



ECAY6003: Advocacy: Maintaining Independence in Service Provision

Theme 5: Principles of Empowerment (Revisited)

Part 3: Endogenous and Exogenous empowerment, Problematising, Conscientisation, Praxis and Empowerment & Advocacy



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Endogenous & Exogenous Empowerment

- These terms are used to describe where empowerment comes from
- (Christens, 2019, no page) argues that, 'lines of scholarship have tended to define empowerment as the processes through which groups can gain greater control over their circumstances'.
- And goes on to state that, 'many uses of the term *empowerment* have not been coherently linked to theory on empowerment, and even empowerment theory itself has not been sufficiently connected to considerations of community power'. (Christens, 2019, no page)
- In this, Christens is echoing many of the points made by Arnstein when discussing participation

Endogenous Empowerment

- In their paper *Engage, participate, empower: Modelling power transfer in disadvantaged rural communities* Steiner & Farmer (2017, no page) state that 'Endogenous empowerment relates to empowerment processes that emerge from within the community and are independent from the influence of external bodies'
- In its purest sense endogenous empowerment arises from the community itself where strong leaders emerge to voice the wishes of the group
- However, it can also relate to projects to promote and develop 'awareness, skills and capacity assessment, capacity-building and skills development, participation and greater control in decision-making' within communities or groups' (Garba, 1999, no page)

Endogenous Empowerment

- Steiner and Farmer (2017) go on to argue that ‘Through engaging and making accountable, local people, these very citizens gain capacity to control and adopt knowledge and information and grow capabilities to sustain a development process’.
- They add that ‘Endogenous empowerment therefore relies upon community members who take responsibility for the design and execution of development strategies’ (ibid)
- In this way, endogenous empowerment can be seen to have strong links to Arnstein’s ideas of Citizen Control.



Endogenous Empowerment

- In the paper by Garba, mentioned earlier, the focus was on the way in which women in marginalised groups can be **doubly disempowered**
- This is a key focus of many endogenous empowerment initiatives and has links to Crenshaw's theories of Intersectionality
- Hiller & Touré (2021) go as far as to say that, 'Women's empowerment in developing countries has emerged as a key objective for international organizations and policy makers'.
- They point out that the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal is to '[Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#)' (UN, 2023)

Endogenous Empowerment

- Other works to focus on this problem of multiple disempowerment include;
- The UN publication *Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Strengthening Development Cooperation* (2010) which discussed over 100 projects worldwide and further explored issues of intersectionality
- However, it is not as simple as promoting the empowerment of women as this, in itself, can cause issues.
- For example, Fakir *et al* (2016) point out that female empowerment can lead to resentment in male partners and can lead to intimate partner violence (IPV) because the males have not been involved in the process of empowerment and react to a perceived threat to their own power



Exogenous Empowerment

- Steiner and Farmer (2017, no page) then move on to discuss exogenous empowerment, which they characterise as ‘having an external cause or origin, growing or originating from outside’
- Exogenous empowerment, where the government or organisation (external stakeholder) delegates some level of power or responsibility to the group or community, is the more common form of empowerment
- Steiner and Farmer go on to argue that, ‘Whilst the external stakeholder is not necessarily all supremely powerful, criticism of exogenous development hinges on the dominant role of external players which can neglect and downplay local knowledge and values’ (ibid)



Problematising

- In his work, *The History of Madness* Michel Foucault argued that society's attitude to mental health is negatively influenced by assumptions and 'common knowledge'
- He argued that, in order to understand any complex issue one needs to remove these assumptions and challenge the 'common knowledge'.
- He called this process 'problematisation' (the critical enquiry into a 'problem' in society in order to see the issue clearly)
- Reich and Hager (2014) argue that the process of problematisation is not only an academic exercise but is vital for professionals as it 'open(s) up new ways of thinking about practice and learning'

Problematising

- An example of this, in the area of empowerment, can be seen in the work of Fakir *et al* (2016) mentioned earlier.
- In this study, the empowerment of women which is generally ‘assumed’ to be a positive thing led to negative consequences
- By removing the assumptions, the professional can seek to ensure that their practice is as ethical and effective as possible.
- Reich and Hager (2014) argue that problematising a practice results in a ‘more nuanced and complex way of conceptualising professional learning’
- In this way , the process can be seen to have importance for the professional Advocate

Conscientisation

- One final theoretical concept that is useful when thinking of developing professional practice is conscientisation
- Developed by the critical theorist and educator Paulo Freire (2014) as part of his work to empower poor and oppressed people through education
- He argued for a process of 'consciousness raising' which would lead to the development of a 'critical consciousness' that would allow individuals to take control of the decision-making process
- Further developed by theorists such as Roberts (1996) the concept is still much used in the field of empowerment.

Conscientisation

- Dalrymple and Burke (2001: p. 15) quote Freire (1972) 'in order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation they must perceive the reality of oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limited situation which they can transform'.
- It is this idea of transformation , of changing things for the better, that is at the centre of the concept of empowerment
- Put simply, it states that in order for people to change a situation they must first be aware of the inequality they face
- Freire's work had much influence on the 'liberation' theories that we discussed earlier.

