Community Development Practice

Stories, Method and Meaning

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Chapter 2

Developmental Community Work - A Method

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Introduction

I am one of the graduates from the University of Queensland's (UQ) School of Social Work and Human Services. Like many other Queensland practitioners, I owe much to the work of Anthony Kelly who taught community development and related subjects over a 25-year period. Anthony's contribution to the field of community development ignited the flame of my imagination when he taught me a unique developmental approach that can be used to create a socially just world. This approach to community development practice is about working with small groups to build their capacity to do whatever is needed for active citizenship and full participation in society. It requires action that is strategic and proactive with the aim of reducing or preventing the deleterious effects of oppressive systems and structures.

For the past twelve years I have been working in paid and unpaid community development contexts, most recently at Nambour Community Centre in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. This chapter describes the philosophical traditions that have contributed to the method, the particular values and practice principles in which it is firmly rooted, and some of the distinguishing features of the approach. It also describes my interpretation of the developmental approach to community work and how we have

been applying it at the Nambour Community Centre and in the wider Sunshine Coast these past few years.

Founders of the method

The developmental method, used by many in Queensland, has been articulated and expanded upon by past UQ lecturers and practitioners: Les Halliwell, Sugata Dasgupta, Anthony Kelly and Ingrid Burkett.

The developmental approach is sometimes referred to as the 'Gandhian tradition' of community building, referring to links with Mohandas K Gandhi and his position on non-violence to achieve democratic socialism. Dasgupta (1974, p.34) articulated Gandhi's definition of violence as 'exploitation, centralisation of power and dominance; all that retards free expression of the weak who live at the base of society'. Gandhi's fundamental analysis was that if he pursued the truth of the matter, known as Satyagraha – the force of truth, that exploitation and dominance creates poverty; then this would unleash the most powerful moral, social and economic forces available to rectify oppression (Kelly, 2005). In the Gandhian tradition the development process is based on truth, not power, to be a force of liberation for the 'poorest of the poor'.

Philosophical concepts underpinning the method

The philosophical concepts embedded in this method are not new. However, the way they have been articulated together has created a unique, practical and disciplined approach to community development work. This approach has been utilised by practitioners in many locations and contexts, both in Australian settings and in global south contexts. The method has been influenced by a number of philosophers and educators including Rabindranath Tagore, Martin Buber and Paulo Freire. The concepts they espoused and how these have been used within the method will now be discussed.

Making connections

Rabindranath Tagore, a poet, philosopher and Nobel Prize winner for literature, suggested a foundational principle for establishing developmental relationships: that is, to make a connection, one has to 'see through the eyes of another'. Tagore (1861-1941) was born into a wealthy Bengali family and managed his father's rural estates. Many poor people lived and worked around these estates. As he became sensitive to their hardships, he asked them how he could help. Their response was that he could not begin to understand their life of struggle because he had come from such a different world (Kelly, 2008). With this insight, Tagore laid the foundation for this approach, one that questions the typical stance of 'helper as expert'. It

begins from a premise that a helper, rather than having expert knowledge, is the learner (Andrews, 2004). The helper does not understand what is best for the community, or what could be done in a particular situation. Rather, this wisdom must come from those living in these situations. This understanding establishes a quality of mutuality within the relationships. To see through the eyes of another is to put aside the helper's notion of what is to be done, and truly understand the other's point of view. This stance, that values learning about the experience of another, is an important first step in the development process.

Dialogue – three movements

Martin Buber (1878-1965) was a prolific writer, educator and philosopher. From his influential philosophy of Dialogue, described in 'I and Thou' (1937) the second principle of the developmental method was derived. Buber's thesis differentiated between 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' relationships. Of these, the I-Thou depicts the relationship between man (sic) and the world as one of mutuality, openness, and directness. Buber's contribution to the method builds from Tagore's wisdom. To truly see through the eyes of another, relationships hinge on the quality of the dialogue that occurs between people. Meaningful dialogue takes place when mutual understanding about particular matters is established between those involved.

