The Developmental Approach: Demonstration Programs in the Brotherhood of St Laurence

Author:

Benn, Concetta

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Foreword

Among the several items listed in the terms of reference of the Social
Welfare Research Centre is : "to arrange seminars and conferences to
foster understanding of and to elucidate issues in the field of social
welfare". Among the main areas of special focus listed in those terms
of reference is "alternative methods of providing and administering
social welfare services". As part of its third seminar series, the
Centre invited Concetta Benn, Associate Director of the Brotherhood of
St. Laurence*, to present a seminar on some of the alternative methods
developed by the Brotherhood in its social development programs. In view
of the innovative nature of the Brotherhood's programs and in view of the
wide interest shown in its approach the S.W.R.C. has decided to publish
the paper in its Reports and Proceedings series.

The paper argues that theorists and practitioners in social welfare operate
in different worlds, and that rarely are the lessons from innovative
practice fed into theory. The Brotherhood has initiated a number of projects
which attempt primarily to develop human rather than material resources.
It is argued that agencies can, by developmental and participatory means,
enable consumers to plan and direct their lives with a minimum of bureau-
cratic or professional intervention.

This approach was developed in the Brotherhood's Family Centre Project and
is now being tested in three different demonstration projects. The paper
describes and analyses these three projects within the context of the
developmental approach to social well-being. The projects are a community
program for older and retired people; a job creation program for disadvant-
aged unemployed people; and a program providing long-term accommodation for
homeless young unemployed people. As demonstration projects they have both
strengths and weaknesses, and there are obviously many valuable lessons to
be learned from these projects and the developmental approach.

Adam Graycar
Director
Social Welfare Research Centre.

*Brotherhood of St. Laurence
67 Brunswick Street
FITZROY   VIC   3065
Telephone (03) 419.7055

Introduction

In my opinion, social science theory which is not derived from
practice is weak and ineffectual. Indeed, early social work
theory was developed in exactly this way, and it is a tragedy
that few Australian practitioners carry on this early tradition.
In the profession, there appears to be little understanding of
the value of praxis, and so it is given little priority. Conse-
quently, many brilliant social inventions, created by busy prac-
titioners in the pursuit of the helping process, are not recorded,
instead they are continually recreated, and the opportunity to de-
velop a uniquely Australian theory of social work intervention is
lost. As Gramsci pointed out:

> ... one can construct, on a specific practice, a theory
> which, by co-inciding and identifying itself with the
> decisive elements of the practice, can accelerate the
> historical process that is going on, rendering practice
> more homogeneous, more coherent, more efficient in all
> its elements ...[1]

The importance of developing theory out of practice and refining
practice from the theory so developed has been observed in social
science literature. At least one well-known text on social change[2]
points out to practitioners that they have a professional obliga-
tion to evaluate their inventions, to test them in varying settings,
and then to communicate them to their colleagues.

In line with these thoughts, the developmental approach is presen-
ted as a new form of social work intervention developed out of re-
cent practice at the Brotherhood of St Laurence. The approach was
developed in the Family Centre Project during 1972-75 and is now
being tested in three different demonstration projects. The de-
velopmental approach seeks to achieve social change rather than

systems maintenance because it does not meet needs according to pre-
vailing values and institutions, but challenges significant values
in society.

The developmental approach is directed towards that type of social
change which allows 'the common man' more control over his own life
and environment. In view of the fact that "men are embedded in
social systems through which they strive to meet needs and attain
ideal values",[3] the nature/nurture debate becomes relevant. Are the
sources of social change found in the social system or in man him-
self? Romanyshyn reminds us that:

> One may easily fall into the trap of regarding man only as
> a social product conditioned by society and reacting to
> change, rather than seeing man as creating social order,
> responding to it, disrupting it, and inventing modes of
> relationship to it in order to enact a new vision of human
> possibilities.[4]

The developmental approach is directed towards changing the external
structures and institutions of society in such a way that man does
have more opportunity to mould them to his own needs. Thus, "more
control over his environment for the common man" is a short-hand way
of expressing a value system which is the foundation stone of a par-
ticular ideology.

