
Assessing NGO's contribution to the overall quality of life and sustainability of the community, A Case Study.

PH v/d Westhuizen
pietervdw@uj.ac.za

Dr. H Kesa
[hemak@uj.ac.za](mailto:hentak@uj.ac.za)

Abstract

The study first aims to determine the contribution of none governmental organizations, (NGO's) to the overall quality of life of the community and its members. Quality of life is a vague and difficult concept and students have not yet agreed on the definition of quality of life (Kruger, Rootenberg, & Ellis, 2013; Massam, 2002; Dissart and Deller; 2000). The question that needs to be answered is how many of these statements have been translated into sustainable actions? In its simplest form it describes a person's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their life. Well-being and quality of life usually means the same (Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013) and can be measured from a multi-material dimension and non-material dimension (Easterlin and Angelescu, 2012; Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2010). Secondly it identifies the socio-demographic variables relative to quality of life perceptions. Embracing the framework of appreciative inquiry the researchers looks at how community engagement has continued to strive towards sustainability to be sustained in communities and then add to the quality of life in a community. There is a focus on the levels of interest in community engagement, with the intervention of students in a structured academic programme and what is being done by higher education institutions to sustain that interest. Theoretically this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the contribution of the School of Tourism and Hospitality, (STH), working with students over the last years (2014, 2015 and 2016). It is important that the STH develop long-term strategies for the NGO's that will benefit the community and its members and so ensure the sustainability of the relationship with the NGO's and improve the overall quality of life.

Key Words quality of life, community, sustainability and NGO.

Track Research perspectives in Hospitality and Tourism, within the CE arena

Focus of paper: 'Theoretical/Academic'

Introduction

In South Africa, after 15 years of implementing bold new education and strategies to enhance learning at work and realise a more equitable and just society. There is growing realisation that it is time to pause and investigate systematically what works, what does not work, and why. It is time to turn NGO's activities and lifelong learning inside out, in order to re-examine understandings of the operation of NGO's and then the knowledge and learning our students obtain from this.

Quality of Life

Quality of life can be divided into subjective and objective indicators. Objective indicators measure the circumstances of people's lives, such as education attainment and income (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2010). Subjective indicators measure an individual's happiness or satisfaction with a list of capabilities, needs, aspects and functions of life (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2010; Stiglitz et al., 2009). The subjective dimensions covers factors such as life satisfaction, happiness, feelings of well-being, and beliefs about standard of living (Davidson and Cotter, 1991; Diener and Suh, 1997; Dissart and

Deller, 2000; Grayson and Young, 1994).

By using these statements we ventured into measuring the impact our students could have on the quality of life within a community and how a NGO can benefit from it and make this a sustainability venture.

Methodology

Research was conducted over a period of 3 years working within the 2 NGO's, Alex Hospice and Rehabilitation Centre and Tshepang programme for orphaned & vulnerable children. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method was used as a guideline for this research. However, over the last decade it has also been increasingly deployed as a research tool in education. This was very important as the focus was to also measure the learning outcomes of our students. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) funded and conducted a pilot study of AI to investigate its potential use in educational research. In particular, the study aimed to:

- explore the potential and limitations of using AI as a research approach✓
- identify the effectiveness of using AI as a research approach✓
- identify any potential areas where AI might be a valuable research technique✓
- explore the benefits of applying AI from the participants' point of view;✓ and
- examine the financial cost of conducting research using the AI approach✓

The 5 points above were found to be a valuable guideline for this research.

The context selected for piloting AI was young, people, (our students) and community organizations, (2x NGO's). A review of recent literature on community cohesion (Hetherington et al, 2007) revealed a paucity of research on young people's on what can be considered as community cohesion. Moreover, the study also found that local authorities (Las) in deprived areas had implemented several initiatives in schools to build community cohesion, but these initiatives were not sufficiently evaluated. Hence, community cohesion seemed a good choice for the application of AI. In our case all activities related to the two NGOs were fully monitored and assessed within the year programme of Hospitality Practice 1.

What is appreciative inquiry?

Appreciative inquiry is a relatively new theory which takes a positive approach to organisational development. It aims to identify good practice, design effective development plans, and ensure implementation. It focuses the research process around what works, rather than trying to fix what does not. AI therefore presents an alternative to the problem solving approach underpinning action research and offers an alternative approach for evaluating and envisioning future initiatives based on best practice. AI's originators, Cooperider and Srivastva (1987) criticised the lack of useful theory generated by traditional action research studies and claimed that the problem solving theory underpinning action research is to blame. They challenge the fact that action researchers tend to assume that their purpose is to solve a problem and thus groups and organisations are treated not only as if they have problems, but also as if there are problems to be solved. Cooperider and Srivastva argued that this view of organising and researching reduces the possibility of generating new theory and new images of the future. As an alternative, they devised the AI model as a change management process using the **positive** experiences of an organisation or group to bring about change. The main philosophy of AI can be summarised as follows (see Hammond 1996):

- In every society, organisation or group, something works.
- What we focus on becomes our reality.
- Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities
- The act of asking questions of an organisation or group influences the group in the same way.
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.
- If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past. It is important to value differences.
- The language we use creates our reality.

