REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM-BASED APPROACH AND THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Article · January 2012

2 authors:

Edmarie Pretorius
University of the Witwatersrand
14 PUBLICATIONS   **17** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Hanna Nel
University of Johannesburg
14 PUBLICATIONS   **66** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:

People centred community practice View project

Social Work and Art View project

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROBLEM-BASED APPROACH AND THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Edmarié Pretorius
Senior Lecturer, Social Work Department, School of Human and Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand
Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za

Hanna Nel
Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Johannesburg
hannan@uj.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to reflect on the traditional problem-based approach to community development in relation to the asset-based community development approach (ABCD). Although the traditional approach to community development has some guarantee for survival and the improvement of services and facilities, it is likely to reinforce dependency and is not designed to bring about sustainable change. The ABCD approach seems to be an alternative and complementary approach. This approach is a collaborative process between community members and professionals, allowing them to work together to determine outcomes that draw on community members' strengths and assets. In community development it is necessary that people take up their power and gather some semblance of control in their lives to prevent problems becoming the road map of their lives.

INTRODUCTION

Although community work is one of the primary methods practised by the social work profession, during the process of democratisation in South Africa, the practices of community work, social and community development have gained recognition as the most appropriate ways to address inequalities in the South African society. These practices in social welfare evolved from the country's unique history of the violation of human rights and inequality under colonialism and apartheid (Patel, 2005). It was realised that empowerment of communities – where environments are created in which community members are mobilised to take ownership, learn to be independent, and become more self-reliant – is more likely to enhance sustainable development.

Through a detailed analysis of relevant manuscripts and texts community work, community development and two different paradigms to community development are contextualised. The article explains the traditional problem-based approach and the alternative asset-based approach to community development and attention is drawn to critics of both approaches. Lastly, the differences between the two approaches are underlined.

COMMUNITY WORK AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community work, one of the three primary methods applied in social work practice, aims at bringing about social change required within a community. Depending on the context, different practice models or combinations thereof are used to facilitate the required change. The five models most often used are social planning, community development, social action, community education and social marketing (Weyers, 2011). Different models facilitate different types of change within communities. Although the social action model focuses on power and uses conflict when necessary in an attempt to achieve the desired outcome of structural change, the other four models are primarily problem-focused, and aim at facilitating functional change as the desired outcome in a peaceful manner (Weyers, 2011). Ife (2002:2) sees community work as "the activity, or practice, of a person who seeks to facilitate the process of community development …"

The many different views about what community development is cause challenges in defining community development. The White Paper of Social Welfare (1997:68) uses the 1960 United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs' definition of community development, which refers to "uniting the efforts of people with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and

integrate these communities with the life of the nation in order to enable them to contribute fully to national progress". This definition highlights the partnership between community and government, and the importance of integrating social, economic and cultural aspects to the benefit of all citizens. In relation to this, Ife (2002:2) argues that community development is a process "of establishing, or re-establishing, structures of human community within which new ways of relating, organising social life and meeting human needs become possible". Community development is also explained as "a vehicle for change" (Chile and Simpson, 2004), and a process largely concerned with meeting the needs and aspirations of community members who have limited or no access to adequate services and who are often excluded from opportunities and/or decision-making (Gilchrist, 2004). Community development is a comprehensive form of community inter-vention (Weyers, 2011; Green and Haines, 2008) with the intention of bringing about substantive and sustainable change. Throughout the literature, community development is explained as both a process and an outcome (Weyers, 2011; Phillips and Pittman, 2009; Stepney and Popple, 2008; Ife and Tesoriero, 2006).

For the purposes of this article, community development is seen as a "people-centred change process facilitated with a community of people to take action to increasingly actualise their fundamental human needs to enhance the quality of their own lives and those of the wider community that they are part of" (Schenck, Nel and Louw, 2010:6). The characteristics of a people-centred community change process as described in Schenck et al. (2010) Block (2009), Brueggemann (2006), McKnight (1995) and Burkey (1993), are based on strengths and potential and belong to the community. Moreover, a people-centred community change process is dialogical, evolves over time, consists of cycles of planning, action and reflection and facilitates a collective decision-making process.

Specific principles underpin community development and it is important to realise that these are not independent, but related (Ife, 2002), and should be applied within the specific context of the community.

