

**THE MULTI-SERVICE CENTRE:  
A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY**

**by**

**JANET WOO**

**B.A., UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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Department of COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

The multi-service centre (MSC) is a community-focused agency that hosts a variety of social services on one site (e.g., a school, daycare, community centre, library, health clinic, welfare, and community police office can all be clustered together in one location). Some of the general goals of the MSC are to improve convenience and accessibility to users; provide continuity and holism in service; reduce fragmentation and duplication in the social service system; reduce costs through sharing; and serve as a neighbourhood gathering place.

Despite the lack of City policy regarding the MSC, it is nonetheless a prominent model of service delivery in Vancouver. The MSC takes many forms but the most prevalent one is an arrangement whereby a neighbourhood house or community centre is located next to a school. This thesis studies three examples of MSCs in Vancouver and the methodology includes interviews with their directors and principals, as well as Social Planning staff who have detailed knowledge of these MSCs. Also, a literature review is conducted and substantiates the primary data.

The data reveal that such issues as synergy, leadership, efficiency, neighbourhood relevance and scale, facilities and access, and systems impact significantly on the overall performance of the MSC. Further, themes such as balance, courtship, and collaboration serve to guide these features to their full potential. However, the MSC is only one strategy on the continuum of social services. Not to be discounted are other models, such as the traditional dispersed and the new integrated service delivery approaches. Choice in service delivery is important and each strategy serves to complement and reinforce the other.

The policy challenge represented by the need for choice and complementarity in social service delivery resoundingly points to better collaboration in planning systems. Specific policy implications include more integration in planning, more power to municipal planning departments, and increased expansion of the traditional role of the school.

The general purpose of this study is to contribute to contemporary planning thought and practice by providing some insight into how social services can be better coordinated and delivered.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE

Over the past three decades, the topic of the multi-service centre (MSC) has become increasingly salient for planning purposes. In its broadest sense, a common MSC serves a variety of purposes, these being educational, social, recreational, and sometimes medical and legal. For example, a school, daycare, information and referral service, employment assistance, counseling, advocacy, immigrant settlement, library, gym, health information, community policing, and legal advice are but a few of the services that can be offered in one location. In short, the MSC is a facility which integrates a host of social services -- which are traditionally separately located and offered -- on one site. In most cases the services provided by an MSC tend to centre around an elementary school. It is widely believed that this integration of services, premised on functional interdependence, is a sensible model from the viewpoint of convenience and accessibility for both those who use and deliver the services; efficiency in fiscal and physical resources; and effectiveness and holism in service delivery. In fact, the very existence of the MSC, in whatever form it takes, connotes the need for some type of coordination in social service delivery. In its essence, the MSC recognizes that people who use a service often benefit from other related services as well, if the options are available and accessible. In other words, social problems by definition are seldom isolated phenomena, but rather interconnected and reflections of a broader and deeper societal malaise, and thus require a multi-disciplinary response.

The topic of MSCs is salient for planning purposes in that planners have the opportunity to make a unique contribution toward amalgamating and restructuring existing social infrastructure to its highest and best use, this being a fundamental tenet of sound planning. The development of MSCs offers a chance for planners to meaningfully shape the social environment -- a crucial determinant of livability -- of the community. In short, with regard to the social vitality of our cities, planners have the opportunity to make a difference. Especially for the vulnerable inner city stressed by poverty, family breakdown, crime, ill health, addictions, poor school performance,

institutional dependency, and the uncertainties of gentrification and redevelopment, the planning profession would do well to utilize its tools and planning acumen toward ameliorating, if not preventing, these challenges. First and foremost the MSC is for the benefit of the public, those who occupy the front lines of structural change and thus, must bear the brunt of any social fallout from ill planned transitions.

Against this background, this thesis proposes to investigate the general utility of MSCs in order to achieve the MSCs' goal of improved quality and delivery of services to people. Further, this thesis proposes to compare the MSC model with the traditional dispersed model of service delivery and the new integrated service delivery model recently adopted by the City of Vancouver. At this point it is pertinent to note that the term "utility" can be defined from a variety of perspectives. Whose purposes does the MSC serve? This question will be answered differently depending on the opinions of service users, service providers, administrators, funders, or the community at large. This study intends to limit the investigation to the service delivery (i.e., receivers and providers of services) perspective. The investigation will focus on the city of Vancouver for its analysis.

### *1.1.1 Coordination*

The critical role for planning is one of strategic management of change and the need for a more long term, anticipatory, and integrated planning response to address the social impacts that will inevitably follow from the rapid and complex changes Vancouver is experiencing (Hutton, 1994a). The crux of the issue, then, is coordination. Coordinated planning has the potential to remedy a number of ill side effects that befall those who venture to use our system of social services in the city. The current network in Vancouver is criticized for its disjointedness, complexity, duplication, inconvenience, and bureaucratic inertia (Annis et al., 1993). The by-product for those in need of service is that they often get lost in what is perceived as a labyrinthine maze of services and thus, are either resistant to access the necessary services or do not receive the appropriate assistance or both. In addition, there are a number of specialized agencies which address the same problems, but are at risk of working at cross purposes. They also frequently compete for government funding. Taken together, these factors compound and perpetuate the problems that cause people to require help in the first place. Given this situation the pressure to coordinate

services is great. MSCs have high present and future promise for communities as stabilizers, helpers, and innovators for positive change.

## **1.2 RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH**

### *1.2.1 Service Fragmentation*

The primary rationale for the development of MSCs is that the delivery of social services in this city appears to lack coherence and vision for the future (Annis et al., 1993). This is due partly to administration of the same problems by different levels of government as well as "sub-optimal" coordination between and within ministries and departments. Although complementary, many services seem to be offered in a disjointed fashion, making access difficult for those in need. In addition, duplication of services is common, with many agencies offering services so similar to the extent that many are confused as to which place is most appropriate. Moreover, this situation is frustrating to administer. Administrators of social service agencies must deal with the problems of overlapping and competing jurisdictions, and staff have difficulty accessing valuable and related sources of expertise as well as community facilities. Disjointedness and duplication are also costly to the taxpayer. And while this city is experiencing high growth and transformational change, there seems to be a policy void in how to address the attendant needs and demands for services that will inevitably arise. There is presently neither a coherent nor holistic plan to address these problems. This situation begs the questions, "What should the plan be?" and "Who is to develop such a plan?"

### *1.2.2 Demographic and Economic Change*

There are a number of social trends in society that impact ultimately the ability to deliver social services to the community. The complex changes occurring in Vancouver's social composition require that planners create a strong social support network that will minimize the negative effects of such changes. According to Hutton (1994b), the demographic profile reveals a population that is both growing and transforming due to an increase in immigration, the aging of the large baby boom cohort, a change in the multicultural makeup, and the evolution of the traditional family form to include such conceptions as singles, couples without children, single parent families, extended families, and homosexual couples with and without children.

In each case, a rising demand for the concomitant services required by these different scenarios will emerge to complicate service delivery. That is, there will be growth, segmentation, and differentiation of demand in the social services.

In addition, the economy is restructuring from an industrial base to an increasingly tertiarised economic base and labour force. As a result, many will suffer from structural unemployment while others will constitute a different type of labour force altogether. While this occurs, there is the risk that the underclass will become increasingly marginalized as social polarization becomes more prominent with a bifurcated service economy and the resultant income stratification (Barnes et al., 1992; Hutton, 1994a; Sugarman, 1983). Again, there will be an increase in demand for different types of services as these situations arise. Also, negative consequences of restructuring can include the emergence of an underclass. Amidst these dramatic changes in the social landscape, people will lose their bearings in the eventual social skidding that takes place lest there are sufficient and effective anchors in the social service network to help them adapt.

### *1.2.3 Shrinking Resources*

Another general trend that lends itself to the development of MSCs is shrinking government coffers. In light of constrained financial and physical resources, it becomes prudent to learn to spend not more, but smarter. On an increasing basis governments are streamlining operations with the goal of maximum efficiency. Service delivery that is efficient and cost-effective are general priorities of any public institution. However this is a task that is becoming more challenging. The city of Vancouver is emerging as a post-industrial, cosmopolitan centre on the cusp of global-city status. Indeed, Vancouver is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in North America. Moreover, the city's burgeoning suburbs are grappling with the challenges presented by growth, spread, and change. Within this context there is a need to coordinate services to accommodate a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse population with equally rapidly growing and diverse needs, all in the face of dwindling resources.

In addition, Vancouver is experiencing pressure to improve the use of scarce urban land resources (Hutton, 1994a). As a result, innovative ways to save money and utilize expensive land are high priorities on the planning agenda. Imagination and innovation must be encouraged to achieve "optimal resource deployment" (Kahn and Kamerman,

1975:177). As one response, the integrated services of the MSC would conserve community resources (e.g., expertise, facilities, and land) and simultaneously accommodate those who use them (Ringers, 1981). Compared to the traditional dispersed model of service delivery, it is believed that the MSC can minimize the consumption of land while maximizing the efficient use of government services.

#### *1.2.4 Expanded Role of the School*

Another general trend is that the traditional role of the school is expanding. Once considered as educators in academic training primarily and social skills secondarily, the school is now expected to take on more demanding tasks. Society is changing, and there are as many different backgrounds of children as there are special needs required by them. The needs of children and families are broad and complex, and their solutions go far beyond what schools can provide on their own. Education cannot be dealt with in isolation from the wider system in which the child is a part, it cannot possibly hope to teach a child without dealing with poverty, ill health, poor nutrition, and a dysfunctional home life (Kahn and Kamerman, 1992; Rist, 1992). The school can do little on its own and needs to be incorporated into a system that deals with these issues as an integral whole. The concept of an accessible multitude and range of complementary and interrelated services on one site is fundamental to serving more people in a better way.

Especially in the inner city, the school is called upon to be an educational institution as well as a safe haven during and after school hours where children can receive nutritious meals, clothes, counseling, before and after school care, recreational services, assistance from police, and a place to just "hang out." Moreover, because children's problems are for the most part a reflection of their situations at home, adult family members, too, are often in need of services.

In places like the inner city where social problems are more acute, there is a growing need for "full-service" sites where schools can operate in conjunction with social service agencies, community centres, and health care clinics to address present and emerging issues faced by an increasingly stressed and high need student population. A recent GVRD report states that, "Teachers are expected to meet the needs of youth from dysfunctional families, immigrant populations, and disabled students at a time when more pressure than ever is being applied for 'curriculum accountability'"

(1991:63). In Holtzman's (1992) view of the school of the future, education is a shared responsibility with families, schools, the community, and other agencies. Already, several inner city schools are participating in serving breakfasts and hot lunches, clothing exchanges, and settlement work for new immigrant families. In addition, as more parents are required to work outside the home, more families are depending on schools and non-profit organizations to supplement, and in extreme cases even supplant, the responsibilities of child-rearing.

With the general decline in large households since industrialization and the increase in working family members, the shift of family tasks to other institutions has become more pronounced. In particular, the raising of children has long ago ceased to be a household monopoly (Kahn and Kamerman, 1975; Sugarman, 1983). In the average two-parent family, members are working outside the home 65 to 75 hours per week, compared to just 45 hours in the previous generation (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). Particularly for the working poor, the ability to spend time with children to socialize and educate them has been compromised. Within this context it is not uncommon for teachers to take on the role of lay social workers in addition to their instructional duties. In short, schools are being asked to take on more with fewer resources. This challenge can be met by having schools collaborate with other agencies which serve the same population (Donofrio, 1992).

The pressing issue is how planners can best respond to this situation. According to Alastair Fraser, assistant superintendent of schools in Vancouver's northeast sector as well as one of the principals of the Inner City Program: "I envision the school as the hub of community services, a place where people could get one-stop shopping so they don't have to travel across the city to get to the immigration office or unemployment services. A lot of these parents don't have the bus fare to get across town" (Balcom, 1993:B2). Implicit in this statement is the recognition that schools alone cannot be expected to solve the problems experienced by their students and families, and that the synthesis of services is the most efficient, effective, and practical means of delivering assistance. In other words, social services need to be on site to buttress and enhance the role of the school.

The potential for agencies to provide social services in order to mitigate the growing challenges faced by schools is great. In fact, in all the cases examined in Chapter 3, schools appear to be a common element on the sites of existing MSCs. This trend

suggests that MSCs play a crucial role in school operations in particular, and community development in general.

Through its Community School Program, the Vancouver School Board recognizes the importance of integrating services and the crucial role played by the school. The school is a springboard for activity, outreach, and resources. Likewise, an MSC could make the school more inclusive of the community for the benefit of all, students and non-students alike. In fact, it may be argued that the MSC is the operational hybrid between the respective philosophies of the neighbourhood centre and community school, a topic discussed in the next chapter. The community school concept is one which comes close to realizing the potential of schools as part of the MSC.