Praxis

- Throughout this Theme we have explored the various theoretical strands that contribute to ideas of empowerment and, by extension to Advocacy, e.g.;
- Theories of Power (Foucault and Middleton)
- Empowerment theory itself
- Social Control
- Theories of Participation (Arnstein)
- Liberation theory
- Social Capital
- Problematisation and Conscientisation

Praxis

- In many cases these theoretical approaches have been applied to professional practice
- For example Arnstein's ideas of gaining effective participation and Reich and Hager's arguments that problematisation is essential to professional learning.
- The combining of theory and practice in this way is often known as 'praxis' which has been defined by Blackburn (2016) as 'the application of a theory to cases encountered in experience'
- Whilst there are other, sometimes competing views, it is this sense which is of most use to the Advocate
- For example, Roberts (1996) talks of 'the link between conscientisation and praxis'

Praxis

- The academic literature has many examples of this combining of theory and practice
- For example, Jenny Maturi (2023), in her work 'Using a critical praxis lens [...] explores different understandings of empowerment that arose in interviews with front-line domestic violence workers who support refugee and migrant women experiencing gendered violence in Queensland, Australia'.
- Whilst Archibald and Wilson (2011) talk of praxis involving 'a practical theory of action whereby education practitioners and researchers can work towards salvaging empowerment's emancipatory potential'.
- The concept of praxis has strong links with the theories of reflective practice that we explored last year

Empowerment in Practice

- The principle of empowerment is central to the disciplines of community development, social work, psychology, education and advocacy among other fields
- It has been a key concept running through the Modules that you have studied
- As we approach the end of this Module we will revisit the idea of empowerment and apply it to the role of the Advocate

Empowerment in Practice

- Abercrombie and Warde (2000: p. 188) argue that, from a social class perspective empowerment:
- ‘Acknowledges the issue that ‘the upper class, and especially its business core, forms a relatively closed, coherent and self-recruiting elite’.
- This elite has ‘Coherence, combined with great wealth and the effective control of very large businesses [which] gives great power’.
- As we have seen before, theories of empowerment are a way of trying to address this power imbalance

Empowerment in Practice

- Williams (2010: p97) offers some key factors which affect the ability of the group to become an empowered and enlightened entity:
- Focus, i.e. the aims of the group
- Inter-group communication including decision making processes
- Relationships within the group, e.g. roles and norms (social capital)
- It can be argued that the role of the Advocate is to understand and communicate the aims of their clients though building effective relationships through skilled communication

Empowerment and Advocacy

- There are any number of sources that make this link between empowerment and advocacy and we will briefly look at some of these in turn
- In his paper *Empowerment, self-advocacy and resilience* Dan Godly (2005) explores the impact that empowerment can have for individuals with learning difficulties
- He argues that 'Empowerment now has a long history of prominence in the community care rhetoric of service provision [and] has been keenly added to the vocabulary of professionals' (ibid, p.335).

Empowerment and Advocacy

- In another paper, *Empowerment through advocacy and consciousness raising: Implications of a Structural Approach to Social Work* Maurice Moreau (1990) explores the role that empowerment has to play in the area of group advocacy in a health setting.
- He argues that in such situations 'The worker explores and tries to understand the possible relationships between, on the one hand, clients' health, feelings, ideas and actions towards themselves and others, and, on the other hand, the extent to which clients are kept inferior or powerless by their social location' (Moreau, 1990, p.54)

Empowerment and Advocacy

- In the book chapter *Empowerment and Advocacy* Ken Simons (1994, p, 173) explores the issues of empowerment for people with learning difficulties.
- He states that 'Inevitably, there will be tensions; some carers remain adamant that people with learning difficulties wouldn't possibly speak for themselves' (ibid)
- However, Advocacy by encouraging 'users and carers [to] work together is one way of resolving these tensions' (ibid.)



Empowerment and Advocacy

- The relationship between advocacy and empowerment has also been explored in a blog on the Social Care pages of the Department of Health and Social Care.
- In an article entitled ‘Why advocacy provides the seeds of empowerment’ June Sadd said, of the right to an independent advocate set out in the Care Act 2014:
- ‘by getting support from someone who understands us, we can grow what I call ‘the seeds of empowerment.’ This means handing people choice and control so that they can be fully involved in the decision-making process’.

Empowerment and Advocacy

- In their paper *The role of advocacy and empowerment in shaping service development for families raising children with developmental disabilities* Szlamka et al (2022) make the following points which link back to much that we have covered in this Theme:
- ‘Some scholars focus on what the key goal of advocacy is, suggesting for example to achieve **social justice**’
- ‘Meanwhile others define advocacy as such that it has overlapping elements with the definitions of **participation** and **empowerment**’.



Empowerment and Advocacy

- Thus, in exploring the principles of empowerment we have been reminded of its centrality to the practice of advocacy
- We have often looked at empowerment as addressing the **power relations** between community members and the powerholders
- However there is one final message that must be made clear, that is to say that we must remember that there are also **power relations** between the client and the advocate

Empowerment and Advocacy

- Writing on the [National Development Team for Inclusion](#) website, Peter Irvine make the following key points:
- ‘As advocates, we often refer to the power differential in relationships between those we support and the professionals in their lives’.
- He goes on to argue that ‘We do not always seem to fully accept the impact of the power differential in our own advocacy relationships’.

Empowerment and Advocacy

- He also points out that the advocate/client relationship has been changed by the 'Recent refocussing of advocacy within the Care Act and the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) which direct advocacy towards task-focussed advocacy and short term interventions'
- In doing so they can 'undermine the empowerment opportunities previously available within longer term advocacy relationships'.
- If this is the case then the professional advocate will need to be even more focused to ensure that empowerment continues to be a central part of their practice.

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