Buber identified three connected and enfolding 'movements' in our dialogue with others (Kelly, 2008). 'First movement' interaction occurs when we present ourselves to another and say who we are and why we are here. 'Second movement' dialogue occurs when there is a response from the other to our first movement statements or questions. 'Third movement' dialogue is our response to their response. It requires us to be attentive to what is being said, to listen for and connect with the data or content they are communicating. Attaining third movement is not easy, especially because, in the desire to help, one usually finds it difficult to set aside one's particular agenda and truly connect dialogically.

Genuine dialogue, such as suggested by Buber, necessarily goes through all three movements, folding one into another, back and forth in a reciprocal fashion. Buber describes this process of establishing mutual or developmental relationships as moving from 'I' (first movement) to 'You' (second movement) to 'We' (third movement) (Westoby & Owen, 2009). 'Community' has been described as the sum of the mutual relationships between people. Buber's respectful dialogical framework, which values mutuality, is at the heart of this approach to community development work.

Listening for key words to build action

Paulo Freire (1921-1997), Brazilian educator and philosopher in the late 20th Century, suggested that during dialogue we listen for and explore 'generative themes' (1970, p.77), to build action. This concept forms the third foundational principle of the method. Creating genuine dialogue gives us vast amounts of data about people's lives, concerns, hopes and dreams. To make sense of this data and to guide purposeful action, we need to be strategic in our dialogical endeavours. Heurisms are words that evoke a particular meaning for both the speaker and the listener (Kelly & Sewell, 1988). Everyday words like 'community', 'family', 'work', are all heurisms. Each of us attaches meaning to heurisms according to, amongst other things, our life experience; our educational backgrounds; and personal frameworks through which we view the world. Connecting in third movement dialogue requires us to explore heurisms to establish the other's meaning of those key words. This is truly what is meant by the 'gift of listening'.

Heuristic logic is used in many disciplines. Child development specialists use 'heuristic play' when working with children to explore what playing with a particular toy means for a child. Therapists, when counselling, listen for particular heurisms regarding a person's emotional state. The heurisms to which community development practitioners attend are those considered to be 'action-reflection' heurisms. These are usually verbs or keywords that lend themselves to some sort of action.

For example, a number of heurisms are apparent in the following statement: "I've been feeling pretty annoyed about the situation, but now I think it's time to get involved.' The action-reflection heurism is 'involved'. A third movement question back to this speaker would be, 'In what ways do you think you should get involved?' or 'What does getting involved mean to you?' Further exploration of their response might elicit ideas for action that would be in step with their hopes, dreams and desires.

In summary, the three principles outlined in this section are: making connections by seeing through the eyes of another; building relationships through dialogue, and mobilising action by listening for keywords. Together these create the basis upon which this developmental method is enacted. It is a method in which the people affected by the particular circumstance are integral to all aspects of the development process. Such an approach requires a shift in thinking from the practitioner doing something *for* or *to* people, to doing something *with* people.

Method of community development

Method is the way in which we organise our engagement in the work, including the processes and procedures we use, the systems we encounter and the intentions we have which underpin our practice. There are several dimensions of the method, including: implicate-method; micro-method;

mezzo-method; macro-method and meta-method. It should be noted that although written as a categorical list below, these methodological approaches are inherent within each other. For instance, implicate-method and micro-method are present and applied in the other methodological domains. Furthermore, a worker might be required to enter the work through any of these domains. For example, if they join in with a previously established macro-method process, they will be drawing on other methodological domains at the same time as engaging in the macro-method process.

Implicate-method is where practitioners position themselves into the work assertively and intentionally. It moves the worker beyond generic job descriptions and methodically and reflexively explores the worker's unique and individual voice in the work (Kelly, 2008). The practitioner explores their self-view and their world-view. They acknowledge who they are and where they have come from. This process links to their capacity to join with others, and to ground the work in the midst of complexity. This is sometimes referred to as a practitioner's explicit framework for practice. For all, practitioners and community members alike, this reflection helps us understand how our internal world shapes the work or our actions, in the external world.

Micro-method is when the worker joins with others, and assists those people to hear each other's stories, seeing what they see, engaging in dialogue and working with reflective action themes that enable social change. They do this because they are concerned with the agendas of the people and with the sustainability and mutuality of process. This process is sometimes referred to as 'bonding'.

