Emergent Theories for Facilities Management in Community-Based Settings

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Abstract

Facilities Management (FM) in the community setting is a new approach exploring opportunities for the development of a socially inclusive and sustainable approach to FM in the public and third sectors. The role of FM is defined by stakeholder value rather than shareholder value, and therefore becomes crucial in translating strategic community plans into effective operational reality. This research explores the role of FM from the stakeholder perspective and reports on findings from empirical research undertaken through case studies, in order to theorise on how FM should act in enhancing stakeholder value. It developed a five perspectives model, which addresses FM as: a) a place based approach to community facilities; and b) a people centred approach to community development. These two approaches highlight the role and social construction of FM within community facilities. In the latter, FM contributes to the creation of sustainable communities through a stakeholder approach to the management of community facilities.

Keywords: Facilities Management, Community facilities, Community development, Stakeholder value

1. Introduction

The variety of definitions for FM by researchers and practitioners illustrate the broad scope of the discipline and illuminate its evolution as a discipline. However, most of these definitions do not offer a holistic view of FM, but offer two paradigms for FM. The first is focused on FM application in organisation's facilities and the achievement of business objectives. The second is focused on the social orientation approach of FM. Significantly, whichever definition is preferred, it is essential to understand that FM is an umbrella term under which a wide range of disciplines may be integrated for the benefit of organisations and communities.

The multi-disciplinary approach of FM has challenged first researchers, both in terms of subject and funding, and second practitioners, in terms of applications. Practitioners' perspective of FM focuses on the physical and economic factors such as information technology, the cost of effective workplace, globalisation, and user satisfaction; in which the

social factors are missing such as integration with communities, sustainable development, and community engagement (Alexander, 1996; Varcoe, 2000; Elmualim et al., 2010; Lilliendahl et al., 2011). Price et al. (2009) debated that strategic FM should commence to engage with organisation's social realities. Furthermore, they called for a research agenda for FM that embraces the organisational discourse in outlining the environment of organisations' functions. Alexander & Brown (2006) argued that FM implications require a reorientation from the organisation and user advocacy to the community and neighbourhood. The European vision of FM is to enable FM to lead the continent's development to become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy, create an innovative identity in global sustainable growth, and promote better cohesive societies (EuroFM, 2006). In order to achieve this, FM needs to be viewed holistically including both shareholder and stakeholder value.

For the purpose of this research, a new definition was adapted from the CEN (2006) definition for FM as, the integration of people, processes and place, to develop, manage and sustain effective and efficient services, which meet the socio-economic and environmental objectives of the community. To this end, it is essential to clarify what we mean by community and community facilities before investigating the role of FM in the community setting.

2. Community

There are diverse meanings of community, with no scarcity of debate on these meanings and the contested nature of the concept. The term community is encountered widely the work of communitarian philosophers or sociologists, and also in the talk of politicians, police and commissioners (Stack, 2010). Usually, the place, neighbourhood, and part of cities are used as the basis of communities. The idea of social bonds is a key indicator for the concept of community and it seems community connotes a social meaning (Mooney & Neal, 2009). However, the concept of community changes within different contexts, according to the context's setting and its particular environment. The concept of community can be mobilised or purposely used to categorise groups of people who have the same interests outside the social processes. One of the difficulties with the meaning of community, is that it falls in the category of an 'essentially contested concept' (Mooney & Neal, 2009), and can be both descriptive and evaluative. It is descriptive when it refers to features of a world that describe what it is to be community. The evaluative meaning comprises the value connotation that are attached to the positive term community (Plants, 1974) cited in (Banks, 2004). Within this sense two different communities can be identified, the place based community and the

identity based community. The first is based on: 1) the geographical area or boundaries and 2) people live within one area in common. Locality here is the important dimension of people identity and sense of belonging (Gilchrist, 2009). The second is based on characteristics other than physical proximity, such as ethnicity, occupation, religion, and so on (Butcher, 1993). This research has identified that identity, interest, and place as the characteristics for communities with either descriptive or evaluative meanings. Although community may be used in diverse ways, the notion of sharing something brings together all of these concepts of community.

Similar to facilities management, the problematic nature of community's definition has become a starting point for academic investigations of communities (Mayo, 2008). Mooney & Neal (2009) refer this variety of meanings to the diversity of the social science responses. Bruhn (2011) argues that although there is no agreed definition, that community is shaped by the relationship between a group of people in certain graphical or cyber space. This research however adopts Dwyer's (2004:27) definition of community as "a body with some common values, norms and goals in which each member regards the common goal as their own", as this shared goal is the focus of our redefinition of FM.

3. Methodology

The methodology of this research is derived from its social constructivist philosophy. The research adopts an inductive qualitative methodology with idiographic nature which is shaped by the combination of grounded theory, case study, and action research (Tammo & Nelson, 2013). Grounded theory is used as the research strategy because of its ability in providing explanations that are recognisable to the subject of the research, i.e. the role of FM in community development; and to identify the contribution of community facilities to improving stakeholder value. Case study is used as a research approach due to its appropriateness to meet the research aim and to interact with organisations where FM plays a role within their community facilities (Tammo & Nelson, 2013). Gagnon (2010) discusses that in conducting a case study, the researcher should subscribe to a constructivist philosophy.

