

Assignment cover sheet

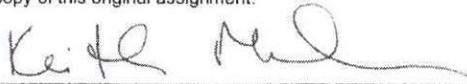
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Unit code: SWTP205	Unit title Social Work Practice with Communities
Due Date: June 12, 2007	Date Submitted: June 12, 2007
Lecturer-in-Charge: Peter Humphries	
Tutorial group:	
Assignment Title and/or number: Evaluation of a social development initiative – "budge"	
Lecturer's comments:	
Result	

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

1. This assignment is submitted in accordance with the Academic Regulations and the Academic Honesty Policy.
2. No part of this assignment has been copied from any other source without acknowledgement of the source.
3. No part of this assignment has been written by any other person, except to the extent of collaboration and/or groupwork approved by the Lecturer-in-Charge.
4. This assignment has not been recycled, using work substantially the same as work I have completed previously and which has been counted towards satisfactory completion of another unit of study credited towards another qualification, unless the Lecturer-in-Charge has granted prior written consent to do so.
5. I have made and retained a copy of this original assignment.

Signature of student:



As discussed, a few elements of the paper were from my group assignment last year. Copy attached as appendix.

The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems. Mahatma Gandhi

1. budge

a-Introduction

budge is a social development initiative being designed to raise awareness of structural deficiencies in the Canadian political system. An unreported case of systemic corruption involving senior politicians, officials at the federal broadcasting authority (CRTC) and media companies; corruption designed to transfer wealth from citizens to influential corporate shareholders, which I actively opposed during 1995-06. In addition to the loss of more than \$C 1.3 billion, citizens have also been denied their statutory rights in the process, as documented on my website www.CRTCscandal.com. The case serves to illustrate how Canadian citizens are oppressed by a system which is unduly influenced by corporate leaders. It is the position of Ellis and Scott (2003) community initiatives are required to "rejuvenate democracy" in Western countries because "the state has become increasingly complicit with capital, at the expense of the well-being of the private citizen (p.254)." Furthermore, according to Freire, "[t]he oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a contrary conviction can begin to grow within them. Until this occurs, they will continue to be disheartened, fearful, and beaten (1970, p.40)." Consequently, it is my intention to challenge the case of corruption again, however, more in a role as an educator than a crusader this time, and also by concentrating on building a coalition against the oppressors, which I hope will result in a sustainable and effective outcome. In light of the fact that I am designing the initiative, I admit to a bias that I have already evaluated it to be worthwhile. Elements of the initiative are addressed in this paper, including supportive research. Furthermore, I plan to subsequently use my involvement in the case to try to raise awareness of mental illness and challenge its negative stigma, which requires that that the initiative be logical and professional. This paper only focuses on the first phase of the social/community development initiative.

b. Values & Principles

budge qualifies as a legitimate social work intervention, as social change and political action are promoted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) to challenge inequities and injustices in society (IFSW, 2000). Moreover, the Australian Association of Social Workers is "committed to promoting fairness in the distribution of economic resources and access to political power (AASW, 2006). Furthermore, radical social work is an authentic part of social work tradition, one which embraces

emancipatory politics and “provides an important social critique of the economic realities of an unequal society” (Powell, 2001, p.69).

In addition, the initiative is based upon fundamental principles of community development, including a commitment to powerless people, social justice, citizenship, participatory democracy, empowerment, change, and practising the power of example (Kenny, 2006). Moreover, emancipatory dialogue and trust in members of the public are inherent elements of *budge*, as advocated by Freire (1970). Specifically, the initiative is educative in nature, designed to facilitate understanding of the corruption’s existence, and its structural origins, beneficiaries and possible solutions. Moreover, it is constructed to create conditions ripe for increased dialogue and potential unity for collective action against the oppression. Accordingly, a concerted effort will be made to create the right conditions to encourage participation, including explaining the importance of each person’s participation, clear language, an assortment of ways to participate, a simple process, and support and value participation, as recommended by Ife and Tesoriero (2006). One key requirement of such participation is for me to effectively transfer my regulatory expertise and knowledge of the corruption to the community in order to facilitate independence, while also providing advice on strategies to combat the oppression (Powell, 2001).