Mezzo-method is the process of moving from the private concern of individuals into public action with others; or when a group with its issues, connects to the structures in society. For example, a group of parents work with a public institution, such as a school, to progress particular issues they have in common about their children in the school context. The worker facilitates and supports these processes. Sometimes referred to as 'banding', because people band together to take action for social change. Workers engage with groups of people in such a way that participants appreciate their points of connection, make decisions and take mutually beneficial action. The aim of mezzo-method is to build self-help and mutual aid amongst participants, by establishing: a shared agenda, a shared basis for working together, and a shared commitment to follow through with the action/s - sometimes referred to as having a 'community analysis'.

Macro-method is when workers nurture partner relationships in the form of community organisations. This is both as an expression of community itself and an instrumental mechanism to achieve the public purpose of the organisation. Community development processes build organisations that are community-based and community-owned. The aim is to build organisations and social infrastructure to achieve a public good. This process is

somewhes referred to as 'structuring the work', or establishing mechanisms that enable community development work to be sustained.

Meta-method occurs when practitioners facilitate community development processes to join with others who are doing this work and integrate both locally and globally. Progressive community development theorists, whose thoughts are often shaped by a global analysis of poverty, argue for a practice that makes local and global connections; or at least a practice that is informed by a global analysis, and then attempts to go beyond the local. Meta-method acknowledges the complexities and paradoxes of this work and is when coalitions of macro organisations band together, so that small scale and local work can connect with 'people's movements' for social and global change.

At the heart of the method - values and practice principles utilised by the Nambour Community Centre

Good practice has its roots firmly located within core values (ideals we hold) and practice principles (ways in which we are committed to act). From these values and principles, all developmental practice flows. Practitioners can find the complexities of community work very challenging. This can be because of the great variety of contexts in which we work; the numerous practice approaches that abound; the various and fragmented theoretical underpinnings and the social policy contexts that inform the work; and also the diverse language that is used to discuss practice. Community development work is very 'process-driven'. Frequently, outcomes cannot be prescribed, nor predicted. This can leave a practitioner unsure of which path to take with a particular piece of work. Therefore, it is essential for workers to remain firmly tethered to the core values and principles of community development, which provide guidance for good practice. Below are the values and practice principles given particular attention to by the Nambour Community Centre. These have guided our practice and helped us make decisions about what to focus on and put our energies into.

Underpinning values

Human Dignity and Worth - We believe that every human being has a unique worth; and each person has a right to well-being, self-fulfilment and self-determination, consistent with the rights of others.

Integrality / Involvement - We believe that each individual is an integral member of the community and through their involvement in community activities can realise their personal potential.

Belonging - We believe that when people have a sense of belonging and connection to others, they can experience empowerment. This sense of belonging occurs when people are valued and acknowledged for their unique contribution.

Reconciliation - We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia. We are committed to working for reconciliation and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their land. We are also committed to working in partnership with the local Indigenous community to foster understanding and build positive relationships.

Cultural Diversity - We acknowledge the considerable disadvantages people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers to Australia. We are committed to providing a voice for people disenfranchised within the community by raising awareness, being an advocate and by providing accessible and equitable services.

Social Justice - We are committed to working for a just society for all its members. Working for social justice encompasses the following: the satisfaction of basic human needs; the equitable distribution of resources to meet these needs; fair access to public services and benefits to achieve human potential; recognition of individuals and community rights and duties; equal treatment and protection under the law; social development and environmental management in the interests of human welfare.

Practice principles

Cooperation – We aim to: develop trust between parties; elicit a commitment from stakeholders to work interdependently; and work together to achieve something collectively. In this way, ideas are generated and participants have a sharper focus on collective outcomes they wish to achieve together.

Partnerships – We endeavour to work with individuals, groups and organisations in partnerships that are based on relationships of trust, mutuality and cooperation.

Sharing Resources – We aim to share our resources that will strengthen and empower a broad range of community activities.

Education – We value the gifts of knowledge and wisdom that individuals bring to any community activity. We also aim to provide opportunities for personal and professional development through access to training or other forms of education. We practise from an educative stance, one that builds understanding, knowledge, and skills that can be applied in all community endeavours.

Accountability / Transparency – We aim to conduct our activities in ways that are transparent, remaining accountable to all our constituents: members, service users, partners, funding bodies, and ourselves.