4. Data collection and analysis

Methods of data collection emerged from the philosophical and methodological stances of the research: constructivism, grounded theory, and case study. The research's interpretive paradigm anchors the researcher to specific research methods which include interviews,

documentary evidence, case studies, and memos. Data analysis was undertaken in 2 phases. The first involved the thematic analysis of existing concepts of FM in the community-based setting, and the second was the analysis of case studies undertaken as part of the empirical research. They involved a process of classification of coding through the interpretation of the data by the researcher. The text was examined line by line in order to identify core consistencies and meanings. A conventional content analysis was used as the codes are defined before and during the data analysis. NVivo 10 was used in the analysis of data which included interview transcripts, content, and memos.

The coding classification started with open coding in which 600 codes are identified across the five case studies. The axial coding stage highlighted the relationships between these codes, while the selective coding categorised the codes into groups of themes. Analysis demonstrated the amount of emphasis put by the interviewees on certain codes including, but not limited to, community, facilities management, community facilities and people.

5. Research Findings

The main challenge in the analysis of the value added by the existing concepts of FM in the community is the lack of implementation and application in practice. Concepts reviewed were Urban FM (Roberts, 2004), FM as Social enterprise (FMSE) (Kasim & Hudson, 2006), Community based Facilities Management (CbFM) (Alexander & Brown, 2006), and Sustainable FM (Shah, 2007). Of these, only the CbFM concept by Alexander and Brown (2006) has been developed into a model, and applied in assessing community facilities. Urban FM and FMSE are still in the conceptual stage, and are yet to be implemented in practice or evaluated (Dale & Newman, 2008).

The comparative analysis of these concepts showed similarities and differences under the following five themes:

1) Level of intervention: identification of the level of intervention for all concepts was based on the three main levels of FM: "tactical, operational, and strategic" (Then & Akhlaghi, 1992).

2) The target of intervention: four targets were identified, namely: communities, local service delivery, local economy and organisations.

3) Unit of analysis: each has its unique unit of analysis. Four units were identified, namely: management of organisations, management of community facilities, management of community, and management of facilities.

4) Alignment of FM: each sought to clarify whether FM is linked to public or private interest.

5) Drivers: identifying the drivers for each concept was based on the main components of sustainable development and regeneration.

Five case studies were undertaken to find out what aspects of FM are currently implemented in various community settings. The advantages of undertaking these studies include: identifying elements of FM in the community setting, and deriving grounds for theory for FM in the community. The choice of these case studies is based on the purposeful characteristics of each case. Three case studies are socially driven based on their housing context, and two are economically driven based on their business context.

6. Emergent theories

The recognition of the added value by FM to community development has led to the identification of concepts, principles, and development of a model that theorises the added value within the community setting.

1. First, was the development of the five perspectives model of FM which synthesizes the existing concepts of FM into one general approach. The following perspectives represent the principles of FM in the community:

    i. Service perspective: FM in the community setting should provide facilities that enable effective delivery of services in response to local needs.

    ii. Community perspective: Management of community facilities should include social objectives and involve community members.

    iii. Strategic planning perspective: A strategic FM approach to community facilities would enable facilities managers to analyse the urbanism context and apply principles of engagement with public and private spaces.

    iv. Environmental perspective: Facilities should be eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable, and awareness of environmental issues raised with the community, including behavioural change.

    v. Economic perspective: Facilities should be economically viable and sustainable, and services affordable by the community.

2. Secondly, there are direct links from this five perspectives model to the seven Es concept of community development developed by Gilchrist (2004), namely: enabling, encourging, empowering, educating, equalising, evaluating and engaging.

3. FM as a place based approach to community facilities proposes FM as a precondition to successful management of community facilities, and the community facility as a precondition to successful community development. Community facilities in this concept have the potential to act as social agents for the delivery of community development.

4. FM as a people centred approach contributes to the creation of sustainable communities through a stakeholder approach to the management of community facilities to improve the quality of life, sense of belonging, and provision of affordable local services. In this role, FM could:

   i. Be an economic multiplier with emphasis on social objectives involving multiple stakeholders.

   ii. Improve the use of community facilities in order to increase the benefits to the community through integrating stakeholders into the management and delivery processes of services delivered within these facilities.

   iii. Facilitate and manage the relationships between the multiple stakeholders in community development.

5. Community facilities play a significant role in the effectiveness and sustainability of their communities, and carry a clear message about the community's values. The role of facilities in community life may vary from provision of services to creation of job opportunities, the creation of spaces to supporting community activities, and to their impact on the sense of belonging through engagement and occupation, which are some of the main challenges for community development.