As an empowerment-based community development initiative, I accept that “[t]he process of community development ‘involves stimulating communication between people with a view to social action for the ultimate purpose of transforming individuals and society for the better’ (O’Sullivan, 1993:59, as cited Powell, 2001, p.108), which requires citizens to be able to see their oppression, enter into dialogue, critically question the structures of oppression, and be motivated to act; all characteristics of empowerment (O’Sullivan, 1993, as cited in Powell, 2001), and similar to the concept of ‘conscientisation’ by Freire (1970). In addition, the initiative is founded upon a trust in citizens to be able to understand and act to resolve the matter once aware of the oppression, because the system cannot be changed without their active support. Furthermore, according to Powell (2001), “[t]rust is the basis of an inclusive society (p.97).” Similarly, Freire (1972) advocated trusting and acting with the people, not for the people, because the legitimacy of actions is dependent upon the genuine participation of the people.

2. Methods

a. Change in Methods

According to Tropman & Erlich (as cited in Rothman, Erlich & Tropman, 2001, p.240), the three main change initiators, including at the societal level, are force, inducement, and agreement, or “hit, buy, and woo”. In 1995-06, I converted my expertise and transactional skills into force to strike against the system in the political and legal arena, and through supportive media outlets. However, I had insufficient

force to successfully pressure elected government to initiate an independent inquiry into the issue. Consequently, this time, I am going to concentrate on using inducement and agreement styles to try to influence existing organizations with more power to hit the system hard enough to change it. Furthermore, I am going to place information on the Internet to limit my dependence upon journalists to address the public interest issues for advocates and citizens.

b. www.CRTCscandal.com

A website is being constructed to properly document the case of corruption in a clear, orderly, accessible and compelling manner. Given my location in Australia, my past experience with the media, the corruption being obscured by technical and complex regulatory issues, my limited resources and damaged credibility, the size and nature of my opponents, and the importance of maintaining my mental health, the method is sound. Canada is one of the world's top 15 online markets (Computer Industry Almanac, 2006). Moreover, Surman and Reilly (2003) note that the Internet is being successfully used to mobilize people to participate in social action and the authors state that the ability for activists to use networked technologies more strategically and politically is imperative for civil society. Specifically, the Internet; frees groups from requiring mainstream media for mobilization; permits personal contributions between activists; is an extremely cost-effective medium for people to learn about and support an organization; and facilitates the collection of large email lists and permits rapid organization with little effort (Surman & Reilly, 2003).

c. Theoretical Framework

A critical theory/modernism framework has been assessed to be appropriate for the initiative. As articulated by Ife (1997), critical theory: is based upon social action; is political by nature; requires structural analysis to identify causes of oppression and direction of change; acknowledges that the forces of capitalism are often hidden by limited analysis by the mainstream media; and is focused on 'liberation' of people through education of social issues. In addition, 'politicisation and collectivisation' is a modernistic approach to addressing economic social problems (Allan, 2003).

d. Primary Role & Target Audience

I am changing from my prior crusader role for that of an educator. Furthermore, the majority of my time and resources will be spent researching potential allies and trying to collaborate with existing groups and key individuals who have demonstrated a social change agenda and are in a position to use the case of systemic corruption to advance their own public interest agendas. This is the primary focus of dialogue is planned, to assist these groups to address the corruption and raise awareness of the case to

and the I.F.S.W.?

their constituents and other citizens. In addition to consumer and public interest groups, I will also contact labour unions, whose members are being financially oppressed by the corruption, and who might wish to publicly address the example of excess corporate influence in government to promote and support their ideology. Moreover, unions are important due to their large membership base and the financial resources to pursue the issue to its logical conclusion. Proponents of social justice, such as the social work profession is another potential ally, for example, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) serves close to 1,600 educational programs globally and represents the profession at the UN (Hokenstad & Midgley, 2004). In addition, anti-globalization activists reject the existing corporate power and 'dominant ethos of modern capitalism' and "[m]ovement participants strongly embrace social and environmental justice, human rights, and the idea of democratic participation" (Buttel, 2003). Consequently, activists like Naomi Klein will be contacted. It is my belief that a collaborative focus will serve to enhance credibility of the case, build momentum and help safeguard sustainability of the initiative.

