Understanding Community and Community Development

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Abstract

This chapter delineates what is meant by the term 'community' in community development practice. Is the meaning changing in the context of development taking place in the socio-political and technological areas or is it some aspects of community functioning that are important in community development practice? Thus, the nature of community and its function towards meeting goals of human society has been explored.

Social workers work with communities at different levels ranging from micro to mezzo and macro level. Their processes in community development are guided by values and principles based on human rights, social and ecological justice. These are at the core of community development practice. While applying these values and principles and working at the grassroots level, social workers face dominant societal views and power structures that operate at local, regional, national and even international levels. Thus it is imperative to revisit the knowledge and skills a social worker needs to have in the field of community development.

Key words: community, community development, community development practice

Defining the Concept of Community

The earlier and most commonly held meaning of 'community' refers to people living in a place who have face–to-face contact with each other. Based on this assertion Tönnies (1955) classified community as 'Gemeinschaft' to refer to pre-industrial social formation where face–to-face contact was possible in rural and tribal society. With changes in industrialised society, a new society emerged that was more akin to impersonal contact amongst its people. People related with each in formal ways and life was contractual. Tönnies denoted this with the term 'Gesellschaft'. This conceptualisation served the purpose of defining and conceptualising community in earlier days; however, such a tight compartmentalisation changed over time as community crossed physical boundaries of place and people could connect with each other by using technologies and still fulfil most of the functions of the community. A critique undertaken by Bhattacharya (2004, p. 11) also points out that a place-based conceptualisation of community

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itself is not sufficient to conceptualise community development practice for three important reasons. Firstly, it refers to 'a neighbourhood, a small town, or a village… regardless of the absences of any cohesion in it'. Secondly, it disguises various differences and shared interests that transcend boundaries of place and unite people together to act. This is also regarded as Durkheim's 'organic solidarity' and Tönnies' 'Gesellschaft'. Thirdly, place-based conceptualisation of the community 'fails to take into account the radical social change that is brought by modernity' (Bhattacharya, 2004, p. 11).

Defining community in the context of community development requires a broadening of definition that includes both place-based, interest-based and other forms of new and emerging communities, for example, web community, Facebook or other social media community and online groups that traverse physical boundaries and relate with unknown people in diverse locations.

This can also be explained by looking at different theoretical explanations about what constitutes community. Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012, p. 294) cite Luloff and Krannich (2002) who have used three theoretical approaches – human ecology, systems theory and field theory – to explain what constitutes community.

The theory of human ecology explains 'community as the structure of relationships through which a localised population meets its daily requirements' (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012, p. 294). It points out its key role of providing support to its members for its survival by forming relationship of care. Systems theory identifies community as the amalgamation of different units or sub-systems that jointly work towards achievement of community goals. This theory views people as holding different roles and statuses as part of different systems closely linked with each other. The field theory describes 'social interaction as the most critical feature of community' (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012, p. 295). Thus these theories contribute in explaining the community as a structure of relationship whose members are inter-related and function through social interaction. Community relationship could be based on shared identity that is derived from place, ethnicity, culture, interest or ideology. This identity helps bring solidarity amongst people, what Durkheim (1960, as cited in Kenny, 2011a, p. 46) identified as 'mechanical' and 'organic solidarity'. The distinction between these two types of solidarity is regarded as a difference due to commonality of experience for the former and divergence of experience for the latter type of solidarity. This concept is useful in understanding community as an entity where people share identity that brings solidarity in relationship. It helps cross physical boundaries and thus becomes relevant in understanding post-industrial and post-modern communities that have shared identity and are functional communities. Kenny (2011a, p. 47) describes two types of solidarity: thick and thin solidarity. The thick type of solidarity is

where people have 'deep [feelings] and an all-embracing relationship', such as racial or ethno-religious groups, and thin solidarity refers to relationships that are most evident in the post-modern era whereby people take membership of different organisations on the basis of identification with a profession, group or place; however, their involvement may not be as deep and all-encompassing as in thick solidarity. An example could be membership of a professional organisation, human rights group, or action groups. Nevertheless, each sort of solidarity has its place in community development work as people are entrusted with different roles and responsibilities based on their affinity and sense of ownership.

Elements of Community

For communities to function and help their members to achieve their goals, compositional factors that include structural aspects and circumstances for growth (poverty, crime, housing and environment) (Chaskin, 2009, p. 32); and physical location, including both natural and built environment are important. According to Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan (2012, p. 295) these 'physical resources are important for functional, aesthetic and symbolic reasons'. If we examine the impact of physical resources on the inhabitants of a place, then it is clear that people who live in places which are deprived of resources, opportunities for growth in education, skills development, and offer limited employment opportunity, are restricted in functionality. Aesthetically, people also prefer to live in places that are pleasurable and, symbolically, physical resources strengthen the identity formation of community members (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012, p. 295).

This does exemplify that the quality and nature of physical resources are important and constitute an important ingredient of the community. However, different professional groups focus on different aspects of community. Physical resources are an area of possible improvement where urban planners are more likely to focus to. Social workers and social theorists are more likely to be concerned with another ingredient of the community, that is, people's relationships, networks and trust in those relationships. These things form the basis of community strengths as different stakeholders in the community (individuals and groups) bring different sets of knowledge and skills that determine existing community capacity to effect change and helps in building an empowering process that relies on existing community social capital. This can also be described in the form of various assets that make up what has been termed 'social capital' (Putnam, 1993). Putnam describes social capital as a resource that the community can draw upon to achieve common goals. A very similar conceptualisation of elements of community structure and functioning has been theorised as 'community interaction theory', initiated by Wilkinson and further developed by others (Wilkinson, 1970; 1991; Cheers & Luloff,

2001; Sharp, 2001; Carroll et al., 2006, all as cited in Taylor, Wilkinson & Cheers, 2008, p. 31). This theory points out that every community has elements of 'local society, the community field, community structures (including power networks); horizontal and vertical patterns of interaction; strong ties and weak ties and community narratives' that together promote and develop social interaction which is the essence of the community. In order for the community to achieve goals of development its members should act together in various social fields such as education, health, transport and welfare. Thus the rise of community is not possible until social fields linking together act for achievement of the common good (Taylor, Wilkinson, & Cheers, 2008, p. 34).

