

Roundtable on “Reimagining the Social Service Sector”

Monday, 28 November 2016
Seminar Room 2-1, Level 2, Manasseh Meyer

SESSION 3
Evaluating Impact across the Social Service Sector

PRESENTATION BY

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Working Paper 2

Councils of Social Service

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28 November 2016

Purpose

1. Compare various councils of social service across different countries in terms of their governance structure, membership criteria, core functions and focal concerns
2. This will help inform public deliberations on the appropriate structure and function of charity associations relevant to social service sector

Background

- ‘Many helping hands’ but ‘too many cooks spoil the soup’?: Tendencies towards centralization
- NCSS has taken on multiple roles that are sometimes at odds with one another: statutory board, ‘federated fundraiser’ (Comchest), membership organisation for VWOs
- Need better understanding of conditions under which centralized control works, and whether their trade-offs are worth it

Approach

We examined and compared Councils of Social Service (Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia), as well as equivalent charity associations such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO) (UK) and the United Way (US)

1. Governance

- Only NCSS and HKCSS are statutory bodies
- Voluntary councils have autonomy but statutory councils have control

2. Membership criteria & association rules

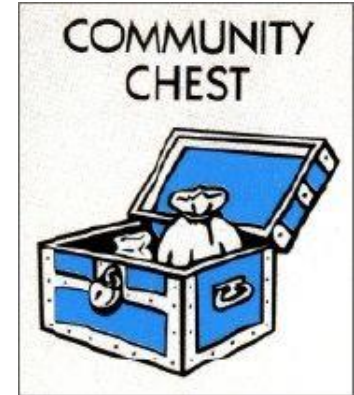
- Only VWOs? (i.e. direct service providers of welfare to disadvantaged groups)
- Government departments, for-profits, religious organisations, individuals?
- Balance inclusivity and danger of dilution.

3. Service and Sector Development

- Service Development: range from design, planning and implementation of services
- Sector Development: eg consultation, training, setting service standards, offering member services, sector planning etc

→ Statutory bodies more likely to develop services and have greater ability to influence implementable sector plans

4. Federated Fundraising & Resource Allocation



- Who gets what?
- Who gets to decide and how is it decided?
- Donor empowerment vs 'rational; system of needs assessment
- Helps VWOs or helps corporates?
- Hegemony of workplace fundraising and crowding out fundraising space
- Is payroll deduction even moral?

5. Policy Research & Advocacy

- Focal concerns: Charity vs social justice models
- Advocacy approaches: towards the public or towards the government?

→ Statutory bodies able to be independent enough to do meaningful advocacy? Able to represent the views and values of its members?

Discussion

1. Governance

- Should charity associations like NCSS have more autonomy from the state?
- Are the roles NCSS plays contradictory or conflicting?
- As the social service sector matures, will an independent voluntary council serve the VWOs better and be responsive and representative of their needs?
- Is Singapore ready for an association of non-profits beyond the more narrowly defined Council focused mainly on social service?

Discussion

2. Membership

- Inclusive membership criteria can generate more participatory governance, but can also dilute value to its core members.
- Who and what type of members should NCSS admit, and what kind of rights should they have? (attending, speaking, voting etc).
- Should NCSS admit other types of organisations, even individuals as members?

Discussion

3. Federated Fundraising & Allocation

- Is our current fund allocation system transparent, rational, inclusive and democratic? Are these values even desirable?
- E.g., is greater transparency of funding policies potentially detrimental? What are the barriers to have greater transparency from both ends of the spectrum: funder and receiving agency?

Discussion

4. Advocacy Focus and Approach

- Should NCSS 'absorb' rather than do advocacy? If NCSS were an independent, voluntary body, will their advocacy concerns be different from the existing ones? Will this create conflict amongst its membership base?
- Will the advocacy role of statutory bodies be determined by government set parameters? Is this healthy for the sector?

Based on this discussion,
please write down questions
worth surveying VWOs about

Thank You

Thank You

Acknowledgements:

Foo Jia Xin

for excellent research support

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