### *1.2.5 Prevention*

Finally, with regard to society as a whole MSCs bode well for the future. Because its services are preventative and go beyond immediate service responses, MSCs may help reduce future social problems, thereby reducing the multiple social costs borne by society as well as financial costs to taxpayers. As one writer advocates:

... turn schools into community centres which combine many services. Schools, or a grouping of nearby schools, might offer health services, social services and a community police office all under one roof .... The idea would be to combine and share resources, and to prevent future problems -- whether health or social -- which would cost society and the taxpayer a great deal of money in the future.

(Das, 1994:A17)

Given the conditions discussed above, the challenge becomes one of how to best structure social services in the city in an operational framework. Society has a vested interest in creating and nurturing an environment where mental health, social adjustment, the quality of life, and the caliber of its growing generations are given primary attention (Kahn and Kamerman, 1975:176). The planning profession has much work to do if it is to heed the call for the better coordination of social services. The field is ripe with opportunities to meet the growing and changing demands of the population for vital and viable social infrastructure. The MSC is one planning response that is worthy of consideration.



### 1.3 PLANNING POLICY RESPONSES

#### 1.3.1 *No Applicable Council Policy*

There is presently no explicit City policy on MSC-type facilities. Despite this, there are a number of different complexes in Vancouver which incorporate various services on one site, the most comprehensive and well developed being the Britannia Centre, located in the heart of the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood on the city's east side. In the 9 buildings located on the 17 acre site, there is an elementary school, secondary school, community and school library, seniors drop-in centre, teen drop-in centre, pre-school, immigrant services office, community information and referral office, gymnasium, swimming pool, ice rink, and a host of other social, recreational, and educational services. The Britannia Centre, which opened in 1972, was an experiment in unprecedented levels of cooperation and coordination that came about not by municipal directives, but rather was borne from local initiative to address local issues. Other MSC-type facilities, such as community centres and neighbourhood houses that are located next to schools (e.g., Kiwassa Neighbourhood House and Strathcona Community Centre), are also products of local area initiatives or social service agency advocacy.

With regard to the City of Vancouver, it has had a history of ad hoc responses to the MSC model. Proposals created by community groups to improve the coordination and delivery of social services to their neighbourhoods are handled in the traditional manner of government politics: committees are formed to study proposals' feasibility. This is not to suggest that the current policy void is negative. Some would argue that the City should not be the driving force behind community initiatives, but instead respond constructively to the interests and requirements of each distinct area. In short, the key focus of a government's purview is on ensuring that the needs of each community are heard and are met with an appropriate response. This situation represents the age old tension between planners and the "planned for" regarding how much municipal planners should listen to the people or, alternatively, lead the public with their visionary ideas.

### 1.3.2 *Ad Hoc Position*

The City does not have a firm direction regarding MSCs or similar type facilities. For the most part the arrangements for this model are ad hoc and direction usually comes from the bottom at the level of the neighbourhood organization or the social service agency. Ringers (1981:3) claims that ad hoc arrangements are characterized by the following features, which are applicable to the Vancouver situation:

1. They are formulated to improve a specific work or service situation.
2. They are usually the result of people's ingenuity to take advantage of a particular opportunity or need.
3. They are typically operated on a casual basis at the operating level of the agencies involved and their respective personnel.

Even though these ad hoc initiatives provide sorely needed services, their informal status ensures that they are not designed to change institutional or political goals or directions, although they certainly are symptoms of the need to do so. They are just small, albeit significant, steps toward the solution of a larger problem.

Possible reasons for the City's reluctance to commit itself to a policy on integrated services such as the MSC are the complexities involved in coordinating the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved, conflicting professional and philosophical interests, territorial control, the perception of favouritism (e.g., which constituency is the government favouring? depriving?), and funding. However, the existing propinquity between schools and community centres or neighbourhood houses is more than astonishing coincidence. The proximity is what the residents and advocates in these communities wanted and successfully lobbied for. It is safe to assume, then, that the idea must have great advantages. Definitely, more comprehensive service delivery and more efficient use of physical resources are two obvious benefits. However, the fact that integration remains a low priority on the planning agenda also hints that there may be some serious disadvantages as well. These issues and other difficulties associated with MSCs will be explored in Chapter 3.

### 1.3.3 Summary

To summarize, there is only a "fuzzy" municipal-level forum for the exploration and negotiation of policies surrounding the MSC-style integration of services. Where integrated services have been established, they have been developed on a case by case basis, and typically initiated by concerned community groups. When integration is initiated by the City, it is usually driven by funding issues rather than the merits of integration per se. As a result, there is no criteria by which to determine what is and is not justifiable when clustering services and no consistency in allocating resources. Although integration of services and sharing of resources are frequently stated as general goals, they have never been comprehensively studied and municipally sanctioned. The MSC concept is an example of coordinated planning and provision of services, but efforts to formally operationalize it have been minimal. The delivery of services by the City has been improvisational in nature and thus not as effective as it could be. The City is left with a provocative template, but without the foresight to see the bigger picture.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

### 1.4.1 Research Questions

Given the challenge to address the dearth in coordinated services to communities, the question to be asked is whether the MSC model is a viable idea. Specifically, the questions to be researched are:

1. What criteria are relevant to an analysis of the efficacy of competing community service models? (e.g., efficiency, accessibility, convenience, cooperation, etc.)
2. In general, how does the MSC model compare to:
  - a) a dispersed model of community service location, and
  - b) the integrated service delivery model?

3. Which of these models (or combination thereof) seems best suited to the needs of communities in a rapidly growing, changing, and increasingly complex city like Vancouver?

#### *1.4.2 Methodology*

The methods used to answer the above questions will be twofold. First, a literature review of selected texts on the topic of integrated services will be conducted. The review of pertinent literature provides useful background material to achieve the breadth and depth of knowledge necessary to explore as broad a concept as integrated services. From this, important variables and relevant generalizations are expected to emerge. By extension, it is also expected that this method will assist in explaining existing phenomena in the area of MSCs against the prevailing theoretical backdrop (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Moreover, the solid theoretical grounding provided by this method serves as valuable checks when comparing findings from actual data gathered via interviews, the second method used for this study.

Interviews with those familiar with the MSC model (e.g., people from the City Social Planning Department, principals of schools located at MSCs, and MSC directors) will provide diverse interpretations and perspectives of the MSC concept. What this method lacks in breadth it makes up for in sensitivity in that it reveals an accurate snapshot of the perspectives and attitudes of key informants. Personal interviews have the advantage of yielding richer data than the literature review as the interviewer is given the opportunity to build rapport with the respondent and ask probing questions. In addition, experts in the field can elaborate upon complex concepts put forth in the theoretical literature.

These two methods of data collection are expected to ultimately yield valid and reliable results. Each method is useful in different and supplemental ways and affords a diverse range of data. Not only do they complement one another in providing breadth, depth, and sensitivity, but they also serve to verify one another.

### **1.5 OVERVIEW OF UPCOMING CHAPTERS**

Following this introductory contextual chapter, Chapter 2 investigates the historical roots of the MSC. It focuses on the history of MSC-type services, the settlement

movement and community education, and explores their respective origins, purposes, and philosophies. The discussion then argues that the MSC concept is in fact a philosophical and operational hybrid of the settlement house and community school. Woven together, the latter two become one unified whole, the MSC. Chapter 3 examines the results of field work conducted to evaluate the MSC concept. The chapter will highlight some of the critical issues and themes of the MSC concept, via interviews with Vancouver planners and managers of MSCs and substantiated by the literature review. An expected by-product of this research will be that the attributes and drawbacks of competing models of service delivery will emerge. The concluding section, Chapter 4, discusses this comparison with competing models; the implications the results hold for planning; and general conclusions. Ultimately, the task is to determine how planning can be used as a tool of intervention to improve the delivery of social services to citizens and the communities in which they live.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **EVOLUTION OF MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is important to note at the outset that the MSC is manifested in a variety of forms. The most common type of MSC found in Vancouver is one where a neighbourhood house or community centre is paired with a school. This situation is not surprising for three reasons. First, the earliest appearance in the literature of an MSC-type of facility is found in writings about the settlement, or neighbourhood, house which also happens to be the ancestor of the community centre (McKenzie, 1947). Second, the original prototype of the traditional school was intended, like the neighbourhood house, to provide a variety of services and programs for the community as well as education for its pupils (OECD, 1978a). Schools have since evolved into more formal institutions of learning and the community orientation has been largely lost. However, a derivation of the traditional school, the community school, fills this gap. Last, schools enjoy a favourable reputation, an accessible location, and physical resources that make them ideal candidates for an MSC.

Based on their respective histories and compatibilities with the general definition of the MSC outlined at the beginning of the thesis, it appears that the neighbourhood house or its offspring, the community centre, and the school, specifically the community school, are amenable to the MSC concept. The prominence of their dual presence on several MSC sites throughout Vancouver is therefore not surprising. Although it would be premature to state conclusively that the neighbourhood house or community centre coupled with the school is the ideal form of MSC, the fact that it happens to be the most common type of MSC in this city makes it worthy of further investigation.

#### **2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT**

The settlement movement and its creation, the settlement or neighbourhood house, represents the philosophical and concrete roots of contemporary social services, community centres, and neighbourhood activism. Beginning in London, England at the

turn of the 20th century, the movement was one of progressive reform. It was essentially a reaction to the explosive and uncontrolled growth that resulted from the advent of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. The changes wrought by these events happened too rapidly for an unprepared society (Pacey, 1950). With social justice ideals in mind, settlement pioneers sought to secure healthy and pleasant living conditions for the working poor in response to the rapacious competition, social chaos, and appalling conditions created by a laissez-faire system. A portrait of life at the time reveals a downtrodden populace grappling unsuccessfully with the squalor, hardship, and drudgery that accented life in the industrial city. Crass materialism and what Carson (1990) calls "spiritual sterility" were commonplace. As the ravages of capitalism wore on, the pervasive misery prompted two socially minded people, John R. Green and Samuel A. Barnett, to do something about it. Barnett insisted that the rich owed the poor their real "wealth," this being knowledge, character, and happiness (Carson, 1990).

They originated the idea that people who wanted to help should take up residence among the poor in London and in effect, "settle" among them to learn firsthand of their problems and discover with them solutions for their elimination. Mr. Barnett wrote, "The men might hire a house, where they could come for short or long periods and, living in an industrial quarter, learn to sup sorrow with the poor" (Holden, 1922:12). This novel and humanitarian idea so inspired one Arnold Toynbee that he became a powerful and influential advocate of the movement and persuaded fellow university graduates to get involved. So passionate was he in his credo of selfless public service, and so tireless in his work, Toynbee soon infected people with "settlement fever" and cultivated a large following. As a result the first generation of settlement residents was born (Carson, 1990; Holden, 1922; Trolander, 1987).

Out of these humble and sincere beginnings came the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, which was opened in 1884 by Mr. Barnett. It was run under the auspices of the University Settlement Association, a committee working on behalf of Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The settlement was located in London's east side in a house that was refitted with lecture and meeting rooms along with living quarters for the university graduates who came to "sup with the poor." Here, residents of the settlements could promote a neighbourly, as opposed to professional, relationship with the locals. It was hoped that in this congenial, supportive atmosphere problems could

be resolved. The philosophy of the house, indeed of the whole burgeoning movement, is best expressed in the following passage from the first report of the Association:

As a means whereby the thought, energy and public spirit of the University may be brought into the direct presence of the social and economic problems of our times, the value of the experiment cannot be overrated. The main difficulty of poor city neighborhoods, where the toilers who create our national prosperity are massed apart, is that they have few friends and helpers who can study and relieve their difficulties, few points of contact with the best thoughts and aspirations of their age, few educated public-spirited residents, such as elsewhere in England uphold the tone of Local Life and enforce the efficiency of Local Self-Government. In the relays of men arriving year by year from the Universities in London to study their professions or to pursue their independent interests, there are many free from the ties of later life, who might fitly choose themselves to live amongst the poor, to give up to them a portion of their lives, and endeavor to fill the social void.

It is an enterprise, which if patiently maintained and effectually developed, cannot but beget experience which will react most practically upon the thought of the educated classes upon whom, in a democratic country, falls so deep a responsibility for local and central good government ....

(Holden, 1922:13-14)

Two years later in 1886 an American, Stanton Coit, lived at Toynbee and was impressed and inspired by the work done to the extent that he decided to experiment with the idea at home. He returned to America and in 1887 established the first settlement house in the country, the Neighbourhood Guild, which was situated in the Lower East Side of New York City. Shortly thereafter, in 1889, the most famous settlement, Hull House, was established in Chicago by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Star (Carson, 1990; Holden, 1922; Trolander, 1987). These settlements and the many thereafter became the hub of the neighbourhood: a centre where friendly relations among neighbours and the different classes were fostered, and a focal point for special events, clubs, and classes. Activities and programs such as arts and crafts, daycare, libraries, employment assistance, citizenship classes, home nursing services, music halls, and art galleries could all be found in the settlement (Holden, 1922). In short, the settlement house cultivated attitudes and practices that would elevate mental, emotional, and social wellbeing.