The principles can be categorised in broad categories. The ecological principles underlying community development include holism, sustainability, diversity as well as organic and balanced development. Social justice principles include addressing the structural disadvantages and discourses of disadvantage, empowerment and defining the need. The notion of 'valuing the local' coined by Ife (2002), which implies respect for indigenous knowledge and culture, existing resources and skills as well as existing

processes in communities and participation, seems to be a fundamental principle in community development. Process principles refer to outcome and vision, the integrity of process, people-centeredness, consciousness raising, participation, cooperation and consensus, inclusiveness, the pace of development, peace and non-violence and community building. Lastly, global and local principles comprise linking the global and the local and anti-colonialist practice (Schenck, et al., 2010; Ife and Tesoriero, 2006).

Being mindful of these principles when practising in the field of community development in South Africa is of the utmost importance. The destruction of apartheid and the way social and community development were practised pre-1994 disempowered people and were criticised as not being developmental.

DIFFERENT PARADIGMS TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development can primarily be approached from two different paradigms. The conventional way of working with communities is to identify problems, and needs within the community. An alternative approach is to focus on strengths and assets with the intention of building the community's capacity.

Both approaches focus on facilitating change within communities. According to Breuggemann (2006), there are two different but related approaches used by professionals to problem-solving when assisting people to create a more humanitarian social environment, solve social issues and make social change. The two approaches described by him are rational problem-solving and social thinking. Rational problem-solving is a cyclical process consisting of specific steps. It is the conventional way of making decisions and is often used when applying the problem-based approach to community development.

Social thinking is an uncomplicated method used in natural human engagement, is change-oriented, uses a citizenship approach, is the basis of civic consciousness, utilises collective effort, is interdependent, empowering, rooted in practice and utilises multiple thinking strategies (Brueggemann, 2006). Asset-based community development tends to utilise social thinking when dealing with communities.

Problem-based community development

In social work practice, problem-based approaches are implemented across micro, meso and macro levels. Prior to 1850, proto-social workers used problem-solving to assist with the justification and streamlining of services

to persons with intellectual and emotional disabilities. During the Reconstruction (1865-1880) and Progressive (1880-1915) Eras, social workers used problem-solving thinking for planning the provision of private charity, and in this way contributed to placing government in context. In the 1930s and 1940s problem-solving thinking was extended by John Dewey's *How We Think* in 1933. Dewey argued that effective problem-solving requires the pursuit of specific steps in a precise and systematic sequence (Brueggemann, 2006; Compton, Galaway and Cournoyer, 2005).

During the 1950s and 1960s Perlman was the first person to openly connect social work practice with problem-solving. In 1957 Perlman developed a framework to describe the social case-work method as a problem-solving process with different steps (Brueggemann, 2006; Compton, Galaway and Cournoyer, 2005). Rational problem-solving as described by Brueggemann (2006) forms the foundation on which clients, groups and communities are assisted by professionals to resolve personal and social problems. The social work profession predominantly applies 'problem-focused' practice models because of the pre-occupation with human deficits, social problems and dysfunctional attributes and limitations in groups and communities (Russell and Smeaton, 2010).

In Africa, the problem-based approach was the preferred approach to development throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and until the late 1970s the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan African countries were rarely asked what their priorities and concerns were – aid organisations hardly ever considered that the people might have something of value to offer in responding to the countless humanitarian crises they encountered (Russell and Smeaton, 2010; Booy, Sena and Arusha, 2000). Even today, the identification of felt needs and problems is the predominant approach to community development.

In South Africa, the majority of the population is confronted with severe social problems. The starkness of social problems like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, famine, lack of basic services (water, housing, electricity, sanitation), dependence on social grants, crime and violence, drug and alcohol addiction, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, disability, HIV and Aids, tuberculosis, unhealthy living conditions and poorly managed waste in many informal settlements, underdeveloped areas in townships and low-income neighbourhoods compel the professional to start with the identification of problems when working with a community.

With reference to problem-based community development, the common point of departure appears to be the mapping and analysis of needs, problems

and/or impediments in the community (Weyers, 2011; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). By focusing on the problems, the professionals and the community members tend to concentrate on what is dysfunctional and/or absent in the community. The community's needs map becomes the foundation of the mental map of professionals and the collective mind map of community members about their community and determines how problems are to be addressed (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). Problems are then prioritised, and this is followed by choosing a suitable community work model and designing, developing and implementing a deficiency-oriented plan, project or programme to address the needs (Nel, 2006; Wade, 1989).

