

## ADOPTING MANAGEMENT CONCEPT AND TOOL FOR PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK

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### **Keywords**

community development, community worker, empowerment, facilitation, intermediary goods, intangible and tangible product, participation, total quality anagement (TQM), transitional product

### **Abstract**

Community development emphasises the significance of both the product and process goal. The product goal is more related to the tangible goal, whereas the process goal is the intangible goal. In community development enterprise, both are equally important to sustain community participation and the community development project itself. This is to ensure the continuous improvement in the community development work or activity. Community development process is quite different compared to the production line in a factory; however, there are some concepts of productivity and management tool that can be adopted to enhance productivity in community development work. This paper attempts to discuss the applicability of the total quality management concepts, ideas, and tools in community development work. Facilitation as a tool in enhancing productivity is also relevant in the community development process as discussed in this paper. Facilitation enables group or community members to develop and exercise their ability and capacity to achieve their desired or common goal. The underlying principle of facilitation that facilitates productivity is described. And, in relation to this, the role of facilitation towards empowering community members in a community development activity is also discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Productivity enhancement” is a management concept, and it is very popular in the Total Quality Management (TQM) vocabulary. Productivity enhancement is about increasing productivity so as to ensure organisation success. Together with the product, quality is also another paramount element in TQM. In the era of globalization, both the product and the quality are two important elements to be considered by factories, firms, and organisations as well as production managers and workers. Product and quality are not limited concepts that can only be applied to production plants like factories. These two concepts are also relevant to community development enterprises such as community-based groups, community cooperatives or other forms of informal groups or organisations. Like factories, such organisations are able to produce some kinds of services to be utilised by the users. In the community development context, a community cooperative could provide loans or assistance for its members, while a community-based group could come up with a mutual-help activity or an income generating activity such as initiating a small-scale industry producing foods or handicraft goods. The end-users are the community members within a same geographical area or nearby neighbourhood. The process to produce such services or products involves a process of working with individuals or community members (*after this, both terms will be used interchangeably in this writing*), which in principle is similar to that of a factory producing certain products.

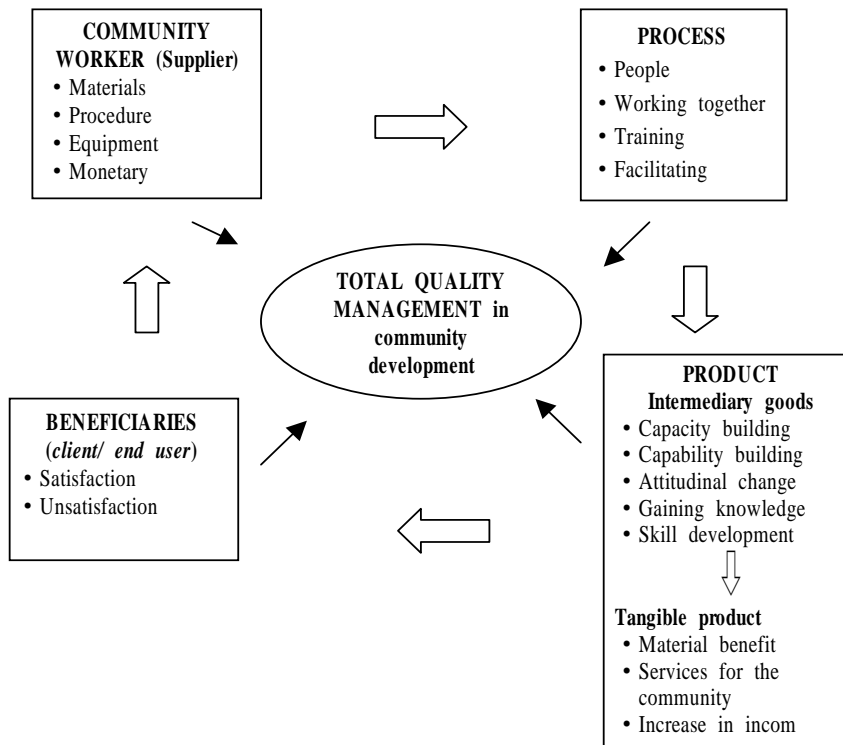
### What is Total Quality Management (TQM) in community development work?

