

Community Development Methods and Strategy

Introduction

- ◆ **In the material on the subject, the nature of community development will be found described as a program, a method, a movement, a philosophy, as well as process. We hold the view that the key word in an analysis is process, by which we mean a change in an attitude of mind, whether personal or collective, that results in a change of behavior and the pursuit of a course of action hitherto rejected or not understood.**
- ◆ **Programs of community development are best considered as manifestations of action taken by people in groups after the process of education for attitude-change has precipitated change leading to decision for action.**

Introduction

- ◆ **If it is accepted that the distinguishing characteristic of community development is the educational process by which people change themselves and their behavior, and acquire new skill and confidence through working in cooperation, we must then examine the method used to stimulate this process by community development workers.**

Community Development Method

- ◆ **To stimulate the movement from being to becoming which we have called process, a movement which brings about a change in attitude, the worker in community development uses at least three tools:**
 - ◆ His own personality
 - ◆ The relationships he creates with people
 - ◆ Various vehicles of communication.
- ◆ **A worker endeavors to help the people to learn skills which reinforce these attitudes and promote attitude-change.**

Community Development Method

◆ Initial Contact and Creating Rapport with Community Members

- ◆ This initial contact may be made with individuals or with a contact group, and is generally established with persons already disposed to welcoming and talking with the worker, either because they feel sufficiently confident to do so or perhaps spill over into urgent expression, and they want to talk to a sympathetic listener.**
- ◆ The community worker has to create and sustain with persons and groups many relationships which are both simultaneous and independent of one another.**

Community Development Method

◆ Initial Contact and Creating Rapport with Community Members (cont.)

- ◆ The skill required to work in a complex nexus of relationships will be understood when it is remembered that in communities, individuals and groups may be fearful of one another, or hostile to each other, while engaged in varying degrees in community activities.**
- ◆ The workers has to maintain relationships with each without arousing mistrust or jealousy when persons or groups may expect to receive his exclusive attention or loyalty.**

Community Development Method

◆ Initial Contact and Creating Rapport with Community Members (cont.)

- ◆ The form of initial contact may be unstructured, the worker making a habit of being around and accessible in a community meeting place to watch the passersby and enjoy their company, until such time as both curiosity and familiarity prompt the first exchange of greeting, comment, or inquiry.**
- ◆ Contact may be made through a group, structured to afford the community the help of the worker in solving some pressing need.**

Community Development Method

◆ Systematic Discussion

- ◆ The second step in the sequence of method comes when the people ask the worker to help them resolve their problems and meet their needs. By helping people to express themselves they can better focus feelings and thereby define more precisely the cause of their discontent.**
- ◆ The degree of help required, and the time needed to move toward remedial action, depends on the social structure and values as well as on the sophistication of the community and its capacity to grow in community consciousness.**

Community Development Method

◆ Systematic Discussion (cont.)

- ◆ Beyond these initial stages lies the task of analyzing the nature of the needs and problems, assessing what is required to deal with them, and deciding which resources can be used for the purpose.**
- ◆ Systematic discussion is necessary to establish what are the commonly felt needs, and which are to be given priority in the light of objective analysis.**
- ◆ The worker does offer only a point of view and not a decision for the people.**

Community Development Method

◆ Systematic Discussion (cont.)

- ◆ Every worker will independently have made some preliminary investigations of the community in which he is to work, and have taken steps to inform himself of basic data on the community.**
- ◆ Native wisdom, the know-how which comes from intimate and long acquaintance with the local environment and climate, has too often been ignored by community development workers coming from outside the community with their imagined superior technical knowledge.**

Community Development Method

◆ Planning and Execution

- ◆ The third step in the sequence is to plan the work to be done, and to parcel out the tasks for execution.**
- ◆ Within the long-term perspective of community development as an educational process, short-term projects or campaigns of limited duration are the vehicles of community action because intense feelings of involvement cannot be sustained indefinitely, and it is important to plan community action, not only to coincide with initial enthusiasm, but to accord with the rhythm of the ebb and flow of human endeavor.**

Community Development Method

◆ Planning and Execution (cont.)

- ◆ Enthusiastic beginnings can be supported, but community workers should aim to protect people from overreaching themselves, from their vulnerability to early disappointment and loss of heart when work demands more effort than anticipated, and an early fulfillment of their hopes proves to be elusive.**
- ◆ By persuasion, they can try to establish more modest targets and help to plan the execution of a project in manageable stages of development.**

Community Development Method

◆ Planning and Execution (cont.)

- ◆ The worker is aware that in the community development process, the educational experience of the people and their growth and development, both as persons and as a community, in terms of cooperation and the maturation of their common relationships, is more important than the content of the program or projects undertaken.**
- ◆ Insofar as he can, a worker should guard against the possibility of protecting people from learning through painful experience. The workers tend to be overanxious, not least in those programs where they are subject to pressure from above to achieve certain targets.**

Community Development Method

◆ Planning and Execution (cont.)