Much of social work theory and practice is constructed around what Saleebey (2009:3) refers to as "… the supposition that clients become clients because they have deficits, problems, pathologies and diseases; that they are, in some essential way, flawed or weak". In relation to Saleebey's view, Gray, and Collett van Rooyen (2002:193) argue that professionals are inclined "… to approach the helping situation with preconceived ideas that influence the way they listen to, hear and interpret the client's story and thus the way in which they design their intervention".

Generally, people's mind-sets and attitudes about life are influenced by their perceptions of the realities they are confronted with and the lens through which they see life then often determines how they address problems. Brueggemann (2006) claims that the attitude that people take towards the necessity of solving problems determines whether social change will take place. The prevailing problem-based paradigm of professionals contributes to the creation of environments where people believe that "their well-being depends on being a client" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993:2). Debilitation starts when community members begin to see themselves as 'victims' or people with 'special needs' who are unable to take responsibility and dependent on outsiders to craft their destinies (Russell and Smeaton, 2010; Mathie and Cunningham, 2002; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Problem-based community development might identify many problems like poverty and unemployment; however, these social issues, which require structural change, are too large and overwhelming to be resolved by one community (Haines, 2009). Although this approach genuinely aims to eliminate problems, there are different factors on the macro level, for example, existing policies, economic growth, job creation and education, over which professionals and community members do not have control, and these factors hinder development. Attempts to address these issues might create unreasonable expectations from professionals and community

members, which is likely to lead to disappointment and failure over time. The unsuccessful attempts by community members in conjunction with their collective negative mental map about the community contribute to the sense of hopelessness, low self-esteem, limited energy and lack of motivation often present among many community members (Green, Moore and O'Brien, 2006; Mathie and Cunningham, 2002; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Critics of problem-based community development

Firstly, continuous focus on problems implies that energy is spent on analysing, maintaining and nurturing the undesirable. Saleebey (2009:3) argues that "the metaphors and narratives that guide our thinking and acting … are sometimes negative constructs that are fatal for the future of those we help".

As Russell and Smeaton (2010:4) explain, a needs map contaminates the collective mind-set of local people, as they then start "to believe that their community is no more than a barren landscape, bereft of productive capacity or value which can only develop by bringing in outside help – this paves the way for experts who will come and fix their brokenness, fill their emptiness, and cure them of their maladies".

Secondly, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argue that problem-based community development allows professionals to be in control of the interventions. This might create perceptions among community members that only external experts or consultants can provide real help (Russell and Smeaton, 2010). They lose faith in their internal and local expertise and no longer invest in mutual support and internal problem-solving. The principle of 'valuing the local' as described by Ife and Tesoriero (2006) is not always acknowledged and honoured. This results in disempowerment and inhibits development from within the community. External dependency does not build strong communities, and when a community starts believing that its needs can only be addressed by outside professionals, it becomes needier and further removed from its capacity to deal with its own needs (Green, Moore and O'Brien, 2006; Mathie and Cunningham 2002; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Thirdly, Brueggemann (2006), Braun (2005:131-132) and Kretzmann and McKnight (1993:4-5) claim that problem-based community development tends to limit sustainability. Because the primary focus is on problems and deficiencies, it constrains the perceptions of people and organisations about the resources, capacities and capabilities, and community members become paralysed by problems, many of which require structural and not functional

change. As Haines (2009:39) claims, problem-based community development "… can point to so many problems and needs that people feel overwhelmed, and, therefore, nothing is done". This contributes to the elusiveness of sustainable development because, when they are overwhelmed, communities are likely to be reluctant to explore unknown territory, and this impedes development per se.

Fourthly, when problems and needs within a community are used as the exclusive guide to attract funding and other resources, it implies that funding and the provision of other resources is dependent on how many things are 'wrong' within a community. As Russell and Smeaton (2010:3) state, "the consequence is that there is no real incentive to reduce this deficit list for fear of a correlated reduction in funding". Therefore year after year, needs analyses are conducted to gather evidence to convince donors and prove to them that problems are worse than the previous year – hence the need for increased donor investment in the community. When problems are used as the draw card for funds, it is almost a given that donors and sponsors will be prescriptive about the conditions attached to the funding (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). This results in jeopardising community empowerment, and communities are reluctant to take ownership of their own development. This might also be perceived as denigrating and undermining local leadership within the community (Ife, 2002). It also reinforces the dependency mentality and strengthens the dependency cycle.

