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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER PROFILING FOR OCCUPATIONAL PROFESSIONALISATION, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUOUS QUALITY ASSURANCE

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ABSTRACT

Regardless of the worldwide acknowledgement of the importance of community development, the challenge of professional occupational recognition remains, intensified by the lack of practitioner profile data. Raising practice standards through standardised, cohesive and effective movements drives professionalism, guided by a practice policy framework that describes its practitioners' ethical code, standardised and quality-assured knowledge and skills to be measured against regulated occupational norms and standards. This article provides a broad overview of the requirements for occupational professionalisation linked to a countrywide practitioner profile survey conducted to inform the South African Community Development Practice Policy Framework that guides occupational professionalism pre- and post-professionalisation.

Keywords: community development, community development practitioners, continuous professional development, practice policy framework, practitioner profiling, professionalisation.

INTRODUCTION

We agree with Robert Chambers (1995:172) that a new professionalism is required in community development, specifically a paradigm that “put[s] people before things, and poor people and their priorities first of all”. We also agree with Margaret Ledwith (2011:14) that community development (and participation) should be a radical practice that “has a transformative agenda, an intention to bring about social change that is based on a fair, just and

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sustainable world”. This should not simply be about “making life a little bit better around the edges” (Hutchings & Lewis, 2020: 311). Even in today’s democratic South Africa, the new professionalism and radical practice are far from achieved. Yet many thousands of South Africans are employed in the community development sector, whether radicalised or neoliberal. A Community Development Practice Policy Framework (CDPPF) can help put them on a better footing vis-à-vis their employers.

This article concerns a Community Development Practitioner (CDP) profiling baseline data survey. Such baseline data assists with conceptualising and describing the new professionalism, verification of skills audits results, as well as curriculum design and applicability reviews of training programmes. Most importantly, such data assists with drafting a Practice Policy Framework that will prescribe the unique form (scope) of practice for the professional occupation, ethical code of conduct, together with quality-assured standardised knowledge and skills, measured against a set of regulated occupational norms and standards. It is thus a critical document because it forms part of a professionalisation application and post-professionalisation to regulate the professional occupation. In South Africa an application for a sector (occupational discipline) professionalisation is submitted either directly to the South African Qualification Authority for sector designation to establish a professional council, or to an existing professional council if the sector is already designated to the specific council.

We are aware of the racially segregated and distorted history of community development in South Africa before 1994. The current government expresses a rhetorical allegiance to community development, but in practice underperformance is characteristic. We acknowledge that the toxic mix of rhetoric and practice limpness hinders the professionalisation of community development. However, this article is not about the academic debate on community development, the “ladder” of participation (Arnstein, 1969), or the tyranny of participation (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). We do think the dialogical process expounded by Freire (1970), as well as Westoby and Dowling (2013), is important in the debate on community development as a guiding framework toward an ethical professionalisation. We can but hope to contribute in this article towards the creation of new professionalism (Chambers, 1995) that leaves room for dialogical community development (Westoby & Dowling, 2009, 2013).

Community development was first formalised between the 1950s and 1970s as both an academic discipline and a social practice profession in Europe, the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America (USA) and Canada (Chile, 2012). This started the global move towards a more standardised and quality-assured community development practice over the past three decades, resulting in different parts of the globe shifting towards some form of formalised professionalised practice in community development. This was further enhanced by the democratic governments of these nations seeking partnership governance that would maximise social-economic development with their progressive social development policies, creating mutually beneficial synergies between economic growth, the environment and social development (DSD, 2014b). In post-apartheid South Africa the participatory partnership-governance discourse around citizen inclusion and empowerment is taken up in the development of national policies and processes. Local and

international authors, such as Engelbrecht and Pretorius (2017), Meade (2011), and Miller and Ahmad (1997) highlight the role of partnership governance in shaping and mediating policy and the much-needed role that CDPs can play in ensuring citizen participation when developing inclusive community development policies. This is evidential from the UK Department of Communities and Local Government report that points to the need for policies to embody community development values and the critical role of the profession in community development:

Society needs now more than ever a strong community development occupation with clear objectives and public endorsement. National policies in the twenty first century need to embody community development values, and building the capacity of the community development occupation will in turn help national policy aims to be delivered more effectively... (Communities and Local Government, 2006:7).