Although the residents and volunteers of the settlement houses were representatives of a different class -- one of higher education and status and other advantages that come



with a privileged position in society -- it was hoped that working alongside those whose conditions were far more limited would prove the helpers' sincerity, humility, and open-mindedness. It was also assumed that through increased mutual understanding and tolerance, mutual ignorance and the resultant suspicion and distrust of others would be eradicated. In neighbourhoods that were traditionally stratified along class and racial lines and where the locals had lost meaningful contact with one another, settlements could re-establish these links and bridge the points across the social axis. These neighbourhood houses could play a mediating role and bring together different groups in society. In other words, settlements could act as an interpreter among different classes, races, and faiths. In this capacity, they could act as a trusted spokesperson for the exploited classes and interpret their resources and needs to the wider community, promote understanding, and rally for cooperative action (Hillman, 1960; Holden, 1922; Pacey, 1950; Trolander, 1987; Woods, 1923).

To this end, the settlements were highly successful in achieving social progress. For example, because settlement residents lived and worked so closely with the poor, they were the only ones who could supply accurate statistical knowledge and firsthand accounts of the living conditions endured by the locals to policy makers (Holden, 1922). As a result they were instrumental in drafting progressive social statutes since the laws were based on information gathered by the settlements. Their command of the facts and personal knowledge of living conditions were the prerequisites for the wise legislation necessary for remedying the ills suffered by the poor (Pacey, 1950).

Other examples of the settlements' pioneering work in social improvement include proposals that span education, recreation, public health, working conditions, and legal issues. Specific illustrations of the settlements' initiatives include: kindergarten, public playgrounds, community self-help, school nursing, medical inspections, housing codes, improvement of working conditions, unemployment insurance, and juvenile court. Moreover, settlement houses were also information and referral centres on virtually every conceivable topic pertaining to social services (Holden, 1922; Pacey, 1950; Trolander, 1987). Incidentally, Jane Addams of Hull House was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Against this backdrop of advocacy and services for social reform, the settlements were one of the first institutions to recognize that the environment, and not simply personal character defects, was a likely source of social problems (Trolander, 1987).

Armed with nothing more than liberal idealism, naiveté, and commitment to hard work, the pioneers forged into unfamiliar territory and created this distinctive new institution, the settlement house. However, it is precisely these pristine motives and enthusiasm that have been called into question by critics. First, by helping the poor, it was believed that settlement workers were smothering the embers of a class war. On the one hand it can be argued that the settlement workers were genuinely helping but on the other, it can be argued also that they were checking potential anti-social tendencies of a marginalized population. The critics charge that ethical concerns formed a "soft" discipline in the movement's aim to achieve social control. Were settlements really democratic agencies or institutions of social control? The critics say that in the genteel world of Victorian manners, the movement was nothing more than a romanticized, surface-level protest against industrialism (Carson, 1990). Although humanitarian ethos drenched the moral landscape, status quo maintenance was a bigger concern. In short, settlement workers were accused by socialist revolutionaries of circumventing a socialist revolution by placating the workers.

A second major criticism directed at the settlement movement was its moralistic overtone. Trolander (1987) states that settlements tended to impose their leadership onto the neighbourhood and to dominate and culturally educate the poor with middle class values. In this sense settlements were accused of being *for* the neighbourhood, but not *of* it. They eschewed grassroots organizing in favour of interpreting -- according to their terms of reference -- *for* the neighbourhood. Sociologist Richard Cloward (1965) echoed this claim in his article, "The War on Poverty." He said that social service agencies, like the settlements, reflected the values of their well-to-do boards rather than the values of the poor they were supposed to help. Settlement workers countered that there were many poor people who aspired to middle class status, and that the only opportunities available to help them achieve this were found in the neighbourhood house. In their view, if settlements assisted the upwardly mobile to climb the social ladder, then being "*for*" the neighbourhood was not so bad (Trolander, 1987). Besides, social reformers by definition have an explicit moral bias.

Last, Trolander points to the settlements' heavy emphasis on the acculturation of immigrants as fodder for criticism. In America the early settlement movement coincided with the expansion of cities and high levels of immigration. In some years levels reached in excess of one million. Because of limited English skills, general alienation and unfamiliarity, and white backlash against them, immigrants crowded

into urban slums. Here, immigrants would come into contact with the settlement house where one of the primary functions was the adjustment of immigrants to the American way of life (Wohl, 1984). Critics charge that the "do-gooders" were threatened by the hordes of foreigners so they sought to re-establish their influence by "Americanizing" the immigrants into their own ethnocentric attitudes and practices.

Whatever the criticisms leveled at the movement may be, one cannot deny the fact that this was one of the first concrete attempts to help for helping's sake. The movement was not an ostensibly religious operation, but rather pragmatic help, plain and simple. High minded purpose was put into practice rather than politely discussed in the parlor (Barnett, 1909). The movement was a non-threatening institution devoted to improvement in society. It focused not so much on major reform, but rather increased understanding between and among the top and bottom strata of society. While the settlement pioneers may be accused of being paternalistic do-gooders and controllers, they nonetheless brought a broader perspective of the social order, and publicized to society the challenges faced by the poor (Trolander, 1987). In short, the settlement movement sought to broaden the vision on both sides of the class divide.

Of special salience to this thesis is the fact that the settlement movement had a natural affinity with education. As Holden (1922) argues, the neighbourhood environment is teeming with natural contacts, social frivolity, and experiments in democracy. In other words, it is a perfect breeding ground for a social education. Furthermore, education is the great social equalizer whereby rich and poor can sit side by side to learn their lessons. Through school, one is inculcated with the general philosophy of getting along with others. However, the social lessons in life are not so readily forthcoming in the formal education system and the settlements are equipped to fill the gap. In the neighbourhood house, students can relate their lives to the cornucopia of lives, experiences, trials, and tribulations out in the "real" world. Through extra curricular programs and philosophical discourse, they are given the opportunity to interpret life in all of its diverse complexities. In short, Holden argues that settlements supplement the schools' lessons, they socialize education, and they socialize people.

To this end, the settlement movement eventually expanded its reach to include a recreation and social centre organized in public schools (Holden, 1922). This was one of the first instances of utilizing public schools for purposes other than academic education. In this context settlements' work in the schools came to resemble the MSC.

However, according to Trolander (1987) it was not until the 1960s when the concept of combining education and social services really accelerated in the minds of policy makers. Pre-school started in settlement houses in 1965, of which the Head Start project was the most popular. In addition, educational enrichment programs for adults were added to the list of services offered by settlements. For example, basic skills and upgrading in reading, writing, and mathematics were offered in order to make people more employable. If they did not already before, settlement houses came to resemble MSCs even more with the addition of breakfast programs for poor children, and the introduction of legal aid and welfare offices on site.

In modern times, Allueva (1993) states that one of the more important functions of the neighbourhood house is the building of partnerships with schools and other community organizations. This networking ensures that the neighbourhood residents' views are given wider recognition, the house is better informed about changes in the community, and there is more efficient sharing of resources such as physical space, expertise, and funding. Regarding this last point, neighbourhood houses operate several programs out of existing physical space such as schools, churches, community agencies, and even homes. Moreover, this close relationship with other community groups is in keeping with the settlement movement's method of blending in with or accommodating to the community. The result is that the neighbourhood house is given flexibility in responding to the mobility of the population, and by utilizing familiar locales, it can develop trust and friendliness within the community and represent its interests.

To conclude this section, drawing upon the work of Hillman (1960:iv-v), settlements can be characterized as having a number of fundamental principles:

1. They are located in a geographical neighbourhood. They seek to understand it, assist its residents, and develop its potential.
2. They provide opportunities to individuals and families in order to develop their potential in the home, neighbourhood, and the wider community. They believe that people possess the capacity for self direction and growth.
3. They are institutions of integration. They respond to the needs of all people regardless of race, religion, nationality, socio-economic status, and seek to improve the relationships among people of different

backgrounds. They serve as the crossroads at which different people come together to share experiences and develop friendships.

4. They are flexible and experimental. They adopt methods and programs according to the changing profile in the neighbourhoods in which they serve.
5. They provide early detection of emerging social problems in their area. They provide valuable demographic information, identify emerging trends, and document the effects these changes have on residents to policy makers.
6. They involve the locals in the planning, decision making, and implementation of services. They provide a forum whereby citizens can participate in dealing with neighbourhood issues.
7. They provide preventative and self-help services. They focus on early detection and intervention of problems through the delivery of social services.

Given its rich heritage in individual and social reform, the settlement has been, and will continue to be, a vehicle for neighbourliness and the awakening of neighbourhood spirit. It possesses the unique ability to have its ear to the ground in a way no politician ever could, and to blend classes, races, and interests into a dynamic and significant force. While the movement's influence may have declined in recent decades, especially in an era of growing prominence for other social agencies, its mandate to provide a broad yet still specific mix of education, recreation, direct services, and social reform has given it a rare viability. Moreover, given the movement's strong neighbourhood roots, it has been able to enjoy a stability when other service organizations and reform movements have come and gone (Trolander, 1987).

The settlement movement distinguishes itself by being the first exercise in cooperative social planning in that it helped realize the social desires of the masses and the need to be organized (Holden, 1922). To this end, individual settlements galvanized their respective neighbourhoods with a unified voice, and made a resounding call for local improvement. It was the intellectual and philosophical spirit of the time and the kinetic frenzy wrought by industrial society that coalesced into the ideas and expressions that created the settlement movement. The experiment to dissolve class barriers and assert goodwill among the people continues to this day.

### 2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MOVEMENT

Education is too precious to be confined to children and adolescents  
(Poster, 1982:22)

The concept of the community school in its most basic form is that the education process concerns itself not only with the progress of the individual student, but also the wellbeing of the whole community. This non-traditional approach utilizes the community as an educational resource and simultaneously allows the community (i.e., adults, businesses, agencies, neighbourhood groups, etc.) to utilize students' and teachers' work as well as the school facilities. The aim is for the school to work closely with the community to identify and remedy problems, and enhance the wellbeing of all the citizens in the community, student and non-student alike. The results of these efforts are expected to culminate in overall community improvement.

In North America the community school movement actually begins with the beginning of education programs in general. In the earlier days the school was already the site for community activities, these being academic, social, cultural, and recreational (OECD, 1978a). It is only when society became more urbanized that functional specialization came to dominate the way of life and the school became isolated from the community it served. The actual starting point for a formal community school began in Flint, Michigan in the 1930s on the initiative of Frank Manley, a physical education teacher. He recognized a need for more recreational programs for youth and suggested that the community should make use of the public schools for boys' and girls' clubs and other programs (BCSTA, 1974). The movement enjoyed a slow but steady incline throughout the 1940s and 1950s as small communities began to adopt the concept and universities organized graduate programs for community education directors. In the 1960s the community school movement enjoyed rapid and expanded growth due to the War on Poverty initiated by American president Lyndon B. Johnson (OECD, 1978a).

According to Hillson et al. (1969), a prominent figure in the movement was Leonard Covello who throughout the 1940s was the principal of Benjamin Franklin High School in the East Harlem neighbourhood of New York City. In Covello's view education is not only beneficial for the individual student, but for the community as well. The school plays an important role in coordinating community activities and

acting as a social centre, socializing agent, and community leader. Essentially, it is a nexus and stimulus for community action, where students learn invaluable leadership qualities that they can contribute to the community well into adulthood, and where communities can nurture and harness resources -- human, material, and financial -- for the future. Covello gives this well rounded definition of the community school's function:

...[T]he school must necessarily become the center of community life in its own neighborhood, a clearinghouse, if you will, for all neighborhood ideas, programs, and enthusiasms. It must aid in correlating these according to an effective plan through which the well-being of the community as a whole may be forwarded and insured. It must establish intimate contacts with the children, the adults, the homes, the welfare organizations, and even the business interests of the community. The range of such activities comprises the background of the educational processes within the school itself. The really successful school, therefore, cannot function as a detached organization concerned only with the imparting of a certain amount of book knowledge to a fluctuating number of pupils during a specified number of hours daily through a limited period each year .... Rather the school must make a break with the formalism and pattern of the past, sacrificing nothing of the essential integrity of an intelligently planned educational program along intellectual lines, but amplifying its program to meet the larger demands of community and Nation. (1969:466)

The community school philosophy recognizes the school as a potent force for positive change for both the individual and by implication, the community. Jencks (1969) extends the argument to include the traditional school and claims that more than any other institution outside the family, the school in general has a greater contribution to make toward individual and community improvement. In modern Western society, education is universally revered and accepted by all, a common value that is strongly held regardless of class, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. In many ways it is the great social equalizer whereby one can transcend the psychological and sociological divisions that exist in our society. In other words education is a gateway in which people can escape conditions beyond their control. Moreover, education is the only widespread opportunity available to inner city children to break free from the slums by familiarizing them with mainstream values, and providing them with alternatives to self-defeating influences in the family and neighbourhood. In this regard, school can act as a bulwark against a neglectful home and turbulent neighbourhood.