Fifthly, service providers often write funding proposals based on the needs and problems of the community on behalf of the community. When funding is granted it is generally managed and controlled by the service providers. Unfortunately, all the funds do not necessarily reach the community and capacity building of community members might be lacking. Therefore, some needs might be addressed and some problems might be resolved; however, the sustainability of some projects and programmes is questionable (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Lastly, as soon as needs and problems form the foundation of policy design and development, a 'maintenance and survival' strategy for marginalised groups and isolated individuals in communities is developed, and the entire community is not included in the development plan. Ife and Tesoriero (2006:145) argue that "community development must always seek to maximise participation, with the aim being for everyone in the community to be actively involved in community processes and activities and to recreate community and personal futures".

If maintenance and survival is the focus of community development, no structural change will result, and, as Kretzmann and McKnight (1993:5) claim, "… if maintenance and survival are the best we can provide, what sense can it make to invest in the future?"

The challenge is to go beyond the consideration of problems and deficiencies and make a paradigm shift to an alternative approach where the focus is on possibilities, capabilities and assets, "gradually challenging our mechanistic view of the world and moving towards a more holistic, ecological view that gives greater eminence to the role of human consciousness in constructing reality" (Braun, 2005:133).

Asset-based community development (ABCD)

The ABCD approach was designed and applied by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) at the Northwestern University Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Illinois, United States of America, as a way of counteracting the problem-based approach to community development. Their ideas for ABCD were based on observations made in the 1980s that disadvantaged communities had a high level of individual, associational and institutional assets that were either untapped or "under-tapped". These observations were critical to their thinking about how communities might change if residents are mobilised to participate in the process of change. The ABCD approach challenges communities to think about what they have and not about what they do not have. According to Morse (2011:10) it assists community members in developing "new eyes about themselves and their surroundings", and for professionals "it shifts the conversation from thinking of citizens as objects to fix, to assets to tap".

Changes brought about by a globalised world economy and the weakening role of government as a provider of solutions to community problems facilitated a shift to an ABCD approach to community development. The challenges of building the capacity of local communities to realise their rights and entitlements of citizenship and finding avenues of economic opportunity also contributed to the shift (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

The ABCD approach is founded on the essentials of the strengths perspective, which is a collaborative process between community members and the professional, allowing them to work together to determine outcomes that draw on community members' strengths and assets (Frediani, 2010; Saleebey, 2009; Oko, 2006; Gray and Collett van Rooyen, 2002).

ABCD is embedded in the rights-based approach and honours social justice. It empowers passive community members who wait for others to accord and respect their rights to become active citizens and to take responsibility and accountability for their own destinies and secure one another's rights (Mathie, 2006; Patel, 2005).

This approach is also complementary to the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). The starting point of both approaches is that people have strengths and capacities, and uncovering these is a key motivator for proactive action (Hadidy, 2008; Xiaoyun and Remenyi, 2008; Braun, 2005; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

ABCD encourages an appreciation and mobilisation of assets and strengths in communities. Assets afford each person with a sense of purpose and identity. The ABCD approach is designed to recognise the assets and capacities of all, irrespective of age, gender or class, and to show where opportunities for collaboration exist for mutual gain in communities (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). Assets are more than just resources. Awareness of assets facilitates engagement with resources.

The literature on ABCD emphasises the importance of valuing the personal/-human, physical, financial, natural, political, social, spiritual and cultural assets/capital within a community (McKnight and Block, 2010; Green and Haines, 2008; Hadidy, 2008; Ife and Tesoriero, 2006; Mathie and Cunningham, 2003; Camey, 1998; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

There is a strong emphasis on social capital in ABCD. *Social* capital refers to the networks, connectedness and relationships of trust and reciprocity on which people rely to make a living. Social capital is inherent in associations where members work together in collaborative action (Green and Haines, 2008; Ife and Tesoriero, 2006). Social capital includes philanthropy *of* community, which refers to the horizontal relation among people who practise the principles of 'Ubuntu'. Social capital is the asset that enables access to other assets (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). Real social capital includes spiritual capital, and "no other kind of capital really works without an underlying base of spiritual capital" (Zohar and Marshall, 2004:3).

Affirmation of the above-mentioned assets plays a key role in providing each person with a sense of capacity and purpose. Assets are also the basis on which people take action. According to Mathie and Cunningham (2003), the ABCD approach is designed to recognise the capabilities and potential

contributions of all, irrespective of age, gender or class, and to show where opportunities for collaboration exist for mutual gain in communities.