For a layman, TQM is a concept loaded with tasks to be performed. The whole notion is about enhancing productivity. In a factory, the process to increase productivity demands a series of management so as to ensure the product produced has certain quality standard. For an example, besides managing the inputs or raw materials in the production process, the workers are also being supervised and managed by the supervisor so as to achieve the targeted

goal. Similarly, community development is “a process during which the people in the small community first thoroughly discuss and define their wants, and then plan and act together to satisfy them.” (Batten, 1957:1)...The goal (of community development) is ... “to improve the living conditions of the people, ... to help them learn a way of living and working together which may apply at any time to any problems which effect their communal life” (ibid: 64). On a similar account, Mezirow (1960:137-38) stressed that “the community development process is, in essence, a planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the effective solution of as a wide range of community improvement problems as possible in an order of priority determined by their levels of competence.” In short, in order to achieve the common desired goals and to find solutions to a problem, community members need to organise and plan an action, and also need to be coached. Here, therefore, the art of managing the people is important in a community development endeavour. In a factory, the management tool to ensure the achievement of a targeted output is supervision, whereas in community development the management tool is facilitation. It is the community worker who acts as a facilitator who facilitates, coaches, guides, and advises community members on their actions. Here, “productivity” in community development terms can be defined as an achievement of a stated common goal, accomplishment of a certain task related to common needs, and/ or other forms of benefit gained, such as experience, knowledge, and skill development as a result of participating in an action. In other words, productivity in community development can be a tangible and non-tangible product (goal) (see Diagram 1).

Based on this premise, there are three practical concepts of TQM that are relevant to community development work: namely, (i) managing the people, (ii) the purpose, and (iii) the stakeholder. These concepts are quite related to the management tool in community development work; that is facilitation. These (practical) concepts are the building blocks of a product. Here, however, it is important to note that though the concept of ‘product’ in TQM vocabulary is applicable to community development work, it is not “a direct template” to a community development endeavour. Many intangible products, such as capacity building, capability building, attitudinal change, consensus building, teamwork, cooperation and so forth, are needed and developed in a community

Diagram 1. Cyclical of the total quality management in community development



development process as the human capital aspect. It is agreed that they are not the final products as defined in TQM vocabulary, as they may be considered as 'intermediary goods' or 'transitional products.' However, without the so-called "intermediary goods," a more tangible output/ product, such as an increase in the monthly income among community members, ability to build a community centre, to sustain a communal activity, to offer services for the community and other forms of benefit, is difficult to achieve. Thus, the human capital aspect needs to be shaped, sharpened, gauged, monitored, and cultured; and this demands a kind of management whereby the philosophy, principles, practices, and the working mode of TQM are applicable in a community development process. Before the final product, a more tangible one could be materialised.

The applicability of TQM (principles, norms, and working culture) to community development work is described in four broad aspects: namely, the

idea of managing the people, the purpose of managing the people, the stakeholders, and lastly, the facilitation as a management tool to enhance productivity. Again, it is important to caution here that productivity has been defined earlier as the tangible and non-tangible product (goal) in community development terms.

## Managing the people

One basic idea underlying the TQM philosophy is that following a standard process of production or operation would produce a desired result (product), and this is known as the quality performance standard. Hence, the main concerns of TQM are (a) the people, (b) process, and (c) performance. If these three basic elements are in harmony, the workers in a certain operation would be able to produce an output of a standard quality. Similarly, in community development work, the process to achieve a desired goal (product) also involves the people (community members) working on the inputs or materials, capitalising the equipment and facilities and following certain procedures in the collective action. Therefore, individuals and their participation are the basic ingredients in a community development process. However, this process cannot develop on its own, but needs to be supervised and managed; and therefore, facilitation (supervision in the case of a factory) is important.