It is an ideology "deeply committed to each person's well-being", an
ideology which recognises "that most people will be unable to achieve
well-being in this society unless, and until, there are radical chan-
ges in society".[5] In modern capitalist society, it is apparent that
the structures of society often prevent individuals, groups, or com-
munities from achieving their maximum potential, and increasing at-
tention has been given to changing the structures which inhibit human
growth. To illustrate this point, Galper uses the example of the way
in which the social work commitment to maximising individual choices
is limited in a society in which the choices themselves are limited.

Whilst social change can be seen to be the objective of most modern
social work and welfare practice, the exact direction and the charac-
teristics of that change are not always explicit. Close examination
of some of the most recent social welfare initiatives reveals, that
despite their many differences, the one common factor is that they
are all directed towards giving individuals greater power or control
over the decisions which affect their lives. Such new initiatives
include:

* consumer participation in the determination and delivery of
  human services;

* the encouragement of self-help groups;

* the deprofessionalization of social work and the transfer-
  ence of specific skills to indigenous workers;

* the regionalization of service delivery;

* support for initiatives which identify local needs and at-
  tempt to fulfill those needs by local solutions;

* deinstitutionalization, more personalized, alternative
  living and care arrangements are becoming increasingly
  available, large institutions have been challenged as
  inhumane, ineffective and costly;

* increasing the accessibility, availability, and quality of
  services to ensure greater care. Associated with equity
  of care is personal choice, all systems are increasingly
  supporting the right of a person to choose the service he
  will use.

The above ideology and its attendant value system was the framework within which the developmental approach was germinated. The developmental approach is basically very simple. It gives high priority to the development of human rather than material resources and its modus operandi is co-operation rather than competition. Its outcome is to liberate people from the selfishness and acquisitiveness imposed on them by a materialistic society and to enable them to care about each other and to share their resources, particularly their skills.

The Origin of the Developmental Approach

As mentioned previously, the developmental approach was first conceptualised in an anti-poverty program, the Family Centre Project, which was a radical and innovative challenge to conventional social work practice with disadvantaged families. It was an experimental program which provided facilities and staff to enable sixty poor families to improve their own social and economic condition through a participatory developmental program. Its basic theme was that the most critical problem faced by the poor was their chronic lack of financial and material resources and, therefore, lack of opportunities to participate on equal terms with other groups in society.

Therefore, the Project was organised around the concept of the provision of resources and opportunities of various kinds to the families which they lacked. The most important of these resources was a systematic scheme of income supplementation which guaranteed every family a regular and stable income as a prerequisite for development for a three-year period.

The objective of the program was to demonstrate that changes in the social and economic conditions of the families was a precondition to changes in their family and societal relationships, and that it was at such changes that social work intervention should be directed.

The aim was to help the families view themselves as active partici-
pants of society, capable of changing themselves and the environment
in which they lived. Within the Centre, the families chose and con-
trolled their own activities and, in so doing, learnt the processes
and methods of decision making and change.

This approach was clearly distinct from the remedial approach of tra-
ditional social work, the latter being part of a social regulatory
process seeking to provide treatment and rehabilitative services to
the poor in order to 'cure' them of their inadequacies and personal
defects so that they would adapt better to the status quo.

Characteristics of the Developmental Approach

Throughout the Project, the emphasis was on the redistribution of re-
sources and power within the program, based on the assumption that
such changes were necessary in society if poverty was to be eradica-
ted. Before long, the experience of the Project showed that power
over decision making was not sufficient, that other types of power
were required if poor people were to change the social structures
around them. Thus, from practice and reflection about the strategies
and structures which produced the most equitable distribution of re-
sources and power in the project, a four-pronged concept of power was
developed.

The four types of power are closely related, dependent upon each other
and often hard to differentiate, they are:

* power over resources;
* power over relationships;
* power over information;
* power over decision making.

The techniques used to obtain these powers were: participation strate-
gies, self-help mechanisms and deprofessionalisation.

In addition, the following characteristics were essential to the approach:

* that it was directed towards change in society's institutions, rather than change in individuals;

* that it was resource-oriented, rather than problem-oriented;

* that it led to self-actualisation rather than to stigmatisation of the individual;

* that it was a means of social change and not a means of social control;

* that life choices were made freely by participation, and not imposed by professionals;

* that professional workers were accountable to consumers and not to their peers;

* that decisions were made by consumers;

* that individuals determined their own life-styles rather than their life-styles being decided by discriminatory and discretionary provisions.