As further justification for the value of community-oriented education, the GVRD (1991) states that, at the least, the school is the primary point of contact that children have outside of their families. As such, the school assumes a direct daily influence, sometimes more than the family, over children and this influence is sustained over several years (BCSTA, 1974). Thus the school is in a good position to have direct knowledge of students' needs and desires; coordinate efforts of other agencies to meet the needs of the child, the family, and the community; and effect positive change. Minzey and LeTarte (1972) also make this point when they argue that a child is a product of the total environment which consists primarily of the family home, but increasingly the community as well. As other social institutions gain in prominence and families relinquish important child rearing responsibilities, the school and the community become virtually inseparable as they gain influence over the child. In short, outside of the family, or despite of it, the school and the community have become major determinants of social aptitude and achievement.

In this context the community school strives to embrace the whole community, not just students, as its constituency. There is the recognition that students' needs cannot be viewed in isolation from the community in which they live. For example, Ringers (1976) argues that problems in the family inevitably are reflected in a child's scholastic progress. These problems are a function of the family's economic status, housing situation, physical and emotional health, and other external forces, all of which impact eventually on the child and subsequently the classroom. Thus the school must take these determining factors into account and work with the community to dismantle these structural obstacles to individual and social progress.

In order to understand and embrace the community in which its pupils live, community schools have several options available to them. They can become the hub of activity of community life by providing: offices for individual and group counseling, facilities for recreation, adult education, a community police office, baby clinics, medical services, and job retraining, just to name a few. A lot of these services are already provided in some form or another but the relationships between schools and community agencies are informal and narrow in scope. As a result, much potential for fuller cooperation and programs is overlooked and resources of both the school and the agencies are not maximized. As it stands now, the situation would probably benefit from some formalization and direction. Proponents of the community school



philosophy believe that once this marriage between school and community is achieved, a sense of community self-actualization will emerge.

To summarize, it has been long established that education is a potent and long term force in society (Levin, 1968). As society changes and becomes more complex, so, too, the school must change and become more complex. It must expand and diversify its role to remain relevant and responsive to the guardians of our present fragile state of community. To this end the community school in particular plays an important role. For both the individual and the community at large, it embodies a "learning for life" attitude, in chronological and qualitative terms. The community school movement recognizes that education is for the long term and that it benefits the individual in particular, the community in general, and society in the ultimate. Moreover, Weaver argues that the movement is absolutely necessary:

The traditional view of the school as an intellectual skill center cannot be expected to produce solutions to the critical problems which we face in this century. When viewed within the context of the modern social milieu .... the Community Education approach to problems can be viewed as a cultural imperative.

(1969:2)

To achieve its cultural imperative, society needs to profoundly reorient its concept of the respective roles of the school and the community. The shift must involve the acceptance that the school and the community do not occupy separate roles, but in fact that their roles are profoundly integrated and ultimately inseparable.

## **2.4 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE AND THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL TOGETHER: THE MULTI-SERVICE CENTRE**

As a point of departure for this section, two qualifications must be made. First, given that the community centre is a descendant of the neighbourhood house, when the argument is made that the neighbourhood house could merge with the community school to form the MSC, it is implied that the neighbourhood house can be substituted with the community centre (although their respective orientations are different). Second, while not every school is recognized as a community school many schools, especially in the inner city, are de facto community oriented by virtue of the needy student population they serve. In this respect, the roles and expectations of these

schools have expanded to the extent that they now accommodate the child as an integral part of his/her surrounding community. So when the argument is made that the community school could merge with the neighbourhood house to form the MSC, it is implied that a traditional school will suffice when a community school is not present.

In both their respective goals and practices, the settlement and community school movements are similar. And coupled with the formal educational component offered by the community school, they represent a viable blueprint for the MSC. The merger of the neighbourhood house and the school represents an integration of a multitude and range of complementary and interrelated services at one convenient locale. Moreover, by working together the neighbourhood house and the community school achieve the dual goals of serving a broader constituency for broader purposes. The integration of the services offered by both holds promise for a mutually beneficial relationship. Ringers Jr.'s (1981) version of the MSC, the "Community Service Center," is defined as thus:

A Community Service Center is a public building, usually a school, where community residents of all ages can receive essential community services such as education, social, health, and leisure programs at times when they are needed or desired. It is also a place where individuals can share ideas and help each other to make their community a better place to live.

Each participating agency in a Community Service Center learns more about the other agencies' strengths and needs. Each has the opportunity to share resources such as equipment, staff, information, and material. Each agency is likely to gain through this mutual support.

(1)

Mutual benefit comes from the facts that the increasing demands placed on schools can be more easily met if schools work in close conjunction with social service agencies; delivery of several services on one site achieves greater holism and continuity in support; accessibility is improved because several needs are met on one site; schools enjoy a familiar, stabilizing, and non-threatening reputation in the community; and use is maximized and costs are minimized as both agencies and the schools share facilities and resources. In an MSC, both agencies and schools have diversified, expanded, and integrated their respective roles. Ultimately, this merger ensures that both will have enhanced viability and longevity as a neighbourhood hub for all residents.

With this in mind, future directions for neighbourhood houses can be a formal teaming up with community schools -- an idea already introduced a century ago -- in order to unify neighbourhoods and coordinate services for residents in a socially and cost effective manner. As the level of integration becomes more defined and coordinated, the combination of the two can transform into a new entity, the MSC. This facility can host a variety of public services in the neighbourhood, a kind of one stop shop of various social services organized at the local level.

As the situation currently stands, there are several other reasons to support the union of the neighbourhood house and the community school. They are natural allies in that they are philosophically compatible and their programs are complementary. On a conceptual level, each is capable of acting as the neighbourhood hub around which everything else revolves, and each strives to be responsive to the particular neighbourhood in which it is located. Just as Holden (1922) writes about the settlement house as the primary intersection where people of different interests are brought together to be educated and find local solutions to improve life, the BCSTA (1974) describes the community school as a "catalytic cohesive nexus -- a connecting point for the dissociated human forces in the community -- a locus for the regeneration of worthwhile human interaction -- a location for mobilizing and co-ordinating community resources" (3).

On a programmatic level, services are available for people at all stages of the life cycle to assist in individual and community self-actualization. Neighbourhood houses are known to provide information and referral to agencies that offer assistance; advocate on behalf of clients' rights; provide services directly to individuals and families such as legal aid, childcare, health services, employment counseling, recreation, group work, and housing assistance; and they organize and mobilize groups for collective action on behalf of neighbourhood improvement. Community schools, in addition to academic education for pupils, have been known to provide similar services as well. In fact, Dryfoos' (1994) definition of the MSC is "a settlement house in a school" (100).

Since both the neighbourhood house and the community school promote similar causes, incorporate similar approaches, and derive mutual benefit from cooperating with each other, it is not surprising that either or both are present in common manifestations of the MSC. With the community as their laboratory of learning and

source of partnerships, they both share a belief in the value of education in its broadest sense, and in active and flexible responses to community needs.

To conclude, if social policy analysts were to study carefully the nature and goals of the neighbourhood house and the school, they would find that they are largely compatible and therefore should be working cooperatively. Their operations are not limited to hard boundaries and discrete roles, but are characterized by much necessary overlap. In this light, policy makers must re-evaluate their approach to the two for they no longer represent exclusive concepts of education and social services: "The boundaries between the 'educational' field which is covered by the school and the 'social' field which is covered by the welfare mechanisms are no longer as clear as they were" (OECD, 1978b:33).

However, despite the general argument outlined thus far that the two should integrate into an MSC, the model undoubtedly has its limitations. The next chapter is devoted to a critique of the MSC.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CRITIQUE OF THE MSC

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Community social services tend to locate proximate to the populations they serve. Historically, this tendency has led to a dispersed location of services, consistent with the relatively dispersed pattern of population distribution in urban areas. However, the dispersed nature of service delivery has led to problems with fragmentation, duplication, impracticality, and access. Against this background the MSC model has emerged in response to the perceived need and the inherent appeal of decentralization, integration, and rationalization of services; local accountability; and citizen participation (Clague, 1988a).

The MSC is known by a variety of names: community services centre, service hub, neighbourhood information centre, "one stop shop," and full-service school to name a few. Moreover, various models of the MSC abound. There are those where separate agencies simply operate under one roof (rooming house model), each with separate staff, administrative, and governing systems; those where one or two agencies exercise central authority over the delivery of various services; and those where several agencies are integrated to form a seamless whole, and a representative from each agency forms a management council for the entire unit. Where some MSCs merely coordinate services, that is, act to smooth the relationships of independent elements within it, others will go further and integrate, that is, bring together formerly independent functions and organizations into a new unitary structure (Morris and Lescohier, 1978:23). The menu of program and service options is likewise diverse. There are many variations of the MSC model, none of which can claim to be the prototype.

As this thesis is concerned with the MSC as a concept only, the MSC will be discussed in a generic sense. One fittingly generic definition in the literature is described by Gandy and Delaney (1977) as thus:

The multi-service centre can best be described as a physical location that houses the range of social services provided by the community with joint planning among the services to the end of better service to the consumer and more effective and efficient use of community resources.

(107)

Another broad definition of the MSC is found in a report on the Britannia Centre by the Social Development Committee, City of Vancouver (1968). In it, the MSC is described as thus:

The Community Services Centre concept proposes an entirely new civic arrangement for coordination and integration of services provided by a variety of agencies and people. It suggests a complex of land and buildings, parts of which are used for educational, sports and cultural activities, manpower and legal counseling, medical, dental and welfare services. It also suggests a centre for social action, a place where people meet to discuss local area and neighbourhood problems and work together to solve them.

(16)

Implicit in the above definitions is the underlying philosophy of cooperation. Cooperation is a definitive factor in the MSC and is required to achieve many objectives in social welfare, notably improved accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness to local needs. Despite the many different expressions of the MSC, constant and vigorous cooperation is at the heart of the model, and a credo to which all MSCs adhere.

After its debut on the social service scene some thirty years ago, it is time for a contemporary critique of how it has fared as a vehicle for social service delivery. The analysis that follows is preliminary in nature and makes no claim to be complete. Evaluations of social service delivery are multi-faceted and many variables are beyond researchers' control as they are linked and interdependent with other systems. Thus, it is difficult to determine causes for effects, as will be discussed in the next section. A comprehensive evaluation requires further study and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

What will be covered is a brief overview of the difficulties surrounding the evaluation of social services, particularly the MSC; a determination of some of the criteria that can be used for such an evaluation; and the results of field work that applied this criteria to investigate the overall utility of the MSC. Substantiated by the academic literature, the primary data identified several factors or what Sposito calls "essential" variables that

impact the performance of the MSC and are critical to its development (1993:31). These factors were examined for common attributes, concepts, and patterns, which then led to their grouping into the following categories: Synergy; Leadership; Efficiency; Neighbourhood Relevance and Scale; Facilities and Access; and Systems. These features are by no means exhaustive, but still must be given special consideration when operating an MSC for they affect significantly its effectiveness.

In addition, three major themes emerged from these issues and guide the overall discussion. They are: Balance; Courtship; and Collaboration. A general analysis of how the MSC compares with the traditional dispersed model and the integrated service delivery model of service delivery, plus the implications of these findings for social planning policy, will be analyzed in the final chapter.

### **3.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Determining the actual quality or standard of success of social services is difficult. With the MSC, it is problematic to compare the model against other models of service delivery because no two MSCs are alike. In addition, typically in the social welfare field the variables that need to be measured are beyond the rigorous control needed to determine their potency. This is a domain characterized by judgment and ideally justice, not science. Objectives are intangible and subjective opinions are common (Lewis et al., 1991). Given that the crux of this thesis is to evaluate the MSC model, it is imperative to develop a list of criteria by which to measure it. However, the task is far from simple.

On a general level the evaluation of social services is fraught with ambiguities. Unlike for profit enterprises where the bottom line is clear, the social services field does not deliver tangible returns. Conceptual and practical difficulties abound. Like all other evaluations, a determination of quality is the goal. However, "quality," or such related terms as "effectiveness" or "success" are theoretically vague and value laden (Clague et al, 1988a; Keeley, 1978; Lewis et al., 1991). Among these terms, there is a consensus that they can be defined as the extent to which a user's condition improves as a result of service and the extent to which the user is satisfied (Patti, 1987). Even so, once success has been agreed upon, it is difficult to determine with confidence the causal factors leading up to it. Even if these factors were identified, evaluation is bound to be imprecise because the nature of social services is complex: it is characterized by

changing conditions and priorities; regulatory and ethical considerations; lack of standardization; factors over which evaluators have no control; and difficulties in quantifying something as delicately qualitative as social services (Baum and Parihar, 1984).

With specific regard to the MSC, there is a dearth of reliable comparable data on the quality of its services with other models of service delivery (O'looney, 1993). Another difficulty arises with regard to whether comparison may be a moot point in that each of the three models discussed here -- MSC, dispersed, and integrated service delivery -- has a different significance and set of merits that stand on its own. While these models may be similar in their philosophy about social welfare and equity, each is unique with respect to its goals, services, chosen methodology, and community it serves. To compare would be to risk disregarding the radically different features that characterize each model. For example, outcomes will be different, as will the level of coordination and costs, because the objectives and methods of each model are intended to be different. It is the classic apples and oranges dilemma. In this regard, the validity of comparison is questionable.

