if those controlling interests do not share the same ideological or value positions as workers in the programme. In such a case, the outcome of an evaluation might result in conflict, again undermining the programme and the possible benefits for the participants.

From another perspective, an evaluation of work in the local authority setting may concentrate to a large degree of the outcomes of planned work. This may overlook the possibilities in unplanned outcomes and some judgement is required to allocate time and resources to this eventuality.

In terms of time and resources, evaluation can be very expensive - particularly in engaging external evaluators. In addition, the process can be very complex and time consuming for workers who may feel they are doing little else than filling in evaluation forms for long periods, day after day.

Nevertheless, evaluation is an alternative to doing nothing - or rather to continue what has gone on before. Despite the difficulties that can be encountered, the value of the insights to be gained from carrying out an evaluation, it is argued, far outweigh the drawbacks of a particular approach or method. Moreover, workers and their managers interviewed in the course of researching this thesis were generally supportive of the benefits to be gained.

The Evaluator

Chapter Five considers the skills and role of the Evaluator. Significantly, the emphasis is placed on the style of approach and the manner in which s/he becomes integrated, or "botanises", with the setting. The ethnographic style is considered to be most appropriate where the evaluator becomes involved with the participants in the programme. Moreover, the evaluator is described as a "human instrument" whose unique and intuitive view of the programme, its context and the data produced, provide a sophisticated synthesis of the information derived from the evaluation.

The evaluator requires a certain "intellectual passion" or "connoisseurship". S/he will actively participate in "the act of knowing" (the evaluation process) adding a further dimension to the programme being evaluated, and a vital influence on its direction. This suggests that the evaluator will be proactive in the evaluation process - implementing the method and also advising on, or stimulating, courses of action.

The choice of an evaluator is important and the factors influencing that choice are set out on pages 84 and 85. Essentially, a balance of factors including time, money, other resources, the specialist skills required and the climate within the organisation commissioning the evaluation will determine the choice. The preferred option is most likely to be that an "internal" evaluator will be chosen.

Caveats are attached concerning the consideration the Evaluator will give to the staff involved in the evaluation, the need for openness and the form of presentation to the audience receiving the finding. Community workers will be sensitive to and, perhaps, sceptical about an evaluation of their work. An evaluation will be a new experience for many workers. It will need to be well managed, conducted openly and in a time scale that permits workers access to the process allowing trust to be built.

In a local authority, is most likely a Council Committee or special working party that will receive the findings of the evaluation. It is argued that the evaluator will present the findings in a concise rather than protracted manner. This is not to demean the thinking process or undervalue the effort, but to attract interest in the findings and stimulate discussion. The overall aim being to arrive at solutions that are not merely conventional and routine.

Approaches, Models and Design

The implementation of an evaluation is discussed as a lateral series of stages that begins by identifying the most relevant approach, devising an abstract model that sequences the important stages in the process and constructing a design of the method. Although presented in this way, the separation is for analysis. In practice, the stages flow together each informing the other.

It is necessary to establish how the evaluation is to be carried out. Will it consider how the programme is achieving the initial or current set of programme goals?; the systems with which the programme interacts? - or perhaps both! Is the approach to be "inside" the programme where the evaluation is undertaken as part of the process of devising and implementing the programme. The "action research" approach is identified as particularly suited to those circumstances.

Moreover, decisions will be taken at this stage about the balance of "hard" and "soft" data that will be required and the degree of compromise between the degree of scientific rigour and more subjective lines of enquiry. These considerations cannot be prescribed. They are particular to the programme and require the active involvement of the participants with the evaluator.

It is a feature of the whole process and continues with the formulation of an appropriate, abstract model of the evaluation. This sets out the sequence of significant elements that will be covered by the evaluation. Importantly, the central or connecting feature of the evaluation can be identified. This may be to engender support, or improve communication, or achieve social or political change and so on. It is what, in concept, the evaluation sets out to do. Clarity in this respect is important so that the evaluation is plausibly integrated, accepted and understood by the participants.

The evaluation model serves both "formative" (improvement) and "summative" (judgemental) purposes. In constructing the evaluation model, the relationship between these two apparently adjacent positions can be balanced.

