

A Conversation in Global Practice at the Programmatic Level

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Most creative approaches to social development recognize both the universality of social problems such as violence, hunger, gender and racial discrimination, and environmental degradation as well as their uniqueness in each country. Yet this recognition that most social problems may look different in each country, albeit connected to each other and to the global economy, rarely inspires different responses to addressing social problems at the programmatic level. Theoretically, planners recognize and respect different contexts, but when it comes to action there are often a limited number of dominant technologies superimposed in the implementation process.

In this presentation we introduce what we are calling an “emergent” model of program planning that allows for differential responses at the local level. Our emphasis will be on program planning, not implementation or evaluation. Our aim is to provide a conceptualization of planning processes and skill packages that will be useful, regardless of the culture, mission or goals of the human service organization within which planning and service occurs. This model may be especially congruent with cultural approaches to human service delivery in non-western environments. Gannon contends that it is fundamentally important to study, recognize, and understand culture in a “globalized world [that] demands cross-cultural expertise if we are to survive” (2004, p. 3)

Built on the assumption that both rational and non-rational thought go into problem solving, but that only rational approaches have been presented or packaged to the world as the appropriate technology for program development, this presentation offers an alternative way of

designing social programs. We offer an opportunity to consider how exporting social programs across national and cultural borders has the potential to oppress because traditional program planning represents only one world view operationalized at the program level. Our hope is to help participants take advantage of alternative opportunities instead of simply assuming that in a global economy, those who do not plan rationally represent lack of competence to engage in "real" planning and effective problem-solving. We believe it is important to recognize that there may be multiple ways of competently engaging in program planning

Definitions

Before considering various planning models, we must acknowledge the impact of terminology and language. In this presentation we are specifically focusing on “human service programs.” Programs should not be confused with organizations, generally understood to be "social unit[s] with some particular purpose" (Shafritz & Ott, 2001, p.1). From our perspective, in human services, individuals gather together to serve a particular purpose and that purpose is served through operationalizing programs. Organizational goals are achieved because programmatic tasks are completed by a collective of individuals able to achieve something more and better than that which could be achieved by a single individual. So, for the most part, programs develop within the cultural and technological context of organizations. Sometimes, however, a program develops in response to a need and prior to the organization in which it is eventually housed. To some degree, then, the difference between a program and an organization is the degree of structural complexity that surrounds activities geared towards "the enhancement of the social, emotional, physical, and/or intellectual well-being of some component of the population” (Brager & Hollowy, 1978, p. 2).

Defining Programs & Projects

In traditional, rational program planning it is assumed that there is a clear understanding of what constitutes a program and what does not. Programs are "pre-arranged sets of activities designed to achieve a set of goals and objectives" (Netting, Kettner, & McMurtry, 2004, p. 327). Direct service programs focus on clients, whereas staff development and training programs target staff by providing additional knowledge and skills for better direct service provision. Support programs are intended to assist direct service or staff development and training programs (Netting & O'Connor, 2003, p. 296). Finally, advocacy programs are geared to "systematically influence decision making in an unjust or unresponsive system" (Schneider & Lester, 2001, p. 64) by facilitating either case (individual) or cause (collective) problem solving.

In addition, the terms "program" and "project" are often used interchangeably in practice, but they are defined differently in textbooks. "Projects are much like programs but have a time-limited existence and are more flexible so that they can be adapted to the needs of a changing environment. Projects, if deemed successful and worthwhile, are often permanently installed as programs" (Netting, Kettner, & McMurtry, 2004, p. 327).

Note the assumptions embedded in the definitions presented. First, programs are "pre-arranged" implying that someone has the capacity to predict the future or at least reasonably determine what needs to happen. Second, there are "sets of activities" which assumes at least a minimal complexity in which various things are connected and must occur, rather than one set of actions. Third, these activities are targeted to "a set of goals and objectives," the achievement of which would reveal whether the program "works." The proliferation of books on program evaluation attest to this model, in which the very nature of effectiveness-based or performance-

based or outcomes-based program planning means determining in advance where one is going and what one plans to achieve. Projects, on the other hand, are assumed to be more short-term, based on a bit more uncertainty, and flexible in order to adapt to what is learned in process. According to the traditional definitions above, projects likely aspire to become programs. However, we are suggesting that the concept of "project" may be congruent with emergent or nonrational programs that neither seek, nor necessarily "should" seek, to become rational programs. All of this raises the possibility that even the definition of program masks assumptions that may script the planning process. We now turn to the concepts of rational and non rational thought in order to provide the context in which these different approaches to program planning seem to have developed.