To speculate that one model is better than another may be misleading when in fact they could be complementary. Against this background, it must be qualified that the formulation of common criteria to judge them is bound to be a controversial exercise, as there are comparability and reliability problems. "It is not an approach which is amenable to strict forms of comparative evaluation yet it can model, demonstrate and point the way for beneficial change in service systems" (Clague, 1988a:404). With this caveat, certain discernible criteria were identified from the literature as indicative of the issues that face the MSC. The criteria formed a starting point for the inquiry and were incorporated into a questionnaire that explored the overall concept of the MSC (see Appendix A). The questionnaire formed the basis of personal interviews with planners at Vancouver City Hall, principals of schools that were part of an MSC, and executive directors at 3 different MSCs in the city. The results of the interviews are in the following section:

Figure 1 on the next page represents an amalgamation of the various criteria and issues relevant to social services evaluation that have been written about over the years (Baum, 1984; City Manager, 1994; Clague, 1988a; OECD, 1978b; Peterson, 1971;



Ringers, 1981; Sugarman, 1988), with the distinction that all of these articles pay particular attention to coordinated services.

**FIGURE 1: LIST OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

1. Effectiveness
  - goal fulfillment
  - degree to which services satisfy the needs of the users
  - coordination among various programs
2. Efficiency
  - maximization of results with minimum resources
3. Accessibility
  - user friendly
  - responsive
  - serves a wide cross-section of the community; relevant
4. Convenience
  - range of needs that are met
  - availability of resources
  - degree to which work has been facilitated and enhanced
5. Flexibility
  - capacity to change as required
6. Workable Implementation
  - appropriate organizational mechanisms and programs for accomplishing goals
7. Leadership
  - manages group and organizational culture; team building
  - maintains program vitality, motivation, and support
  - coordinates all efforts toward organizational goals
  - representation to outside organizations
8. Management
  - clarification of purpose, authority, roles, responsibilities
  - policy, goals, and methods, compatibility
9. Cooperation
  - inter and intra agency cooperation encouraged and supported
10. Staff
  - carefully selected, trained, supervised, and developed
11. Conflict Resolution
  - process for presentation and investigation of opposing positions
  - process to convert problems into opportunities
12. Community Involvement
  - opportunities for different individuals and groups to meet
  - inclusiveness

### 3.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.3.1 *Synergy*

One of the outstanding features of MSCs identified in the interviews and literature is the synergy that results from close collaboration among service providers. Synergy in its simplest form is an outcome that is greater than the sum of its constitutive parts. Services, and people, are interacting in a constructive and cooperative manner in producing an effect that is greater than the sum of the effects of all the elements working separately. In other words, services and people do not constitute simple and linear cause and effect relationships, but they synergize: they combine forces to create something that is new, different, and greater. The process is not to be understood in linear terms of "more of the same," but rather something that yields higher, richer results (Chess and Norlin, 1988). In short, the relationships create a "value added" product.

In the interviews terms like "synergy," "cross fertilization," and "cross pollination" cropped up frequently when the attributes of MSCs were discussed. For example, one respondent claimed that one of the greatest opportunities offered by an MSC was the ability to take agencies' existing resources and strengthen what they do and provide in ways that were more possible than had they been operating separately. The level of synergy is most prominent at the staff and program levels while there are more limited effects at the administrative, user, and community levels.

In an MSC where different agencies offer complementary services, synergy comes from the ability of each agency to maximize its respective strengths or exercise its own comparative advantage to enrich the larger context in which it operates. Each can contribute relevant knowledge, skills, and expertise previously unknown to the others. From this cross fertilization comes increased learning and practice of a nature that exceeds what stand alone agencies could deliver on their own.

Because they are working in concert with other complementary and supportive counterparts, agencies are allowed more opportunities to be innovative, imaginative, and responsive. Most respondents shared the view that the greatest amount of synergy took place at the staff level and this allowed them to improve their respective

programs. In the structured and regular cooperation that is built into the operations of an MSC, there is peer based support among staff as well as opportunities for consistent follow up of clients. Moreover, although agency staff may intersect at mutual interests and goals, they may diverge in programs and techniques, and this allows for more learning all around. Cross supervision and cross referral are also facilitated. In general, people do not have to be experts on the variety of social services delivered as they can gain awareness and knowledge from the collective experiences and interagency support that comes from denser networks. There is no need to "reinvent the wheel" as each staff member has skills and perspectives that can be contributed. Taking these factors together, the jobs of staff are made easier.

As one example, several agencies often share the same clients. These people could be engaged in counseling, a parent support program, and employment training; and their children could be a student at the school and partake in the after school programs. By their location at an MSC, agency staff can more frequently meet to ensure services received reinforce one another, and customize the service according to the individual circumstances of their clients (O'looney, 1993). Staff can put their collective knowledge together for the common goal of the wellbeing of their clients.

Synergy does not necessarily have to be structured in or formal. Staff from different organizations frequently see each other and at these moments informal information exchanges and updates on mutual clients take place. Nor are these exchanges exclusive to staff either. In one school that has a hot lunch program, in addition to students, all the MSC staff and clients are welcome, and in this mixed and informal atmosphere impromptu -- as opposed to programmed -- bonding and counseling often occurs.

A second example of synergistic outcomes is the readily available assistance. At one inner city MSC, 26 different languages are represented among students at the school, far beyond the communication capabilities of the teaching staff. However, translation of school notices and report cards and interpretation between teachers and children and their parents can be provided quickly and easily by staff from next door. In this context communication and understanding are facilitated and opportunities to concentrate on other issues are increased.

Because the volume and complexity of the work at the MSC are typically high, staff sometimes cope by focusing only on their respective programs to simplify things. In this regard synergy does not magically happen but must somehow be structured in or deliberately practiced. As one respondent said, "The cross-referencing does not just happen, it is a continual challenge." Another claimed that it is important that "cross fertilization be achieved intentionally as well as creating the atmosphere to allow it to happen."

In time, the frequency of interaction may help staff to become more "generalized experts" as they are exposed to different disciplines and learning experiences. By contrast, staff who are isolated in dispersed agencies may feel pressure to know more because they do not have the benefit of relying on others' knowledge.

Because of the many different opinions and methodologies that exist, checks and balances are constant and according to a few of the respondents, "They can keep an eye on one another," "There are always more than the usual 2 sides to the story ... one cannot possibly have all the answers," and "It keeps us honest in a positive sense." In this environment ill-informed, knee-jerk responses are rare. In an MSC setting there is a broader view beyond staff members' respective specializations and greater sensitivity than in traditional settings (Perlmutter et al., 1979).

Although many of the respondents waxed enthusiastic about the ways the MSC made the staff more knowledgeable and conceptually more able to improve programs as a result, it remains to be seen whether these synergistic effects have trickled down to the benefit of clients. And despite the fact that the majority of respondents said the MSC made jobs easier and saved a lot of time for staff, it is unclear whether the saved energy and time have been harnessed for clients' benefit, administrative operations, or some other purpose. At this point the relationship between synergy at the staff level and client outcome is unclear. However, one interviewee said that the likelihood of a richer client outcome is greater in the MSC. In those MSCs that offer services in a continuous, seamless fashion such as a parenting, moms and tots, preschool, school, after school care, and youth programs, clients are at the same place over a longer period of time and synergy takes place. Another said, "There is a lot of interface anyway so it's bound to happen because of similar clients, interests, and all the overlaps and connections."

There is no doubt that synergy exists and is a dynamic and potent force within the MSC. The cross pollination of different talents and disciplines add up to sum greater than its individual parts. And while it is unclear whether the quality of services actually improves because of this synergy, at least the *potential* is there. The sheer volume of interactions allows for a high possibility of new and different outcomes. "There is virtually no program or service in a community services centre that cannot benefit from such an interchange. The possibilities are limitless .... The act of collaborations in an integrated service model inevitably alters the content of what each party has to offer" (Clague, 1988a:372). Others put it more bluntly when they said that the MSC *had to* experience synergy and that it would not work without it. However, in order to create, and maintain, this synergy the MSC requires a special type of leadership.

### 3.3.2 Leadership

According to several interviewees and the literature, a second crucial aspect of the MSC is its leadership. The MSC leader must have "extraordinary people skills" according to one respondent. The personal qualities of directors and staff, how they interact, how they view their work, and how they resolve conflict all come to bear ultimately on the operations of the MSC. Neither physical proximity itself nor contractual agreements alone will ensure the smooth collaboration of agencies required in the MSC. It rests on the leadership and commitment of individual workers of separate agencies who benefit, or threaten, the whole unit. Once the leader has set the tone for good chemistry among the staff, the team can then become the catalyst for more achievements. This section concentrates on the necessity of good relations and those issues that would hinder it. That there will be a lot of cooperation and collaboration at the MSC is a given. What is not a given is "the personalities, level of trust, and past experiences that are added to the mix" as one put it.

For those who work at the MSC the level of commitment must be high, and maintained at that level throughout. Especially in an MSC setting, staff must be willing to overcome professional distances, and engage in the lateral thinking necessary to cooperate. Cooperation is essential as it is a prerequisite to the collaboration, coordination, and integration of services that characterize the MSC.

While there seems to be a general willingness to cooperate on an "official" level, the idea is often met with resistance. The majority of interviewees responded that many

people do not really understand the concept of working together and a lot of them give it the proverbial lip service. One issue that hinders cooperation is the "us versus them" mentality that characterizes some specialists in the field. There are also those agencies in MSCs that possess an "empire building mentality" and wish to be the premiere organization, dominate the others, and "call all the shots."

To overcome these professional and organizational border skirmishes, a leader must provide strong direction to pull together all the disparate interests. Above all, those in leadership positions must possess clear conceptual and practical knowledge at multiple levels. They must deal with a wide range of people and issues; navigate a personnel minefield and ensure that, as one respondent said, "staff are treated gingerly, that no toes are stepped on, but at the same time provide staff leadership"; and understand how to work within the parameters of a unique power structure.

The role of leader is one that must inspire and cultivate an atmosphere of team spirit and constant learning to further improve this team spirit. All participating agencies in the MSC must be actively consulted and involved in the direction of the overall whole. One respondent noted that if people are feeling disenfranchised, "The whole thing could collapse." In this regard it is crucial that a leader be able to communicate the value of the MSC project, and to convince people to participate in an often unprecedented level of cooperation. The leader needs to convey that "The project is not just one of the better models of social service delivery, but the very best" as one respondent advised. The leader can do this by getting people involved and fostering excitement, pride, and commitment in something that is of a landmark nature. In short, it is imperative that the leadership convince staff that the model is both worthwhile and workable (Donofrio, 1992).

The position of leader must also deal with "the beautiful baggage of decision making," as one respondent put it, and perform such routine tasks as hiring and firing, clarifying, adjudicating, observing, evaluating, reporting and interpreting to different interest groups, and fundraising. One of the most daunting tasks of the leader identified in the interviews and the literature is playing referee to the professional turfism that often erupts at the MSC. Most of the interviewed managers of MSCs confirmed this stance when they said that inherited staff from other agencies were much harder to deal with than new members who start their careers at the MSC. For the latter, there is no stressful adjustment period from being the expert or specialist to the "generalist" whose

specialty takes a secondary role. Perlmutter et al. (1979) concur that good managers must be willing to confront traditional, professionally discrete patterns of work at the MSC. Managers need to foster a shift in the workers' self-identification and help them embrace, or "buy into," the integrated service concept for many continue to see themselves as specialized service professionals.

Despite the tendency for staff to entrench themselves within their own respective specialized domains, there is surprisingly little discord when they are called upon to work together, as they often are at the MSC. As one respondent said, "You're bound to run into each other. Besides, it is not much of an issue especially given the requirements of ever increasing joint funding: this forces agencies to not only work together, but also to demonstrate that they can do it well. Really, there is no choice." Another echoed the same view when he said, "You have to be careful with your colleagues because you're in it together, so there's not much turf poaching." In essence, many respondents stated that the constant collaboration that takes place at the MSC leaves staff with little choice but to get along. Another reason for the lack of conflict is that regular meetings, open communication, and clear expectations reduce the amount of assumptions and confusion. Last, but of no less importance, is the heavy reliance on goodwill and the fortune of having compatible personalities to start off with.

When there is professional tension, it is usually of such a nature that it can be resolved informally. However, respondents also admitted that when there are so many different agencies and likewise different staff working together, "You need to have a lot of talking, though" and "A lot is trial and error." All the directors and principals at MSCs concurred that informal, unstructured conflict resolution via open lines of communication and "just dealing with it when it comes up" worked best. They said that the commitment to open communication and frequent interaction helped to monitor any possible undercurrents of tension. It also takes an astute and strong director to ensure that the problems of power and turfism are not left unattended and festering (Clague, 1988a; Perlmutter et al., 1979).