Yet, regardless of the worldwide realisation of the importance of community development, the challenge of professional occupational recognition remains evident, intensified by the lack of CDP profile data. The academic debate continues about the desirability of professionalism. There are two distinctive schools of thought: (i) those supporting quality-assuring community development for the benefit of communities, but not supporting its professionalisation; and (ii) those supporting professionalisation for regulatory quality assurance and standardisation of community development. In short, the critique is founded on the sociology of professions discourse and its notion of “professional”, which implies an expert who has authority to direct, linked to an elitist, thus exclusionary, discourse (Kenny, 2019; Smeby, 2017; Švarc, 2016; Saks, 2015; Evetts, 2014; Bonnin & Ruggunan, 2013). Although this critique has merit, considering that community development subscribes to principles of inclusion, equity and empowerment, the fundamental drive towards professionalisation should be founded on an ethical code of conduct with quality-assured standardised practice, not on elitism. Fitzsimons (2010) indicates that the need to raise practice standards using a standardised, cohesive and effective movement drives professionalisation. This need drove the professionalisation of community development in South Africa. Highlighting recent additions to the debate, Kenny (2019:152-153) comments on “how the latest embrace of professional protectionism narrows the scope of community development while at the same time there is increasing emphasis on community development as a global undertaking”. While this viewpoint and debate are valuable, the South African context required some “house-keeping” focus on its national community development agenda, both as a developing country and in transcending its apartheid history of social exclusion.

In 2010, South Africa took the first steps towards professional recognition with the development of three legislated professional community development qualifications to standardise and quality assure CDP education and training. These three qualifications will also be used as frameworks for CDP’s recognition of prior learning, but they have thus far not been recognised for their role in community development practice (Hart, 2018:14-15). South Africa embarked on a community development practice statutory professionalisation process in 2012.

When working with communities, a statutory profession applies a legislated regulatory framework to ensure quality, standardised skills and ethical practice.

This article provides a broad overview of the countrywide CDP profile survey, which was conducted to set up a baseline database. The baseline data informed content for inclusion in drafting the South African CDPPF as part of the professionalisation requirements and will continue to assist with the verification of the result of skills audits, curriculum development and reviews of community development training programmes, as well as the quality assurance and regulation of ethical practice. We report and reflect on the survey data collected between May to June 2014, indicating the varied educational backgrounds and continuous professional development (CPD) requirements of CDPs linked to community development practice occupational strengths and challenges in South Africa. The survey has contributed to the similarity validation of the preceding comprehensive literature review. The review consisted of empirical research and document analysis data-sets of international community development practice values, principles, norms and standards published by academic scholars, researchers, organisations and governments from countries such as New Zealand, the UK, USA and Ireland, as well as by international community development entities such as the International Association for Community Development and the Community Development Society. Collectively, the data findings contributed to the finalisation of a South African CDPPF, internationally aligned in its prescribed practice scope, norms and standards for practice standardisation and quality assurance, and the CDP ethical code of conduct (DSD, 2014a). We conclude with the benefits of having practitioner profile data and how these should be updated for continuous beneficial use.

BACKGROUND

Community development was undertaken without a comprehensive theory, mainly because practice preceded theory. Early CDPs operated without a well-articulated paradigm and few general principles, supplemented by models and theories borrowed from the social sciences and philosophy. In the 1950s the United Nations attempted to describe and implement a global approach to community development (Cook, 1994). A complex activity, community development involves so many elements that it seems to defy definition and description. Community development is integrative and holistic, rather than sector-specific, both in theory and practice.

Community development has been influenced by varying definitions of the term “community”. Contemporary definitions strongly relate to the realisation of the integrative and holistic way people coexist and the social networks that link community members and entities. In reviewing the literature over a ten-year period, scholars such as Chile (2012:43), Maistry (2012:33), Fraser (2005:286-287), Bhattacharyya (2004:9), and Fiol and O’Connor (2002:532) have consistently associated the term “community” with the physical, social and moral aspects of people and their collective lives. Furthermore, the related literature on community development indicates comprehensive interpretations in a too rigid manner. This has resulted in not allowing descriptive elaborations of norms and standards or an acknowledgement of the multi-disciplinary character of community development approaches by those working with and in

communities. This rigidity has contributed to the international and national identity crisis from which community development has been suffering for many years because it has been considered as an all-encompassing and comprehensive concept rather than as explicit and specific in its practice (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Chile, 2012). This identity crisis was one of the main challenges to overcome when drafting the CDPPF, which had to present the occupation's unique form of practice, as well as its skills and knowledge sets to be standardised, including the required norms and standards for continuous quality assurance of the practice.