It was perhaps the last characteristic of the developmental approach which was the most significant in the Family Centre Project and which most differentiated the Project from traditional social work. An unexpected supporter of this view was Mao Tse-tung, who said:

... All work done for the masses must start from their needs
and not from the desire of any individual, however well-inten-
tioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a
certain change, but subjectively they are not yet conscious
of their needs, not yet willing or determined to make the
change ... There are two principles here; one is the actual
needs of the masses rather than what we fancy they need, and
the other is the wishes of the masses, who must make up their
own minds instead of our making up their minds for them.[6]

Arising logically from the principles of the developmental approach
was a concern for social justice and social action. Thus, poverty was
seen as a phenomenon which reflected social structures which must be
changed and inequalities which must be rectified, not a phenomenon
which reflected a deviant group of people who were abnormal and must
be cured.

These then were the elements of the developmental approach - a prac-
tice-derived approach to an important social issue - poverty. Systems
theory provides the theoretical underpinning of the developmental ap-
proach and a discussion about its theoretical input can be found in a
book about to be published by P.I.T. Press.[7]

Application of the Developmental Approach

The developmental approach has now been refined and supplies the ob-
jectives and underlying assumptions for three new Brotherhood demon-
stration programs involving retired, unemployed, and young persons.
These programs are:

* SPAN: a community program for older and retired people.

* The Neighbourhood Employment Development Program (NEDP):
  a job creation program for disadvantaged, unemployed
  people.

* The Boarding House: a program providing long-term accom-
  modation for homeless, young, unemployed people.

These three programs are in different stages of development and none of them have completed their demonstration periods. SPAN is almost at the end of a three-year demonstration period, NEDP is half-way through a two-year demonstration period, and the Boarding House has just started a three-year demonstration period. Due to the different stages of development, it is difficult to discuss outcomes of the developmental approach in these different settings. It is, however, possible to examine the proposals of each program knowing that the proposal, through the device of 'management by objectives' becomes the 'bible' of the program and that the implementation of the program will, therefore, be larded with the underlying assumptions and objectives of the developmental approach.

SPAN: A Community Program for Older and Retired People

Origin of Program

SPAN is not an acronym, the symbol of a bridge is used for the program because it is believed that older people are in a unique position to cross age, sex and class barriers. The program arose out of analysis of the social and public services which are currently available for older persons in our community, and the way in which the developmental approach could be applied to this area of service delivery. This analysis soon made it clear that most traditional services for older people encouraged dependency and reinforced socialisation practices making retired persons feel useless and hopeless.

Comparison of Remedial and Developmental Approaches to Ageing

The idea that as soon as a person retires from work he needs care and protection, as repayment for his years of contribution to society through work, is a remedial approach to the aged. It attempts to change the individual overnight into something he is not; it is problem oriented; it stigmatises the aged person; it forces him out of the mainstream of society and therefore discriminates against him; it implies that other people will make his decisions for him.

A developmental approach to ageing acknowledges the expertise and skills accumulated by any person who has lived for many decades, and the capacity of older people to transfer those skills to anyone in society who wishes to learn them. A developmental approach does not discriminate against older people, but includes them in the mainstream of society by valuing their contributions, by acknowledging their potential for growth, and the possible contributions they will make in the future. Confining participation of the aged to remedial services which encourage dependency is a less than subtle way of informing the aged that they are powerless, that they have no right to choose their own lifestyle, or to have their views heard in order to influence community decisions.

The remedial approach results in the disorganisation and segregation of the aged. Service arrangements based on the remedial approach ensure that the aged keep their views to themselves, and stay as far out of sight as possible. On the other hand, the developmental approach recognises that the aged are not inherently conservative, are capable of organising themselves, and that ordinary aged people are as capable of contributing to society as a Winston Churchill or a Margaret Mead. This is not to say that support services are not required for those elderly people who do have diminished capacities, or are psychologically defeated by society's attitude to them, and are unable to grasp the opportunities to develop which may be offered.