In addition to sound leadership, the other side of effective personnel relations is the staff. Like management, staff at the MSC face their own particular challenges. As noted, for people who have traditionally been trained to be specialists in their disciplines, and often in isolation from other related disciplines, working in a general, collaborative

framework can be a psychological and professional hurdle. According to one respondent, one must be ever mindful of "whose toes you're stepping on" or "who's in the line up."

Several of those interviewed believe that the issue of "professional turf" applies particularly to teachers of schools on the MSC site. Some blame the traditional training of teachers which has been parochial and compartmentalized from other human services, which has reinforced the separatism of professional identity. Moreover, when they go to work in the schools they continue to remain relatively isolated. According to one respondent:

Teachers don't understand a lot, they think they are the only 'professionals' and everyone is a peripheral assistant. This is due in large part to their training environment and lack of proper orientation to more integrated principles of holistic teaching. They need to recognize that there are different professional statuses other than their own and teaching is not limited to 9-3.

Similarly, Baillie (1983), Gage (1976), and Rist (1992) find that professional turfism is prevalent and workers are unlikely to favour integration if it would threaten the identity of their own particular service niche.

In general, all staff must also possess specific skills beyond those that they would possess had they been working in a dispersed model of service delivery. In the intricate and changing environment of the MSC, roles and responsibilities often shift and this requires a further refinement in collaboration. Those who can handle these adjustments are those who are open to team work, and, according to one respondent, who "do not feel threatened if resources and power are open, exposed, and accessible to others."

Clearly this type of work demands a high tolerance for ambiguity and can be frustrating for those who need clear structures (Clague, 1988a). It takes special skills to define order out of chaos, and to tolerate many bosses (many of which are from the lay community). At the MSC staff are constantly reminded that, with regard to their colleagues, different problems are dealt with differently by different kinds of people, and because of the close collaboration, they are accountable to not one supervisor, but everyone who works there. In effect, they report to many masters. One person put it



bluntly when he said, "You are always on stage and can't get away with much" and, "You are run off your butt!"

### 3.3.3 *Efficiency*

A number of research efforts have lauded the MSC model for its advances in greater efficiency (Clague, 1988a; Gage, 1976; Lewis et al., 1991; O'looney, 1993; Perlman and Jones, 1967; Ringers, 1981). In particular, these studies have noted the model's contributions toward reducing the fragmented, duplicative, and bureaucratic nature of social service delivery. However, the primary data qualify this efficiency by stating that while there is definitely operational and service efficiency, whether there is cost efficiency is less clear.

O'looney (1993) outlines the typical process that people undergo each time they engage in a type of social service activity. First, there is the intake; second, eligibility assessment; third, diagnosis; fourth, social history; and fifth, case management. The more agencies these people go to, the more this arduous and time consuming process is repeated. This is a wasteful and labour intensive use of multiple resources to get the same information. The result of this repeated processing is high "transaction" costs (e.g., information gathering, analysis, and decision making) that are borne by both service users and service providers. For the users, they and sometimes their whole families are burdened by multiple intakes and assessments; the providers, the time and energy spent processing clients could be more beneficially allocated toward serving more people, improving programs, and more staff training. At the MSC where coordinated services allow for better flow of information (Lewis et al., 1991), duplicative processing is eliminated as information is gathered only once and the common file made accessible to all the relevant service providers.

With regard to the facilities, one interviewee remarked on the cost savings that came from having only one computer lab, one photocopier, one gym, and one kitchen rather than one of these items in each social service type agency. According to Clague (1988a), there is a net saving in capital costs when facilities are shared, even when they are expanded, than if each agency were to duplicate these facilities themselves. Simply, one bus is cheaper than two, one security or janitorial service is cheaper than two, and so on. The savings could then be invested in other projects. The MSC

philosophy, layout, and operations allow agencies to "maximize use of whatever resources exist" (Sugarman, 1983:136).

In its review of integrated school and community services, the OECD (1978b) discusses the operational inefficiency of separately offered services. Each agency has its own bureaucracy, administration, budgets, personnel, policies, and facilities, and this leads to wasteful and inefficient duplications. The OECD posits that sharing resources and centralizing some administrative items such as staff training, personnel, and purchasing also allows for the left over time, energy, and funds to be used for other purposes or as a "cushion" when funding is low. However, while the pooling of resources and the ability to "buy in bulk" may achieve some economies of scale, there is disagreement as to whether the MSC is actually cheaper to run than stand alone agencies in the dispersed model.

Although the above examples show how operating costs can be cheaper in the MSC, it is important to separate operating from capital costs. Several of the planners interviewed pointed out that the MSC's initial capital costs are extremely high. First, because of its expansive size, the MSC is land intensive and in a land-constrained city like Vancouver, the purchase of a piece of land sufficient in size to house an MSC can be exorbitant. The actual construction costs of such an expansive, multi-faceted, and high-volume complex are high as well. Second, the developing stages of an MSC are labour intensive. From initial conception to opening day, the planning for an MSC consumes many hours of meetings, negotiations, and revisions that drive up labour costs.

Then there are those who would add that the operating costs of the MSC, and not just the capital costs, are high. One interviewee said that in the MSC "everyone is working hard, but efficiency is another matter." As discussed in the previous section an MSC needs to hire a director to oversee the operations. In addition, the administrative costs may actually be higher due to extra management time, constant meetings among agency staff, and more complicated procedures and bookkeeping/financial arrangements. In effect, the "extra layer of bureaucracy" found at MSCs generates extra costs. As the situation currently stands, the issue of costs remains unresolved as there is little research done in the way of cost efficiency or comparisons with regard to cost per client across different models of service delivery. However, it is important to remember that economies, or diseconomies, of scale are only a portion of the

measures used to assess the overall effectiveness of social services. In the field of social welfare, pure market rationales are not always applicable in evaluations.

Cost efficiency aside, what does seem clear from the research is that the MSC achieves service efficiency. One interviewee said that even though the cost of service delivery for the MSC is competitive with the cost for stand alone agencies, the advantage of the MSC is in the access to service, which means more efficiency for the users. For example, they access several services at one place and more than one family member may be scheduled for different services at the same time (Perlman and Jones, 1967; Ringers, 1976).

Moreover, response time is quicker due to the access to multiple human and material resources. That is, there is little lag time between identification of a need and a service to address this need. For example, at one MSC the director relayed how one single mother suddenly needed after school care for her children and space was made for them immediately at the community centre next door. At another MSC, a family suffering from an unexpected crisis was able to get immediate counseling because resources were immediately at hand. This was possible because the flow of information is much quicker at an MSC, and someone is bound to help, or know someone who can, from the wealth of collective knowledge that exists on site. In a final example, one principal at an inner city MSC complained that the traditional dispersed model was inefficient. He was constantly and unsuccessfully trying to contact social workers and other service providers over the phone to discuss mutual clients. A lot of his time was wasted due to this "telephone tag" and had the social workers been working on site as they would be at an MSC, there would have been a faster response and more accountability in the system.

Second, service efficiency exists because the scope of services offered is greater. As one person noted, "Programs are sufficiently finessed to allow for dovetailing due to coordination." Because of the consolidation of resources and the proximity of other services, each agency at an MSC can offer more. In essence, the MSC can incorporate the best from each (Clague, 1988a). Also, agencies can coordinate to achieve more continuity and holism in service for their mutual clients. Moreover, cooperative efforts like the MSC improve efficiency because the increased networking allows agencies to review policies and procedures to enhance services, compromise, and give up some

turf to more able agencies so they can redirect energy toward improving or enlarging other areas, or capitalizing on comparative advantage (Perlman and Jones, 1967).

Last, the MSC allows for maximum use, that is, more meeting space, longer hours of operation, more computers, more equipment, and so on because an enterprise of this scale would be too costly to remain idle. As a result, facilities are rarely empty at an MSC. Because of the physical proximity of facilities like a gym, playground, kitchen, computer lab, classrooms, and library, there is more program space and intensity of use (Clague, 1988a). Simply put, there are more hours of client contact, there is more space to do more things, and there are more services offered to more people.

While it cannot be definitively concluded that the model saves money (Perlmutter et al., 1979), the argument can be made that money is spent smarter and it achieves more "bang for the buck" as one respondent put it. However, in the field of social welfare it is important to not focus too zealously on the bottom line, which is only part of the bigger picture. "While community service centres do not necessarily save money they may provide the way for service delivery to become more efficient and effective" (Hepworth, 1976:92). Those who would judge MSCs on cost efficiency alone overlook the fact that MSCs can add value in other ways. Ringers (1981) advocates the need to focus less on economic efficiency and more on the relevance, value, and efficiency of services to clients. MSCs provide benefits that would not be otherwise had agencies been located separately. According to one of the respondents:

The extent and quality are greater than would be done independently and costing must begin at this premise. Ultimately, it comes down to the age old tradeoff: do you believe in saving money in the short term or perhaps better serving clients in the long term? In the long term, you can achieve more and break the cycle of dependency.

### *3.3.4 Neighbourhood Relevance and Scale*

Two other critical variables in the performance of an MSC are neighbourhood relevance and scale. The theme of balance is prominent here. Previous sections have noted that leaders must balance competing interests, staff must balance demands between their roles as specialists and generalists, and the MSC must balance short term cost efficiency with long term client success. In the case of neighbourhood relevance and scale, the MSC must balance the plethora of needs and wants of its constituents

while at the same time maintain a scale of operations that is not too big. It must juggle the dual tasks of providing a broad range of services yet not be too institutional or bureaucratic.

Concerning neighbourhood relevance, the MSC occupies a symbolic, practical, and geographic position to become the hub of a neighbourhood. Like the neighbourhood house, the MSC is at the intersection of influences in the neighbourhood and forces outside of it. At one of the MSCs studied, it truly serves as a central place in the neighbourhood. Its management board is comprised of local residents and this board determines which groups can use the space and the rate to be charged on the basis of criteria that is sensitive to the neighbourhood. At this particular MSC, in order for groups to be granted the use of space the issue and participants have to be local, the event has to be free to the people, it must be accessible, and the sponsoring group(s) has to be non-profit. At another MSC located in Chinatown, its highly localized context is reflected by the fact that its premises are the headquarters for the local residents' association, the Chinese residents' association, and the community garden committee, to name a few.

In effect the MSC derives its vitality from the intimate relationship it enjoys with the community and bases its operations on cues from the area. Most of those interviewed concurred that the MSC essentially knows the "rumblings" in the community and changes its complexion according to what is "out there." In answer to a question about the MSC's ability to respond to changes in its local area, one person said, "If 20 single moms suddenly moved into the neighbourhood, you'd hear about it pretty quickly." Indeed, if the MSC is to be socially vibrant and viable it must be relevant to the community and responsive to the heterogeneity of its needs and interests on an organized, collective basis (Clague et al., 1984; Perlmutter et al., 1979; Ringers, 1981).

One director emphasized the importance of recognizing and respecting that neighbourhoods must have a voice in what goes on in their area, a view increasingly shared by City Hall. He spoke of the "restrictions of elitism" and the assumption that only a "certified planner can plan, and unsophisticated input gets in the way of efficient productivity." Instead, planners "need to deprofessionalize what they've been taught ... professionals are too detached, objectivized, and intellectualized." He went so far as to promote the idea of planners "living next door, getting to know intimately

the characteristics, history, dynamics, and feel of the neighbourhood and recognizing that what they do is of no use unless it is relevant to the community."

However, there is a danger in being too relevant to the neighbourhood. Because of its strong community orientation, MSCs can erode commitment to provincial standards and policies (Clague et al., 1984). Moreover, if MSCs promote stronger identification with the neighbourhood to an extreme, the neighbourhood can become self-contained and self-absorbed. A parochial focus creates the potential for competition among neighbourhoods and a division of loyalties between the interests of the neighbourhood and those of the city overall. In addition, if the MSC is successful in meeting the needs of its residents, it can be argued that this prevents people from traveling across the city and becoming familiar with other areas, thereby creating an insular mentality.

Another crucial element in the operation of the MSC that emerged from the data is its scale. A majority of those interviewed were concerned with the issue of size. They said that the MSC cannot possibly meet the numerous and far ranging needs in its community without sacrificing an intimate and humanistic approach. If it tried, it would risk becoming, as one respondent said, "a bureaucratic monolith which people would resist." All respondents believed that scale is important and that a centre that has a welcoming and intimate feel to it is preferred over a grand "Taj Mahal" type structure, as one person described it. Some people simply feel more comfortable in smaller spaces, and small is more manageable (Clague et al., 1984; Lewis et al., 1991). However, by definition the MSC is "big" to the extent that it clusters several agencies together on one site, it has several staff, an extra layer of administration, and a high volume of use. In addition, it needs to be big to exploit economies of scale. Thus, the issue of scale rests on the determination of a happy medium.

One respondent described the issue of scale in the MSC as a tradeoff: "To scale down is to make it accessible, but this is not cost effective." And she went on to say that even if the MSC's scale were sufficiently large to be cost effective, "It could be problematic as its own bureaucratic nature becomes increasingly dominant and more time and energy is spent on its smooth operation rather than servicing clients." So it appears that if the scale of operations is too big, the MSC risks being removed from the neighbourhood interests it is supposed to represent (Perlmutter et al., 1979). In his study of MSCs in the Chicago area, Spiegel (1974) notes that some centres have become so large as to defeat the very goals for which they strived. Residents complain

of long waits and incessant record processing. In short, a large scale risks the point of entropy where organizational concerns override program ones.