- ◆ The work will be done without damage to community self-esteem if workers help people to plan carefully; to phase the execution of a project; and to make the kind of decision about what they want to do that would comprehend the discipline of the situation, requiring completion of a task within a reasonable time and with a reasonable outlay of effort to which no one can reasonably object.**
- ◆ No worker can guarantee success. With our present limited knowledge of human behavior and its motivations, the worker and the people must live in imperfect knowledge of themselves.**

Community Development Method

◆ Conclusion of Project

- ◆ Conclusion and evaluation constitute the fourth step in the sequence. This action in turn, provides the seed for a further undertaking of community action.**
- ◆ While celebration is desirable to mark the conclusion of a satisfactory project, there is a danger that more attention may be given to the function and the occasion than is warranted. Workers, under pressure to show results, have been known to present false statistics and to recommend for awards people not qualified as literate.**

Community Development Method

◆ Conclusion of Project (cont.)

- ◆ The worker's daily routine should be seen in terms of the should process of community development. Such perspective is enhanced by the skill of record-keeping, by his professional relationships with his supervisor or supervising committee, and by the concurrent evaluation which both afford.**
- ◆ The record-keeping, supervision and evaluation are part of worker's method of developing his professional self, but during a project they also contribute to helping the community make its own evaluation.**

Community Development Method

◆ Conclusion of Project (cont.)

- ◆ The worker's skill in leading, stimulating, and supporting group discussion, his work in committee, his relationships with people in the community – all contain the ingredients of evaluation.**
- ◆ It appears simple enough to conceive of community development method as making contacts through rapport, establishing ongoing relationships, working with people through group discussion to interpret their needs and problems, and finally helping them to carry out appropriate action to satisfactory completion.**

Community Development Method

◆ Conclusion of Project (cont.)

- ◆ In fact, the method is made complex in application. Some of the complicating factors include the personality of the worker, the group personality evolved by people in various task groups, the particular profile of the community, the alternative choices of action facing the community to meet their needs and problems.**
- ◆ We also need to consider other factors, such as context and form, organizational and administrative, which we may term community development strategy.**

Community Development Strategies

◆ Collaborative Strategy

- ◆ **There are two major problems with community development are:**
 - ◆ Outside workers making decisions about what would be best for the community.
 - ◆ The organizations sponsoring community development programs losing touch with them, finding them threatening, and then discontinuing them.
- ◆ **The community development strategies are aimed to solve the problem of outsiders deciding what should happen within the community. The collaborative participation opens communication and helps reduce resistance to change created by the community development program.**

Community Development Strategies

◆ Action Research Strategy

- ◆ **Most community groups do not seem to pay much attention to researching their community structure, problems or process. The particular characteristics which differentiate action research from other research methods are examined and related to a value orientation which is seen to be compatible with the values underlying community development.**
- ◆ **Because of the many different kinds of community action each type of action research has its validity. It is important in choosing the type of action research best suited to the needs of any particular community action.**

Community Development Strategies

◆ Education Strategy

- ◆ According to the gains to be expected from community action are in terms of the value as an educational experience rather than in terms of any specific achievements in administrative change.**
- ◆ The community worker helps people critically reexamine the society in which they find themselves, to understand the ways in which various political and administrative systems work, to acquire skills in self-organization and also more specific skills that may be relevant to their self-chosen projects.**

Community Development Strategies

◆ Process Strategy

- ◆ It is this transmission of skills from community workers to citizens individually and collectively that supposedly leads to achievement and strengthening of popular power.**
- ◆ In the process of planned change, community development intends to share or redistribute existing power. Often it may be necessary to build a new power structure through citizen participation and organization.**

Community Development Strategies

◆ Leadership Strategy

- ◆ All citizen organizations to be effective require both a large membership and a dynamic cadre of leaders. There is the need for a clearly articulated program of political education that challenges capitalist hegemony so that other alternatives can be discussed.**
- ◆ Therefore, local struggles and organizing are important in reaching people, educating them politically and dealing with their everyday problems in the context of longer term political struggle.**

Community Development Strategies

- ◆ In order to increase the local capacity for independent community action, and to discourage dependence on government, people need some basic skills and knowledge.**
- ◆ One of the major goals of community development is to strengthen the capacity of individuals to learn all the time, and to remain flexible and adaptable.**

Summary & Conclusion

- ◆ **What initially is a question of bringing the technical advice and resources of government development and social-service departments to the aid of the people becomes a matter of helping people to continue using those services, and through use to improved them and gradually to provide and finance local or regional counterparts.**
- ◆ **The most sensitive tools of community development are still the field agent, who is the village-level worker, and his relationship with the people.**

Summary & Conclusion

- ◆ **The basic elements or components for structuring a model program might include:**
 - ◆ **The location of personal agents-of-change within the boundaries of isolated communities.**
 - ◆ **Effectively organized self-help groups within local communities.**
 - ◆ **Technical and material aid for such groups.**
 - ◆ **The operation of organized and systematic channels of communication and administration between agencies of technical and material assistance and organized self-help local community groups.**

Summary & Conclusion

- ◆ **The keys to growth in the process of community development are to be found in the person and personality for the agent-of-change, in the capacity of the community to evolve groups of people with self-help motivation, and in the channels of communication, external to those groups, which lend them support, encouragement, and recognition from the larger community, along with the technical and material help required.**

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