Several milestones in the professionalisation process had to be passed before reaching the semi-final milestone of drafting the CDPPF for submission to the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) to assess and approve the professionalisation of community development practice in South Africa. The SACSSP approved the professionalisation application in 2018, thereby starting the process towards establishing the professional board for community development under the SACSSP as the final milestone for professionalisation. A Community Development Professionalisation Steering Committee was established in 2011 to ensure achievement of the goals of community development professionalisation.

Progress in Community Development Professionalisation Steering Committee professionalisation from 2011 until 2018 included: (i) standardisation of CDP skills and knowledge required in the development of three legislated South African Qualification Authority-accredited community development qualifications frameworks at National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels 4, 5 and 8; (ii) collaboration, buy-in and partnership development of all relevant role-players and stakeholders: CDPs, higher education institutions (HEIs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), private and public sectors in community development professionalisation; (iii) registration of the South African Association for Community Development (SAACD) Not-for-Profit Organisation (NPO) by December 2013; (iv) development of an recognition of prior learning framework inclusive of articulation paths from past and current qualifications linked to community development; and (v) preparing the community development professionalisation application to the SACSSP (Hart, 2012; Hart, 2018; Luka & Maistry, 2012). By 2019, the only outstanding matters in community development professionalisation were the election of board members and registration under the SACSSP. Early in 2020 the SACSSP started the process of compiling a voters roll for board member elections and development of the required board member nomination form. The Covid-19 pandemic adversely impacted progress with this process. The SACSSP has gained momentum again towards completion of the process started in 2020. The estimated target date for completion, set for the end of 2023, signified with the inauguration of the professional community development board.

The purpose of a CDPPF was mentioned earlier and as such is one of the most important documents required for professionalisation, because it guides all stakeholders on the integrative and standardised implementation of community development, in theory (i.e. training) and in practice, as well as forming the basis for practice regulation, by the professional board in terms of standards, quality assurance, code of ethical practice and continuous professional development.

Therefore, such a framework needs to include the definition of community development including registration on the South African organisational framework for occupations, with its own unit group registration number – indicating it as a standalone discipline; and for community development training and practice to include occupational values, principles, norms and standards, linked to codes of ethical practice (Organisational Framework for Occupations, 2013). This necessitated the national CDP profile survey, a first of its kind in South Africa. At the time only four other countries had carried out national CDP surveys (Komolafe, 2009). The survey results assisted with a literature review and a document analysis with data comparable with international community development practices, as well as CDP profiling in South Africa, which also informed the knowledge and skills requirement for community development training and CPD.

THE EVOLVEMENT OF PROFESSIONS

Since the 1990s, professional occupations have been linked with standardised and quality assured knowledge based on post-school and higher education and training – currently known as self-regulated occupations in terms of licensing and work practice by professional statutory bodies. This gives professions their dual character of knowledge for economic gain and service provision (Evetts, 1999:119-120). Abbott (cited in the Council for the Built Environment Policy Position Paper (2012:2) defined the characteristics of an occupation as:

...possession of specialised knowledge and skills partially or fully acquired by intellectual training ... that others do not possess; creation, organisation and transmission of this knowledge by the profession; provision of services calling for a high degree of integrity...; acceptance by society of the value of the knowledge possessed and the belief that it can solve problems in society....

Professions have evolved differently according to the various historical, political, economic, geographical, demographical, and cultural conditions in different countries. Some have evolved more or less independently, whilst others have become legislated statutory bodies. Controlling institutions in the professionalisation process have been generally perceived as associations, states and universities (Evetts, 1999:121; Meintjes & Nieman-Struweg, 2009:3). Variants, such as controlling agencies, continue to influence occupations, even after professionalisation.

The move towards community development professionalisation

Occupation professionalisation takes place through two primary routes: (i) traditional: relating to prestige, title and high pay, and (ii) non-traditional: linked to the development of a formal qualification, the emergence of a regulatory body, some degree of monopoly rights (sector designation), and building trust over an extended period (Hart, 2012:61). South Africa opted for a non-traditional route driven by an all-inclusive principle, thereby contrary to the stance of elitism and exclusion. The South African process includes practitioners with formal and informal education, ranging from volunteer to specialist practitioner levels in specific areas of community development practice. South Africa's process is linked to benchmark professional principles of (a) accredited professional qualifications and recognition of experience and

learning; (b) professional autonomy and authority relating to culture and independence from other professions to address duplication between professions and the identity crisis in the field of community development; (c) unique quality skills and knowledge in the application of theory in practice – including the multidisciplinary of community development practice and articulation; (d) a code of professional conduct ethics; (e) a statutory body for practitioner licensing, CPD, quality control and conduct regulation; (f) community sanction; and (g) research for expansion and refinement of knowledge, skills, values and reflective practice (CBE, 2012). The CDPPF consists of a detailed description of the aforementioned, including alignment with international community development practice, related principles and standards (DSD, 2014b).