Program Development

One of the major aspects of the program is a 'skills sharing' idea, whereby older people use their skills and abilities in a wide variety of ways. For example, a reading program where older people help students from the local technical school who have difficulty reading; a home handyman service which involves a group of retired men in doing small odd jobs for frail local residents; a craft group of older

women who teach young mothers forgotten skills, like tapestry and crochet; an active transport committee which is lobbying for improved public transport in the area.

Some other concerns of the project are: to find part-time work for older people who are seeking it; to take action about the standard of all local services for local older people; to co-operate with local businesses and industries in retirement preparation courses for their employees.

The Project has now almost completed its experimental term and is following much the same pattern of development as the Family Centre Project. Consumers of the Project are beginning to be involved in its decision making and day-to-day operation, and skill-transferring activities form a major part of the work of the consumers.

Differential Application of the Developmental Approach

Perhaps the most important difference between the application of the approach in the Family Centre and in SPAN is that the approach was initially developed as a casework strategy to 'help' deprived families in the Family Centre, but applied in SPAN as a community work strategy. The best indicator of this difference lies in the fact that the 60 families in the Family Centre were chosen by criteria developed by caseworkers, whereas the SPAN consumers are self-selected.

Another major difference lies in the application of the four power concept. This concept is implicit rather than explicit in the project and does not form part of the rhetoric of the consumers, as it did in the Family Centre Project. The SPAN Co-ordinator, Jean Hamilton-Smith, believes this difference is caused by the nature of the change to be achieved. As she wryly points out, "power can eliminate poverty, it cannot eliminate ageing, but merely change attitudes to it".

The third, and probably most significant difference lies in the techniques used to achieve power for the consumers. The effects of deprofessionalisation, which was the technique that received the most emphasis in the Family Centre Project, have been felt by all welfare workers in Australia. The practice in SPAN has shown that one small part of this technique, 'skill transference', has empowered SPAN consumers to such an extent that it should be regarded as a technique in its own right.

The Co-ordinator of SPAN has suggested that deprofessionalisation is not so important in SPAN because the relationship between workers and consumers has always been more equal and because the project meets the secondary, and not the primary, needs of its consumers.

These comments suggest that there may be an important relationship between needs, the four types of power and the techniques used to achieve them. Speculation prompts the idea that techniques may vary with the type of power required to fill the most pressing needs.

Neighbourhood Employment Development Program (NEDP): A Job Creation Program for Unemployed, Disadvantaged People

Origin of Program, Comparison of Remedial and Developmental Approaches to Unemployment

The Neighbourhood Employment Development Program is the second new program based on the developmental approach. It is a job creation program arising out of the Brotherhood's concern about unemployment, a concern which has been expressed in research and policy documents since 1972.

The Brotherhood believes that unemployment is the most important social issue facing Australia to-day and that it is quite disastrous that the Federal Government is approaching the issue with re-

medial social policies - for example, the work test for unemployment benefit was made more stringent when the unemployment rate rose; 'dole-bludger' campaigns were mounted which had disastrous social results, such as parents ejecting children from their own homes; manpower programs were devised which prepared people for non-existent jobs.

The developmental approach to unemployment requires a manpower planning policy which ensures satisfying jobs for all unemployed people even if it means job creation and increased public expenditure. The need for such an approach to unemployment is reinforced by an understanding of the social and psychological meaning of work to all people, but particularly young people. Despite the prediction of the futurologists that work will be a rare activity in the coming decades, currently it is central to most people's lives. Unemployment affects a person's sense of social worth, his identity, his social relations and the place he takes in society.

This demonstration program will not, of course, solve Australia's unemployment problem and it does not seek to do so. It merely sets out to show that something can be done about unemployment if enough resources are allocated. It also sets out to reverse the feeling of apathy and helplessness people feel when thinking about unemployment to a feeling of positive belief that something can be done about it by local people at a local level.

The NEDP has an interesting history. It originated from the Victorian State Government's concern about youth unemployment. This concern resulted in the Brotherhood being commissioned by the Victorian Department of Social Welfare (now known as the Department of Community Welfare Service) to carry out a study of Australian Manpower Schemes. The study was carried out in June, 1978, and resulted in a report entitled, 'Disadvantaged Workers and Employment: Policies, Programs and Jobs'.