Rational & Non Rational Thought Defined

Early empiricists such as Locke, Berkley, and Hume, join the Vienna Circle in influencing the development of logical empiricism and logical positivism, in establishing that the true basis of knowledge rests on empirical or evidence-based verification rather than simply on personal experience. As scientific methods developed in natural science, these methods were transferred and applied to human agency. From Comte and other positivists active in the 19th and early 20th centuries there has developed a belief that all genuine human knowledge is contained within the boundaries of science, the systematic study of phenomena and the explication of laws embodied therein. Induction, defined as making inferences of a generalized conclusion from particular instances, became the preferred method of consolidating the observational link between science and reality. Deduction is a method by which knowledge, inductively generated, is applied to other empirical situations not yet observed. Induction, going

from the general to the specific, became clearly preferred over deduction.

As a derivative of this philosophy of science and its application to the study of human nature, reason is assumed to guide both human behavior and one's coming to understand it. According to Fay (1996, p. 92), for the rationalists, "to explain human actions is to provide their rationale; and to provide their rationale is to show how they were the rational thing to have done given agent's beliefs and desires." This assumes that human agents are rational; that they engage in certain inferential processes and act on that basis. Notice that this should be contrasted with the possibility that an agent might act intentionally on the basis of a reasoning process that is itself illogical (in that the premises do not warrant the conclusions) and thus produce an act that is irrational. As this stands, there is no argument with this characterization until one deconstructs what is assumed to constitute rational thinking. Based on the reductionistic goals of positivism a linear approach to reason became **Reason**. It is only with the postmodern critique of positivism and the entrance of more interpretive epistemologies that non rational thought has been embraced as a valid way of knowing.

The modern positivist and post-positivist perspective is characterized by a concern for providing explanations of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction, and actuality. It tends to be realist, determinist, and nomothetic. In its overall approach it seeks to provide essentially rational explanations of social affairs. It is pragmatic, problem-oriented, seeking to apply the models and methods of the natural sciences to the study of human affairs. It tends to assume that the social world is composed of relatively concrete empirical artifacts and relationships which can be identified, studied and measured through approaches derived from the natural sciences (Rodwell, 1989). A more linear reasoning is

appropriate, given these assumptions.

Rationalism dominated the development of organizational theory. Thus, it is not surprising to find the philosophical assumptions introduced above embedded in the theories that dominated organizational thinking for decades. And at the programmatic level, the assumptions of rational planning reverberate by requiring one to move forward as if prediction is possible in the face of human diversity. However, Hasenfeld (2000) criticizes the rational model of organizations as being “theoretically weak and empirically untenable.” He goes on to say that “One can also readily see how a rational model fails to take into account the unique attributes of human service organizations, [faltering] in the face of multiple and conflicting goals and the existence of indeterminate service technologies” (p. 92).

In contrast to a rational approach, an interpretive perspective is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is and the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanation through individual consciousness and subjectivity, within participants’, rather than observers’ frames of reference. The approach tends to be nominalist, antipositivist, voluntarist and ideographic. In interpretivism the social world is an emergent social process created by the individuals concerned. Social reality is little more than a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings. There is an orientation towards obtaining an understanding of the subjectively created social world as it is in terms of an ongoing process. A very different standpoint than the positivist perspective, interpretivism is also involved with issues relating to the nature of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity, and actuality. From this different standpoint, a more circular approach to thought is appropriate and useful (Rodwell, 1989).

Interpretive approaches have been labeled as alternative, non traditional and non rational because they include a logic that is not so much non linear as circular, able to consider even the most tangential aspects of a thought process. This approach to thought is based on the assumption of multiple, competing truths where knowledge and decision-making must include multiple understandings achieved through no fixed sequence of analytic steps. This approach is highly attentive to power and politics with an understanding that context influences what constitutes a reality. Decision-making, therefore, must be more tentative, based on influences and the hope of getting what is "good" while avoiding what is "bad." However, there is a recognition that "good" and "bad" depend on the context, so what is at issue is making sense of paradox and politics within the time and place of the decision-making. Reasoning, then, is more by metaphor and analogy rather than by "if/then" statements. Decisions emerge by a more fluid and circular route.