Wharf (1977) discusses the bureaucratic inertia of service delays, resistance to change, and cumbersome procedures as some of the drawbacks of integrating services and creating too big a scale. He warns that:

While the primary goal of those favouring integration is not bigness per se, this is a not unusual outcome. We need to be very clear then that a likely consequence of service integration is the creation of superagencies with all the attendant evils of centralization, impersonalization, inaccessibility, and dependence on rules and regulations -- in short, a system which stifles initiative and criticism.

(24)

In a later article, Wharf summarizes the above statement and writes that, "... one inescapable consequence of integration is that already big and complicated organizations become even bigger and more complicated" (1978:12).

This view is also shared by other writers. Katz (1978) argues that too big a scale at the MSC generates too big a team whereby each team member demands that his/her input be given priority, and conflicts erupt over responsibilities. Ultimately this can be counter-productive as the team becomes inwardly focused on "ironing out the kinks" at the expense of serving clients. Also, O'looney (1993) claims that organizations operating on a bigger scale have more difficulty reconfiguring resources, and rewriting organizational charts and job descriptions when needed. Last, sometimes it is assumed that flexibility is impeded as the size of an organization grows. Essentially these points reflect the notion that a "bigger beast moves slower."

On the other hand, it can be argued that it is advantageous to be a large organization like the MSC. O'looney claims that it can handle the problems of scale, service disruption, and abrupt changes in social policy direction and remain more intact than smaller organizations ever could. Furthermore, he argues that a bureaucratic nature is not really a deterrent to users, and that it is not the size of the bureaucracy that is the problem but rather its fractured and categorical nature.

As one respondent put it, at the MSC "both negative and positive features are multiplied as a virtue of size." The MSC faces the constant struggle of determining the

right size, or achieving the point of balance between too small and too big. It must discover the threshold where it becomes too big to be functional, too bureaucratic to be accessible, too institutional to be personal, and yet get just big enough to be cost effective.

### 3.3.5 *Facilities and Access*

With regard to facilities, a degree of design determinism is evident. If an MSC is designed right, it will be used extensively by clients. One consideration is that the space must be, to accommodate the different services offered, flexible. Demands for service change according to the demographic profile of the neighbourhood, and current and emerging problems, needs, and interests. In this context the MSC bodes well if it provides space that is flexible and adaptable to a variety of uses. Multi-purpose rooms and other facilities that can be easily modified for different programs rather than "static" space that can be used for a singular purpose such as a gym, daycare, workshop, or kitchen are costly and suffer from underuse.

Second, facilities need to be sensitive to the users. The MSC must be welcoming, user friendly, and add to the street life. However, it must balance these features with concerns for privacy as in the example of MSCs that offer drug and alcohol counseling to those who wish to remain inconspicuous, and security as in the case of MSCs where a school is on site. In this respect design considerations such as different entrances at different grades, landscaping, lighting, and signage to name a few play a significant role.

Last, although the point is obvious it must be emphasized that there must be adequate space. Respondents who worked at MSCs mentioned the dearth of space as exemplified by the fact that their facilities were "bursting at the seams" as a consideration. Although MSCs carry the advantage of "offering more in a compact space" as one interviewee put it, the number of innovatively designed, compact spaces is low in the 3 MSCs studied in this thesis. However, even if facilities were to have flexibility, sensitive design, and ample space, these would be of little use if the MSC were inaccessible.

Accessibility in its simplest definition means easily reached and easily used. With regard to the MSC it must be both geographically and psychologically accessible. In



the context of geography, one interviewer mentioned that MSCs would work well close to shopping areas, "where people normally go anyway." According to Ringers (1981) accessibility means reducing the distance to get to services as well as the distance between services. The MSC should be located in an area that is convenient, reached easily by public transportation (preferably within 1 block), and in a well used location where people would go for other purposes.

The presence of the school on an MSC site is important for psychological accessibility. Most everyone can relate to schools for they have familiar surroundings and they enjoy a favourable reputation in the community. This may be especially true for new immigrants who lack trust in government agencies and may be suspicious of neighbourhood houses, community centres, social service agencies, and health clinics given that these may have been non-existent in their home countries. In addition, schools are accessible because of their daily and prolonged contact with children which allows programs to be better promoted and contact with parents facilitated. Further, it seems that parents trust and cooperate more if schools are involved. In an interview with a principal at an inner city MSC, it came to light that parents would frequently speak to him about prostitution and drug dealing in the neighbourhood. They turned to the school to coordinate action because to many, the school represented symbolically a place of trust and assistance.

At this point it is necessary to underscore the presence of a school as a critical, though not necessary, element in the MSC. In his study of several MSC-type facilities in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Ringers Jr. (1976) notes that many recreation and social services are provided in centres that are attached to schools, and argues that the relationship of schools to other services is crucial. Schools should not bear the full burden of providing a full range of services, but rather should be integrated with other service agencies to achieve the efficient, best utilization of all resources in providing human services. Furthermore, the school's high visibility and universal access make it an ideal focal point for community work. It serves as a type of beacon, a unifying force for different elements in the community.

Psychological accessibility is also enhanced by the kinds of services that are offered. People are more apt to use services that have been thoughtfully clustered together for their convenience. Most respondents claimed that those services with natural compatibility and continuity would work (e.g., daycare and school; English language

training and other immigrant settlement services), as would those that shared similar goals and had overlapping clientele. The general guideline is to cluster those services that possess complementary features and can make a particular contribution to an overall common goal (Clague, 1988a).

The thoughtful clustering of services also means offering them in a manner that minimizes stigma. MSCs are successful in this regard because while other agencies offer traditionally stigmatizing services such as counseling or welfare, users feel less stigmatized when they are plugged into an integrated system like the MSC, where the services are packaged as an educational or family-support program (O'looney, 1993). MSCs end segregation and stigma "by joining social services with education, health and recreation" (Wharf, 1978:9). The holistic program promoted by the MSC moves away from the perception that people are to be identified as "problems" toward the realization that they are whole entities. People are not classified simply as a "welfare mother," "abused child," or "hungry family." By contrast, in typical stand alone agencies that offer services to specific groups, this specialization tends to lead to segregation of these groups which may lead to further stigmatization than already exists (Perlman and Gurin, 1972).

Last, MSCs provide access to information. A majority of the respondents identified the MSC's ability to provide an information and referral service as an operational strong point. Because a lack of information hinders accessibility, the MSC addresses this problem by acting as an information clearinghouse, and while it cannot possibly offer all the services that a community may need, it can at least steer the person in the right direction.

One way of measuring whether facilities and access are adequate is the extent of community use of the MSC. However, one respondent argued that just because an MSC is extensively used by members of the community does not necessarily mean that it is accessible. There may be whole groups of people that are not represented in the MSC user population and this is a concern over which management must be ever vigilant in rectifying. To be truly inclusive and accessible require much outreach, monitoring, feedback, and demonstration projects.

### 3.3.6 Systems

There was consensus by those interviewed and in the literature that coordination at the service delivery level is at best difficult and at worst seriously compromised when there is sub-optimal coordination at the overall structural level of governing systems. These arrangements include both the government and agency levels.

At the government level there is a commonly held view that ministries and departments, which provide the bulk of funding, do not coordinate between their respective domains, let alone among each other. One interviewee stated that "There must be integration at the senior level if long term integration is to happen in the community. Getting the systems to cooperate is the hard part. Staff submits willingly, participates in innovation, but the system does not appreciate what they are trying to do."

Gage (1976) and Gandy and Delaney (1977) have also written that integration at the local level is difficult without parallel integration at superior levels of government. It makes little sense if the government level deals with issues section by section as opposed to an overall whole, while agencies are scrambling for a focus, direction, or even some technical assistance on mundane matters. One social planner sympathized with service agencies who had to deal with the time-consuming and complicated application procedures each time they approached different funders. Yet each of these funders, although they have different official mandates, have much overlap among their objectives. To simply offer a youth program may require negotiations with the separate departments governing probation, schools, and new immigrants, all of which have different funding criteria. Each application is time-consuming and labour intensive, not unlike the extensive transaction costs that befall clients at each intake at a separate service agency.

One reason for the lack of coordination among senior levels of government is the ubiquitous presence of politics. "Politics is the biggest factor," claimed one interviewee. He went on to say that, "There are enormous boondoggles re MSCs. There is no direction and it is left to the whims of the political realm. Some MSCs are built as pet projects or the demonstration of a theory rather than focusing on a coherent rationale or vision." Each subsystem is dealing with a hidden agenda, namely its own, and this narrow focus precludes seeing the bigger picture of which they are all a part (Wharf, 1977).

Second, O'looney (1993) claims that integrated service exemplified in the MSC model runs counter to the prevailing political logic. For politicians, it looks better to take credit for several services rather than one MSC. Furthermore, legislation drafted in a categorical manner meets the demands of special interest groups. Also, keeping these groups separate is less threatening than facing a few unified, well-organized coalitions that could form from integrated units and advocate only too well for their constituents. In essence, cohesive communities represent a threat to central government ( Clague et al., 1984; Katz, 1978).

Another reason for the lack of coordination is simple bureaucratic inertia. Bureaucratic mentality favours the smooth maintenance of the internal system and its procedures rather than the interests of the external populace whom it serves. Moreover, bureaucracy tends to beget more bureaucracy and it soon reaches a scale that is not only far removed from the people, but mired in operational details. In his discussion of bureaucracies' inability to respond to individuals, Spiegel notes, "Like dinosaurs, it is argued, these big institutions trample over fragile vegetation without even noticing because they have just grown too large and clumsy and impersonal" (1974:10).

Respondents essentially said that the government levels should adopt the "practice what you preach" method. Simply, lack of integration at governmental levels hinders implementation of integration at delivery levels. The current structure does not facilitate communication and cooperation among ministries as budgets, policies, and procedures are set in a categorical approach, in isolation from the wider context. At the senior level, if there is common ground with regard to these issues, these should be focused upon to facilitate service planning and delivery.

Government bodies are not the only ones to blame for lack of coordination in the system. Service agencies also have difficulty coordinating among themselves. Lack of common philosophies, policies, financial systems, and geographic boundaries can hinder collaboration among agencies operating out of an MSC. For example, there are complicated legal and financial issues such as insurance liability and who pays for what that need to be clarified before any collaboration takes place. Also, it is common to have jurisdictional conflicts over service boundaries. Some agencies will serve only one area but their partners may serve others, yet they are required to work together (Baillie, 1983).

In addition, agencies have their own priorities and organizational culture that may undermine the collaborative philosophy. There is a strong urge for agencies to maintain independence, commitment to established patterns, and its status on the social service hierarchy. These are preferences which are not amenable to the lateral, integrated services found in the MSC (Perlman and Jones, 1967). In an MSC, not only do organizations pool their efforts, but they also undergo a complex internal rearrangement of power. Clague (1988a) states that "They must be willing to reach across traditional boundaries in forms of collaboration that blur historic jurisdiction and scramble the prevailing arrangement of power" and "Established habits and administrative routines will prevail unless confronted" (352; 362). He goes on to argue that this willingness to merge identity and autonomy is not a question of program or service compatibility but of leadership, organization, and staff competence. In other words, proper systems and structures must be in place before collaboration can be operationalized.

Sometimes, agencies in an MSC have competing goals, vie for power and authority, and compete for clients and scarce resources, all of which serve as potentially destructive undercurrents to an integrated model. It sometimes gets to the point that "even agencies don't trust each other," as claimed by one respondent. Especially in a time of budget slashing, they are motivated by self-preservation (Baillie, 1983; Katz, 1978; Sposito, 1993). However, it is precisely this situation of competition in times of scarcity that agencies should collaborate and become strengthened by integration, rather than weakened by division.

The field of social welfare is comprised of several systems that are linked and interdependent, these being education, health, community services, cultural, and recreational to name a few. To ensure smoother collaboration at the delivery level requires mutual commitment to overall goals and a refusal to be burdened by political and operational details, at both the government and agency levels. It also requires strong measures such as legally defined roles of power and authority to enforce this commitment. To do this, several respondents suggested structural supports to "grease" the system along. Such supports as legal agreements, contractual obligations, staff training, improved information exchange, and other governance components are necessary to buttress the collaborative nature of the MSC. A heavy reliance on the whim of personalities and the goodwill of people to coordinate systems is not enough.

As one interviewee put it, "Serendipity in the absence of formal structures is highly risky at best."

### **3.4 THEMES**

The categories of Synergy; Leadership; Efficiency; Neighbourhood Relevance and Scale; Facilities and Access; and Systems were created from the data culled from the interviews and the literature. For the most part these categories are illustrative of certain general themes that dominate the discussion of MSCs. These are themes of Balance, Courtship, and Collaboration. They are organizing concepts that are useful in placing the data in a meaningful context.