METHODOLOGY

Survey purpose and objectives

The survey was designed to gather baseline data on CDPs in South Africa, which contributed to drafting the CDPPF, as a key document for the pre- and post-professionalisation of community development practice.

The survey collected in-depth data directly from those working in, or providing services to, the community development sector to relate, integrate and support the preceding comprehensive literature review and documents analysis data findings regarding community development practice for local and international alignment and integration. This required comparing CDPs' discipline background, roles, qualifications (formal and informal), knowledge, skill sets, employer types, job functions and community development practice challenges.

Three objectives guided the survey purpose: (i) strengthen the CDP profiles and practice information base; (ii) increase information for assessing the CDP knowledge and skills base and their current work performance requirements and challenges; and (iii) provide information for continuous professional development (CPD) to strengthen prospective skills and capacity requirements. Research data collected included age, gender, qualification types and levels, employment contexts related to work settings, responsibilities and challenges, and capacity building needs for practice (DSD, 2014b).

Literature review

In its more radical interpretation, community development is a unique form of practice with an intrinsic orientation toward democratic and participatory outcomes of collective change, inclusion and equality. A comprehensive literature review and document analysis was carried out on research studies, practice guidelines and reports that focused on community development theories, definitions, processes, approaches and practice, both internationally and nationally. The review highlighted the gaps in the empirical literature on community development practice – specifically on national and international baseline data (profiles) of people working in community development. The literature review and document analysis provided four survey measurement focus areas, listed below, for the design of the survey instrument.

Sampling

The sampling frame was developed by consolidating the stakeholder, service provider and CDP employer databases gathered by the Community Development Professionalisation Steering Committee since its 2011 inception, providing a population database of 4,596 CDPs. The initial sampling method was purposeful sampling extraction from the consolidated databases. Snowball sampling formed part of the final survey data-gathering process because initial survey participants forwarded the questionnaire to others whom they thought should participate. Sample reliability was ensured by electronic elimination of duplicate respondents before data responses were assessed.

Survey data were collected over three months and 1,551 questionnaires were completed and submitted, exceeding the 1,532 database participants to whom questionnaires were sent initially. Rather than a simple head count of community development sector practitioners, the survey aimed to achieve a broad CDP coverage to gain an in-depth profile of practitioners in South Africa.

The survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire measurement focus areas were: (i) personal CDP profiles; (ii) community development stakeholder profiles; (iii) CDP job profiles; and (iv) community development occupational strengths and challenges. The wording and terminology of questions in each focus area were verified in focus group sessions with community development sector working entities to finalise the survey questionnaire for piloting. Of the 23 questions developed, 12 were quantitative. Eight quantitative questions also included an “other” option for selection, which respondents had to complete in more detail if selected. A thematic analysis approach was applied to data from the 11 qualitative questions and 8 quantitative “other options” for coding and categorisation of the data sets to present answers supporting the statistical format.

The specific questions formulated for each focus area were evaluated for measurement validity by dendrogram assessment of the entire questionnaire, before sending it out for pilot testing.

MAIN RESULTS OF SURVEY DATA

Personal profiles

Personal CDP profiling aimed to obtain data indicating the gender, age and qualification level types derived from the literature review and document analysis data, pointing to the sector-relevant qualification. Qualification levels and types are critical in determining practitioner registration levels with a professional body (board and/or council). Levels in most social service professional occupations are: (i) auxiliary, (ii) practitioner, and (iii) specialist, as well as (iv) student, while a registered student for a professional qualification.

In South Africa community development qualifications was developed on NQF levels 4, 5 and 8. Four community development professional registration levels are distinguished: (i) student registrations for those studying for standardised professional community development qualifications at levels 4, 5 or 8; (ii) community development worker (CDW) for persons with NQF level 4 qualifications (auxiliary level); (iii) assistant community development practitioner

(ACDP) for those holding NQF level 5 qualifications (auxiliary); and (iv) community development practitioner (CDP) with NQF levels 8-10 (practitioner level). This group could have a professional NQF level 8 qualification or a NQF level 7 undergraduate qualification and a postgraduate NQF level 8 qualification (e.g. Honours or Postgraduate Diploma) in a related field, offering knowledge and skills to the practice scope of community development as an occupation. The community development sector has not yet formulated CDP specialisation registration areas, typically done by well-established professions at a much later stage.