In a quality management system, there are four basic concepts stressed: (i) the product (output), (ii) the process - the operation to generate the output, (iii) the clients or end-users (or beneficiaries in community development), and (iv) the supplier - the provider/services provider. These concepts are also applicable in the community development process as illustrated in diagram 1. The whole enterprise is cyclical in nature, which does reflect the continuous exercise towards achieving and enhancing productivity.

In community development work, the community worker who is a facilitator (supervisor) provides assistance in terms of providing advice, procedure, materials, grants, and equipment during the process of working with the community members to bring about a change. As a facilitator, the community worker manages and monitors the process of operation to ensure the achievement of a desired or targeted goal (tangible product). Apart from that, his or

her role is to organise, coordinate, and motivate the community members, mediate and synchronise their ideas, energy, efforts, suggestions, and other contributions towards promoting capacity building among the community members (intangible products/goals). This process of developing and sustaining the intangible product/goal later enables and enhances the process of meeting a desired goal. All this involves managing the people in a community development enterprise. Also, working along this principle, a community worker provides the hands-on experiences to the community members to help them in their collective actions to generate outputs at the end of the process.

A quality management system employed and supported by an appropriate and efficient monitoring system, such as supervision (in a factory) or facilitation (in community development work) helps to guarantee a quality product. The only difference is that in a factory the products are tangible, but in community development work it may produce the tangible and/or intangible products, such as services development (communal services), material benefits, capacities building, attitudinal changes, knowledge enhancement, or skills development among the community members who participate in the process (see more discussion on “The purpose”). A quality product produced by a factory satisfies consumers or end-users. Similarly, a quality product in community development benefits the community at large by increasing their well-being and fulfilling their spare time by organizing activities; and to some extent, it enables them to use such products in carrying out some other activities.

However, expectations and needs from customers, clients, or beneficiaries change over time. This implies that the product or the output produced should also meet the current demands. To fulfil the current demands means to produce a new product. That new product is becoming a new set of goals for a community development process (or for a factory as well). In order to keep update with the new demands or new challenges as in community development terms, the operational process requires a quality management system. It is a management system that responds to clients or beneficiaries and that is able to meet the required demand. All these ideas are applicable to community development work. For example, the sustainability of a community-based organisation or a communal cooperative organisation, among other factors, also depends on their ability to offer new services to meet the needs of clients or prospective clients. In order to meet those demands, a quality

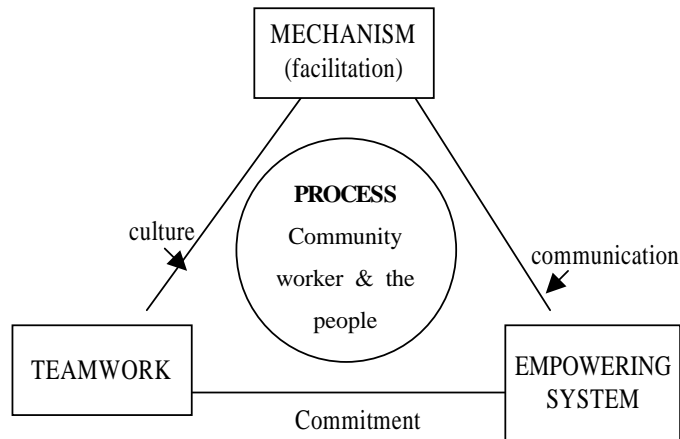
management system of working that encourages and guides individuals to contribute towards achieving the product or output is needed. For that reason, a community-based organisation or alike should have its own vision, mission, objectives (quality), and a functional management system. This means that the caretaker and its team members should adhere to it and create a culture of working that encourages the spirit of teamwork, commitment, openness, free flow of communication, mutual support, hard working, cooperation, and accountability among the members. The inter-relation between these elements would harness the process of enhancing productivity.