Understanding processes of social interaction and how different social fields/ sectors link together and act together thus becomes important in a local society/ community that could be geographically based, interest-based or in a virtual environment.

Functions of Community

If one examines the role and importance of community in the social, economic, spiritual and political life of human beings, it is far clearer that various functions that are performed by the community have a bearing on the extent of well-being and disadvantage experienced by its members. Communities through identification and symbolic artefacts provide a sense of belongingness to their people. Human beings associate and form relationships with each other based on shared identity of place, class, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage and various other mechanisms that help form these identities. This *sense of belongingness* connects people with each other and builds social capital that is referred to as relationships based on mutuality, trust and cooperation. Although there is no certainty that people will develop trust and cooperation, a sense of belongingness opens up possibilities of establishing connections, networks and generating solidarity. This formation of social capital can be both inclusive and exclusive of marginalised and disadvantaged communities. How people can be excluded by shared identity of some members of the society can be understood by looking at three case studies in Victoria, Australia presented by Mendes (2004): Footscray Matters: excluding drug users; Port Phillip action group: excluding street prostitutes; and the Blackshirts group who went against single mothers. (See website URLs for action groups following the reference list.) These show contrasting examples of social inclusion and exclusion in policy debates in that Australian state. Kenny (2011a, p. 52) adds to our understanding of this phenomenon by pointing out that 'people identify with communities on the basis of their own concrete experiences and relations', thus paving the way for both inclusive and exclusionary practices.

It has been generally agreed that communities are formed based on people's shared interest, mutual concerns, and identity formations, and may dissipate when needs are met or tasks accomplished (Kenny, 2011a, p. 53). However, the relationships formed and associations built are channelled to work together on issues that are similar and conform to the value orientation of members. The organisations raising awareness and taking action to bring about change in policies and actions taken by public and private sector players in the socio-political and economic and environmental context could encompass many diverse issues such as the green movement, environmental degradation projects, an anti-corruption drive, the fight for land rights and gender inequalities. Such examples could be GetUp!, Avaaz, Human Rights Watch, Greenpeace, and Amnesty International. (See website URLs in reference list.)

In contemporary society, advancement in communication technology has helped in reducing distance and bringing like-minded people together, thus increasing the functionality of interest-based communities. 'Virtual communities' is one example of such communities which exist across boundaries and help in bringing people together to work closely, not only on local issues but also on matters that concern humanity globally. Virtual communities function to empower those who feel marginalised in traditional structures of community life (Blackshaw, 2010, as cited in Kenny, 2011a, p. 51). They provide an alternative to face-to-face interaction, although they could be forming thin relationships with new members in the community; however, they could also act to cement existing relationships, thus providing an opportunity to build rich community experiences. Communities thus have wider roles to play. It is not only about thinking locally, but also acting globally.

The current environment of uncertainty and exponential growth in materialism has given rise to inequalities and unjust distribution of resources for the majority of people living in the 21st century. Moreover, the current trend in most of the developed and developing economies is towards shifting responsibility for welfare services onto the community. Thus the community has to take more responsibility in providing support, care, financial resources, technical know-how and maintenance services to its members with minimum resources provided by the state. Thus changes in the functions of the community call for alternative ways of working with communities to support them in new functional responsibilities (Ife, 2013).

Community Development as an Approach of Social Work

Community development has been identified as a core social work approach or method to work with communities who are disenfranchised, marginalised and faced with broad social issues resulting from unjust policies and planning at global, national, state and local level. The failure of neo-liberal policies and the social democratic

welfare state in meeting human needs has become evident in the last four decades and the current 21st century where widening gaps between the rich and poor, an increase in hunger, poverty, crime, and social unrest is evident in most of the world. Countries such as Congo, Zambia and Zimbabwe now have a lower human development index (HDI) than in 1970. There are widening gaps in the health status of some countries where they have suffered serious set-backs; besides this, economic growth has been extremely unequal amongst the countries of the world (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010). Still there are 1.2 billion people who live in conditions of extreme poverty. The global financial crisis has widened the global jobs gap by 67 million people (United Nations, 2013). Social workers are faced with these challenges on a global scale and have roles and responsibilities to effect change that prevents marginalisation and meets human needs.

The social work profession has addressed human sufferings through charity and philanthropy in the past. The Welfarist tradition of western countries (such as the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia), where people have reliance on government support, has also failed in meeting human needs, which is evident by increasing disparity in income levels, rising employment even in these countries over the last decade. Ife (2013) argues that community-based solutions are needed to address contemporary social issues such as poverty, hunger, illness, crime and violence. Thus developing community-based structures can serve as an alternative to large-scale bureaucratic structures and governance that might be distanced from the community it plans to serve. Kenny (2011a, p. 8) defines community development as 'a method for empowering communities to take collective control and responsibility for their own development'.

The main focus of the community development approach is on instituting those interactive processes that help communities to take autonomous decisions on meeting their needs and addressing issues that affect their life the most. It promotes collective action rather than an individualised approach and thus can be differentiated from approaches that focus on individual well-being. The International Federation for Social Workers regards social workers as change agents who bring change in the lives of individuals, groups and communities. Community development has the potential to transform society and thus bring change in the status quo.

Community development needs to be contextualised in the current environment. Many societies are now developing as mixed pluralistic societies which embrace heterogeneity in their composition, relationships and practices. Modern societies that are best known as industrialised societies share a common feature: relationships amongst people are no longer confined to 'places' and have been extended to unknown

people in unknown places. They no longer hold the same norms and value system that were pertinent in pre-industrialised society.

Kenny (2011b, p. i17) believes that what is needed is 'an edgy community development practice that is never secure and does not operate in a comfortable "home"'. Largely community development is being practised through non-government organisations (NGOs) also known as the third sector that includes non-government organisations, not-for-profit, non-profit, voluntary organisations/ associations, community-based organisations, civil society that work autonomously from governmental control or semi-autonomously. These various forms of community-based organisation are the basis of organising communities, working with communities to effect change processes.