Articulation

A most important task for sector professionalisation is to assess all qualifications that articulate with (relate to) the professional scope of practice for the respective sector. This is done not only for practitioner registration but also for recognition of prior learning and, ultimately, career pathing through life-long learning. With community development and its multidisciplinary character, qualifications articulation assessment for horizontal (same NQF level) and vertical (hierarchical NQF levels) articulation will always be a factor for registration employing its three standardised professional qualifications at NQF levels 4, 5 and 8.

Table 1 indicates the gender ratio for CDP qualification types. The gender sample split indicated 59% female and 41% male respondents, presenting a fair practitioner balance. Eight qualification types were measured with the NQF levels 4 to 10. While 21% of respondents had a degree or higher diploma (NQF Level 7), 25% had reached NQF Level 8, and 10% did not have formal community development post-school education. The results also indicated that 13% had a Master's (NQF level 9) qualification, followed by 3% with a PhD (NQF level 10). Thus, it can be concluded that 28% of all respondents will apply for professional registration at the ACDP level, requiring articulation qualification assessment before registration, followed by at least 10% applying for professional registration at the CDW level, requiring first time and standardised community development training and/or being taken through an recognition of prior learning process. The same would be required by at least 46% of respondents applying for professional CDP-level registration. These results justify the importance of a qualification articulation matrix for professional practitioner registration at different levels.

Table 1: NQF level and qualification type per gender ratio

(NQF level) and qualification type	Female N = 899	Male N = 633	Total N = 1532	Percentage qualification types
(4) Gr 11 / N2		11	11	1
(5) NSC / N3	61	82	143	9
(5) Occupational certificate	92	112	204	13
(6) Diploma	153	82	235	15
(7) Degree / Higher diploma	204	143	321	21
(8) Professional degree/Honours/ Postgrad diploma/ Certificate	225	133	384	25
(9) Masters	143	51	194	13
(10) PhD	20	20	40	3
Percentage gender ratio	59	41	100	100

Data results, presented in Table 2, indicate the different highest qualification fields of study (disciplines) achieved, linked to respondents' qualification levels, providing a baseline from which to start developing the qualification articulation matrix for CDP professional registration. The questionnaire provided 22 preselected fields of study, with a "specify field" option if a qualification was not in the preselected fields: social science; rural and urban development; tourism; human settlement; international relations; environmental studies, agriculture, arts and culture; sport and recreation; policy development; geography; gender studies; development studies; economics/business economics; theology; health; education; community development; social work; youth development; psychology; and public administration/government management. The fields specified by respondents are presented as "other".

Table 2: Qualification type and fields of study (discipline)

<i>(NQF level)</i> qualification type and field of study	Total N = 1532	Percentage qualification types
(4) Gr 11 / N2	11	1
Other	0	0
Community Development	6	0.5
Social Work	5	0.5
(5) NSC / N3	143	9
(5) Occupational certificate	204	13
Other	10	1
Community Development	98	5
Agriculture	18	1
Education	18	1
Health	10	1
Project Management	10	1
Arts and culture	18	1
Sport and recreation	10	1
Policy Development	10	1
(6) Diploma	235	15
Other	51	3
Public Administration / Government Management	82	5
Sport & Recreation	41	3
Youth Development	61	4
(7) Degree / Higher diploma	321	21
Other	7	0.5
Agriculture	8	0.5
Youth Development	20	1
Community Development	60	4
Development Studies	68	4
Education	10	1
Health	10	1
Policy Development	20	1
Public Administration / Government Management	16	1
Psychology	10	1
Social Science	82	5

Economics/business economics	10	1
(8) Professional degree / Honours / Postgrad diploma / Certificate	384	25
Other	43	2
Agriculture	11	1
Community Development	40	2
Development Studies	52	4
Environmental Studies	10	1
Geography	10	1
Human Settlement	10	1
International Relations	19	1
Sport and Recreation	10	1
Social Science	72	5
Public Administration / Government Management	29	2
Psychology	12	1
Social Work	37	2
Youth Development	29	1
(9) Master's	194	13
Other	10	1
Community Development	27	1
Development Studies	51	3
Education	10	1
Arts and Culture	10	1
Public Administration / Government Management	10	1
Social Work	31	1
Theology	10	1
Gender Studies	10	1
Youth Development	25	1
(10) PhD	40	3
Other	0	0
Development Studies	20	1
Community Development	13	1
Public Administration / Government Management	3	0.5
Social Work	4	0.5
Grand total	1532	100