One of the results of this study, which was published in February, 1979, was a Brotherhood proposal for a pilot project in job creation, entitled a Local Employment Program. This proposal was subheaded, 'A Proposal for a Pilot Project Based on a Developmental Program for the Unemployed Disadvantaged Worker' and leant heavily on the developmental approach emphasizing particularly that unemployment was not the 'fault' of individuals, but a function of economic, social and political forces, and that decentralized decision making was a prerequisite for the success of the program. The following paragraph encapsulates the developmental approach as it was used in this proposal:

> In contrast, a developmental approach to unemployment
> focuses on the actual and potential experience, know-
> ledge and skills of the unemployed. It assumes and
> focuses on potential for growth. It encourages real,
> as opposed to token, participation in programs. It
> recognises that unemployed people are as capable of
> contributing to society as employed people. In brief,
> the developmental approach recognises that the only
> real way in which people can contribute to society is
> through socially useful and personally satisfying jobs.

Program Development

The Local Employment Program was eventually accepted for funding by the Victorian Employment Committee, and after some adaption, introduced as the NEDP under the joint management of the Brotherhood and the Department of Employment & Training. The program was funded initially for a two-year period and is now operating in three Melbourne metropolitan localities - Williamstown, Box Hill and Frankston. It is based on a series of assumptions which make up a developmental approach to unemployment. These assumptions are:

* Everyone who is able and willing to work has the right
  to work.

* Given the chance to obtain employment which is per-
  sonally satisfying and challenging, most people want
  to work.

* All people have the potential for growth, including
  the unemployed.

* Society cannot afford to waste the actual or potential
  skills of the unemployed.

* The inability to obtain work is a function of economic,
  social and political forces in a dynamic and changing
  society and is not the fault of the individual.

Two of these pilot job creation programs began in December, 1979, and
the third in March, 1981. Project officers have been appointed and
community advisory committees elected in each locality. In summary,
the project tasks are to create new jobs, particularly in the human
services, for unemployed, disadvantaged workers in local communities;
to select and financially support workers in these new jobs whilst
being trained; to ensure that the new jobs are sustained after the
training period. The original target for each project was to create
and sustain 40 new jobs in one year, but the first year of operation
has proved that this target was over-ambitious.

Differential Application of the Developmental Approach

Although it is too early in the life of this Project to fully examine
the way in which the approach has been applied, the outcome can be pre-
dicted to a certain extent at this time. Unfortunately, the modifica-

tions which the Victorian Government insisted upon before it would fund the project have already 'diluted' the approach. These modifications included: joint management of the Project, one instead of four staff members in each locality, the creation of jobs in private as well as public sector, and in secondary as well as tertiary industries.

The inclusion of small business and private enterprise as avenues for job creation diminished the role of the project in equalizing job opportunities for disadvantaged workers, the radical reduction of staff diminished the project's self-actualisation potential and dispensed with opportunities for the unemployed to participate in decision making and the control of the project, and the joint management committee increased the centralisation of decision making.[8]

The Boarding House: A Program for Homeless, Unemployed Young People

Origin of the Program

Young homeless people are not a new group in Australian society; both public and private welfare organisations have been attempting to meet their needs for many decades. Indeed, the Brotherhood's first welfare service was a hostel for homeless boys established in Fitzroy in 1934. Increased attention has been drawn to this group in recent years because it appears to have grown dramatically. This growth is often attributed to the growth of youth unemployment - a trend which started well before the current economic recession. While there is some evidence for the relationship between the growth in the homeless youth group and the increased rate of unemployment,[9] the exact nature of that relationship is not known. It is possible that an equally important cause for the growth of the homeless youth group is the increasing rate of family break-up. Whatever the exact

relationship, it is clear that unemployment has exacerbated, and made more visible, the problem of homelessness amongst young people.

Youth unemployment is a world-wide problem which is deemed to have many causes. Explanations for youth unemployment are strongly influenced by the ideological position of the person considering the problem. Suggested causes range from the laziness or apathy of young people (blaming the victim) through the post-war baby boom (a demographic factor) to the weak, competitive position of young people on the labour market (a structural factor). Whatever the cause of the problem, the reality is that the younger the person competing in the labour market, the higher the likelihood of unemployment. In November, 1980, the unemployment rate for the 15-19 age group looking for full-time work was 16.8%, more than three times the national average for the population as a whole.