To understand what community development offers, it is important to consider its purpose and what it is that it tries to achieve. Community development fosters **active citizenship** whereby individuals work together to improve human conditions for the 'well-being of their communities' Kenny (2011a, p. 19). This role of being active citizens can be performed in four ways. Firstly, it largely maintains existing power relationships between the 'giver' and the welfare recipient under the guise of 'civil virtue'. The second type of active citizenship is 'individualized self-help or do it yourself' (Cornwell, 2008, as cited in Kenny, 2011a, p. 110). This ideology is promoted in neo-liberal policies where citizens are obliged to aim for their self-fulfilment. Thirdly, it can be in the form of 'defensive opposition', where citizens may challenge a particular policy and resist change to an existing relationship or assets; however, power relations are not challenged. The fourth type of active citizenship is the idealistic version of 'visionary active citizenship'. This form of citizenship brings alternative ways of thinking and doing and changing the existing power relationships in the community for the benefit of those who are oppressed and marginalised. The concept of active citizenship is also aligned with developing **human agency** as one of the goals of community development. Bhattacharyya (2004, p. 13) cites Giddens (1984), who postulates human agency as being able to 'act otherwise'; it is further explained as 'to be able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs'. Thus the aim of community development practice is to promote human agency, that is, human freedom to choose actions that could sit anywhere on the continuum from maintaining existing relationship, self-help, defensive opposition and visionary act of citizenship. According to Bhattacharyya (2004), development of human agency as a goal of community development also serves the purpose of including the broad spectrum of community development that encompasses 'economic, social, [cultural] and improvement of quality of life'.

Principles and Strategies of Community Development

The practice of community development should be guided by its goal. As discussed earlier, developing 'human agency' and 'active citizenship' is a key goal of community development practice; an ideology of equality, social justice and rights seems to be closely linked to this goal. Key principles and strategies that a worker might adopt to guide community development practice are delineated here with evidences from studies in related fields.

Human beings can achieve their full potential in the society only if they have equal opportunities to grow and prosper and their basic rights are secured; that means that society takes responsibility for meeting people's rights and ensuring that distribution of resources is just.

The seminal work of Paulo Freire (1972) regards human beings as change agents who in active pursuit of their goal should be able to identify needs, and make decisions on how to meet those needs. This positions them in a state of power where they hold decision making power. He further postulates that human beings can only be liberated from oppression if they have critical awareness of their current situation, which he termed as 'conscientization'. It is this consciousness raising that empowers people to make decisions that affect their life. Doing community development work that aims to develop human agency to transform their existing conditions of powerlessness and act as a collective to change human conditions begins with personal empowerment.

To bring about change in the society, *empowering members* of the community is thus important and to empower their participation and voice in the decision making process is the cornerstone of the community development process. However, it has been noticed that not all members of the society have equal opportunity to participate. One such example could be the voice of children in their neighbourhood community development. Goodwin and Young's (2013) work with children and young people in a 'school engagement project' found that children's perspectives reflected not only their own age-related issues, but also shared adult perspectives influenced by their developmental stage and experiences. Their study concluded that it was important to include the voices of children in neighbourhood development programs as they are important stakeholders in the developmental processes. Similar examples of the value of empowering processes can be drawn from Quinn and Knifton's (2012, p. 593) paper on a 'Positive Mental Attitude' project, which showed that mental health service users gained mastery over their lives through participation in arts, drama and performances. Stephens, Baird, & Tsey (2013) argue that empowerment even needs to be embedded in preparing and training community development practitioners. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for critical reflection on practice and experience which will bring attitudinal change in

individuals and transform their lives. It is this approach that prepares empowered people to empower others in the community.

The concept of human agency, where people have decision making power to decide what they need and how these needs should be met, is further linked to values that inspire people to act for their own self-development and for a group as a whole. Values around **human dignity and worth** are considered to be driving the liberation movement for people who have suffered disadvantage and marginalisation (Rahman, 2008). One of the examples given by Rahman (2008) is the liberation movement of indigenous tribes who were bonded labourers in Maharashtra, India and who organised themselves and fought for land rights, minimum wages and later focused on cultural and political rights.

Community development aims to bring about change in the oppressive powerful structures and institutions in the society. These structures could be class, race, gender and institutions such as capitalism, patriarchy, racism, ageism and sexuality. Community development workers are involved in **social policy action** to bring about change in existing inequality in policies that disadvantage and marginalise certain sections of the society. This requires collective action and involvement in conflict with unjust policies and practices. There are many examples of people's movements and resistance to politically and economically driven modern development efforts that have resulted in economic, social and environmental disasters for the society. One such example is the formation of 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' (Save Narmada Movement) in 1985 to resist the development that had devastating consequences for the people who inhabited Narmada Valley and would have been affected by the construction of a number of dams on the Narmada River in Central India. The Narmada Valley Development Project (NVDP) plans to build several mega, medium and small size dams. One of the largest dams, Sardar Sarover Project (SSP), is recognised as causing large-scale human displacement. Official figures project human displacement to be only 40,000 and rehabilitation plans have been put in place (Ahmad, 1999, as cited in Routledge, 2013); however, figures obtained from Save Narmada Movement (McCully, 1996; Ram, 1993; Sangvai, 2000; all cited in Routledge, 2003) project these figures to be much higher, that is, nearly '85,000 people will be displacement by the SSP and with completion of dam 400,000 people will be displaced and another 600,000 will have adverse livelihood conditions'.

The Save Narmada Movement is a people's movement where both insiders Adivasis (Indigenous) people who belong to the Narmada Valley and outsiders who are activists – social workers such as Medha Patkar, students and like-minded people who oppose such development efforts – have come together to resist such developmental change. The movement has now a history of nearly two and a half decades where it has progressed through their effort of resistance by mobilising

people, raising people's awareness, conscientisation, reconstruction and use of Gandhian non-violent techniques such as 'Satyagraha', fasting and Yatras (marches), strikes, hunger strikes and self-sacrifice. Such mass efforts of resistance and reconstruction could not be possible without people's participation, involvement and commitment.