Finally, to serve as the basis of the planning processes we will be investigating, we distinguish between rational and non rational thought. Table 1 provides a comparison of the basic premises for each (Fauri, Netting, & O'Connor, 2005). Rational thought is based on the assumption that there exists a single, immutable truth and that truth can be discovered, as well as most decisions can be made, through a series of well-defined steps that follow a fixed, linear sequence. It assumes that decisions are determined by an assessment of the most benefit for the least cost, and are based on objective and determinant rules that allow predictions of costs and benefits and assessment of alternatives including consequences. Reason is the basic building block for selecting among alternatives and minimizing objections. This is possible due to the reductionism of the "if/then" dimensions of linearity.

Table 1

**Rational/Non-Rational:
Comparison of Analysis Processes for Understanding Policy**

Rational	Non-Rational
Single truth	Multiple, competing truths
Decisions made through series of well defined steps	Decisions must include multiple understandings
Steps follow fixed sequence	No fixed sequence of analytic steps
Linear	Non-linear
Based on market (biggest bang for the buck)	Based on power and politics
Most benefit, least cost	Context is everything
Based on objectivity and determinant rules	Decisions based on influence
Prediction based on objectives, alternatives, consequences	Getting what is “good” and avoiding what is “bad”
Decisions from selecting alternatives and minimizing objections	Making sense of paradox and politics
Reason as the basic building block	Reasoning by metaphor and analogy
Decisions made with assumptions of linearity	Decisions made with clarity and reason, but more fluid and circular

Experts dominant participation	Participation by all stakeholders
Policy Analysis Types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rational • Chaotic • Garbage Can • Historic 	Policy Analysis Types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political • Contextual • Collaborative • Hermeneutic

Source: Fauri, Netting & O'Connor (2005, p. 105)

In line with Hasenfeld's (2004) and others criticism of the rational model, there are scholars who have spent years studying how seasoned managers perform within their work environments. Given the constantly changing and evolving nature of their organizations,

they employ a variety of different perspectives or frames. As one set of conditions arises, they focus on certain cues that lead them to apply a very analytic and structured approach. As these cues fade, they focus on new cues of emerging importance and apply another frame, perhaps this time an intuitive and flexible one . . . the ability to see the world in a dynamic fashion does not come naturally. It requires a dramatic change in outlook, a redefinition of one's world view. It means transcending the rules of mechanistic logic used for solving well-defined problems and adopting a more comprehensive and flexible kind of logic (Quinn, 1989, p. 4).

Essentially, this is what interpretive or non rational planning is all about. And we note that it may "not come naturally" in cultures steeped in rationality, but it may be very natural in other cultural contexts.

Given the differences between rational and non rational thought, it seems that attention to the more positivistic goals of understanding and controlling historic influences or the unexpected or chaotic in the planning process would be at the base of the more traditional rational planning model. The emergent, more non rational model, attends to the political and the contextual through more collaborative or hermeneutic processes. For us, the expert dominated traditional

model makes full participation of all stakeholders difficult. It also inculcates a tradition of top down hierarchy and bureaucratic models of organizing that may be antithetical to the culture in which a human service program is planned. We think it is important to know when an alternative model can provide guidance for clarity in planning, while assuring participation of all stakeholders in a context sensitive manner. We believe that it is at this level the possibility of just global development exists.

The Traditional Program Planning Model

In social work in the United States, the planned change model is based on a rational problem-solving approach (see Kettner et al. 1999; Netting et al., 2004). It assumes that programs and services should be aimed at incremental or gradual change to alter people's status so that they can function best within society. The model is linear, moving from problem analysis and needs assessment through hypothesis development, setting goals and objectives, to designing programs that create either individual or contextual/structural changes that are evaluated using traditional, mostly quantitative methods.

Built on the assumptions of positivist science, problems are identified and analyzed from objective assessment data. Needs are assessed through consideration of objective data known about the identified problem. Program planning follows logically from the problem diagnosis or problem definition. First, hypotheses are developed about what is necessary to alter the problem status. Goals and objectives are derived from the "if/then" dimensions of the hypotheses about how incremental change can be achieved.

Taber and Finnegan (1980) identified basic components of program design in keeping with this problem solving orientation. The components are: analyze the social problem;

determine who the direct beneficiary of the program is; determine the social work theory of helping; specify the service providers; identify the key persons required to produce client benefits; specify the helping environment; describe actual helping behaviors; and identify emotions and responses. The assumption is that planning occurs in the order that the components are presented, but that information and decisions made in subsequent steps may suggest or require alterations in previous steps. Linearity is preserved even if modifications occur.