The application of AI takes place in four stages: **discovering, dreaming, designing, and delivering**. This process will fully be explained under results.

Results

Prior to the four stages of AI taking place a **workshop (1)** is held in class (academic theory contact time). The session would cover the following:

- an introduction to the projects, the 2 NGO's to be worked with
- their role and activities they will be involved in as part of this project
- an introduction to community engagement (definition of the Community Engagement policy of the University of Johannesburg).
- an introduction to AI and its different stages to follow
- conducting interview (asking questions, probing and keeping the focus on the positives within the community).
- appointing a student coordinator within the group, taking notes and recording everything.
- evaluating the wrap-up report of the previous group and discuss this
- plan the first visit to the NGO.

Workshop (2) (academic theory contact time). **Discover, share and design**

The team met again in the class contact time to analyse the data (wrap-up report of the previous year), and share the positive stories of events that took place the previous time. Those positive outcomes then became the base of the plan designed by the group to foster the activities for that year. Smaller groups will be formed to work on different projects for that year

Dreaming

The student coordinator and a lecturer will visit the NGO, and dreaming phase will start, to focus on what can be achieved for that year.

Designing

Designing plans for the future which reflects participants' views of good practice and visions. This phase involves producing provocative propositions, which are statements about what the participants want to achieve. A project proposal is handed to the lecturer to be evaluated and assessed.

Delivering

The energy moves toward action planning, working out what will need to happen to realise the provocative propositions of the project.

Table 1

Tshepang programme for orphaned & vulnerable children 2014
Amount of students participating in this project: 29 = 97% positive, 3% not sure
Community's' feedback for the year: Grateful for all the assistance
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Educational talks on proteins and baking products, (staff or volunteers of the orphanage)- Establish a worm farm- Talk on herbs // lesson on seeds, (staff or volunteers of the orphanage)- Vegetable donation and the preparation and freezing of that for the orphanage- Work on a brochure for the centre- Menu, new structure, and introducing of that into the centre- Full clean-up of the area.- Hand out of clothes, colouring in books, and scrap paper.

Table 2

Tshepang programme for orphaned & vulnerable children 2015
Amount of students participating in this project: 27= 100% positive
Community's' feedback for the year: Grateful for all the assistance
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collection of soap and under clothes- Spend time with the children in the centre- Working on distributing posters- Get more baking sheet and pans for the kitchen- Looking at introducing items to be made in the kitchen to be sold to the community- Prepare and install new windows in the centre- Prepare and upgrade computers- Maintaining of the gardens- Organizing a talent competition in October 2015- Building on Skills development

Table 3

Tshepang programme for orphaned & vulnerable children 2016
Amount of students participating in this project: 23 = 99% positive, 1% no comments
Community's' feedback for the year: Grateful for all the assistance
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In 2016 a big donation was received from Mintels Mining Co. and the following was donated to the centre:- 2 large gas bottles- 1 new gas stove- 2 bags of blankets- A garden hose pipe- Gardening tools and equipment Several visits were done to the centre to help and maintain previous year's activities.

Table 4

Alex Hospice and Rehabilitation Centre 2014
Amount of students participating in this project: 22 = 96% positive, 4.5% no comments
Community's' feedback for the year: Grateful for all the assistance
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- R600-00 raised by having coffee and chocolate sales- Concentrated by working towards the executing of Mandela day- Nestle donated towards the NGO

Table 5

Alex Hospice and Rehabilitation Centre 2015
Amount of students participating in this project: 24 = 100% positive
Community's' feedback for the year: Grateful for all the assistance
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fund raising was done and the following items were donated to the NGO:- 9kg gas bottle- Fold-up-table- Plastic containers- Posters- Cutlery for the kitchen- Vegetable seeds- Signage for the centre- Vegetables for the centre- Second hand clothing handed out- Sandwiches and biscuits handed out

Table 6

Alex Hospice and Rehabilitation Centre 2016
Amount of students participating in this project: 21 = 100% positive
Community's' feedback for the year: Grateful for all the assistance
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collection of money- Collection of clothes for the Hospice to sell- Collection of dinner plates- Groceries were donated to the centre- Collecting of 500ml bottles for the Hospice- Sheets and blankets were donated- 4 coaches were donated to the centre- Sanitary pads were handed out

Table 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 gives full details of the activities and accomplishments during the 3 years of research. Due to the high volume of material gathered during these 3 years, a separate POE was created to reflect in full the outcomes of the different projects. This POE will be available on request.

Highlights of 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017

- In 2015, 149 hand knitted or crochet blankets were handed out to the elderly on Mandela Day. This was a very excited project that had the entire University united in creating a winning blanket!
- In 2015 we started with the Tops-and-Tags project. Students and staff together collected these items to be able to reach a total of 450kg. Working with the Sweetheart Foundation we reached this target and we received 2 wheelchairs to be donated to the Hospice within our NGO.