The increase in the numbers of homeless young people makes it difficult for the problem to remain hidden, and the proliferation of the unemployment industry has ensured that it has become very visible. When welfare workers report that young people are sleeping in the laundries of Housing Commission estates, or in Brotherhood collection bins because they have no other shelter, then the problem cannot be ignored.

To-day, most young people who wish to enter the workforce are disadvantaged. The increase in the duration of the unemployment of young people emphasises this fact - nearly half the people aged 15-19 years who were unemployed in July, 1980, had been so for more than 26 weeks. However, it is also true that some young people are more disadvantaged than others, and that lack of education and vocational skills, sex, area of residence, and a migrant background increase their disadvantaged status.[10]

It was in this context that the Brotherhood accepted an offer from the Melbourne Diocese of the Anglican Church in July, 1980, to undertake a joint initiative focusing on accommodation for unemployed, homeless, young people. A proposal was developed for a house which would accommodate six young disadvantaged people where they could learn simple survival skills for independent living.

Application of the Developmental Approach to the Objectives of the Proposal

One of the lessons which has been learnt from the demonstration projects which use the developmental approach, viz. the Family Centre Project, SPAN and the Neighbourhood Employment Development Project, is that a multiplicity of goals is a deterrent to successful outcomes in an experimental program. The objectives, or goals of a program must be simple, clearly expressed, and few in number. Martin Rein has expressed this idea in the following way:

> A proliferation of goals in a program usually reflects
> low confidence in major achievements. Multiplicity and
> alteration of goals often substitutes for effectiveness
> of action.[11]

With Martin Rein's comments and the Brotherhood experience in mind, the following objectives were devised for a developmental program for homeless youth:

1. To provide an environment for disadvantaged, homeless young people in which they can master the social, practical and relationship skills necessary for independent living.

2. To ensure that young disadvantaged people can remain in this enabling environment until they choose to test newly acquired independent living skills in the community.

3. To test the techniques of skill transference, mutual support, self-help and participation in decision making as the means of developing independent living skills.

4. To improve the access of disadvantaged unemployed young
   people to the community's permanent accommodation resour-
   ces by developing a network of accommodation alternatives,
   and providing information and funds to enable their utili-
   zation.

5. To help young people develop and/or strengthen their links
   with the community into a support network which will sus-
   tain them when they move into permament accommodation.

6. To ensure that the information obtained from the program
   is used to change government policy towards homeless young
   people to improve accommodation and support services for
   them.

Program Development

In this program, one of the major differences from other demonstration
programs is the auspice. Evaluations of the SPAN and NED Programs
have shown that community involvement has been the main factor which
has produced successful outcomes, therefore, the Brotherhood proposed
that this program would be 'handed over' to a local community at the
outset, rather than after it had been established as in the case of
SPAN.

A consultation was held with various experts in the area of this work
and a decision reached to locate the program in a particular inner
suburb of Melbourne. A community committee has now been established
and is working on obtaining a house through the Housing Commission of
Victoria, and appointing a community worker to begin building accommo-
dation networks.

Differential Application of the Developmental Approach

One of the first tasks of the local steering committee of the Boarding
House will be to study the proposal for the program and it will be im-
portant that the developmental approach is maintained. This will re-
quire that it is properly understood and that the steering committee

genuinely wishes to empower young people rather than blame them for their own situation or fear them for their violence potential. There is one representative of the Brotherhood on the local committee and it is hoped that this will provide some safeguard against the dilution or modification of the approach.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to describe the origins of the developmental approach, the elements of which it is composed, and its application in three different programs.

It is perhaps too early to be dogmatic about the effectiveness of the approach, but it is possible to say at this time that it can be adapted as a means of intervention in different social situations to meet the needs of different target groups. Theoretically, the model has been applied by different people to many different systems - health, education, migration, access radio and even social work student supervision. In each case, the ultimate aim was to assist each and every individual to gain more power and control over his own life, and to husband and develop human resources.

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