e. Opportunistic Activist

I will still act as a direct activist, but only when a good opportunities present themselves, and where the potential value warrants the time, effort and risk. Moreover, I will focus on short-term micro-campaigns which will also leave a paper trail for purposes of accountability and opportunities for action research. For example, I have researched and determined that the single largest beneficiary of the corruption is a Rogers Communications Inc. (Rogers). I have researched the financial analysts for Rogers in both Canada and the USA and have their contact information. To launch the updated website, I am planning to have my barrister notify the analysts of the website so that they can factor in the potential cost of public discovery of the case into the stock price. The company's TSE and NYSE stock prices are to be posted on the website. In addition, a report into the program production fund which is involved in the case is to be released soon and it is my plan to incorporate that into website to take advantage of heightened interest in the fund. As noted by Jansson (1999), "[e]ffective policy practitioners skilfully select propitious moments to inject issues into political deliberations. John Kingdon suggests that 'windows of opportunity' exist when background factors are particularly favourable" (p.71).

f. Participation, Dialogue, Action

In terms of participation, it is imperative that my website serve to direct citizens to contact existing groups who are equipped with the resources to enter into constructive dialogue with them, effectively utilize their support, and convert such support into effective collective action. As a result, contact information, hotlinks, websites, quotes and references will be available on my website to facilitate

further contact and support. As an independent citizen in Australia, I am not in a position to play such a role in direct dialogue with numerous individuals. According to Freire, “[p]olitical action on the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, hence, action *with* the oppressed.” Hence, it is logical for me to act as a participation facilitator and provide accurate information to let people know what is happening in the case of corruption, and the parties to contact to act collectively, because I do not have the political power or resources to directly the system. However, I will have a blog to keep readers up to date on any developments, to suggest strategies, and I will offer a database for those who want to subscribe for alerts. Furthermore, I will post messages from organizations and citizens involved in the struggle, so citizens will know where to contact, support, trust, join and take collective action with. Moreover, micro-electronic campaigns will be periodically initiated, such as an e-petition, and their will be on-line polling on the website so citizens can easy make their views known on aspects of the issue. Contact details for politicians and bureaucrats will also be posted, along with letter templates for those interested, and submissions to the website will be encouraged from individuals or groups who want to address the issue.

g. Explanation of Cause

The structural deficiencies will be evident from reading the chronology of the case of corruption, but will also be specifically addressed as a designated part of the website. For the sake of credibility, I will use information from a number of experts in this regard to address issues of regulatory capture and other contributing factors in the current system to account for the oppression. Experts cited will include Powell (2001), Democracy Watch (2007), Balkan (2004), Domhoff (1979) and Jansson (1999). For examples, please see Appendix 1. In addition to building greater credibility, reliance upon experts will also create a vested interest for those people to support the website initiative, as they will be notified that their material is on the website.

h. Vision

A critical theory framework is based upon optimism that positive change is indeed possible (Ife, 1997). Furthermore, according to Jansson “[p]olicy advocates need a vision of a preferred state of affairs, whether in specific agencies, communities, regions, states, or the nation” (1999, p.19). Consequently, a vision of what a reformed regulatory system might look like, and its benefits for citizens, will be an important element of the website. Similar to how references from experts will be cited to identify the causes of the corruption, information from other sources will also be relied upon to support the vision. Using influential people’s referenced content on the website will also increase the probability of it being accepted by readers (Simms, as cited in Rothman, Erlich & Tropman, 2001, p.171).