Details about what should constitute activity in each step may vary from scholar to scholar. Some advise attending to the various dimensions of the problem, while others suggest that in order for planning to occur, the problem must be translated into needs (Kettner, Moroney, & Martin, 1999). Some suggest that the target of change and the resources for change should be identified in connection with specific practice theory to inform the design (Rapp & Poertner, 1992), while others suggest that all this can be included in the development of a program hypothesis. The program hypothesis should frame the planning process. Kettner et al. (1999) suggest that "to deal successfully with a problem, one should modify or remove those factors associated with the condition or the etiology of the problem" (p.76). This is based on the positivistic assumptions that independent variables when related to intervening variables produce dependent variables. A discretely defined intervention into the identified and operationalized problem causes a result which is expected to be the elimination of the problem as defined.

Strengths & Challenges of Rational Planning

The traditional model of planning produces a clear and measurable statement of an action that allows tracking and useful information for implementation and evaluation. It is the

dominant type of planning required of persons in the United States who want to receive funding for outcomes-based programs. Outcomes-based programming requires that one know where one is going and then logically plan the steps to get there. Support for this type of process is evident among most funders, both governmental and private. Resources are available to assist in writing such plans (Ketter et al., 1999; Pawlak & Vinter, 2004).

A difficulty in rational planning is that rarely do planners have the time available to fashion the necessary precision in logic or language to achieve the standards for valid and reliable measurement, so incomplete and even incorrect information may guide the selection of outcomes. These outcomes, because they are pre-determined, can be seized upon as “Truth” and thus remain unaltered even in the face of new data. In addition, some planners may be less capable than others of the linear linguistic and cognitive processing necessary to design this type of program plan.

The traditional model also assumes that a program plan starts at the beginning, continues with a middle phase and ceases in an ending process. This is extremely useful for start up activities; but most human service programming is rarely that discreet, making achieving the logic expectations of the model almost impossible to enact in fast paced, chaotic environments. This traditional model does not lend itself to quick responses or to serendipitous opportunities. Instead, it is best suited to longer range opportunities with well defined timelines for proposals and implementation.

The traditional model provides a picture of cool, controllable clarity rarely found in even the most developed organizational or social systems. This may be comfortable to persons who enjoy certitude, but provides a sense of false security. Because of this, assumptions may be

made about quality and appropriateness of programs that are not a reflection of the lived experience of the planners, the implementers, or the recipients of the service contained in the plan. From an evaluation standpoint, type I and type II errors remain possible because of the idiosyncrasies of statistical analysis that wash out the impact of both extremely negative and extremely positive results. Yet, a strength of the model is seen in its evaluability in that a well designed program plan will have information systems and measurements built in from the beginning.

Finally, the problem-solving model assumes and requires a type of linear logic that flows naturally from Germanic and Anglo-Saxon language patterns. For the precision required in the plan, a type of reduction is needed that is not easily present in the more circular logic of romance languages or non-Western cultures. Because of this, in order to engage in planned change or problem solving planning, planners from non western languages or cultures are required to learn a different cognitive processing, in addition to the skills necessary to produce such a plan. This challenge raises a fundamental question about whether or not this change in thinking is so fundamental as to make application of this planning method inappropriate in certain situations and certain cultures or conditions.

Emergent Planning

Experience tells us that some programs, even long-lived ones, reflect norms more like those of projects discussed earlier. They remain flexible, oftentimes because there is little choice given what they need to do to be responsive, and the ambiguity with which they appear to operate may appear to fly in the face of rational planning principles. These programs predominantly do what Brody calls “forward-sequence planning” as opposed to “reverse-order

planning.” Forward-sequence planning begins by asking where can one start rather than what do we want as a final result, which is the focus of reverse-order planning (2000, pp. 77-78). Our recent research indicates that some programs that predominately use forward-sequence planning can be labeled “exemplary” in their communities, even when they do not have clearly defined roles and pre-conceived tasks (Netting, O’Connor, Thomas, & Yancey, forthcoming).

We think these projects or programs are representative of an alternative, emergent model for planning based on a non rational model of problem solving. This model occurs when those engaged in the planning process are attentive to political and contextual idiosyncrasies that divert them from their "real" plan. Planners, steeped in rational traditions, may be reluctant to admit to this aspect of their work because it does not conform to strict principles of rationality. Here we seek to articulate this more interpretive approach as a viable framework a program planner could use and still be called a competent planner.