A number of global issues that are affecting humanity in the 21st century include poverty, water scarcity, food insecurity, climate change and resultant disasters. Pawar (2013, p. 249) discusses the main issues that are related to water security, such as 'water availability in the eco-system', 'water distribution', 'fair distribution of water resources, 'use and abuse of water', 'ownership and control' and governance that warrants appropriate social action if we need to address such wide-ranging issues associated with water scarcity. Social workers who are intending to bring change in existing policy are likely to benefit from community development principles and processes to organise the community and raise awareness in the community. This will require **people's participation and engagement** at all levels. Any social action requires mobilisation of people who are committed to the cause and willing to take collective action. This might include strategies such as having consultations, negotiations with people who are in governance and control resources. '[Social workers] can mobilize communities to participate in the redistribution decision making process, stop vested interests, seek accountability for external costs and to ensure adequate rehabilitation policies and programs' (Pawar, 2013, p. 257). Social action strategies such as lobbying, public demonstrations, protests, signature campaigns, media talks, street plays and peaceful disobedience could be used in exposing those who have vested interest in exploiting ecological resources and using them for their own benefit.

Another important principle of community development is *sustainability*. An example of how social workers can work towards **sustainable development** is presented by Rambaree (2013). He presents the case of Mauritius, where local people are denied their rights to access the beach by economic power-holders who represent the minority Franco-Mauritians (2%), who possess 75% of beachfront houses and control more than 80% of land ownership, have strong links with multinational companies and exploit the tourism industry for their own benefit, thus depriving local people of economic gains. Another group holding power in this society is the Mauritian Indian community who came to Mauritius as indentured labour several decades back and now control political power. This group is leasing out 'state land' to its own community for a hundred-year period. Oppressive measures have been used to silence the voice of local people by political groups in the past. Local people are of the opinion that their involvement and participation in the sustainable initiative are important for them to share the benefits of economic

development. It should also be an integrated approach where development is promoted in all spheres, such as socio-cultural, economic and political. Rambaree (2013) suggest that social workers who work as community development workers have requisite knowledge and skills to mobilise people and engage them in sustainable development initiatives. He argues that social workers can challenge existing structures of inequality by mobilising people and helping them create alternative structures for overall community well-being. They can embrace political activism to guide the direction of change and work towards collective empowerment by engaging with international support groups to boost the agenda of change. Their knowledge and skills in analysing existing power dynamics in the society and ability to work at the grassroots level guided by values of social justice enables them to effect change that is just and sustainable.

Over the last few decades, social workers have encouragingly been involved in environmental issues and *building awareness at the community level* about the harmful impacts of unsustainable, unequal and unjust practices in the ecological sphere. A well-known environmental movement of the poor known as 'Chipko (Embrace) movement' (1973-1981) is a good example of forest protection by the people of the hill region of northern India. This movement led to 'prohibition of commercial deforestation' (ref?). Although this prohibition also led to non-availability of forest goods for the local residents for home and livelihood purposes, the ripple effect of this movement also led to the preparation of a cadre of social activists who became active citizens; they formed associations and organisations to fight against unjust policies and mentored other youth and workers who were conscious of environmental degradation and its impact on humanity (Ishizaka, 2013).

Another issue that has significance in both the economic and environmental realm relates to global food insecurity that has raised questions about unsustainable food growing systems, marginalisation of small farmers, rising hunger and non-availability of fresh produce in urban localities, along with heavy reliance on convenience stores that are selling processed food. Macias (2008, as cited in Besthorn, 2013, p. 193) affirms that community development initiatives at the grassroots level and involvement of professional organisations have been increasing in past few decades. Besthorn (2013, p. 198) says that social workers are trained in conducting needs assessment of communities, identifying strengths and community resources. These skills can be vital in identifying specific needs of urban local neighbourhoods whose needs for ethnic fresh food and preferences for the availability of cooked meals close to where they reside is important in sustaining vertical farming in urban localities. They are also trained to effectively work with **culturally diverse communities**, which is important for relating to people who may belong to different age, gender and ethnicity groups. Social workers can also use their **advocacy** skills

and organising skills that may be needed to develop relationships and negotiate change with 'city planners', 'law makers' and 'municipal governments' (Besthorn, p. 198).

Being a Generalist Practitioner

The diversity in nature of community, its culture and needs point towards the need for generalist community development practice that embraces the principle of holism and rejects a linear solution to problems (Ife, 2013). This is also aligned to the post-structuralist perspective that values the subjective experiences of people and communities and emphasises the changing nature of knowledge that is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, thus highlighting a pluralistic perspective. This form of conceptualisation implies that there are various theoretical perspectives and viewpoints about how communities function and what could be achieved in community development practice.

Community development workers thus need to embrace wide-ranging perspectives to work with communities. They need to understand issues from micro to macro level. It could be as small as locality/neighbourhood development to connecting with interest communities across the borders or bringing changes in existing institutions, policies and structures. A work of this nature warrants a generalist practice approach where they are open to learn and be educated by the community itself. It does not require a specialist approach where power dynamics are inherent in a specialised knowledge base. However, it does not deny access to specialists if need be, but that should be only a last resort (Ife, 2013).

The work carried out by social workers has to be in conformity with the principles and values of community development.

Educating Social Workers in Community Development Practice

According to Ife (2013, p. 380), a 'professional model' for practice or having a 'specific community work educational qualification' is contrary to the ethos of community development. This will set community workers apart as having specialised knowledge that discounts people's local knowledge. Rather he suggests that community development workers should have a broad knowledge base that helps them deal with the complexity and challenges of community work.

The question then arises as to what sort of knowledge should be imparted and how it should be given. Purcell (2011, p. 267) suggests that instead of having a narrow focus on some theoretical perspectives such as the critical perspectives of Freire and Gramsci as the main or only critical theories, community workers will benefit from having a broader knowledge base, that is, 'theories of everyday life'. Purcell (2011, p. 272) further argues that the community worker might explore a

knowledge base in everyday life that is space bound rather than in a time zone. Students visiting a physical space observing, strolling without a preconceived notion and knowledge base will explore the everyday experiences of ordinary people in those spaces and understand how 'ideology, social control and resistance' is being played out. This observation can be undertaken by even an ordinary person who can be instrumental in generating knowledge/understanding that is specific to that space and population and develop insights for practice.