Responsiveness - We aim to be responsive to community need by providing dynamic and flexible services. We respond by providing a comprehensive information and referral system, and through community development processes we also develop new initiatives and responses when gaps in community services are evident.

Pro-activity - We aim to work with a focus on prevention and early-intervention within the community. Therefore, we will be the instigators of projects that focus on building social capital within the community. 'Social Capital' means the 'glue' or processes between people, which establish networks, norms and social trust and facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Sustainability - We aim to create sustainable outcomes in the work we conduct to reduce the need for ongoing service delivery. Sustainability refers to the maintenance of the cultural, economic, physical and social wellbeing of people and communities.

Integrity - We value and aim to practise with honesty, reliability and impartiality.

Good Process - Our work aims to encompass good process as its touchstone. We believe 'the means justifies the ends', and not the reverse.

Distinguishing features of developmental community work practised at the Nambour Community Centre

The features outlined below have been described in relation to: *who* is involved in this work; *where* this work occurs; *how* the work is conducted; and *what* the outcomes or desired results are from the work.

Who is involved in this work?

The work is driven by people at the 'grassroots', that is, community members. In this regard, it is considered 'bottom-up' work, not 'top-down' work. Bottom-up work happens when community members set the agenda, the way the work will be undertaken and any other decision-making processes that affect them. This contrasts with the more typical top-down approach, which is one that is primarily driven by workers, often with set agendas and seeking set outcomes which have been instigated by a particular government / social policy agenda.

Community development work undertaken at Nambour Community Centre is referred to as 'developmental community work'. The word 'developmental' can be substituted for the word 'relational', emphasising the importance of good relationship development in the process. The beauty of placing emphasis on relationships means that work undertaken does not necessarily rely on any external resources. People and their

relationships with each other are the most valuable resource and are the starting point for any work.

At the Nambour Community Centre a 'whole-of-community' approach to community development work is taken. Individual projects are not targeted towards particular groups 'at risk', as is the case in service provision. Usually, community development projects are open to all who wish to engage. However, one of the features of neighbourhood centre work generally is that it occurs with people who are considered disadvantaged or from particular vulnerable populations. This is an important aspect of the community development work, as often the demands on a worker's time come from a broad cross-section of the community. Generally speaking, Nambour Community Centre workers connect with people who are less resourced or those Gandhi referred to as 'the poorest of the poor'.

Where this work occurs

Developmental community work occurs in the public realm, not the private realm. This compares with other forms of social work / human services work, which mostly occurs with individuals or, for instance, within a 'case management' framework, with families or young people. Interests, concerns, and issues in people's lives are moved from the private realm (individual work) to the public realm (group work), by bringing people together who have similar interests utilising a method, which is referred to as the '0-1-3' (Westoby & Owen, 2009). The 0-1-3 will be explored more thoroughly further on.

This approach to community development work aims to create 'multiple pathways in and out' for participants. 'Multiple pathways in' means creating opportunities for people to connect with others, the worker, and the project, in a range of different ways to work on the concerns they as a collective may have. 'Multiple pathways out' means that the work undertaken creates new and additional opportunities or options for action that people can utilise and move into. This is referred to as having 'agency', because it means having real choices and the ability to act on those choices (Bhattacharyya, 2004). This contrasts with more traditional forms of service delivery, which usually only offer one pathway into an activity / service, and one pathway out, that is, when a participant's involvement with a service is completed they are taken 'off the books'.

How the work is conducted

There is a beautiful saying from Mahatma Ghandi 'carry your agenda lightly'. This means there are multiple ways to build community, and carrying our agenda *lightly* requires that the community itself, not the workers, determine the specifics associated with the work. What we hold onto *tightly* is more of an aim; it is broad. For example, we may have an aim to

'increase community wellbeing' (that is, a sense of happiness and satisfaction with one's life); or to 'create sustainable development', or to 'build stronger communities'. The Nambour Community Centre's motto is apt here, 'Building Community by Working Together'.

This approach is not about service delivery, which ostensibly is about workers, usually from some field of expertise, delivering a particular service to many different people. Each piece of developmental community work is unique and usually not replicable, because it is driven by the particular people who are actors in particular situations and localities. The community development practitioner demonstrates her/his expertise in the processes they use; their facilitation skills; and knowledge of resources the group can utilise to meet their aims.