Following a more social constructivist theoretical context (Rodwell, 1998), the alternative view of planning, relies on a less reductionistic, more collaborative approach to decision-making about problem definition, program design, and implementation. Instead of the systematic data gathering of the traditional approach, an emergent process focuses on hearing multiple perspectives from diverse groups and persons as a means of information gathering. This information is usually gathered ethnographically by planners steeped in the culture of the context and with great attention to all sources of information, including intuition, word and numeric data. Quinn (1989) describes this masterful planner as engaging in “a kind of thinking that is complex, holistic, and fluid – a kind of thinking that distinguishes the master from the novice” (p. 9). Data collection tends to be both formal and informal with whatever structure that is applied being

tentative and open to reformulation depending upon what is being learned in the context of the data collection. The process is emergent while being attentive to time and context.

The goal of this approach is less assessment of a problem and more an understanding of the problem in all its complexity. This means that both subjective and objective dimensions of problem description are essential. Analysis is viewed as a broadening, not reducing process, so that efforts are always present to avoid premature narrowing of what constitutes the articulation of the problem of interest. The problem is defined when the participants in the investigation process say it is, and it may change when new information emerges.

The emergent model is not expert driven in the way most traditional problem solving planning models are. There exists in this model no prescribed form of problem description or goal statement. Instead, the problem definition and the determination of what should be done about it is the result of the involvement of all those with a stake in the problem of interest or its resolution. The problem definition and the solution design are a result of a collaborative process. That in itself is interventive, due to the mutual education that is produced as a result of an authentic planning process where all perspectives and views are encouraged and critically examined for usefulness in problem resolution.

Consensus building about the problem and the solution is the goal of this process. Because the process is steeped in an understanding of the multiple dimensions of power and politics, naiveté is avoided because attention to the will of the polity (Stone, 1997) is essential to the sense-making about what becomes constituted as the acceptable problem definition and solution in a particular time and context. Political reasoning, not rational, cost/benefit thought is central to this planning process. In order to attend to all constituencies with a stake in the

problem, acceptable planning for change is expected to be acceptable to all stakeholding groups. Compromise and consensus are the major products of the planning process. Because of this, collaboration and campaign tactics for change within programs, organizations or social contexts constitute the standard for good practice.

Strengths & Challenges of Emergent Planning

Emergent planning, instead of being time intensive in its initial stages, like the traditional model, is very time intensive throughout the process. It is neither cool, nor controllable, making on-going accountability monitoring a challenge, especially when precision only achieved through control may be required from an outside evaluative or funding source.

This alternative model is overtly political. It is attentive to the polity and attendant ideology, regardless of empirical evidence to the contrary. In some cases, it might be suggested that the alternative model supports best possible practices instead of best practices because of its extreme attention to the political will of those involved in the problem solving process. We think this is much more representative of the actual planning experience within democratic societies.

This alternative is very attentive to the context bound nature of language and cognition. It protects the cultural nuances that influence both what is seen to be an acceptable problem and a viable solution to the problem. It does this by being as much process oriented as it is interested in product. Because of this, the model will not be efficient. Clearly, it sacrifices efficiencies while aiming for situational effectiveness.

Its' strengths, however, lie in the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the planning process and the willingness to make changes as situations change. Whereas this wreaks havoc when outcomes are pre-determined in a traditional evaluation, the expectation of this model is

more realistic in complex programs that are attempting to be sensitive to the unique service needs of individuals.

Some Practice Examples

We propose that there is a place for rational program planning and a place for emergent planning. We suspect those places are distinguished by what one is trying to achieve. We illustrate with three examples.

Example # 1

A student intern was asked to design a program as a class assignment. She wanted to address the needs of “runaway/throwaway” youth. These youth were on the street without resources, subject to the risks of drug and alcohol use, prostitution, and a host of other potential situations. The local shelter that had focused on homeless youth’s needs had recently closed. Other shelters in the city were open to taking in youth, but the youth had to be referred through a professional source. The student intern’s assumption was that the problem of runaway/throwaway youth on the streets had not gone away, but they were even less visible now that no shelter allowed walk-in’s or self referrals. In a traditional planning process, needs assessment data would be gathered and then goals established. The difficulty here was that there was no way to gather needs assessment data in a traditional manner. Certainly one could walk the streets looking for homeless persons who appeared young, but it was hard enough to figure out how many persons were homeless in the city, much less distinguish their characteristics. If these youth existed, they were by desire not highly visible. Yet, the student persisted because she knew that the closed shelter had had a steady stream of youth who had presented for overnight stays. Without a place for them to go, without a referral, they had simply disappeared.