6. Themes such as Community development, Neighbourhood and strategic decision making are vital to be included in any curriculum of FM. Facilities managers need to understand the impacts that the community facility has on the surrounding community. They need to be trained from the early stages on how to deal with problems outside the traditional boundaries, especially in buildings that deliver public services and have daily contact with local residents.

7. Discussion

Critical review of the data has identified gaps which address the need for new approach to FM to act effectively in the community setting. It has shown that FM contributes to community development; specifically in creating innovative and inclusive solutions that deliver social, economic and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, it has demonstrated the multi-disciplinary nature of FM, which was a real advantage in theorising a new approach to FM. The focus on sustainability within FM is identified as one of the key issues driving the adoption of FM in the community setting, as is the development of the concept of sustainable business practice. Therefore, the research introduces new thinking for community development, based on the use of community facilities to sustain and develop more effective communities. Significantly, this is achieved by the implementation of an effective FM strategy derived from an ongoing investigating of the concepts of FM as people centred approach and as place centred approach. The effectiveness of the emergent theories is highlighted through discussing: 1) the role of FM in community facilities, 2) its links to the social construction of these facilities, and 3) the role of FM in sustaining local growth.

a) The role of FM in community facilities

Community facilities are seen as spaces in which the process of social osmosis can assist in social integration and contribute to the positive aspects of community life (Mooney & Neal, 2009). Facilities were described as socially-constructed spaces, and the personality of these spaces is influenced by FM practice (Dommelen et al., 1990). This highlights the significant role FM has to play in terms of management of the community facilities. Supporting this, McShane (2006) illustrates that the management of community facilities has been identified as a distinctive activity of the public sector. Part of what makes FM a place centred approach is that most of these facilities have a community focus, and policy ascribes an instrumental role to facilities.

Butcher (2004) argued the need for reconsidering the organisational structures and processes required to support community practice. In seeking for an effective management of organisational facilities within communities, we need to look beyond traditional thinking (Hardcastle et al., 2011). The consideration of community practice as a work process (Butcher, 1993; 2004, Banks, 2004; Hardcastle et al, 2011) leads to the question of how to organise and manage such work processes. This in turn leads to the role of FM where its main function is to deliver effective organisational management.

b) Social Construction of community facilities

The Civic Trust (2005) attributed the success of reformed public service to the provision of better community facilities. Furthermore, the Trust argued that an active community needs active community facilities. In terms of community development, Prescott (2003) emphasised that sustainable communities include active facilities that meet different needs over time and minimise the use of resources. So the potential of community facilities is introduced in the sense that sustainable communities need sustainable community facilities; which are considered as a home for local community social and cultural enterprises that play a vital role in community development (DTI, 2002). These facilities are the contact points and they are a key access for FM to act and support community development (Glisson et al., 2012). They create the professional landscape for integrating FM within community setting.

c) Role of FM in Sustaining Local Growth

The political and socio-economic conditions that would enable FM to play a major role in local economic growth are now in place. Roberts (2004) argued that the dominance of the business imperative and shareholder value is balanced in the re-alignment of FM with the public interest. FM has the ability to enhance the community's economic and social indicators, through providing local citizens with skills and opportunity to start businesses to provide community services as suppliers. FM can provide a new way of thinking on how to integrate organisational support services and community support services, and the development of the function of core business outside the organisational frame, including the urban context (Lilliendahl et al., 2011). To this end, local economic growth is a bigger challenge to a government facing contraction in the national and global economies. Political machinations in regeneration and community-based settings tend to create an atmosphere of change and uncertainty, which is difficult enough for the local authorities to manage, and would be even more so for members of local communities. The drive for cost efficiencies, and, arguably, transfer of responsibility for the provision of public sector services from central to local government and the community, have also created the right environment for the development of facilities management in the community setting.

8. Conclusion

This research has clarified the research stances within its contextual and theoretical background in terms of facilities management and community setting. It is apparent that FM is a wide umbrella term, which covers a wide range of multi-disciplinary activities. It is not

only about buildings and spaces, but it is also about people inside and around these spaces and buildings. Social drivers are considered factors by many academics because of their ability to introduce FM as a profession which cares about social objectives as much as economic objectives. FM has the capacity to understand the relationships between buildings or facilities and the people who form the community.

This research developed the five perspectives model of FM, which encompasses most of the initiatives of FM in the community setting and introduces principles of the emergent theories. This defines FM in the community setting as a people-centred approach and as a place centred approach for community facilities. From a community perspective, the fundamental principle of this research is the belief that a community can act for itself. This principle underlies the rise of community facilities within the community context. In a large part, this draws on the assumption that community facilities ought to be the best advocates of the community interests; it facilitates the trust and solidarity that helps residents.

Community facilities are seen as a precondition for successful community development, whilst FM is considered a precondition for a successful community facility. The research introduces the use of FM in the community facilities as a place-based strategy for community development. In this context, the added value of FM must not only be assessed by the perceived benefit to stakeholders, but also by its impact on society and the environment. FM has a major role to play in optimising the use of community facilities as a vehicle to improve the local economy.

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