What are the outcomes or desired results from the work?

Sometimes this work is referred to as 'sustainable' community work, meaning that the work has a chance of continuing on without the direct input of a worker. However, sustainability may not be the goal of every piece of work, as sometimes activities are time or project-specific. The view held by those working at the Nambour Community Centre is that a sustainable community is one that has strength, resilience and capacity to act. This includes the capacity of community members to tackle new or complex projects that meet their particular needs. Additionally, it includes strength and capacity to stand against oppressive processes or structures, which are encountered too often in community life. Therefore, community development is not just about community-building efforts, but also forms of community activism. The litmus test for sustainability is that those who have participated in various projects will have developed new skills; new community resources will have been acquired and perhaps, newly developed infrastructure that supports the various activities will have been established. In essence, sustainability means that people will have the skills, resources and connections with others to engage in a range of endeavours without a worker's involvement in the long-term.

The aim of the work is for people to be empowered and skilled up throughout the processes used, and to make connections with others. The results should be that participants are no longer isolated – they have each other; they have new skills and new information about ways in which they can solve problems in their own lives, either individually or collectively.

Finally, this work is about social change. It is not just reactive to social problems as they arise, but it is proactive, by looking at and addressing the root cause of issues. This means practitioners and community members can be working at two levels at the same time with the one issue. That is, working together with people affected by the issue to develop responses locally; and working at a social policy / social planning level to redress the situation or to prevent it from re-occurring. In this regard, the work is transformative as it seeks to create something new from the work. This

might include new infrastructure, new resources or new outcomes, which benefit people in the long-term.

The relational method – from private concerns to public action

The 'o-1-3' bonding and banding together

The o-1-3 method begins with the idea that when we are alone there is no relationship (o) and any issues or concerns remain private, ours alone. With two people there is one (1) relationship, but the relationship still remains primarily within the realm of the personal, for each participant is central to the structure of the relationship. So, any issues or concerns remain private. With three people there are three (3) relationships and *shared* issues become public issues. The concern only becomes completely 'public' when there is a 'three-person' relationship, because no *one* can occupy all the relationships (Burkett, 2007).

Keep adding people into this equation, and the increase in the number of relationships is exponential e.g. four people = six different relationships, and so on. The benefit of being in relationship with two or more people is that if one person were to leave the relationship, then no one person would be alone. In the Sunshine Coast context that is known for having a very transient community, this relational method is helpful because it reduces social isolation experienced by many who live in the region. Social isolation is known to be one of the causal factors in depression and other detrimental health scenarios.

This common sense idea of banding together with others seems simple. As one practitioner put it, 'it's not rocket science'. However, thinking from the perspective of this as an approach to community development practice, the o-1-3 becomes essential when we desire to work in the *public* realm as development workers, as opposed to the *private* realm in which most service delivery takes place. The o-1-3 method builds relationships amongst people and creates groups by which public action can take place.

In the private realm, such as with counselling or casework, when the intervention is completed, no new relationships other than with the worker have necessarily been established. In the private realm however, this is not the aim; there are therapeutic or other aims driving these types of interventions. Further, there are therapeutic groups located in the public realm and in these, the worker often plays a 'coordinating' role and usually has expert knowledge about the subject matter that has brought the group together. For example, a post-natal depression support group led by a health worker, or a domestic violence therapeutic group with survivors of domestic violence, led by a domestic violence prevention worker. Another difference between these types of groups is that therapeutic groups aim for therapeutic outcomes and community development groups aim for public action, which builds social capital and enables groups of individuals to

collectively create the kind of communities in which they wish to live, work and play. Having acknowledged this however, it has been said by people who have engaged in various community development projects and developed skills and friendships as a result, that the outcomes of their involvement felt very therapeutic. This is just not the aim.

A community development practitioner takes on the role of 'facilitator' as opposed to 'coordinator' when working with groups. In the beginning of group formation, practitioners are often the central hub of the group because they are likely to have a relationship with most of the group members, that is, they have done their o-1's and bonded with individuals. The practitioner aims to move to the edge of the group, alongside all the other members, so that group members develop strong relationships with each other and begin to take responsibility for running the group themselves. This mechanism gives groups the greatest chance to be self-sustaining.