Stephen, Baird and Tsey's (2013) experience of imparting community development education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities points out the need to develop collaborative education based on real-life experiences. They propose that teachers need to be humble to learn from the students. A model that is based on empowering the learners to empower others; linking personal learning with practice experience through participatory approaches and enhancing their bonding and bridging social networks with fellow students, community members and alumni involved in various community projects could be beneficial in getting support, resources and guidance.

Community development work is challenging, time-consuming and at times frustrating as processes of change are slow and involve power conflicts amongst the community members, local, state and national government. The breadth and depth of community work is far-reaching and thus includes various stakeholders with whom to negotiate and deal on a daily basis. Community development workers thus need to have time to themselves for self-reflection and support to deal with the stresses of daily life. Social work education thus needs to build resilient workers who are equipped to face the challenges of this work.

Community development education and training thus needs to be based on the principles of community development work. What applies to practice is very much related to what should be the imparted knowledge and how it should be done. Thus participatory approaches to learning that is embedded in everyday life experiences and empowering workers to empower others are some useful strategies that an educational institution could foster in program development and delivery.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly described some of the processes and challenges facing communities in contemporary society. It has then examined the concept of community, its elements and function that has relevance for the community development perspective. Community development as an approach has been proposed to overcome some of the challenges posed by wider socio-economic, political institutions and the resultant failure of national and international policies to overcome these. How the community development perspective can be utilised

to solve some of the crises of 21ˢᵗ century such as the water crisis, food insecurity, unsustainable of food-growing practices, access issues and rights of the poor and marginalised has been examined. Lastly, a case for generalist practitioners and education that is based on community development principles has been put forth.

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In Response to Globalisation: Community Development in Social Work Education

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Abstract

In the 21ˢᵗ century, the process of globalisation continues at a rapid pace, fuelled by improvements in information and communication technology and infrastructure. Very little of what happens in the world is a local event and there is constant interaction between the global and the local. Globalisation has also led to a number of complex transnational problems, such as climate change and the global financial crisis, problems that impact most heavily on marginalised communities and individuals in society. In this chapter, the role that community development can play in enabling professional social workers to respond effectively to the impacts of globalisation is analysed. The themes drawn from this discussion are further examined in the context of social work and social work education. The chapter closes with a delineation of Integrated Social Work as an approach to enabling future social workers to work effectively in a globalised world.

Keywords: Community Development, Social Work, Social Work Education, Integrated Social Work, Micro-Macro Approaches, Globalisation.

Introduction

The second half of the 20ᵗʰ century and the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century have involved increased extensions of global networks, intensity of global interconnectedness, the velocity of global flows as well as the impact propensity of global interconnectedness involving a multiplicity of actors and flows, a process commonly referred to as *Globalisation* (Held & McGrew, 2007). This relatively benign view of globalisation is challenged by a number of scholars who see globalisation as a reshaping of the world and society on global economic principles (Alphonse, George, & Moffatt, 2008; Beck, 2000; Gopalkrishnan, 2003; Heron, 2008), one that is guided by neoliberal ideology that emphasises the primacy of the free market and its ability to respond effectively to social problems. This view of globalisation is frequently termed *neoliberal globalisation*. The extent that this

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extends across the globe is greatly facilitated by information and communication technology and infrastructure that enable the increasing speeds and volumes of transactions across the world (Babacan & Gopalkrishnan, 2001). Further, Multilateral Economic Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization provide an ad hoc system of global governance for neoliberal globalisation that completely lacks democratic accountability and tends to support the interests of the rich (Gopalkrishnan, 2001; Stiglitz, 2004). Another issue with neoliberal globalisation is that inequity in its institutional arrangements also ensures that the economic benefits that flow from it are divided very unequally (Sen, 2004), with the top 20 per cent of the world's population accumulating 86 per cent of the wealth as against the lowest 20 per cent with only 1.3 per cent of the total wealth (Dominelli, 2010b).

It can be argued that neoliberal globalisation exacerbates the scale and severity of already existing social problems such as poverty, hunger, ill health and unemployment and incorporates new elements of risk such as in the area of natural disasters caused by climate change (Beck, 2000; Gopalkrishnan, 2011). Transformation in the economic maps of the world is also reflected in transformations in the pressures on the environment with the income-poor, less industrialised countries of the *Majority World* coming off a poor second to the income-rich, highly industrialised countries of the *Minority World* (Doyle, 2005; Sachs, 2004). These terms of Majority and Minority Worlds will be used through the rest of the chapter, rather than the more traditional ones of 'Developed and Underdeveloped' or 'Global North and South' as the author is of the view that they represent more accurately the distinctions between these groups of countries than the traditional terms have done.

It must be noted here that these risks are increasingly being spread across countries through global processes such as migration and economic interdependence (Dollar & Kraay, 2003; Sachs, 2004). Poverty itself is becoming global as a result of drugs, diseases, pollution, migration, terrorism and political instability (Nissanke & Thorbecke, 2006; United Nations, 1996). There are a number of issues that transcend the boundaries of nation-states including environmental changes, global warming, world hunger, population growth, and external debt, to name a few (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002). The processes of neoliberal globalization also involve the state placing increased emphasis on reduced public spending and welfare provision, leaving it less able to ameliorate the worst impacts of globalisation (Dominelli, 2010b; J. Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

The traditional support systems that existed in the extended family and the community are also weakened or demolished by the fluid interactions of global forces, further increasing the vulnerability of large sections of the population

(Ahmadi, 2003). Ledwith (2001) further argues that the impacts of neoliberal processes are both gendered and racist, in that they impact most heavily on women, especially those from marginalised groups like the African-American community in the United States. The United Nations (1996) speaks about this negative impact on women in terms of the neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programs imposed on many countries of the Global South, stating that their net impact has been to reduce even further women's access to entitlements needed to sustain minimal well-being.