Key attributes of "validity", "reliability" and "utility" are constantly applied at this stage to substantiate the ongoing judgements that will be made about the progress of the evaluation. This introduces the concept of "evaluating the evaluation" - a necessary feature of the evaluation model that determines how the evaluation occurs and the effects it produces in relation to the integrative factors preformulated in the model.

There are examples of how this can occur in practice and the forms this can take (pages 102-113). It is very likely, however, that both the approach to be adopted and the model of an evaluation will be implicit rather than explicit. It is argued that these two stages should be more explicit for the particular setting and preceding the more task oriented stage of evaluation design.

At the design stage, all the issues, problems, tensions and other considerations (such as the scope for evaluating unplanned work) come into sharp relief. The evaluation is the operational framework for the evaluation and finalises the practical and fine details. It is a systematic and selective phase that establishes the method and produces the data upon which judgements will be made.

The content of the evaluation design is discussed on pages 125 to 128. What is important is that the design is practical and (continuing a consistent theme in this thesis) constructed with the central involvement of those who will participate in the evaluation. This is **how** the important compromises that will be required on ethical, epistemological and methodological issues are reached.

Significantly, the design stage can be utilised as a management tool where the evaluation is integrated with the design model for the host organisation. The features of collective involvement and co-ordination of activities will be helpful in managing workloads, planning and prioritising work. Importantly, this is a means to ensure that an evaluation has an impact on policy, which it informs - and thereby changes - the way things currently are into workable strategies for future action.

The examples of evaluation designs discussed in Chapter 8 are in current or very recent use. Examples have been selected from both local authority setting and the voluntary sector. They are presented also because of the contrast in approach, representing different degrees of complexity. This ranges from straightforward subjective, impressionistic recording of "input, output, outcome" to the more thorough "programme audit" carried out by Alan Barr in Strathclyde. Each example is illustrative of how the evaluation is tailored to the situation and information needs of the host organisation and the participants in the process.

The concept of the "experimental design" is considered as a further contrast because it contains all the necessary inherent logic of an evaluation design, although there are problems in the application of this method in researching social programmes. Social programmes are, of their nature, "open systems". It cannot be expected that two social groupings can be alike in every way for comparison, or subjected to "treatments" to gauge the effects even though it may be possible to show that one event has caused another.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the design stage is that it will most likely be the first real opportunity to "step outside of the programme"; to consider the specific aspects of the programme and to decide how to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programme, objectively and under scrutiny.

Reaching Conclusions

The final two chapters of the thesis consider the aspects of the evaluation process that assist in interpreting the information and data that the evaluation procedures will produce. First, the important role of theory is discussed. It is necessary to have both a structural understanding of the issues and a framework for understanding the participants. This is important because it introduces into community work practice, properly reckoned strategies for planning and implementing the work. Significantly, the emphasis is placed on developing "mid-range", rather than "grand" theory. Theory can be regarded as a "starting point" and a basic thinking tool.

Using and developing theory is encouraged - even though to many this may seem "academic" and "not practical". Theorising, it is argued, is not unnecessary and pretentious, but a means of developing plausible ideas about community work. By thinking more deeply about community work, it is possible to develop propositions about the likely outcome of that work. These propositions are also called hypotheses or the line of enquiry for which data is produced.

This is the classic approach to all forms of research that defines quite specifically what characteristics the programme, or some aspects of it, is expected to have if its objective or purpose is to be met. This then requires criteria to be formulated to determine how this will be judged. "Indicators" are proposed and given values that can later be measured to show change. Because evaluation is largely concerned with the collection and interpretation of qualitative data, several indicators will be proposed, given values and measured. If change is discovered it can imply that changes have taken place in relation to the whole programme.

Importantly, an evaluation is quite often not carried out until programmes have been underway for some time. Consequently, determining criteria, indicators and appropriate measures is a "two stage" procedure. First to establish the benchmarks by which judgements will be made, and then systematically applied to show change.

Measures and measuring is discussed, and the need for a balance between quantitative and qualitative data to be determined. Measures symbolise "reality" as we know it in terms of both quantity and quality. Measures are tangible. They map data and draw pictures about the programme or event.