'o-1-3' - Stories from practice

Nambour Community Centre has engaged in a range of developmental projects in recent years. What follows are a few stories from our practice. The first two stories are from our multicultural community development program, facilitated by community development practitioner, Naomi Wiley. The third story is from our generalist community development program and the fourth is an organisational development story, in which I engaged in the development work in my role as community development worker and coordinator of the centre. All of these stories articulate how people have bonded and banded together to create social change on the Sunshine Coast.

The 'United in Diversity' and 'Srikandi – Indonesia' Groups

In 2005 a new community development program was established at the Nambour Community Centre. Naomi Wiley, the multicultural community worker set out to meet the broad aims of what became known as the 'Cultural Connections' program. The aims included: creating inclusive and sustainable culturally diverse communities on the Sunshine Coast; advancing multiculturalism; reducing the deleterious effects of racism, and providing opportunities for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to increase their citizenship within society. A two-pronged approach was used: to develop relationships with community members from CALD backgrounds and to develop relationships with service providers and the wider community.

Moving issues from private concern to public action began with Naomi hearing individual stories. For a period of a few months she went to many meetings, events, picnics, culturally specific gatherings and dinners. The outcomes associated with these processes are sometimes referred to as

'community engagement'. The purpose of this engagement was to hear the stories of those she met, listen for themes that emerged from the stories, ideas, and issues, and look for trends. Two clear themes emerged from these early connections. Firstly, *social isolation* associated with the process of migration and secondly, the need to create opportunities to *earn an income*. Many people were interested in various small business ideas and ventures.

To provide a response to the first theme – social isolation, the o-1-3 method was used. Naomi asked people if they would like to connect with others who had similar ideas whom she had met in her new role. People came together and shared their stories of migration, their hopes and dreams, and their struggles of living in this country. The group members bonded quickly and they decided to keep meeting fortnightly. After a while, and because they had gained so much from the process, the group decided to put on a multicultural celebration with the hope of forming other connections and bringing other newly migrated people together. They took the opportunity to apply for a small grant to assist with the costs associated with hosting the event. The Nambour Community Centre auspiced their application for which they had to decide on a name for the group. They chose 'United in Diversity'. They were successful with their application and this meant that their informal group quickly shifted to a more semi-formal one, which now had responsibilities for financial accountability, deadlines to meet and much to organise to host the event.

The event attracted over 100 people and was hailed a great success. The women of United in Diversity gained a great sense of achievement, made many new connections and multiculturalism on the Sunshine Coast was celebrated. The United in Diversity group continues to meet, while acknowledging the natural ebb and flow of energy the members have depending on their life circumstances, a variety of different group activities has since taken place.

One of the spin-off activities from this original United in Diversity process was the establishment of the 'Srikandi – Indonesia Women's Group'. As this group conducts its meetings in Bahasa Indonesian, a member of United in Diversity took on a leadership role informing and facilitating the group. As Naomi does not speak this language her role is less about facilitation and more about support and resourcing. Naomi contributes to the group in a range of ways including building bridges to mainstream resources and the wider community. This dynamic group has continued to meet; its recent activities have included a feast to signify the end of Ramadan, and a seminar on women's rights. These events were open to the public and were, among other things, a great opportunity for members of the wider community to learn about and build bridges with Muslims on the Sunshine Coast.

In both the United in Diversity and Srikandi groups, through the o-1-3 process, new connections have been facilitated that bring about a greater sense of community belonging for the members. Both groups needed to

develop what are referred to as 'community analyses' about the collective needs of group members and how to respond to these needs. A community analysis is one in which group members develop a shared understanding of what is to be undertaken together; how they wish to work together; and they make a commitment to undertake the plans made.

The skills that members of United in Diversity have developed throughout this process have increased their individual capacity and confidence and the strategies for action they have employed collectively have meant that community capacity has been built. New infrastructure has been established by the formation of the Srikandi Indonesia Women's group. These two community development processes have taken place over a two-year period. This developmental approach to community building is slow. It is necessarily slow, to ensure all individuals become integral to the group processes, and therefore the pace must match the slowest participant. Working with community groups to bring about social change, is about taking a series of small strategic and intentional steps. The o-r-3 method employs a disciplined approach to making and sustaining connections with community members, and has a flow-on or 'ripple' effect in that skills are learned and applied to new situations and contexts by those who have participated.