Impact on the overall community quality of life

The students indicated that the projects with the NGO's influenced their lives positively by (98.6%), (1, 4%) stated that they were not sure. The 2 NGO's, added quality of life to the 2 community's, not only was monetary value added but human capital and its value's left a huge impact on the 2 organizations, and immediate communities.

Conclusion and recommendations

The aims of the study were to measure the contribution to the overall quality of life of the community, the sustainability thereof, and the partnerships with a tertiary institution. The contribution of the University and its students have done remarkably well to establish and maintain a very positive attitude from the NGO's towards the students and the university. This can be attributed to the fact that the lectures and students have involved the community in planning and organisation of all activities. Results indicated that the constant contact with the NGO's have a more quality of life on a community level than an individual level. This will definitely assist with the overall sustainability of projects with the NGO's.

The notion of formative years, an early period in human psychosocial development from the age of 14-20 years is the basis for cohort analysis. The premise being both personal and societal factors when an individual was growing up (i.e., formative referents) have an impact on present day decisions (Gardiner, King, & Grace, 2012). Twenge et al. (2010) emphasizes that people who grew up at the same time are believed to conform to the same common value structures that results sharing similar formative

experiences, which is contrasted to other generations that grew up at a different time. Despite the multigenerational hospitality workplace and the potential for individuals to possess different work values, generational research in the hospitality sector remains underdeveloped. Within the organizational behavior literature, it has been suggested that generational misconceptions have tended to dominate dialogue due to lack of empirical investigations, a view that is also shared in the marketing literature (e.g., Garginer et al., 2012). When a person is working for something that they value, they become more involved and will seek to do as much as possible to make the organization, (project), a success. Once the students have found the purpose of working in these projects they excelled very fast. A great sense of understanding society and its needs of our people was embedded in the student's experience. We strongly believe that these projects added value to our students as being more mature citizens to the society. Communities will benefit from work that is sustainable and carries on from year to year.

Due to the comprehensiveness of this study it was decided to produce a full story board of the activities over 4 years. This will be available during the course of the conference,

References

- Andereck, K.L., & Nyaupane, G.P. (2010). Exploring the nature of tourism and quality of life perception among residence. *Journal of Travel Research*.
- Cooperrider, D.L. and Scrivastva, S. (1987). 'Appreciative inquiry in organizational life'. In: Woodman, R. and Pasmore, W. (Eds) *Research in Organizational Change and Development: Volume 1*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Davidson, W. B., & Cotter, P. R. (1991). The relationship between sense of community and subjective wellbeing: A first look. *Journal of community psychology*, 19(3), 246-253.
- Diener, E., & Eunkook Suh, M. M. (1997). Subjective well-being and age: An international analysis, *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics*, 17, 304-324.
- Dissart, J. C., & Deller, S. C. (2002). Quality of life in the planning literature. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 1.5(1), 135-161.
- Dissart, J. C., & Deller, S. C. (2000). Quality of life in the planning literature. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 15(1), 135-161.
- Easterlin, R.A., & Angelescu, L. (2012). *Modern economic growth and quality of life: cross-sectional and time series evidence* (pp. 113-136). Springer Netherlands.
- Gardiner, S., King, C., & Grace, D. (2012). Travel decision making: An empirical of generational values, attitudes, and intentions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(3), 310-324.
- Grayson, L.M & Young, k. (1994). *Quality of life in cities: An overview and guide to the literature*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hammond, S. (1996). *The thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing.
- Hetherington, M., Benefield, P., Lines, a., Paterson, C., Ries, J. and Shuayb, M. (2007). *Community Cohesion for Children, Young People and their Families: a Rapid Review of Policy, Practice and Research in Local Authorities* (LGAR Report 01/07). Slough: NFER [online]. Available: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/downloadable/LCO.pdf>, [25 April, 2007].
- Kim, K., Uysal, M., & Sirgy, M. J. (2013). How does tourism in a community impact the quality of life community residents? *Tourism Management*, 36, 527-540.
- Kruger, S., Rootenberg, C., & Ellis, S. (2013). Examining the influence of the wine festival experience on tourists' quality of life. *Social indicators research*, 111(2), 435-452.

- Massam, B.H. (2002). Quality of life: public planning and private living, *Progress in Planning*, 58(3), 141-227. Mapumalanga Gaming Board. (2015).
- Stiglitz, J. E., Sen, A., and Fitoussi, J. P. (2010) Report by the commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress, in, Paris: Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. Decreasing. *Journal of Management*, 36(5), 1117-1142. Ucanok, B. (2009). The effects of work values, work-value congruence and work centrality on organizational citizenship behaviour. *International Journal of Behavioural, Cognitive, Educational and Psychological Science*, 1(1), 1-14.
- Twenge, J.M., Campbell, S.M., Hoffman, B. J., & Lance, C. E. (2010), Generational differences in Work Values: Leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values.