3. SKILLS

a. Analytic, Political, Interactional & Value-Clarification Skills

The scope and objectives of the initiative require an assortment of ‘advanced analytical, political, interactional and value-clarification’ skills. According to Jansson (1999), competencies in these specific skills “can only be developed by practicing them in agency, community, and legislative settings” (p. 66), which means that my prior experience is an advantage for the present initiative. In my opinion, my strengths lie in analytical, strategic, and interpersonal skills, and knowledge of the technical details of the regulations and the case history. Writing, however, is not a personal strength and has formerly been a trigger for relapse of symptoms of mental illness. As a result, I have located several writers for hire to assist me, and I will also be searching for other people who want to address the issue who are better writers than I am because it is essential for the sake of credibility that content on the website be accurate and high quality. Similarly, I have also retained a professional graphic artist and web designer.

b. Target Identification

According to Brager, Specht & Torczyner (1973, p.403), “[a] major task of the direct actionist is to locate the ‘soft underbelly’ of the target, his point of greatest vulnerability, while simultaneously protecting his own flank from counterattack.” Based upon my knowledge of the regulatory regime and the system, I consider the identified case of systemic corruption as an ideal target to attack to demonstrate the structural deficiencies, one which holds significant promise as a catalyst for change. At the same time, I think that it is time to repackage, update and escalate the issue by focusing on the refusal of the current Prime Minister, elected on a promise to clean up government, to respond to notification of the corruption. In terms of protecting my “flank”, the collaborative approach and my status as a mental health advocate both protect me to a degree in this area. Ideally, groups will pick up on it quickly and my opponents will be unable to leverage my mental illness at all. Alternately, my opponents might successfully attack my credibility based upon my mental illness, in which case the tactic will be turned into an asset for the upcoming anti-stigma initiative, www.nakedadvocate.com.

c. Personalize & Polarize

Furthermore, last time I focused on the issue and did not personalize the issues, which I think was a mistake. This time, several high-profile “persons of interest” involved in the corruption will be identified on my website, including a billionaire, the Prime Minister, a Cabinet Minister, and the head of the public broadcaster (formerly an industry lobbyist).

Alinsky offers a tactical rule which, while not as universally applicable as he suggest, is nevertheless, an important starting point for direct action. "Pick the target," he says, "freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." He argues that in our complex and interrelated society, it is difficult to fix responsibility and identify an enemy. When protesters shift their attention from one jurisdiction to another, they dissipate their energies and diffuse their strength. The argument, in effect, speaks to focus which, as we've suggested in earlier chapters, is relevant to many aspects of community work practice. Targets must also be personal rather than abstract in order to arouse the hostility necessary for contest tactics to be effective. City Hall is an inanimate structure, Alinsky points out, and corporations do not have soul or identity (Brager, Specht & Torczyner, 1973, p.404)

d. Language

Given the complexities of the issues and the reliance upon content on a website to make a case against the system, the proper use of language is vital in terms of building credibility and establishing allies, both written and verbal. As addressed by Jansson (1999), "[e]ven analysis intersects with politics, however, because it must be framed so as to attract the attention of decision makers. Words, titles, and explanations must be both comprehensible and palatable to decision makers" (p.72). Since my primary function is to secure interest and support of the issue by other groups, the language used must be tailored for that audience. As a result, I will focus on language that is calm, clear, and understated, as the facts of the case are sufficiently damning under close inspection that it is not necessary to risk losing credibility by over-selling the case. "There are other practical reasons, besides ethics, for not overstating the case, one of which is the risk of losing credibility. Credibility may be one of the most important resources that advocates must garner and protect" (Ezell, 2001p.44). On the surface, this decision might not appear to be supported by the call for emancipatory language by both Freire (1970) and Ife (1997), but I believe it to be logical and practical because the groups that I am contacting are in a position to raise more awareness of the corruption to citizens than me, so if I lose their support due to inflammatory language, citizens are to be denied their greatest opportunity to learn about their oppression. Moreover, citizens who do discover my website will still be able to read about the structural oppression. Furthermore, there is nothing to stop me from elevating the tone of the language once the case hits wider public knowledge and/or more people are subscribing to my web database. As noted before, I will be relying upon external assistance in writing content for the website.