Community education – small business skills with CALD participants

The second theme that emerged from engagement with community members - the need to earn an income, was responded to using a community education strategy. Naomi had also been connecting with established services on the Sunshine Coast to ascertain in what ways they might be utilised to bring about the aims of the Cultural Connections program. One of those services was a registered training organisation that had an interest in seeking funding for training small business skills with community members. A community education approach to assist individuals gain skills in establishing their own small businesses was undertaken. Using the o-r-3 method Naomi facilitated relationship development between people from CALD backgrounds, the registered training organisation, and people with small business experience from the wider community to provide a mentoring role with participants. Funding was obtained to teach a twelve-week course on small business skills and Naomi, utilising her expertise in cross-cultural communication, was able to assist the training organisation to deliver the learning modules in ways in which participants would most benefit. A small group of participants from the course continue to meet to provide peer support and peer mentoring in their business endeavours. Naomi continues to create bridges between participants and state and local government programs that assist small business owners and sole traders establish their businesses.

Multiple starting points – traversing the developmental continuum

The Nambour Community Centre is one of over one hundred neighbourhood centres funded in Queensland by the State Government's Department of Communities. Like many of this cohort, the Nambour Community Centre has over the years succumbed to neo-liberal influences, and operated its programs only within a service delivery paradigm. However, the beauty of the developmental method and its influence on social services work comes with the knowledge that there is always a more developmental way of doing a particular piece of work. Traditional service delivery can be moved along a 'developmental continuum'. This is where work is conducted in the same general area of community need, but from a bottom-up approach where the people involved determine the processes and outcomes of the work.

One process used at the Nambour Community Centre to drive an existing piece of work along the developmental continuum, occurred with an existing budget counselling service for individuals. This activity was part of an anti-poverty strategy and was located in the private realm of service delivery. The question was asked, 'How can we locate this activity within the public realm?' This individual-focused work was moved into a collective process by conducting a six-week budgeting course with a group of individuals. The course was called 'Living Well on Less'. The workers took an educative stance, where participants themselves did most of the educating, not the workers facilitating the course. This approach to community education articulated by Paulo Freire (1970) is where we join our content or knowledge with the knowledge and lived experience of participants, and together move forward in action. This approach is very different to regular community education where normally the teacher is the expert imparting specific knowledge on a particular subject matter. With Living Well on Less, the facilitators knew that the participants who were already living on fixed low incomes were best placed to share their ideas about how to survive and thrive personally in these situations. The collective wisdom of the group was powerful.

From this community education activity, a savings and loans circle was established. Savings and loans circles are money cooperatives, where individuals come together regularly and pool small sums of their money into a common fund. Members then borrow from the common pool with a no-interest loan for items that the group has approved. The individual loans are paid back over a two-year period, whilst members continue to add to the common fund with their monthly contributions. The 'SOS Savings and Loans Club' is a group formation activity, which has had a long-term, sustainable approach to reducing the effects of poverty for people living on the Sunshine Coast.

A commitment to shift a piece of work from service delivery to community development usually involves the practitioner taking an educative stance with participants, other workers, members of their governing body

and funding bodies. However, in the long run, self-sustaining groups allow a practitioner to move on to new community activities, as the confidence and skills of participants develop. Therefore, in the long run this approach is an effective one and also creates efficiencies as community members continue working on projects with newfound skills themselves. Utilising the 0-1-3 method this shift in practice from individual budget counselling, to community education group work, and then to the formation of a co-operative is an example of how a piece of work organically evolved. This developmental work met the Centre's general aim of reducing the effects of poverty, and was driven by and achieved by the people themselves.

Developmental community work at the macro & meta levels – the Sunshine Coast Community Co-operative Ltd

The same principles and approaches to community development work at a grass roots level can also be applied at macro, sector, or organisational development levels. In May 2007 the Sunshine Coast Community Co-operative Ltd was registered with the Office of Fair Trading as a non-trading co-operative. This had been the culmination of almost two years work to establish a regional community development entity on the Sunshine Coast. The formation members of the co-op are: the Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre, the Nambour Community Centre, the Caloundra Community Centre and the Hinterland Community Development Association of Caloundra. These four organisations are separate incorporated associations, each working in different locations on the Sunshine Coast.