The split between qualification levels and disciplines of CDPs (Table 2) was an important survey measure, not only for articulation and study-related objectives, but also due to the erroneous assumption, prior to the survey, that most CDPs are qualified social workers. Of the 77% total of respondents (in Table 1) with post-school qualifications (NQF levels 6–10), only 8% had a community development-specific qualification – indicating that most respondents were trained in other disciplines. Table 2 indicates that most CDPs have a Social Science qualification (10%) at NQF levels 7–8, followed by 8% in Development Studies and 3% in Public Administration/Government Management Studies. CDPs with a Social Work degree amounted to 2%. The results in Table 2 indicate the multidisciplinary profile of CDPs, further justifying the importance of professionalisation to standardise CDP knowledge and skills. Additionally, these results highlight the need for professional occupational norms and standards, prescribed in a practice policy framework, to standardise community development

theory and practice for regulation and quality assurance. Prescribed norms and standards further assist with the curriculum development and reviews of training programmes, thus also being useful for the comparison of qualification contents when developing a qualification articulation matrix.

Stakeholder profile

An important baseline data requirement is the stakeholder profiles with which CDPs work. This information is crucial for a CDPPF in integration and coordination, together with CDP education and training. CDPs should be knowledgeable and have attributes needed to provide a facilitative, coordinating, and integrative partnership service with all stakeholders and at different levels. All findings indicate a similar knowledge and skills gap to those in the DSD 2009 community development and the Department of Local Government (2008) CDW reports, assessed during the literature review and document analysis phase preceding the survey. Figure 1 indicates that most respondents (21%) work with Local Government, followed by NPOs (20%) and the Public Sector (National or Provincial Government) (19%), indicating why community development practice needs to follow an integrated and citizen-orientated approach, well-coordinated between all stakeholders. Only 3% of respondents work with FBOs, whilst 8% work with CBOs (i.e. entities not formally registered as NPOs with DSD).