e. Mental Health Management

Given that the initiative is initially highly dependent upon my skills, motivation, and knowledge, I consider my ability to manage my mental illness as my most important skill for the success for *budge*. As I subscribe to a holistic mental health model (modified from Parsons, Santos, Hernandez & Jorgensen, as cited in Rothman, Erlich & Tropman, 2001), it is my plan to try to limit my stress, continue effective

treatment, and obtain adequate sleep during the initiative. The collaborative approach being adopted and securing help writing are expected to contribute to good mental health by increasing my existing support system and reducing my stress.

$$\text{Mental Health} = \frac{\text{coping skills} + \text{self esteem} + \text{support system}}{\text{organic factors} + \text{stress}}$$

4. Ethical Issues & Considerations

There are a number of ethical issues and considerations related to this initiative. First, the information on my website has to be accurate in order for my practice to be ethical (Ezell, 2001). Second, disclosure is another ethical issue because I also intend to subsequently use the initiative for raising awareness of mental illness, but I am not disclosing that intention or my diagnosis of mental illness. It is my determination that such disclosure is not warranted at this time, since the information on the website is to be correct and my mental illness does not impact upon the facts of the corruption. Third, according to Ezell (2001, p.188), “looking for a fight” is a barrier to effective advocacy and my personal experience of oppression pushes me in that direction at times. Consequently, I have to focus on the public interest objectives and act accordingly, but I understand that there is naturally a link between self and the political (Ife, 1997). Fourth, my expertise is power and it is my responsibility to adopt a “mutually empowering and educative process” to share my expertise with other citizens or I will be depriving them their right to responsibility and an opportunity for personal growth (Corey, 2006). Fifth, at present I am not under supervision. Given the range of competencies required in the initiative, I require supervision as soon as possible as its omission is a major deficit and not best practice. Sixth, due to the potential of legal litigation as a tool by my opponents, I have to take appropriate measures to safeguard my future supervisor/s and other citizens in the group from unnecessary risks, while encouraging their participation (Corey, 2001). Seventh, there is also the risk that people from ultra-radical groups, with contrary values, might want to become actively involved. Eighth, given the number of ethical issues, and the personal immersion of myself in this issue, a reflective practice is warranted.

4. Summary

The initiative has been assessed as being worthwhile, logical and appropriate. At the same time, however, the fact that the website is only going to be launched in English is a problem due to the significant percentage of French-speaking Canadians. It is hoped that an ally will be found who has the resources to translate material into French. In addition, one key issue which will impact on the success of the initiative is to what extent I am able to effectively transition from my former crusader role into one of

educator/collaborator. I am going to have to continually remind myself of my role, and act according in order to be effective because being a crusader was exciting and felt natural. As noted by Snare (as cited in Rothman, Erlich & Tropman (2001, p.316), "crusaders create their agendas by "inside initiative." Crusaders are entrepreneurs, a driving force behind ideas – their own ideas." This time, however, I need to focus on other people's ideas, and be able to demonstrate how the case of systemic corruption fits into their agendas, because "[i]n highly politicized settings where 'hardball politics' prevails, policy practitioners must develop and use power resources if they wish to be effective (Jansson, 1999, p.70.)." One other change is even more fundamental, trust in the people. In 1995-06, I tried to change the system for the people because I did not trust citizens to act on their own against the oppression. This time, I am trying to create the right conditions whereby people will be in a position to take action to change the system for themselves, and for me. This time, I will fight with the people against the oppression, a prerequisite for victory according to Freire (1970).

Thanks Rick,

A story well told - and I really like how you have linked your experience/ideas to the broader principles of community development. Your paper has real bones since you are talking about something you are doing. Your discussion about your changing role from crusader to educator/collaborator is particularly strong. Excellent use of the literature - good analysis combined with meaningful personal reflection -

great paper!

Pete

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High Distinction!