This entity was formed because of the contemporary forces impacting on the four organisations. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, neo-liberal political ideology brought about substantial change in the way funded community services were conducted. To some extent, these changes saw services shift from humanitarian ideals to those driven by both 'managerialist' and 'marketised' discourses. Economic rationalism and managerialism, which is seeing market logic applied to community services, place emphasis on short-term measurable outcomes of service delivery. This has affected the way practitioners engage in funded community development and other social service program work.

On the Sunshine Coast the trend for social service organisations to adapt to the current context has seen organisations respond in a number of ways. These include: growing their businesses; changing their legal entity status to 'company limited by guarantee' to establish a 'for-profit' arm; amalgamating with smaller organisations; and increasing the scope of their work to new geographic and social service provision areas. This is all being done so organisations can become competitive and relevant in this contemporary context.

The four organisations involved in the Sunshine Coast Community Co-op, however, did not want to amalgamate and run the risk of losing their local, grass-roots approach to the community work they currently have and which they do very well. Nor did they want to succumb to the dominant paradigm of competition. So, with a history of working informally together, and because they had developed a shared or community analysis, the four management committees and senior workers of the organisations foresaw the wonderful benefits of banding together and formally partnering, whilst remaining independent organisations. The Sunshine Coast Community Co-op is working together in a number of ways to partner on both operational and governance-related activities, which they believe will benefit themselves as individual organisations and also have flow-on benefits for the community members with whom they work across the Sunshine Coast.

Conclusion

The method referred to in this chapter has a rich history, steeped in tradition and revolutionary ideals. It relies on tenets such as mutuality and reciprocity. However, community development practitioners come across all sorts of people in the course of their work and developmental community work falls on the self-help side of social services work. Therefore, it should be noted that not all community members are ready for this developmental approach. Some people may need individual support through counselling, or other service delivery to help them deal with the adversity they have experienced or are experiencing in their lives. People need to be ready to take control of their lives and environments, and they need to want to do this in the public realm in which community development occurs. For those who are not at this place, other forms of social services work may be more appropriate, and referrals to agencies that can help are often required.

For the many people who are ready for this developmental approach, these methods to community building offer empowering and sustainable outcomes as well as pathways for effective citizenship. Community development practitioners need to be prepared to approach the work as the learner, not the expert; they need to be a facilitator, not the coordinator or driver; they need to carry their agenda lightly; and they need to go at the pace of the community, or the slowest amongst the group to ensure all are integral to the process. By doing so, by situating themselves alongside individuals, groups and communities and engaging with them in their struggles, a true journey of mutuality and shared responsibility to meet need will be facilitated. It is imperative that workers do not view those they work with as 'the other', where differences are objectified, but rather acknowledge togetherness in the face of their shared humanity. This is how a truly civil society is created and celebrated.

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Chapter 3

The Circle of Men Project

A Story of Tackling Social Isolation in Men Who Live in Aged Care Facilities in Redlands

Ross Wiseman

As a teacher in community development, I engage myself in various community organisations and projects both to express my own desire for social change and to identify suitable real life community projects and tasks for my students. The Redlands District Committee of the Ageing (RDCOTA) is one such involvement.

Through this involvement I participated in meetings to address the high rate of suicide in older men. This is where I first met Mike and Washuntara, two community members I have come to greatly respect. This chapter is about their story of reaching out to older men in an aged care facility in the Redland Shire. They became frustrated that those concerned about suicide in Redlands were not reaching out and listening to the personal concerns of older men themselves. Mike and Washuntara initiated a Circle of Men, by setting up a weekly gathering with a group of men in one of the privately operated residential facilities in the Redlands. In 2006, I was invited to attend one of these meetings and it sparked in me a passion to continue supporting Mike and Washuntara in their venture.

Mike and Washuntara set out to build connections to older men who were likely to be experiencing the deep sense of social isolation often identified in aged care facilities. It has been said that the four enemies that face