In a community development endeavour, it is said that the joint effort between the people and the helping professional, i.e. the community worker, is important (see the United Nations, 1960; Twelvetrees, 1991). In fact, the spirit of cooperation between community members to achieve their common goals or to solve common problems is also emphasised (Thomas, 1983; Kramer & Specht, 1969). It is believed that self-help and mutual support help to develop neighbourhood integration that promotes collective action to bring about change in the community (the goal or achievement). This is the meaning of teamwork in community development process.

The spirit of teamwork between both parties, the community worker and community members, and also between community members could help to synergise ideas, energy and other forms of contribution towards achieving a common goal or a shared goal. The facilitation activity as a mechanism to promote an empowering working environment for the community members employed by the community worker could help to increase the individual's commitment towards achieving the desired goal. These three elements constitute the pillar for quality management as shown in diagram 2.

In the context of community development, the commitment to work for achieving a product is very much related to the socialisation between community members and the community worker. The working culture is possible to be nurtured and developed among community members. This is possible through open discussion or two ways communication between the change agent, i.e. the community worker and community members in a teamwork spirit. The humanistic elements such as the changing of ideas among them and the willingness of the community worker as the front-line worker to listen to the people's suggestion encourage the free flow of communication.

Diagram 2. Inter-relation between elements in the quality management of CD  
*(Adaptation from Oakland's model of total quality management)*



Subsequently, this creates an empowering working environment which eventually smoothens the process of working. Ultimately, this could assist both parties to achieve not only a desired goal but also quality results.

### The purpose

Basically, the purpose of TQM is to ensure the success of an organisation, which is manifested in the product, quality, and performance. In the community development practice, the philosophy of TQM can become a tool to improve the community-based organisation ability or community effort to effectively meet the group goal. In relation to this, the main principle is managing the people so that they can work together productively. For those who participate in the process, their skills, knowledge, and confidence could be developed, and consequently enhance the working process to achieve their desired goals. On the other hand, for those who are not involved directly in the process, they may benefit from the activities initiated by active participants. In a simple word, the basic idea of TQM is about assuring the people to do things continuously to provide a desirable outcome which benefits the community members. And, it is within that process where individuals could also develop their capacity and capability. Of course, as mentioned earlier, productivity in



community development encompasses the tangible and/or intangible product. The intangible product is usually known as process goal, whereas the tangible one is called product goal. Both are equally important. Many proponents of this idea (Twelvetrees, 1991; Barr, 1991; Gilbert and Specht, 1977; Dunham, 1970; Rothman, 1969; Sanders, 1969) agree that the process goal is about changing the people's knowledge, skills and confidence, whereas the product goal is more concerned with the materials gained. The former, which stresses more about the capacity building of individuals who are engaged in the process, can be labelled as 'intermediary goods' or 'transitional product.' On the other hand, the "product goal" of community development is always said to be the tangible one that is equivalent to the final output in TQM terminology.

Although the meaning of "product" between TQM and community development is slightly different, the essence of the concept is very important to community development work. The continuous process in community development endeavour involves the interdependence between the transitional product (intermediary goods) and the product goal (end-product). It is believed that without the development of the transitional product, i.e. human capital (capacity and capability building), the subsequent process to develop or to gain the tangible product by the community themselves would be difficult. Furthermore, the purpose of community development is not a 'one-off business.' Theoretically and practically, the process to develop the community never stops, even though the stated goals have already been achieved. The next is the question to sustain the level of achievement and/or to improve it (in accordance with the changing needs and new challenges faced by community members). This is about maintaining the achievement, as well as improving the performance (as in TQM terms) of a community development endeavour. The sustainability of community development, which includes its tangible and intangible product, could be assured when the individuals in the community or community-based organisation have equipped themselves with skills, knowledge, experiences, confidence and possess positive values. In other words, when individuals are empowered, they know what to do, when to do, and how to do it effectively and efficiently. Indeed, both the tangible and non-tangible product of community development can be achieved and secured, originating from an appropriate management and monitoring system, empowering the working environment, good working spirit, and a proper mechanism of encour-

agement given by the community worker. This is the whole notion of a quality management system in community development work.