The intention is to surface, reinforce and apply these assets/capital and to cultivate a positive vision for the future. This does not mean that the ABCD approach denies the existence of problems or the need to urgently solve them, but problems or needs are not the starting point. The energy is focused on strengths and assets and a positive meaning is then given to "problems and needs" as opportunities for development (Libanda, 2007; Braun, 2005; Ashford and Patkar, 2001). It is a 'meaning-making' process, and it aims to assist with finding solutions for current problems based on available assets and resources, as well as past experiences of success.

Associations (formal or informal) within communities are one of the main features of the ABCD approach. Associations are voluntary organisations that operate on the basis of consent (Boyd, Hayes, Wilson and Bearsley-Smith, 2008, Green and Haines, 2008, Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). There are various types of associations, for example, informal burial societies, 'stokvels', church groups, groups formed around pressing social issues, for example, women abuse, or groups organised around sport, arts and culture. Citizen-driven development happens spontaneously when citizens organise themselves and establish associations that build powerful communities. As vehicles for collaborative effort, many associations can expand beyond their original purposes by taking on different roles in linking with public and private sector institutions to contribute to the development process (Cunningham, 2008; Hadidy, 2008; Mathie, 2006; Mathie and Cunningham, 2003).

ABCD is aimed to stimulate an authentic, participatory, community-driven, self-mobilised process of development. Mathie and Cunningham (2003:3) argue that the poor are often allowed to participate in development, but only in so far as they do not attempt to change the rules of the game "… it is like riding a top-down vehicle of development whose wheels are greased with a vocabulary of bottom-up discourse". Different authors proposed different but complementary typologies of participation, which clearly explains the contested nature of the concept, its complexity and different meanings it can have (Chikadzi and Pretorius, 2011; Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2009; Ife and Tesoriero, 2006; Kumar, 2002; Arnstein 1969). Differences in terms of power are attached to the different types of participation. The type of participation suggested by the ABCD approach is authentic, where the community participates in decision-making and self-mobilisation. People in communities can organise and drive development processes themselves.

There is a significant shift from the opinions and solutions of the outsider to the collaboration and wisdom of those most involved, namely the citizens. The focus is the journey away from bureaucracy and hierarchy towards self-organising and authentic participation. This approach requires a commitment from professionals to "step back" and allow the community to lead. It compels professionals to act as facilitators and intermediaries rather than "drivers" of the community development process. Their focus is on partnering with various organisations using methods and techniques of participatory action research (PAR) with the purpose of strengthening and linking community assets (Schenck et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2008; Brown, 2007).

The logical consequence of focusing on the assets, capacities and capabilities in communities is to encourage community members to fulfill pro-active roles as citizens and replace the passive, dependent roles community members often play when practising community development. Citizens and not government or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), are initiating, designing and implementing the development process. Emmet (2000:512) is of the opinion that outside resources can be more effectively utilised "if the community has already mobilised its own resources and defined the agenda for the utilisation of external resources". Therefore, ABCD is an endogenous and not an exogenous process.

The ABCD is also a methodology and process for identifying and mobilising community assets for change (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). The process usually begins with a period of building relationships with community members with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised groups. Identifying the network of existing associations and local groups within the community is an important part of the process.

The premise behind the methodology is that communities that recognise their assets and opportunities are more likely to be motivated to take the initiative to mobilise and strengthen their asset base. Guided by this premise, the community in partnership with the professional has to decide which combination of tools and methods, for example, appreciative inquiry techniques, inventory and asset-mapping exercises, are appropriate in the identification and mobilisation of community assets. Community members share stories of successful endeavours, which encourage them to focus on successes achieved. These stories are analysed collectively, themes are identified and inventories and maps of assets are developed.

The community should also identify and include local organisations, as part of the asset maps. Ideally the process results in the formation of a community

structure that can sustain the community-driven process (Ennis and West, 2010; Boyd et al., 2008, Emmett, 2000).

From the above description of ABCD the four main principles are that change must come from within the community, that development must build upon the capacities and assets that exist within the community, that change should be relationship-driven and that change should be oriented towards sustainable community growth (Ennis and West, 2010; Ashford and Patkar, 2001; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Critics of ABCD

It seems if there are three major limitations of ABCD. Firstly, the approach over-emphasises the contributions of community members and associations in terms of development. This could blind professionals to the role and responsibilities of external agencies, for example, government in the development of communities (Emmett, 2000).

