

Community Engagement

LCBB4002

Assessment 2

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Introduction

This report is a reflection based on the first assignment for Community Engagement module. The local authority selected for the community project was Haringey and the purpose of the project was to educate young generation and implicitly the parents to be more responsible towards the environment and it intends to have practical activities towards the improvement of local green areas. For this purpose it was developed a detailed program to be implemented based on the community mapping research.

Reflection

For my reflection I will use the model of reflection developed by Gibbs (1988) who states that in order to have an efficient learning it should be applied 6 steps structure: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and plan of action.

The description step refers to what happened. We were required to submit a report as a community engagement practitioner for our local authority to address any social economic development.

Feelings step refers the personal reactions and feelings. I can say that I was determined to put in practice all the knowledge gained through the module.

Evaluation steps refer to the positives and negatives of the experience. It was good that I had access to the learning materials from the module. It was bad because I should have have a more in depth research.

Analysis step requires in depth analysis and it is the base of the Assignment 2 for this module. It involves reflection on how things could have been done differently for the community project, which would have been the best practices, techniques and standards to be used.

There are nine Maine principles for a successful community engagement process which refer to information, consultation and collaboration and empowerment (atsdr, 2022).. This theoretical model helps the community engagement practices to be more effective and to have a strong moral base. I consider that in assignment 1 I should have emphasised more clearly this approach. The first principle is to set clear aims and objectives of how it is intended to be realised the engagement with the community. It should be ensured that community shares their interest to benefit of the community involvement. That is why it has to be an effective communication which provides information, but also attracts the community to participate. If there are barrier towards the community involvement then then this should be addressed in the most efficient and appropriate way. That is why getting to know the community is very important for community engagement projects. I should have considerate more input from the community. For the community project for

assignment 1 I used the SMART objectives model to ensure that the success of the project. I had set up specific objectives to educate the young generation on the major environmental problems and how to contribute towards that, measurable because I established the precise schedule, to organise two teaching sessions per month about water wastage, reducing plastic usage, electricity wastage, recycling, cleaning the green areas. I had achievable objectives which involved renting one of the local churches or one of the local hall centres for Saturday afternoon to organise the meetings. It was realistic because I knew I needed to outsource help of professional environmentalists to volunteer towards teaching materials and sessions because of the effectiveness of the learning, and the set time bound for the project was over a period of six months.

The second principle relates to the levels of knowledge regarding the culture of the community, the economic conditions, the norms and values and demographic trends. Based on the research on the Haringey borough characteristics it has been observed that there is a high percentage of young population. Also the population is very diverse and could find difficult to engage due to cultural barriers. The identified problems to be assessed are the lack of centres for the community to meet. Also it appears that the east part of the borough would need more help as it is a more deprived area. The segment to focus on is the children within the age interval 5 to 14 years old because it would have the parents support and would imply the parents to collaborate which would also build a more stronger community. The type of the project is to increase awareness for the young generations over the environmental problems.

I consider that for the project I should have based my research on primary data collection rather than only mainly on secondary data research. I should have developed a more complex relationship with the community by evaluating the formal and informal leadership to help towards mobilising the community. The project assumed the collaboration with schools but it should have been looked at prioritising engagement with parents by asking schools to have meeting with parents committees rather than letting the school to distribute our informational flyers. This would have created the chance of building trust and obtaining detailed feedback.

Another principle of community engagement is to make sure that the community is listened as a whole and that is not represented by influential segments from the community or to accept external parties to influence the decision making for their own interest.

It is important for the community engagement best practices to partner with community instead of imposing changes which can create discrepancies and reduce efficiency of the project in solving the selected problem. The partnership is defined as the “endeavor undertaken jointly by multiple parties. The parties may be governments, non-profits enterprises, businesses, or private individuals.

The goals of a partnership also vary widely” (Investopedia, 2022). Developing community based partnerships responds better to any changes that needs to be introduced and increases the chances for successful results.

Another principles is to recognise and respect at all times the diversity of the selected community. This are very important for planning of the project and implementation of the project to avoid culture clashes and hit different barriers. Through the community project presented in the assignment 1 it has been created more opportunities for the community to get involved towards a shared concerned related the environmental issues within the local community and globally. It has been identified a common interested for the community that affected all the community equally no matter the age, culture, personal interests, ethnicity and other diverse characteristics. It has been selected a single segment to ensure efficacy, but it is an example for the community to copy behaviour and be more responsible towards environment. The children are the future of the community and the children held no grudges for any differences and that is why it has been selected this segment for this type of project to be introduced first as children can learn form children to embrace diversity and just unite towards shared interests which ultimately would make the community stronger. I consider that the selection of this segment for the project implementation is the most appropriate and it involves a variety of opportunities for the community to get involved and develop relationships.

The community principle related to the identification and mobilisation of the community’s strengths involves teaching and engaging community in the decision making. The community assets will benefit the community because it will be able to stand up and take action to contribute to the development of the community. That is why for the project it will be considered skills and experience sharing and empower volunteers to action, for example after the finalisation of the project to meet regularly to help cleaning the green spaces, to share ideas about recycling and reducing waste and other related aspects. Community assets are “ are the collective resources which individuals and communities have at their disposal; those which can be leveraged to develop effective solutions to promote social inclusion and improve the health and well-being of citizens. Assets include organisations, associations and individuals” (Understand Together, 2022). The project should have ensured more the usage of community assets and that would have been contributed to developing the project to a larger scale.

The community collaboration principle involves long term approach through different collaborations prior, during and after the project. Building long term commitment can be realised through introducing the community projects to more areas within the borough.

For the community project from assignment 1 it should have been realised as best practice a more in depth feasibility study which by looking at answering questions such as “What will the project be? What is expected of the project, Who is the project for? When will it be done? How much will it cost? How will it be done? What is the expected benefit?”. “A feasibility study is an analysis that considers all of a project's relevant factors—including economic, technical, legal, and scheduling considerations—to ascertain the likelihood of completing the project successfully” (Investopedia, 2021).

In the role of the community engagement practitioner I was responsible with the feasibility study which I evaluated before developing the community project. I consider that further research needs to be pursued and I acknowledge the limitations of this project such as time and resources and future projects to the area should include reports with more in depth findings on the discussed topics. Many community developments start off as a collection of bright ideas from local people. These ideas often give rise to many questions relating to achievability in terms of building or land use, demand, prime and maintenance costs, management, ownership, value for money, planning and other legal issues, acceptability to the local community and administration.

The next step for my reflection is the conclusions and refers to what can be concluded from the experience. I consider that undertaking the role of the community engagement practitioner has helped me put in practice the knowledge gained through the module. It has developed my critical thinking and reasoning by developing based on the research a community project to address to identified problems. It has helped me to develop research skills and it had helped me segment the community and to identify most efficient modality to target it.

The last step of the reflection is how will the knowledge gained from the experience will be used for the future. I consider that this learning experience has helped me understand the concepts better from the Community Engagement module and I identified that in order to improve my abilities in the role of the community engagement practitioner I should focus more on creating long term partnerships with the community.

Conclusion

This report has looked at the best practices and theoretical models used in developing community engagements products and it has assessed the community project developed for Assignment 1.

References

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