### The stakeholders

The basic question is who are the stakeholders? In a firm, organisation, or factory, the stakeholders are the CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) and other top-level managers, supervisors, workers, and the shareholders. These are the individuals who have interest in productivity. It is the management team, i.e. the managers and supervisors who try their best to meet the quality performance standard of operation by optimising resources to produce the output. Besides that, they have to understand the customer's needs. If not, it may result in tonnes of products unsold. This concern is also applicable in the community development context. The stakeholders are the policy makers, community workers, indigenous leaders, community leaders, local activists, and community members at large. A general policy on development is decided upon by the policy maker, and implemented by the community worker who works closely with the indigenous leader, local activists, and community members at the local level. Like in the production line, the support from community members through their participation is important in a community development activity. Without the people's participation, the end product to achieve a desirable result may be hampered. The importance of community members' contributions must be made known to them. They must be motivated, encouraged, and facilitated towards meeting the targeted goal (output). The feeling of ownership toward the whole organisation, or a co-operative, or an activity or any endeavour among the stakeholders is important. This helps to ensure that they work hard to enhance productivity and be accountable for it. Though different stakeholders play different roles at different level, the principle of management that values the teamwork spirit, an empowering system of working, and humanistic working culture could improve productivity.

## Facilitation: A technique to enhance productivity in community development

Based on diagram 2, facilitation is one of the management tools to facilitate the working process with the people to enhance productivity. It is about a process of how to get things done or “how to do things” in an easy or convenient way, with some assistance or guidance. An individual who facilitates community members or individuals in a group to achieve a desired goal is known as a facilitator. Besides community worker, an extension agent, community developer, a community nurse, and a leader or a chairman of a local institution can be a facilitator. His/her fundamental role is to facilitate, give guidance, and assist and help individuals in a group or community members in various stages of a community development activity, such as identifying and prioritising the needs (and/or problems), making decisions, planning, defining and redefining goals, implementing (and assigning tasks/responsibilities), networking, resource finding, and evaluating. In the words of Hunter, Bailey and Taylor (1996), ‘facilitation is the art of guiding the group process towards the agreed objectives’ (p. 36). This demands a close working relationship between the facilitator and the community members.

Embedded in the facilitating activity is a learning exercise. Community members learn how to rationalise, organise, strategise, plan, implement, and manage things at different stages of community development process. For example, before establishing a community group or organisation, a facilitator can act as a consciousness raiser so as to make community members consciously aware about their problems. At this stage, community members learn how a particular problem affects their lives. Of course, for this to happen, a facilitator does not have a pre-set content or design idea or curriculum, but the idea of improvement and how to overcome problems emerge from community members through group discussions, meetings, or brain storming sessions. Similarly, at the implementation or planning stage, the opportunity for community members to learn and gather new skills facilitated by a facilitator is wide open. They can learn how to help themselves through experience. The experiential learning or learning by doing under the coaching of a facilitator provides community members the hands-on experience of going about doing things. The learning process is heavily based on the sharing principle in which

the exchanging of information or ideas between community members and a facilitator promotes the transferring and accumulation of knowledge. Internalising the information (which then becomes knowledge) and then utilising it would assist the process to achieve a common goal. All these learning activity is about a continuous improvement gained by community members towards achieving a certain decided goal. Thus, facilitation ensures productivity.

Since the basis of facilitation is about sharing information, there are lots of opportunities that community members can benefit. This is possible because a facilitation process takes place in a democratic style or manner. The facilitator who assists a discussion through a probing technique enables community members to give opinions freely. The freedom to speak for themselves encouraged by a facilitator subsequently helps community members or group members to develop individual skills such as (i) to understand the common problem and /or common need, (ii) to prioritise the need or/and problem, (iii) to initiate an action, and (iv) to develop a plan of action towards improving their community lives. Nevertheless, it is important to note that different individuals might gain different types and levels of skills depending on the form and focus of the action they participate. For example, those who are involved in a discussion that focuses on understanding community problems differ slightly from those who focus on formulating a plan of action to overcome an identified problem. However, one cannot deny that there are skills and knowledge acquired by community members in every facilitation session. The knowledge and skills gained can be utilised by community members in the future when facing a similar kind of issue and problem. Subsequently, more skills and knowledge can be tapped to further improve the personal qualities of community members. Hence, facilitation is about building the people's capacity. It is also about empowering the people through enhancing their personal qualities as they developed their experience, motor skill, information gathering and processing skills, social skill, knowledge, communication skill, and so forth. The increase in the people's capacity as a transitional product in community development process would foster productivity enhancement.