Secondly, while ABCD has some scope for creating dialogue with the macro-level structures that impact communities, for example, government, municipality and businesses, the approach has been criticised because it tends to ignore issues related to power and oppression (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003). This approach is also based on the premise that communities must learn to survive within Western societies that are based on neo-liberal models instead of challenging, for example, the economic systems (Ennis and West, 2010). For professionals and, most importantly, the communities they serve, the ideological foundations of the unjust macro issues might be difficult to accept.

Lastly, a major criticism of ABCD is that descriptive reports primarily written by the agency that undertook the project mainly focus on reporting about the capacity building of community members and associations (internal-looking) without reporting on structural changes (external-looking) brought about by the approach (Ennis and West, 2010).

SUMMARISING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ASSET-BASED AND PROBLEM-BASED APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The explanations of the two approaches to community development allow the differences to emerge clearly. The main difference lies in which lens you

choose to view the community: is the focus on problems or assets? The main differences of the two approaches are summarised below.

Firstly, when practising the ABCD approach to community development, concentration on *strengths, assets, capabilities, capacities and opportunities* is the focus, for example, asset inventories and mapping are the techniques used during the process (Green and Haines, 2008; Wilkinson-Maposa, 2008). In applying the problem-based approach to community development, the emphasis is on the *problems, needs, weaknesses and deficiencies*, for example, needs assessments, problem identification and analysis are deliberated (Mathie and Cunningham, 2003; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Secondly, recognising and utilising basic community wisdom and problem-solving capacities to address the community's problems demonstrate a *bottom-up approach*. In contrast, problem assessments are often based on preconceived ideas and 'instructions' by 'experts' on behalf of communities. Prescribed programmes for communities are developed which results in dependence on experts who influence and control the process of development. This shows *top-down action* (Brown, 2007; Mathie and Cunningham, 2003; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Thirdly, the ABCD approach assumes that even the poorest communities have resources, strengths, assets and opportunities that can be the starting point for interventions. The result is an *inside-out process* where endogenous resources are acknowledged and utilised. Associations and informal groups in communities are the first groups to engage with when ABCD is applied. When the focus is on weaknesses, deficiencies and problems, community members see themselves as people with no capabilities who have 'to be saved' by experts from outside. Using this as a starting point for community development is an *outside-in process* that utilises exogenous resources (McKnight and Block, 2010; Wilkinson-Maposa, 2008; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Fourthly, *philanthropy of community* (known as 'Ubuntu') is the 'horizontal' relationship of help among and between people that enhances cohesion and care. *Philanthropy for the community* is the more vertical transfer from the 'haves' to the 'have nots'. It ignores helping existing community systems and can be destructive by creating unhealthy conflict and competition (Schenck et al., 2010).

Fifthly, another distinguishing feature of ABCD is its emphasis on the active role of community members as *productive citizens*. According to McKnight and Block (2010), one of the ways in which individuals act as citizens is by taking responsibility for initiating community-building activities, rather than leaving this function to government and other agencies. This process of citizen-driven development happens spontaneously when citizens form informal or formal associations and take ownership of community development activities. They then become *producers taking ownership for their own destiny*. On the other hand, when applying problem-based approaches only, community members become *clients and consumers of services*, who are dependent on service delivery by government and other agencies. They then see themselves as people with special needs that should be met by experts from outside the community (McKnight and Block, 2010; Green and Haines, 2008; Hadidy, 2008; Wilkinson-Maposa, 2008; Libanda, 2007).

Lastly, the asset-based approach facilitates *collaboration and partnerships* between different stakeholders in the community and allows for empowerment to take place, whereas the problem-based approach requires community members to fulfill the role of *recipients* and enforces dependence (Schenck et al., 2010; Braun, 2005; Ife, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is apparent that these two approaches view communities through different lenses. When the asset-based approach is practised, the focus is on the capital and assets within the community. However, the realities of poverty, limited access to resources and unemployment should not be ignored. The difference lies in the mind-set and attitude with which the professional approaches community development. When communities are aware of their assets and encouraged to mobilise them, how to seize opportunities for genuine community- and citizen-driven development is better understood.