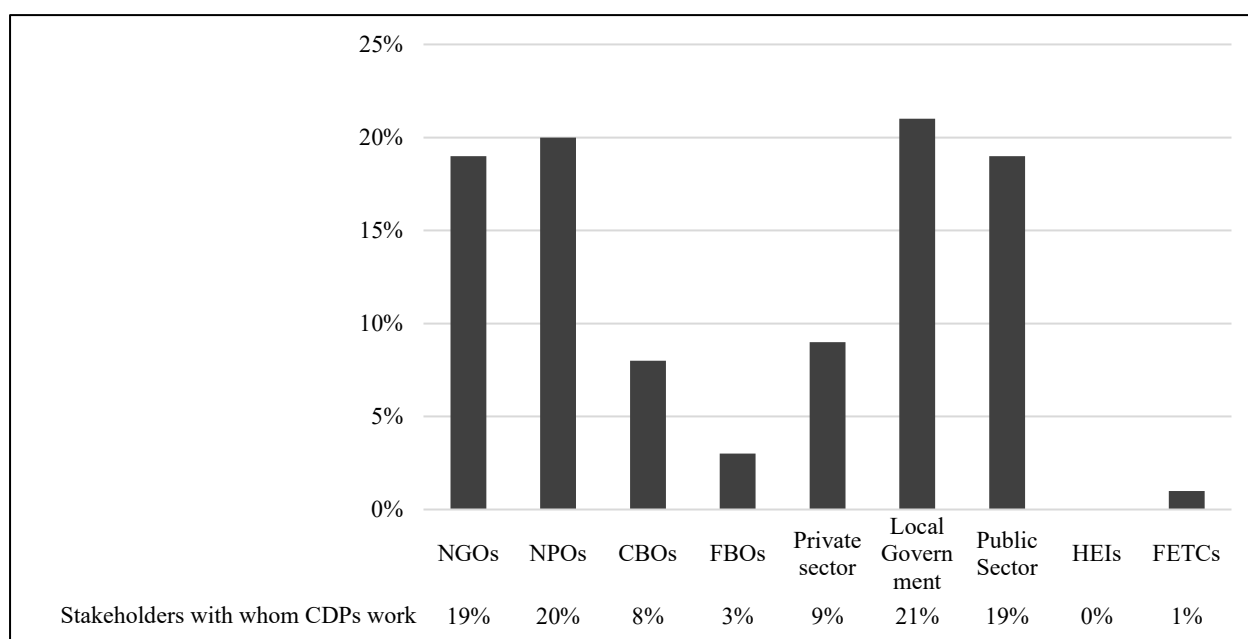


Figure 1: Stakeholders with whom CDPs work

Job profile

The job profile focus of the questionnaire determined the main CDP job functions and the areas in which they would require CPD. Additionally, it assisted with identifying which aspects of CDP theory and practice need to be standardised and quality assured by sector occupational norms and standards, thereby also verifying the content applicability of the three legislated community development qualification frameworks. CPD is a requirement by professional

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boards or councils for professional registration to ensure that practitioners are up to date with trends in required knowledge and skills. Data results in Table 3 indicate the different CDP job functions. This preselected list was derived from the earlier literature review and document analysis, specifically the 2009 DSD Community Development and 2008 Department of Local Government CDW skills audit reports and international, regional and national qualification frameworks for CDP education, training, as well as job descriptions. Respondents could select more than one function from the list provided. The questionnaire provided 31 preselected job functions, with a “specify field” option if a specific job function is needed.

The priority in respective job functions indicated in Table 3 shows the relativity of functions mostly taken on by CDPs. This relates to the set of skills in which CDPs should be trained and/or competent and provide CDP job profiles to continuously quality assure against the norms and standards prescribed in the CDPPF.

Table 3: Community development practitioner (CDP) job functions

CDP job functions	Total	Percentage job functions
<i>Other</i>	174	11
Communication	1042	68
Facilitation	991	65
Monitoring & evaluation	909	59
Empowerment and/or capacity building	858	56
Information dissemination (reporting, presenting)	797	52
Data collection and/or protection (research)	776	51
Project management	756	49
Education, training and/or development (personal development)	735	48
Work with volunteers	735	48
Mentoring, coaching and/or supervision	705	46
Organisational development	684	45
Governance	674	44
Mediation and/or conflict resolution	633	41
Policies and procedures	633	41
Partnerships	592	39
Developing social enterprise	582	38
Networks/networking	562	37
Events planning/management	541	35
Fundraising/income generation	470	31
Reflective practice and leadership development	429	28
Strategic/foresight	357	23
Equality and/or diversity	347	23
Human resources	347	23
Work with regulatory frameworks	347	23
Finance	317	21
Environmental issues	306	20
Social justice	266	17
Marketing/promoting	255	17
Information systems (ICT)	214	14
Procurement/tendering	143	9
Legal advice	82	5

Table 3 indicates that most CDPs needed communication skills competency (68%) and facilitation skills (65%), followed by monitoring and evaluation knowledge and skills (59%), strongly related to data collection (51%). Empowerment and capacity building (56%), project management (49%), policies and procedures (41%), as well as governance issues were also prominent. Partnerships and networking were at 39% and 37%, respectively, both key components for the processes of participatory community development practice, especially in the post-apartheid and developmental context of South Africa. Equality and/or diversity were only at 23%, with social justice at 17%, yet these are critical factors for democratic and participatory community development. Mentoring, coaching and/or supervision were at 46%, reflective practice and leadership development only at 28%. Yet these two functions are interrelated in professional community development practice. These statistics also provide baseline data to review community development qualifications curriculum and CPD education and training content.

The last aspect of the CDP job profiles assessment was the barriers to community development practice experienced by CDPs. The survey questionnaire provided ten preselected barriers. The prioritised barrier data results are shown in Table 4 and those specified by respondents are presented as “other”.

Table 4: Community development practice barriers

Community development barriers	Total	Percentage barriers
<i>Other</i>	51	3
Lack of funding	980	64
Policy and/or political agenda's conflicting with community development	848	55
Limited access to support from other CDPs	623	41
community development best practice model	603	39
Lack of professional recognition/status	603	39
Skills gap to do your job	572	37
Community/client attitude towards you and/or employer	460	30
Norms, standards and ethics	398	26
Contract work (job security and/or promotion)	306	20
No barriers	51	3

Results of the priority job functions in Table 3, taken together with the measurements in Table 4 on practice barriers in CDP's day-to-day job functions, justify the importance and relevance for a CDPPF to standardise and continuously quality assure community development practice through a regulatory entity (professional board).