On the positive side, there is evidence to show that the benefits of neoliberal globalisation can flow through to the poorer countries and poorer communities, such as with the commonly presented examples of India and China, but even this is subject to major institutional reforms and changes to governance structures that have significant negative impacts on the more marginalised sections of society (Bardhan, 2006; Dollar & Kraay, 2003). The anti-neoliberal globalisation movements are also a product of globalisation, in that they would not have emerged without the capability for communication provided largely through global corporates, and they represent new opportunities for positive change by making effective use of the new opportunities provided through technology and the media (Babacan & Gopalkrishnan, 2001). Globalisation does provide a number of opportunities for social work and social welfare through global human interaction supported by technology and infrastructure (Sen, 2004), which can have positive implications for society, even providing new avenues to combat many of the negative impacts of neoliberal globalisation through macro community and social development interventions (Babacan & Gopalkrishnan, 2001; Deacon, Hulse, & Stubbs, 1997).

Social Work Responses to Neoliberal Globalisation

The local, national and international impacts of globalisation present significant challenges to professional social workers who are expected to respond effectively to the negative effects of globalisation as well as involve themselves in a critical analysis of the processes involved (Alphonse et al., 2008). The general responses of social work in the past, particularly in the Minority World, have been in the three areas delineated by Payne (1996) as the individualist-reformist, the reflexive-therapeutic, and the socialist-collectivist. Of these, much of the emphasis of social work has been on the first two, both of which do not seek to change the status quo, and tend to set limits on the role of social work in conformity to the prevailing political/economic/social environment (Lymbery, 2001).

The social work profession places considerable emphasis on social justice as being core to practice and this is reflected by the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) as well as those of the national federations

in many countries such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom (BASW, 2012; NASW, 2012; Solas, 2008). This is also reflected in the international definition of social work as one that:

> …promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005, p. 218)

Working towards an ideal of social justice in this context would require social workers to work at the micro and macro levels as well as to challenge the status quo in some instances. Approaches, such as community development, incorporating values of empowerment, advocacy and anti-oppressive practice, can prove critical in terms of enabling social workers to relate effectively to a globalised world (Lymbery, 2001). Community development is described by Kenny (Kenny, 2011b, p. i7) as 'born out of a commitment to practicing ways of empowering people to take collective control of their own lives'. The question as to whether community development is one approach that is adopted by social workers or whether social work is one contributor to the larger field of community development is a vexed one and is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is very clear that community development approaches are consistent with social work value bases in terms of working towards social justice, community empowerment and the rights of marginalised groups in society (Ife, 2008).

The scope of community development approaches is covered in other chapters, which emphasise the fact that community development approaches provide opportunities for social workers to engage constructively in the promotion of social justice by going beyond individual case work interventions to working with social issues and needs (Mendes, 2009). As Mizrahi (2001, p. 24) argues, 'Social workers trained in macro intervention methods are needed to help promote and implement systemic change on behalf of vulnerable populations disempowered by the market economy'. Of particular importance is the emphasis on transformational practice in community development, as this is value-based, collaborative, democratic and seeks to resist many of the negative aspects of globalisation (Forde & Lynch, 2013).

However, the history of social work interventions in most countries of the Minority World has shown that social work practice has been and continues to be focused on individualised, clinical, case-management-based approaches (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002; Mendes, 2009; Midgley, 2001). With these individualised approaches, problems that arise due to the structures of neoliberal globalisation can be defined at the individual level, leaving the responsibility of fixing or managing them at the individual level. Problems like poverty can be seen in the light of

individual deficits perpetuated by a culture of poverty (Kaufman, Huss, & Segal-Engelchin, 2011). Alphonse, George and Moffatt (2008) state that this process can further intensify the pain experienced by marginalised communities. Individualised approaches also tend to be restricted to urban settings and to further marginalise rural communities and the poorer urban communities. Some authors argue that this emphasis on individualised approaches is also a feature of professional social work in the Majority World, even though many of these countries, such as those in Latin America and the Asian sub-continent, have a rich history of community development (Ilango, 1988; Maritz & Coughlan, 2004). Discussing the single most significant social issue they identify in South Africa, poverty, Maritz and Coughlan (2004) reflect that the minimal intervention strategies of social work have failed the country's poor.

The social work response to the issues of globalisation is further modified by the widespread adoption, especially in the Minority World, of a new managerialism based on market practices and market discipline, all implicit in the processes of neoliberal globalisation. Forde and Lynch (2013), in their research with social workers in Ireland, draw out many of the dramatic impacts of this dominant discourse on the work undertaken by social workers. This has raised significant issues in terms of the relationships of workers with users of services, access to necessary resources, adoption of techno-bureaucratic solutions as well as competition with profit-based private providers of services (Dominelli, 2010a). It has led to an increasing gap between needs and resources and to an inability of social workers to respond effectively to the needs of the community as against the demands of financial and managerial accountability, and it involves a shift of power from social workers and from the community to managers (Dominelli, 2010a; Ife, 2003; Lymbery, 2001). Services delivered in this system are likely to be less accessible, limited in range as well as delivered at a lower quality level (Dominelli, 2010b). This lack of accountability to the community is also a major stumbling block in terms of effectively dealing with the negative impacts of globalisation as the people who bear the negative impacts find themselves without the power to respond (Ife, 2003).

All of these factors point towards the need for a renewed focus on macro approaches that can work effectively towards managing the impacts of globalisation.

Community Development in Social Work Education

The preceding discussion on how social workers engage with the problems of globalisation also raises the issue of how social work education is to maintain its relevance in a rapidly transforming world. As with social work practice, social work education in the Minority World continues to have a dichotomy between macro

and micro approaches to practice with an emphasis towards the latter. Macro approaches are often not seen as core to the business of the social work profession and this bias is reflected in the nature of the programs and field placements within these programs (Kaufman et al., 2011; Mizrahi, 2001). Community development is one such macro approach to practice both within and outside the social work field and is generally a required subject in all the schools of social work in Minority World countries like Australia (Mendes, 2009).