The intern realized that a rational approach to planning would not work here because without having data, one could not go to the next step. In a traditional planning model, going to the next step of assuming that a program needs to be developed, without having adequate data, dooms the process from the beginning. The invisibility of the population group becomes a facilitator for doing nothing. Yet, the student intern persisted. She designed an emergent program in which she obtained permission from an existing shelter to allow her to use up to two beds a night for self-referrals. The plan was for a community organizer to walk the streets, getting the word out that walk-ins were acceptable in the shelter. It was clear there was the possibility that no one would come and nothing would happen because, perhaps, no service was needed. There was also the possibility that youth would appear. If they did, they would become a source of planning information. They would be engaged in the planning process as participants who had a critical type of expertise – potential knowledge about other youth on the streets, information on where they had stayed and who had approached them and thoughts about what would appeal to someone in their circumstances. The fluid, emergent, non-determinate nature of the planning process was trusted. As new information emerged, the program could be redesigned to be responsive to the population group. The plan included a proviso that if the original method of locating youth did not work, the option was open to a completely different approach designed as new insights emerged.

Example # 2

A local retirement home developed a dementia unit in which 20 residents were living. Their goal was to provide the highest quality of life for these residents. A local foundation was interested in funding gerontological type programs and issued an RFP. A grant application was

submitted by the home with the intent of providing residents with increased stimulation so that they would engage in interpersonal activities and have a higher quality of life. A plethora of activities were designed, using volunteers from the community. Volunteers would bring in pets on Mondays; on Tuesdays, they would do horticultural therapy with a local gardening club; on Wednesdays they would have art therapy overseen by members of the watercolor society, etc. Observational measures were proposed to document how engaged the residents were in these activities. Number and length of family visits would document an increased amount of time that families spent with residents. The assumption was that if residents were more engaged in the life of the dementia unit that families would actually have the chance to engage in joint activities rather than just visiting with residents who often did not know who they were. The program hypothesis was well developed and the program had measurable outcomes.

The funded program began and some residents reacted with delight when animals were brought onto the unit. Others fled to their rooms. Others just wandered away as if they weren't there. On Tuesdays when the gardening club came, some residents dutifully took small plants and put them in paper cups, others tried to eat the plants, and others showed no interest whatsoever. On Wednesdays, reaction to art therapy was as varied as the reactions on previous days. There appeared to be no consistent patterns in how one resident would react to all activities. However, it was observed that staff was more upbeat and excited about the activities on the unit and found the interaction stimulating. The unit was described by one LPN as "alive" and "vibrant" on the days that the volunteers were there.

Example # 3

An emergency food and clothing bank redesigned their program to be more measurable.

They had been tracking how much food and clothing came into the bank, but had never really determined who received any of these items. They also wanted to coordinate better with other banks in the community since some supplies seemed to run out faster in some locations than others. The thinking was that perhaps they could barter and trade across banks so that a variety of goods were available to anyone who requested help.

The coordinator of the bank asked a local school of social work to assist them in program redesign. A faculty member and two students worked with him to determine what data needed to be collected in terms of who received food and clothing and what methods might be used to get the word out to community donors about what items were most needed. A logging in system was developed, as well as a data collection process of only those data that would actually be used to document expressed needs of those persons who requested assistance.

What Might These Examples Tell Us?

In these examples, different populations are targeted – homeless youth, demented residents, and families in need. In Example # 1, a rational planning process was not feasible. In fact, if rational planning principles are used, there would be no documented need. Use of empirical evidence to convince funding sources or decision-makers that something needs to happen is next to impossible. Yet the student intern was convinced that if an appropriate means of finding these youth could be devised that they would literally “come of out of the woodwork;” they would emerge. She was also convinced that if she projected too far ahead, writing outcomes like “youth will return home and attend school” would be based on her reality, not the reality of the youth. In fact, until she located a few youth, who could tell their stories, needs and future directions could only be fantasized. She persisted because the worse case scenario for the

program (but not for the youth) was that there really were no more runaways on the streets. The best case scenario for the program would be that these invisible youth had become visible and with that, where to go next would emerge.