Another form of facilitating activity is the process of synchronizing ideas. In such a process, the facilitator guides the discussion towards an agreement. This consensus building process teaches community members to accept other people's views, rationalise things, and later integrate them togeth-

er as a common idea. The process of synchronising various ideas from different sources through facilitation is an activity seeking a quality of solution or an answer pertaining to an issue. Seeking a quality solution eases the action process to achieve a targeted goal; hence, it is in line with the productivity enhancement endeavour.

Although there might be conflicting ideas during a facilitating activity, group or community members will be able to learn to respect views, ideas, and suggestions from their friends, harmonised by the facilitator. It is during this activity that the process of nurturing the 'value of sharing to seek the best solution' takes place. It also promotes group or community members' cohesiveness, mutual respect, and mutual trust that help strengthen the social bond between them. The cognitive process to rationalise things and subsequently accept and tolerate other people's ideas and opinions by individuals has some developmental effect on the group as a whole. It encourages the development of teamwork. Hence, it could be argued that this technique has the potential to develop the culture of working together among the people towards achieving a common targeted goal. This culture is then manifested in the group cooperation to execute an agreed plan of action aimed at achieving a desired goal. In short, there is a good practice to enhance productivity embedded in this technique.

Working together as a group on a certain matter through facilitation enables individuals to establish linkages and contact with others. This would create avenues for individuals to develop their networks. Such a human relationship helps to enlarge the pool of resources, which include skills, knowledge, ideas, etc. that can be utilised whenever needed during the actual implementation of a project. In this respect, facilitation promotes and enlarges network qualities, which assist the process to achieve the goal and enhance productivity.

## Conclusion

In summary, the essence of TQM is about the people doing things (the process) to produce an outcome (product); and to assure that this take place sys-

tematically, continuously, and productively, quality management is needed. Such a management practise, concepts, and management tools are also applicable to community development works in terms of managing the people, process, and resources towards producing a certain desired goal that benefits the people. It also ensures the continuous participation from the people. In that process of working underpinned by a quality management system, as far as community development work is concerned, could generate and strengthen the intangible product (intermediary good or transitional product), and subsequently the tangible product. A systematic and organised participation enables community members to achieve their common goal (product), such as an increase in agriculture production, income, or a reduction in the incidence rate of poverty, child deaths, epidemics and so forth. Besides that, along the participation process, community members could also develop skills, experience, confidence, and knowledge. Hence, both the tangible and non-tangible products are the outcome of a quality management system in the community development work. A quality management system employs a kind of management tool that ensures the systematic, organised, and productive management practice. In community development enterprise, facilitation is one of such management tools. Facilitation promotes the following: sharing of information; synchronising of ideas; establishing teambuilding, mutual respect and trust; developing and strengthening skills, confidence, ability, capacity, and networks among members. All these elements are the building blocks for developing individual and group empowerment. Thus, facilitation promotes the development of social and human capital; and utilising this capital effectively and systematically helps to enhance productivity. Indeed, the TQM and its management philosophy offer a number of practical concepts which are applicable to community development and community work endeavour, though some terms such as 'product' are not "direct templates" as noted at the beginning of this paper. Nevertheless, the philosophy of managing the people with a purpose (i.e. to meet a decided common goal) through the facilitation as a mechanism to increase members' commitments and individuals' capacities to achieve the goal(s) promotes a quality and empowering working culture in community development works.

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