Kaufman, Huss and Segal-Engelchin (2011, p. 914) suggest that, despite the ubiquity of the subjects, there is a dominant view that community development is 'not generally regarded as an integral part of the types of activity undertaken by social workers within social work agencies, but rather its practice is peripheral to the profession and is performed by individuals within organisations outside the realm of social work'. Accordingly, it continues to be a marginalised sub-field of practice (Fisher & Corciullo, 2011), a marginalisation that is reflected in the social work curriculum where there is little community development content in any of the accompanying direct practice subjects, and also reflected in the Australian Association of Social Workers' 'Practice Standards for Social Workers' document where community development warrants only a two-word mention in a thirty-one page document (Mendes, 2009, p. 251). In social work education this is also reflected in terms of community development subjects being often taught by inexperienced sessional staff rather than core academic staff (Mendes, 2009). This marginalisation of community development raises significant issues in terms of the abilities of the social workers trained within this system to respond effectively to many of the issues raised earlier (Lee, McGrath, Moffatt, & George, 1996). This marginalisation may appear to be less intense in a Majority World country like India where community development is one of the main streams of specialisation in social work education. However, the extraordinary impacts of globalisation on the extremely marginalised groups in the Majority World (Nissanke & Thorbecke, 2006) makes it even more important that community development approaches are maintained and emphasised within social work education in the Majority World.

While the extent and intensity of the problems raised by neoliberal globalisation require social workers to be equipped with the tools and approaches to work at both the micro and the macro levels, they also need to be critical thinkers who can participate in critical action. Social work education needs to be considered in the light of the nature of education as described by Ledwith as:

> ...located at the interface of liberation and domestication. This is not a neutral space. The power of ideas has the possibility of either reducing us to objects in our own history or freeing us as subjects, curious, creative and engaged in our world. (2001, p. 177)

As Alphonse, George and Moffatt (2008, p. 155) argue, 'the current global context calls for a paradigm shift in the social work curriculum … from its current emphasis on clinical or generalist practice, including the person-in-environment fit, to more critical theories'. Several scholars reiterate this need for new paradigms of practice in social work, pointing to models of community, social and ecological development as viable options to enable social workers to respond effectively to the globalisation of social problems (Ahmadi, 2003; Dominelli, 2010b; Gopalkrishnan, 2011). Starr, Mizrahi and Gurzinsky succinctly point to this need, reiterating that:

> in this era of fiscal constraint and political conservatism, it is essential that
> graduate schools of Social Work recruit and prepare professional practitioners
> skilled in organizing and planning to play a role in improving the social conditions
> of functional and geographical communities (1999, p. 23).

A renewed focus on community development approaches in social work education is not sufficient in itself. Neoliberal globalisation and international conservative pressures have caused a shift in the focus of community development from empowerment-based community approaches to resource management and accommodative forms of 'active citizenship' especially in the Minority World (Kenny, 2011b). Programs such as 'neighbourhood renewal' are forms of community development that maintain the status quo rather than challenge systems and work towards constructive change (Mendes, 2009). There is a need for social work education to return to the basics of community development approaches involving bottom–up empowerment. This involves the adoption of approaches that place development in local communities and involves an active citizenry that defends, looks out for and advocates on behalf of the community, especially those that are marginalised within it (Kenny, 2011a). At another level, these approaches also need to incorporate the paradigm of international development that works toward dealing with the issues raised by the processes of neoliberal globalisation through international collaboration and action. The choice here is enunciated by Dominelli (2010b, p. 8) as 'to continue with oppressive forms of practice that impoverish people rather than help them or become allies in the endeavour to create liberating forms of practice that affirm people's rights and redistribute power, goods and services across the globe'.

The field of international social work has been suggested in the literature as one where these approaches come together and where social workers can gainfully engage with many of the issues raised by globalisation (Ahmadi, 2003; Caragata & Sanchez, 2002). Also referred to as 'developmental social work' this approach incorporates many of the traditional community development empowerment–based approaches within an inclusionary and international approach to social work (Maritz

& Coughlan, 2004). Many of these ideas have been developed in the Majority World where it has been suggested that the enormous nature of social problems has led to adoption of collectivist approaches to social work, approaches that have then been transferred to the richer more industrialised nations (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002). One example of this kind of movement of ideas is the transfer of approaches involving conscientisation and grassroots movements of health and well-being from Latin American countries to social work as practised in the United States (Cornely & Bruno, 1997).

While this marrying of local participatory approaches with international alliances formed around a common vision of an alternative world is clearly an important way forward (Kenny, 2011), the term 'international social work' itself does not reflect the true nature of integration of individualised, case-work approaches, local community-based approaches and international approaches that is necessary to respond to the global issues impacting at the local and the global level. The concept of 'Integrated Social Work' is suggested as a more appropriate one that would involve a tripartite structure integrating the three approaches to practice. Integrated social work would respond effectively to the needs highlighted by Kaufman, Huss and Segal-Engelchin (2011), that while there is a need to include a systematic process of emotional working through at the community and social levels of intervention in social work, it is also important to utilise socially constructed realities within individual social work, essentially an integration of approaches. Integrated social work provides the opportunities for integrating the micro and macro approaches and also integrating action at the local as well as the global levels.

The argument towards adoption of an integrated approach, such as the one discussed in this chapter, is presented by Midgley as:

> ...remedial, preventative and developmental functions are not mutually exclusive and, as social workers in many developing countries are now demonstrating, it is possible to integrate these different functions within the same practice setting... However, if these functions are to be successfully integrated, social workers will need to recognize the value of the profession's diverse commitments and appreciate the extent to which they all contribute to human welfare. This will, in turn, requite a greater commitment from the profession's leadership to build consensus and end the internecine disagreements which have plagued social work from its formative years. (2001, p. 30)

Integrated social work would have to emerge out of a consensus in the social work profession on the shared goals of practice. It would have to involve the development of a unique knowledge base that is based on the micro-macro and the local-global linkages as central to practice. It would also integrate micro and macro

skills and practice, where micro approaches are utilised in macro practice and macro approaches are utilised in micro practice. This is based on the shared understanding that diversity of practice is focused towards common ends. Integrated social work would clearly encourage the development of multiple partnerships and networks across and within the different levels of practice, including individuals, communities and across nations, based on mutual trust, respect, and an understanding of shared goals. It would also involve the transfer of knowledge, skills, practice methods and human resources across and within the different levels of practice. And finally, integration would be the basis for social work education where subjects are consistently linked to each other and to the different levels of practice, thereby contributing to an integrated whole.