The second example indicates what happens when well intentioned planners develop an elaborate program for a population group that is not able to respond in a “rational” way. Yet, results indicated something that planners often espouse – everyone’s needs are somewhat different and unique; however the plan was based on an aggregated assumption that one size fits all. Obviously, some residents did respond, others did not, and others were distressed by the multitude of interventions. Staff, on the other hand, was relieved to have “life” on the unit, making one wonder for whom the intervention was actually intended. Rational planning would label this a “failure,” whereas from an emergent process what was learned was invaluable in thinking through what might actually work better if individuals’ needs were considered rather than assuming one set of interventions fits all. Superimposing a rational planning model on a program containing non rational and uncontrollable elements will be a challenge. For this context a far better approach requires rethinking the intervention as an emergent process and being totally prepared to redesign the program as information is gathered through experience.

The third example describes a program that could greatly benefit from a rational planning approach, in fact would be strengthened by having the appropriate documentation in place. A predictable set of activities occur but without appropriate documentation. With adequate documentation, this program would have the data in place to advocate for certain groups who presented at the bank, to work with other banks in comparing their data, and even in predicting what types of inputs (i.e. clothing, food, etc.) needed to be mobilized in order to address

expressed needs at certain times.

These examples should also illustrate how rational planning models may be most helpful. Service programs that offer concrete interventions such as money, food, clothing, etc. operate in ways that support the assumptions of rational planning. Using an emergent model to design, implement or modify such programs may not make sense. Instead, the technologies used in rational planning will be very useful and might even be applicable across cultures when delivery of concrete products is at issue and efficiencies are desired. Conversely, programs with interventions that are highly complex; those that require individualization or specific cultural sensitivities; or those that may even need to emerge as new information occurs, would benefit from the flexible structure of emergent planning.

Implications

As Quinn says in his book *Beyond Rational Management*, it is the “complex, holistic, and fluid – a kind of thinking that distinguished the master from the novice.”(p. 7). Persons skilled in dealing with complexity and critical thinking, who can live with paradox and ambiguity, are likely candidates for designing and developing emergent, non rational types of human service programs. Cultures in which non rational thinking occurs may be particularly helpful in educating others about how to face these challenges, just as cultures steeped in rationality may be particularly helpful in incubating rational planners.

We are not suggesting that one model of planning is correct and the other is incorrect. There are places for both. We are suggesting that depending upon the agency or larger cultural context in which a model is used, one model may be more congruent than the other. Cultural congruence is an important factor because program planning can not be separated from

organizational, community, and societal contexts. For example, currently it would be foolish for any program planner in the United States to discount outcome-based measurement and its importance in obtaining external funding from government and United Way sources, both of which have embraced (even mandated) this rational, problem-solving approach.

Yet, application of a rational approach to problem solving may extinguish that which is powerful and unique in an alternative program. Some programs just cannot be measured and planned for by traditional means, if the program is to be sensitive to the needs of the clients or the development of the service technology. Further, by transporting Western planning processes and products into socio-cultural contexts containing unique aspects of social problem elements and resources, solution alternatives by way of programs may be limited. Those limits may make the planning selections culturally or technologically inappropriate.

In addition, we also recognize that the predominance of rational planning can force an essentially interpretive, meaning-making process between social workers and clients into positivistic measurement. In service of accountability, this approach may be taking the very elements of quality change from the process because intimate aspects of relationship are not quantifiable. We believe this creativity and intimacy can be articulated when words are also considered to be data and when emergent planning is recognized as a respectable approach to problem solving. From this perspective, accountability may need to be reconceptualized away from a bottom line business model or what Freire criticized as the banking model. Efficiencies may not be needed in combination with effectiveness when meaning of the process can be articulated. Worth of a program might be able to be identified in a way to satisfy those concerned with appropriate use of service funds.

Conclusion

We close our presentation by advocating for a more global or social justice perspective on the program planning process. We call for the recognition that non rational planning is also good and effective planning. We hope that we have illustrated how the socio-political consequences of acceptance of only one model of planning, regardless of the cultural context or organizational tradition, leaves out the potential for responding to diverse human service needs. Our goal is to open the possibility of different ways of thinking about and engaging in program planning with the hope that new ways to articulate accountability will expand the possibilities and creative responses to human needs, regardless of the agency or cultural context.

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