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Appendix 1

Democracy Watch

"The System is the Scandal!" and no one should be surprised that governments, politicians, government employees, corporations and big business executives act dishonestly, unethically, secretively, non-representatively or wastefully --- the system encourages them to do so through weak rules, weak enforcement, and weak penalties." (Democracy Watch, 2007)

The Corporation

Professor Joel Balkan, a Rhodes Scholar and an internationally renowned legal expert, alleges that, "[t]he corporation's legally defined mandate is to pursue, relentlessly and without exception, its own self-interest, regardless of the often harmful consequences it might cause to others. As a result ... the corporation is a pathological institution, a dangerous possessor of the great power it wields over people and societies (Balkan, 2004, p.1-2)."

According to Balkan, effectively designed and properly enforced regulations "have the potential to stop corporations from harming and exploiting individuals, communities and the environment (Balkan, 2004, p.151)."

According to Balkan, a number of prominent social activists reject that the government is capable of solutions to the problem of corporate domination believing "that government has lost its capacity to contain corporate power. People should confront corporations directly, in the streets and through nongovernmental organizations and community coalitions, they say, rather than relying upon governments to forge solutions (p.151) plus anti-globalization activist

It is Balkan's view that a greater role /facilitated for trade unions, workers' associations, and other organizations which represent interests and constituencies affected by actions of of corporations should be fostered (2004, p.162). The concept of effective counter-balances also fits into the proposed creation of Citizen Utility Board (CUB) legislation made by Democracy Watch.

In addition, Balkan is specifically critical of industry-government partnerships, such as the Canadian Television Fund.

Though corporations have a place in representing their concerns to government and cooperating with government on policy initiatives, the special status they currently enjoy as "partners" with government endangers the democratic process. At a minimum, their influence should be scaled back to a degree more commensurate with other organizations, such as unions, environment and consumer groups, and human rights advocates (Balkan, 2004, p.162-163).

Naomi Klein

According to Naomi Klein, corporations are the most powerful political entities of our time and warrant a direct response from citizens. "The corporation has become the new site of protest (as cited in Balkan, 2004, p.150-151).

The Powers That Be

According to Professor G. William Domhoff, corporations and industry sectors are able to secure “subsidies and procedural rulings” from regulatory agencies in a number of means, including “gifts, bribes, insider dealing, friendship [and], not least, promises of lucrative private jobs in the future for compliant government officials (1979, p.25).”

Moreover, Domhoff notes that regulatory agencies are often captured by the industries that they are expected to regulate.

“It is commonplace that regulatory agencies are often controlled by the businesses they are supposed to regulate. Just about every study acknowledges or demonstrates that point. Nor are the mechanisms of this domination unfamiliar. Many of the agency leaders come directly from the regulated industry. Conversely, longtime agency employees often leave to work for a law firm which represents clients before the agency, or for businesses supposedly being regulated by it. The studies also provide other reasons – the agencies are understaffed, they are harassed by congressional committees that look out for special interest, they are influenced by lobbyists, and information is withheld from them by the businesses themselves (1979, p.31-32).”

Jansson

“In some cases, powerful interests have such clout that they can single-handedly shape the course of deliberations” (Jansson, 1999, p.62).

Powell

Powell addresses internal contradictions of capitalism which explained in the labour theory of value, “which crucially affects the social policies and legal decisions of the state according to the relative strengths or weaknesses of the organised working class at any given point in time. Ultimately, the Marxists claim, government in capitalist society seeks to protect the rights of property. The immersion of the working class is its inevitable consequence, fomented by crises in the capitalist system (Powell, 2001, p.72).”

Recommendations

List recommendations by Professor Balkan and Democracy Watch (Appendix). These recommendations include reforming regulatory agencies by increasing their staffing, accountability, tighter restrictions on the “revolving door” of personal between government and industry, increasing fines against corporations for illegal activities, holding company officials more accountable for the actions of their corporations, appropriate sanctions against offending corporations, and suspending the charters of corporations where warranted, reducing centralized decision-making and bureaucracies.