It is evident from this article that the ABCD approach is founded on four basic principles. Firstly, it is internally focused on what is present in the community and builds on existing capacity and assets. The strong internal focus is intended to stress the investment, creativity, hope and control of citizens in the community. Secondly, it is relationship-driven, meaning that community development professionals need to constantly facilitate the building and rebuilding of relationships between and among local citizens, associations and institutions. Thirdly, it acknowledges, respects and embraces

community-rooted traditions. Lastly, it aims to promote sustainable growth in a community.

The traditional approach concentrates on and prioritises problems in communities. Conducting need and problem analyses, or compiling need and problem maps, instils feelings of despair, inadequacy and hopelessness in community members. This approach enforces a dependence on outside institutions and experts for solutions to problems. The deficiency-oriented mind-set establishes powerlessness in the community. What is important is that community development professionals should reflect on why very few community development interventions are sustainable. Given the devastating and deeply rooted consequences of apartheid, in order to create sustainable development the challenge for professionals in community development is to adopt an endogenous process, facilitate participation of all stakeholders (an inclusive process that is not a simple task) and ensure that community leadership resides where it belongs.

REFERENCES

Ashford, G. and Patkar, S. (2001). *The Positive Path. Using Appreciative Inquiry in Rural Indian Communities* Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Arnstein, S. (1969). "A Ladder of Community Participation" *American Institute of Planners Journal* 35:216-224.

Block, P. (2009). *Community, the Structure of Belonging* United States: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Booy, D., Sena, O. and Arusha, S. (2000). "Capacity Building using the Appreciative Inquiry Approach: The experience of World Vision Tanzania" *Global Social Innovations Journal of the GEM Initiative* 3:4-11.

Boyd, C.P., Hayes, L., Wilson, R.L. and Bearsley-Smith, C. (2008). "Harnessing the Social Capital of Rural Communities for Youth Mental Health: An Asset-based Community Development Framework" *Australian Journal of Rural Health* 16:189-193.

Brueggemann, W.G. (2006). *The Practice of Macro Social Work* Belmont: Brooks/Cole, Third Edition.

Braun, A.R. (2005). "Beyond the Problem-solving Approach to Sustainable Rural Development" in Gonsalves, J., Becker, T., Braun, A., Campilan, D., De Chaves, H., Rivaca-Caminade, J. and Vernooy, R. (Eds). *Participatory Research and Development for Sustainable Agricultural and Natural Resource Management, a Sourcebook Volume 1: Understanding Participatory Research and Development.* Canada: International Potato Center-Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development and International Development Research Centre, 129-135.

Brown, M.J. (2007). *Building Powerful Community Organizations: A Personal Guide to Creating Groups that can Solve Problems and Change the World* New York: Long Haul Press.

Burkey, S. (1993). *People Development* Johannesburg: Zed Books.

Camey, D. (1998). (Ed). *Sustainable Rrural Livelihoods: What Contribution can we Make*? London: DFID.

Chikadzi, V. and Pretorius, E. (2011). "Community Participation in Income-generating Projects: An Evaluative Case Study" *Social Work Practitioner-Researcher* 23(1):39-56.

Chile, L.M and Simpson, G. (2004). "Spirituality and Community Development: Exploring the Link between the Individual and the Collective" *Community Development Journal* 39(4):318-331.

Compton, B.R., Galaway, B and Cournoyer, B.R. (2005). *Social Work Processes Belmont:* Thomson Brooks/Cole, Seventh Edition.

Cunningham, G. (2008). "Stimulating Asset based and Community driven Development: Lessons from Five Communities in Ethiopia" in Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. *From Clients to Citizens, Communities Changing the Course of their Own Development* Warwichshire: Practical Action.

Davids, I., Theron, F. and Maphunye, K.J. (2009). (Eds.). *Participatory Development in South Africa: A Development Management Perspective* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, Second Edition.

Emmett, T. (2000). "Beyond Community Participation? Alternative Routes to Civil Engagement and Development in South Africa" *Development Southern Africa* 17(4):501-518.

Ennis, G. and West, D. (2010). "Exploring the Potential of Social Network Analysis in Asset-based Community Development Practice and Research" *Australian Social Work* 63(4):404-417.

Frediani, A.A. (2010). "Sen's Capability Approach as a Framework to the Practice of Development" *Development in Practice* 20(2):173-187.

Gilchrist, A. (2004). *The Well-connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development* Bristol: Policy Press.

Gray, M. and Collett van Rooyen, C.A.J. (2002). "The Strengths Perspective in Social Work: Lessons from Practice" *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 38(3):193-201.