The concept of integrated social work as discussed here has not been explored to any extent in the literature. The term has been used in the context of amalgamation of community development programs with social work programs (TAFE, 2012) and also in the context of integration of social work theories (Evans, 1976; Salas, Sen, & Segal, 2010) but the broader conceptualisation suggested here is one that needs in-depth analysis. At one level, this integration of approaches appears to be a matter of common sense, and this is the basis of the conceptualisation around other approaches such as international social work and developmental social work, and yet this has not been possible in the past. The literature points to some of the reasons for this and also some of the opportunities that they represent for the future.

With some exceptions as cited earlier, much of the movement of knowledge in the social work field has been from the Minority World to the Majority World. In this process, the focus on individual casework has impacted strongly on the way social workers are working in the Majority World, but not enough of the community development based approaches developed in the Majority World have travelled the other way. Caragata and Sanchez (2002, p. 222) argue that maximum benefits would be derived when social workers engage in international problem-solving activities from a collaborative learning model and with a full understanding of the differences and similarities that exist between countries. They suggest that the shared understandings emerging from such a process would enable an effective response to social problems such as poverty, cultural imperialism and violence (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002, p. 223).

Mendes (2009, p. 250) states that the minority of social workers view community development as a key practice skill that should be used in most social work interventions, while the majority view it as a specialist skill to be used only in specific circumstances when working as social workers. This point, viewed in conjunction with the earlier discussion around the marginalisation of community development, is a major bottleneck when working towards effectively responding

to the issues of globalisation. A widespread adoption of the integrated social work paradigm would help to overcome this view of macro approaches in general and community development in particular, and enable social workers to be more effective at various levels of practice. Through appropriate building of consensus around shared goals and methods, integrated social work could provide new vigour to social movements as well as community and individual practice (Pawar, 2000).

The marginalisation of community development approaches in social work is also reflected in the attitudes of social work students, at least in the Minority World, who largely tend to prefer individualised approaches to community-based approaches (Maritz & Coughlan, 2004). Some of the possible reasons for the negative attitudes include unfamiliarity with the area and that it is too broad and overwhelming as compared to the other studies that they undertake (Mendes, 2009; Kaufman et al., 2011; Pawar, 2000). A key response in integrated social work would be greater integration between community development and social work theory and practice subjects, as for example a subject on interpersonal skills examining how these skills could be used at the community and social level (Heenan, 2004), as well as community development subjects examining their relevance at the individual level (Mendes, 2009).

Another issue is the lack of field placements that include opportunities for policy-practice and social action, as well as negative practical experiences during community development based field placements (Kaufman et al., 2011). A response to this would be improved access to a development-based field practicum supported by sufficient orientation to development approaches and active learning methods that would also improve the positive experiences of students in the field of community development (Heenan, 2004; Mendes, 2009). The orientation and support is of particular importance as Kaufman et al. suggest:

> successful social change-oriented training must sufficiently address the emotional impact of meeting individuals who experience the social suffering first hand, in order to enable students not to become overwhelmed and to apply their social systemic theories to individual cases of suffering – a difficult conceptual shift. (2011, pp. 927-928).

They suggest that this would enable students to integrate the personal with the social and shift to a more complex social construction of suffering and a positive attitude towards developmental approaches. Increased collaborations at the international level will also provide greater opportunities for students to undertake international placements that will help in terms of developing a more complex and in-depth understanding of social problems as well as develop their skills in micro-macro approaches. Another option is the development of community-based integrated projects that would provide active learning opportunities to students

while providing benefits to the community itself. These would need to be approached very carefully as they can involve considerable cost to the community if they fail. Further, they can be time and resource intensive (Mendes, 2009). Nevertheless, if organised effectively, with appropriate community participation and ownership, they can provide excellent opportunities for developing the theory and skills for integrated social work.

There also appears to be a problem with the marketing of social work programs, where the programs largely attract students with little or no experience in political activism (Fisher & Corciullo, 2011; Kaufman et al., 2011). These students, while intellectually understanding the context of social problems and the use of macro approaches to working on these issues, are likely to choose the more conservative approaches within their working careers. In this context, Fisher and Corciullo (2011, p. 363) suggest that the task is to figure out how to increase the marketability of social work programs to politically active students as well as activists in the community, to get the message out that these degrees open multiple career path opportunities for politically active individuals.

Conclusion

Globalisation based on neoliberalism is a fact of life in the 21st century. While it provides unique opportunities for human achievement on the one hand, on the other it is causing enormous pressures on the environment as well as on the poor and the marginalised communities across the world. The negative impacts of neoliberal globalisation are further exacerbated as nation-states are increasingly withdrawing from their traditional roles that enabled them to buffer vulnerable sections of society. In this context, social workers have a very significant role to play in responding effectively to the global issues as well as their local impacts. This assumes even more importance when considered in the light of the emphasis given by the social work profession to the tenet of social justice. Historically, social work responses have largely been in the nature of individualised, case-management based approaches with not much emphasis on broader community or international approaches. Social work education is also reflective of this bias in practice. This focus on micro approaches, while benefiting many individuals, is not very effective at responding to the social, political, economic and environmental impacts of neoliberal globalisation.

To work towards dealing with many of the issues raised in the discussion around neoliberal globalisation, social workers would need to adopt an approach that incorporates individualised, case-work approaches, local community-based approaches and international approaches. Some alternative approaches presented by scholars have been discussed in this chapter, and the conceptualisation of

'Integrated Social Work' has been suggested as one that brings together many of the key aspects of this integration. This would involve the integration of micro approaches with macro approaches as well as work that involves integrating the local with the global. Based on consensus around the goals of social work, this approach would involve respect for the diversity of ways in which social workers respond to the needs of the people they work with. A key aspect of integrated social work would be the consistent integration of subjects within the social work curriculum so as to enable students to enter the field of practice with this focus. Finally, some of the barriers to the practice of integrated social work have been discussed along with some future opportunities for change, especially in the context of social work education.

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