Deriving measures and determining the balance between quantitative and qualitative data resolves a number of evaluation problems. Measures set down quantitative descriptors of characteristics, conditions and so on and secondly as quantitative descriptor of qualitative measures (see page 152). The application of measures produce values for the selected indicators. Over time these values can be compared to show change.

A number of methods, including surveying, "job content analysis", including the use of theory grids and case studies are discussed in Chapter 10. These techniques require in the evaluator a range of skills and the act of applying those techniques is described as the "craft of data collection". This is so because, in addition to applying the techniques, a range of other skills are required including the use of computers and other forms of information technology to store, process and present the findings.

A number of useful techniques of data collection and presentation are discussed. It is pointed out that in the act of even simple data collection exercises, it is possible to gain important insights into the work. For example, the "time budget study" analyses how workers spend their time, but also how they define community work and what they consider to be "contact" and "non-contact" work. In other words separating the "deskbound" aspects of the multi-purpose role expected within the local authority and contact work in the programme, and also tenuous links between the two.

The mapping exercise discussed on 168 -170, otherwise called "theory grids" and "whole agency programme" analysis, are ways of determining and utilising the definitions and typologies of community work. Both definitions and typologies are important and will be determined for the particular programme being evaluated. This will follow similar lines to those discussed in Chapter 2. Consequently, it is possible to compare the progress of two or more programme, and all the programme involvements, against actual and theoretical outcomes. In addition to providing a historical account of programmes and agency function, they serve as a means of planning the strategy for the development of specific and agency work.

The evaluator (as described earlier) is required to ensure that s/he is selective in the scope and level of detail required, endeavouring to produce accurate and dependable data. That is information acceptable and recognised as a true account of the experience of participants - even if that is then rejected by any of the parties involved. In presenting and debating the findings of an evaluation, there are likely to be tensions between what may come to be regarded as favourable or unfavourable outcomes. Criticism of the organisation, or personalities - either direct or implied, will make the finding more or less welcomed by participants.

The structure for analysis will be a body of people "competent" enough to deliberate the findings. These may be people whose experience and knowledge define them as "expert", but also the participants in the evaluation process whose have experience of the programme as funder, politician, resident, worker and so on. The reflection and debate on the findings is, therefore, the means for drawing conclusions.

Moreover, a further problem for the evaluator is in determining the extent to which s/he should participate in drawing conclusions and making judgements about what is appropriate for the programme and participants. It is argued that the evaluator will be attached to the programme and therefore have a unique and intuitive overview of the programme and the evaluation findings. This, coupled with relevant approaches and a sound method place the evaluator in a position to facilitate change. This may have to be specified if an external evaluator is active. It may certainly be a role expected of an internal evaluator who, in turn, may also be a fieldworker or manager of community work resources.

The existence of these tensions in interpreting and using the findings has to be recognised. Indeed, the final outcome of an evaluation is the sum of competing interests, feeling and values. This will, therefore, be shaped by political, structural and emotional factors as much as theoretical and methodological factors.

It is crucial, however, that the findings are routed into the policy and decision making process of the organisations concerned in the evaluation and used as the basis for decision-making, making choices, setting priorities and planning future strategies for change.

Concluding remarks

Evaluation is an improving, dynamic and adaptable means of realising the potential of community work. It is also a cyclical process, where one set of "endings" marks the beginning of potential further study and development of theories that are more broadly applicable. Moreover, the findings of an evaluation may make a contribution to the development of community work as a whole and can, therefore, be communicated to the field in appropriate ways - worker to worker contact or in publications, perhaps.

The purpose of an evaluation is to improve the circumstances of people interacting with each other and the state in a power relationship towards social and political change. This involves community workers who, through effective evaluation, can discover ways of improving their practice and effectiveness.

Evaluation in those terms is personal and emotional. It is also a means of empowering local communities, meeting their information needs, providing feedback on their performance and developing relevant courses of further action. It is these factors that will ensure the findings of an evaluation - new knowledge and theory, will be acted upon and used in policy and decision making systems within the state and at the local level.

It is to be hoped that this potentially exciting area will receive further attention in the future. The current thinking around the issues to do with evaluation is timely. As this becomes the topic of wider debate and practice, evaluation may become more explicit in everyday practice, underpinning efforts to enhance the credibility of community work as a form of intervention and as a valued and emerging occupation within local government.

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