Green, G.P. and Haines, A. (2008). *Asset Building and Community Development* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Second Edition.

Green, M., Moore, H. and O'Brien, J. (2006). *When People Care Enough to Act* Toronto: Inclusion Press.

Hadidy, W.E. (2008). "Possibilities for Income-deprived but Capability-rich Communities in Egypt" in Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. *From Clients to Citizens, Communities Changing the Course of their Own Development* Warwichshire: Practical Action.

Haines, A. (2009). "Asset-based Community Development" in Phillips, R. and Pittman R.H. *An Introduction to Community Development* London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Ife, J. (2002). *Community Development. Community-based Alternatives in an Age of Globalization* Australia: Pearson Education, Second Edition.

Ife, J. and Tesoriero, F. (2006). *Community Development, Community-based Alternatives in an Age of Globalization* Australia: Pearson Education, Third Edition.

Kretzmann, J.P. and McKnight, J.L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out. A Path Towards Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* Illinois: ACTA Publications.

Kumar, S. (2002). *Methods for Community Participation: A Complete Guide for Practitioners* London: ITGD Publishing.

Libanda, B.M. (2007). *Best Practices on Community Visioning* Windhoek: Printech.

Mathie, A. (2006). *Does ABCD Deliver on Social Justice?* Panel Discussion for the International Association of Community Development CIVICUS Conference, Glasgow June.

Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. (2002). "From Clients to Citizens: Asset-based Community Development as a Strategy for Community driven Development*",* http://www.coady.stfx.ca/resources/publications/publications_occasional_citizens.html. (Accessed on 03/02/2010).

Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. (2003). "From Clients to Citizens: Asset-based Community Development as a Strategy for Community driven Development" *Development in Practice* 13(5):474-486.

Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. (2008). *From Clients to Citizens, Communities Changing the Course of their Own Development* Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing.

McKnight, J.L. (1995). *The Careless Society: Community and its Couterfeits* New York: Basic Books.

McKnight, J. and Block, P. (2010). *The Abundant Community* Illinois: Berrett: Koehler Publishers.

Morse, S. (2011). "Communities Revisited: The Best Ideas of the Last Hundred Years", Wiley Periodicals, Inc. Published online in Wiley Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com) National Civic review. DOI:10.1002/ncr.20042. Spring 2011. (Accessed 09/01/2012).

Nel, J.S.B. (2006). "The Application of a Large Group Intervention Method based on the Asset-based Approach: A Repositioning of Training in Community Development" *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 42(3/4):234-250.

Oko, J. (2006). "Evaluating Alternative Approaches to Social Work: A Critical Review of the Strengths Perspective" *Families in Society* 87(4):601-611.

Patel, L. (2005). *Social Welfare and Social Development in South Africa* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Phillips, R. and Pittman, R.H. (2009). "A Framework for Community and Economic Development" in Phillips, R. and Pittman R.H. *An Introduction to Community Development* London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Russell, C. and Smeaton, T. (2010). *From Needs to Assets: Charting a Sustainable Path towards Development in Sub-Saharan African Countries* Asset Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.

Saleebey, D. (2009). *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc, Fifth Edition.

Schenck, R. Nel, H. and Louw, H. (2010). *Introduction to Participatory Community Practice* Pretoria: UNISA Press.

Stepney, P. and Popple, K. (2008). *Social Work and Community: A Critical Context for Practice* New York: Palgrave, Macmillan.

Wade, J. (1989). "Felt Needs and Anticipatory Needs: Reformulation of a Basic Community Development Principle" *Journal of the Community Development Society* 2(1):116-123.

Weyers, M.L. (2011). *The Theory and Practice of Community Work: A South African Perspective* Potchefstroom: Keurkopie, Second Edition.

White Paper for Social Welfare, Notice 1108 of 1997. Government Gazette, number 18166, Volume 386: Pretoria: Government Printer.

Wilkinson-Maposa, S. (2008). "Jansenville Development Forum: Linking Community and Government in the Rural Landscape of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa" in Mathie, A. and Cunningham, G. *From Clients to Citizens, Communities Changing the Course of their own Development* Warwichshire: Practical Action.

Xiaoyun, L. and Remenyi, J. (2008). "Making Poverty Mapping and Monitoring Participatory" in *Development in practice* 18(4/5):559-610.

Zohar, D. and Marshall, I. (2004). *Spiritual Capital - Wealth We Can Live By* San Francisco: Berrett-Khoeler Publishers.