The absence of standardised and quality-assured community development education and training, and the resultant differing practices of community development practitioners from different disciplines have led to a skills set gap, evidential in public sector skills audits such as the Department of Local Government 2008 CDW skills audit, DSD 2009 community development skills audit, and again in the more recent 2019 DSD Social Service Professions skills audit. It is therefore important to keep the baseline data up to date with a four- to five-

yearly practitioner survey, for future data verification use against public sector skills audits as well as training programmes reviews and impact of CPD training.

Table 5 presents the priority CPD areas indicated by the respondents. The survey questionnaire provided 17 preselected CPD areas derived from the literature review and document content analysis, such as the DSD 2009 community development and Department of Local Government 2008 CDW skills audit reports, as well as CDP job descriptions. Respondents could select more than one CPD area from the list and a “specify field” option was provided for an area indicated in the preselected fields. The specified field results are presented as “other” in Table 5.

Table 5: Continuous professional development (CPD) areas

Continuous professional development areas	Total	Percentage CPD
<i>Other</i>	71	5
Program and/or project management	786	51
Monitoring and evaluation	735	48
Community engagement	715	47
Funding, budgeting and proposal writing	674	44
Strategy development and management	633	41
Mediation and conflict resolution	592	39
Facilitation	562	37
Policy formulation	562	37
Emotional intelligence and/or leadership development	552	36
Group dynamics	500	33
Networking	500	33
Partnership development	500	33
Organisational development	500	33
Financial management and recordkeeping	480	31
Governance	480	31
Mentoring and supervision	480	31
Labour relations	378	25
Minute taking, report writing and presentation	368	24

Table 5 indicates a 51% need for CPD training in project management, which correlated with the Table 3 indication that 49% of all respondents have project management as a job function. The 48% monitoring and evaluation (M&E) CPD request is also linked to the 59% M&E job function indication in Table 3. The same linkage can be said to apply to most of the CPD requests listed in Table 5 and the job functions listed in Table 3. Noteworthy are the CPD training needs for networking and partnership development, both at 33%, even though respondents indicate in Table 3 that it only forms part of their job functions at 39% and 37% respectively. The same is noted for CPD leadership development at 36% that was indicated at 28% in Table 3.

The national community development survey aimed at answering key questions regarding the current profile of CDPs and the practice of community development in South Africa. Added to the results of the public sector skills audits of the past few years, the survey results clearly demonstrate the regulatory necessity to standardise and quality assure the practice of *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 2022: 58(4)

community development. More so because currently, CDPs in South Africa come from various disciplines which are not part of an overarching legislated professional occupation with set norms, standards and ethical codes, together with the necessary skills and capacity development requirements.

CONCLUSION

The contribution of this paper relates to three objectives which the authors wanted to achieve after having been part of the South African process of community development professionalisation. This is because it was clear from the onset of this process that there is little to no scientific literature available to assist occupational sectors with the pre- and post-professionalisation process. Yet the need for ethical, standardised and quality-assured practice has become a global imperative, from the democratic governments to the international and national community development entities, HEIs and employment sector, irrespective of whether or not it is a legislated professionalisation process.

The first objective was to introduce the reader to the process and requirements of occupational sector professionalisation. This was done by using the example of the South African process of community development professionalisation process its required milestones from 2010 to date. However, the process and document requirements are similar irrespective of the occupational sector.

The second objective was to present the practitioner profiling data that must be collected and the benefits of having such baseline data, not just for professionalisation but more so for ethical and quality-assured practice. Thus, this paper's contribution is twofold: (i) the four focus areas against which to formulate the questions for a profiling survey instrument will be useful to any occupational sector in setting up a baseline database and ultimately develop and or update their Practice Policy Frameworks; and (ii) the actual CDP profile data results contribute to enhancing the national and international practitioner data requirements, both for application, as a verification as well as quality assurance baseline, to develop and enhance CDPPFs, nationally and internationally.

The third and last objective was to build a case for the benefits of having up-to-date practitioner profile data, linked to objective two but more specifically related to the benefit for future comparative and descriptive empirical research on community development practice. If continuous practice profiling of occupations is done, then empirical research can contribute not only to the benefits mentioned in this paper, but more importantly to the benefit of all the stakeholders involved, such as professional bodies or occupational associations, training providers, the employment sector and end-users. It also justifies the importance of, and requirements for, improved stakeholder partnerships.

We trust that this paper contributes meaningfully to the start of many occupations undertaking the development of baseline profiling databases with which to inform their Practice Policy Frameworks, and that more scientific journals play their part by inviting manuscripts on

profiling data studies which could ultimately contribute to international comparability and trend analysis.

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