#### *3.4.1 Balance*

Implicit throughout the investigation is the notion of balance. MSCs are constantly engaged in the act of weighing certain principles against others in the search for harmonious equilibrium. With regard to synergy, MSCs are working to balance the distinctive strengths of each agency to create richer outcomes. Concerning leadership, MSC leaders and staff are striving for compatibility and "team spirit" among a wide diversity of personalities. They are also fine-tuning adjustments between a specialist and generalist mentality, informal and formal procedures, and conceptual and practical skills, these being specific qualities required of MSC personnel.

MSCs also try to balance the efficiency scale by offsetting the disadvantages of high short term costs with the benefits of better quality services in the long term. In addition, they try to be relevant to their respective neighbourhoods by addressing local issues. Yet MSCs try to do this without compromising city-wide interests. These centres also try to adjust the scale of their operations to be large enough to achieve economies of scale yet still be small enough to be welcoming and intimate.

In addition, MSCs endeavour to discover the right complementarity among services and programs to enhance accessibility for users. Last, they attempt to balance the need for autonomy with the necessity of collaborative efforts among both departments at senior levels of government and agencies at the service delivery level. They also need to find equilibrium among many competing priorities and interests. These systems also

need to balance the efficient operation of complex bureaucratic structures with effective and at times innovative services for people.

### 3.4.2 *Courtship*

Because there are many different types of agencies operating out of an MSC, and each likely has different priorities, organizational culture, and methods of operation, the sometimes shaky development of an overarching team spirit and collaborative relationships can be tricky, much like a courtship between two people. As one director of an MSC aptly put it, "You're sorting out how to dance." Like the initial stages of any relationship, the working relationships at the MSC begin with agencies "checking one another out" and going through a period of discovery to establish compatibility. During this time agencies are becoming aware of one another's habits; learning to communicate; resolving conflict constructively; getting comfortable; establishing trust; making commitments; and moving forward.

The courtship theme implies that the ultimate success of the MSC rests on the personal qualities of those who work for it. It is essential to have a "congruence of concept, values, and personalities" among the different agencies said one director. Another said that "The right attitude is crucial. You cannot possibly have all the answers, programs, or services. Instead, it is better to develop and nurture relationships, foster openness." Essentially, the right mix of people will ensure success.

By contrast, other respondents believed that a successful courtship among agencies rests not so much on the good fortune of having the right people as on clearly defined ground rules. Governance, and not only goodwill, is another dimension to a sound relationship. From the beginning of the courtship, formal policies and procedures are needed to unambiguously articulate roles and responsibilities; authority; accountability; goals and the means of achieving them; and performance expectations in order to alleviate the considerable pressure and stress that comes with the initial checking out period. Built in and predictable procedures add clarity, reduce misunderstandings, and ensure that everyone does what is expected.

In essence, agencies that work together in an MSC experience a type of courtship. As the maturity level and understanding develop at each successive stage of the courtship, "they can get closer" as one person described it. Further, this is a courtship like many

others and punctuated by "growing pains" (Clague, 1988a). Expectations, trust, respect, and responsibility are adjusted until there is a comfortable fit. Frequently, achieving the right fit requires "nailing down loose ends" as one person put it. And once the courtship is steadily under way, agencies can begin to focus on collaboration toward meeting mutual, long term objectives.

### *3.4.3 Collaboration*

What sets the MSC apart from other service delivery models is the fact that the services are located all on one site, essentially next door. However, it is the nature of the collaboration, and not the proximity alone, that defines the success of the MSC. Services do not necessarily have to be located next to each other to provide better service. What is necessary is that there be fruitful collaboration among them. In other words, successful collaboration is the key to better service and this can be achieved whether agencies are located proximate to one another or not.

Separately offered services can still achieve the benefits of the MSC: synergy and complementarity with other services, efficiency, neighbourhood relevance, accessibility, reduced fragmentation, and continuity of service. The deliberate placement of services on one site is only one strategy to improve service. Morris and Lescohier (1978) suggest that other strategies such as coordination, a better flow of information, improved referral networks, and policy consistency can also meet these objectives. In the majority of interviews, respondents claimed repeatedly that collaboration is instrumental in improving service. It appears that while the physical proximity of services is highly convenient and facilitates collaboration, collaboration does not depend on it.

However, these respondents unequivocally believed that while proximity itself does not create collaboration, it certainly nurtures the environment for it. That is, the likelihood for collaboration, exploiting networks, attempting innovations, and synergistic outcomes is more likely in an MSC setting. According to one interviewee, "You know the MSC isn't working if the individual agencies would be doing exactly what they'd be doing off site, if they were connecting in non-productive ways."

There are prerequisites for successful collaboration though. Successful collaboration, like successful courtship, relies heavily on the natural interaction among personnel in



addition to more formal structural supports. Staff must possess a range of talents and skills that predispose them to interdisciplinary team work, a process orientation, a tolerance of complex organizational systems, and a willingness to welcome divergence and creativity (Clague, 1988a; Perlmutter et al., 1979). Further, successful collaboration can also be enhanced by more formal structures like extensive staff training on the philosophical, conceptual, and technical aspects of the collaborative model (Gandy and Delaney, 1977; Perlmutter et al., 1979).

In short it is collaboration and not location that determines how well the MSC will perform. While proximity is a definite asset, it is not definitive. In reference to the idea of proximate services one MSC director said, "Overall, the MSC provides improved accessibility, cuts down on travel time, is cost effective and convenient for workers and clients. When the actual quality of service improves, it is a welcome by-product."

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

Present economic and social conditions suggest that the MSC model may be able to deliver services in a preventative, efficient, and comprehensive manner. However, given that the model is highly variegated and replete with a diversity of services, programs, and approaches, an overall evaluation of its effectiveness is difficult and its attributes only provisional.

With this in mind primary and secondary data point to several key ingredients that lead to successful ventures. First, synergy is present. The MSC is not only an entrepot but an innovator. Both intended and unintended richer outcomes occur at the level of collaboration found at the MSC. Second, personnel -- specifically sound and inspiring leadership and open-minded staff -- who are dedicated to the overall vision of the MSC's goals are necessary. Third, efficiency in program delivery is another hallmark of the well run MSC. However, efficiency in terms of cost is something upon which it could improve.

Fourth, relevance to the neighbourhood and appropriate scale are considerations that need to be fine-tuned. Here, the MSC must look to absorb its flavours from local influences. Fifth, adequate facilities and broad access are issues that need to be closely monitored. Facilities need to be flexible and access accommodating to the new uses and priorities that are always being introduced. (One of the few predictable

occurrences in the social services is unpredictability). Last, systems of organization, at both the government and agency levels, must themselves be collaborative and integrative if they hope to achieve the same on the MSC site. This means clearly articulated and delineated arrangements of power, responsibility, information systems, policies, procedures, and standards must be in place. Further, there must be a mutual commitment to these arrangements by the various components. In other words, there must be genuine partnership at the systems and delivery levels.

The underlying themes that guide these key ingredients are balance, courtship, and collaboration. The success of the MSC very much depends on a sensitive balance of numerous and often competing concepts, needs, and interests. It also depends on overcoming the growing pains of a courtship among agencies who work and essentially "live together" on one site. Finally, success relies upon, ultimately, fruitful collaboration. If there is no spirit of collaboration, the MSC will not work. Although physical proximity of services by itself does not guarantee better service, it certainly nurtures the potential for improvement in a unique manner and environment not available to other modes of service delivery. So physical proximity still makes a difference, but not as much as might be assumed.

The MSC is a deceptively simple idea. The benefits to be gained from pooled time, energy, resources, and creativity are inherently appealing. Despite this, it is premature to assign a definitive judgment on whether the MSC concept is the best model of service delivery. When it comes to the multi-faceted and diverse nature of social services, citizens need options. To promote the MSC model over others would limit choice in a field where it is necessary to have alternatives. The MSC is only part of a larger menu, not the feature item. For various reasons, some options are more appealing than others. People have different preferences and " ... no one model is best in all circumstances" (O'looney, 1993:522). To advocate one model over the other is simplistic.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **THE ROLE OF THE MSC IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This last chapter is dedicated to a general analysis of the overall role of the MSC in the continuum of social service delivery. Specifically, it focuses on how the MSC compares with two other strategies of delivery: the traditional and prominent dispersed system and the new and experimental integrated service delivery (ISD) model. Given that the MSC is one of several types of service models in the social welfare field and given that choice in this area is important, it is important to assess its comparative merits with these other service models. The chapter will then turn to implications for planning policy suggested by the research findings.

### **4.2 THE DISPERSED MODEL**

As the name implies the traditional dispersed model of social service delivery is an assembly of stand alone service agencies, some working together but most not, that currently dominates the service landscape. Some offer multiple services while others offer only one or two. Some serve a variety of different groups while others only cater to select groups. According to O'looney (1993) the model is characterized by "decentralized, independent, uncoordinated organizations interacting as occasion arises but lacking formal ties" (507). They are loosely coupled and nowhere near the scope or scale of the MSC.

The dispersed model offers several advantages over the MSC. A principal one is that because of stand alone agencies' relatively smaller size, they tend to be less encumbered by bureaucratic regulations and hence more responsive and adaptive to clients and the environment. They innovate and evolve more rapidly; maintain a high degree of reliability; promote outreach; allow for choice, a variety of voices, and influences in the system; and avoid the standardization that typifies more tightly

integrated systems. In short individual agencies have more responsiveness and flexibility that larger organizations may have more difficulty providing (Lewis et al., 1991; Morris and Lescohier, 1978; O'looney, 1993).

Another advantage of the dispersed model over the MSC is that it provides a degree of redundancy (Clague et al., 1984). On the surface redundancy may seem like a drawback but it actually provides a system of checks and balances. The provision of different services offering different strategies to meet the same goals provides feedback and verifiers as to which techniques are better. By contrast, integration of services often leads to the centralization of decision making and ultimately a vertical line of authority. Implicit in this is the risk of a service monopoly.

In addition, the dispersion of agencies across a city allows people to get to know other areas as they travel to their respective services. Traveling to other areas of the city to receive services also reduces the problems of segregation or "ghettoization" that may occur if all services are located on one site.

Morris and Lescohier (1978) go so far as to speculate that the current dispersed system is satisfactory as is and each unit is doing a reasonable job for a large part of its clientele. In other words, they contend that the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach applies to the current system of service delivery. "One conclusion is that a multiple provider, pluralist system with many relatively small units may meet the innumerable wants and needs of a large and diverse population much more satisfactorily than a large hegemony of integrated or tightly controlled coordinated subunits" (Morris and Lescohier, 1978:28). Moreover, they suspect that integration is preferred because it makes the system easier to control and thus suits managers more than users. They also claim that the benefits of the MSC model accrue only to those few with multiple needs, which does not justify the MSC's high costs.

As noted in the previous chapter the improvement of service delivery does not necessarily require an MSC-type model of integration. Better collaboration among stand alone agencies will suffice. The dispersed model also consciously acknowledges the differences in service delivery and their respective values. Underlying these attributes is the recognition that it is unwise to put all the proverbial eggs in one basket.

The traditional dispersed model is not without its drawbacks, however. Aside from the inconvenience of extra travel time between services, there are other less obvious disadvantages. For one, stand alone service agencies tend to have too narrow a focus. One director of an MSC complained that dealing with off-site programs was a "pain in the butt" because of their professional isolation and attendant narrow views. Because most agencies have a specialization, this selective orientation is not as conducive to cooperation. Moreover, when cooperation is attempted, problems of territoriality sometimes emerge and this interferes with process (MSCs are not immune from this either). In a traditional model of single organizations with single mandates operating without any connection, there is a tendency for cooperation to be happenstance or forced by funders.

Another principal drawback of the dispersed model is the difficulty with evaluation. With each agency operating on its own, accountability for aggregate effects on the clients are nearly impossible (O'looney, 1993). Each unit evaluates its own methods according to its own mandate without reference to the whole system of which it is a part, and hence without reference to whether its programs may be exacerbating problems in another area of the system. In a more tightly integrated system, there is an increased awareness of the interconnectedness of both problems and the services used to resolve them. Evaluators can measure aggregate outcomes better as they have access to more accurate and detailed information that can be studied comprehensively, rather than in a piecemeal manner when clients move from one area in the system to another. In a system where services are more tightly integrated like the MSC, clients are in one place and it is easier to track progress at each stage of program activity (O'looney, 1993). Clague et al. (1984) add that because an integrated system like the MSC can actually develop a more comprehensive evaluation of its clients and programs, the MSC can also produce information that relates more closely to overall policy goals formed at the government level.

Another drawback of the dispersed model is that it may reduce awareness of alternative services. When agencies are spread out, clients become discouraged and may choose to not make use of them rather than navigate a complicated and time consuming maze of dispersed agencies. At least with the MSC there are mutual support

systems in house, and people generally receive instant attention and are not referred elsewhere (Katz, 1978).

#### **4.3 THE INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL (ISD)**

In the last few years the City has implemented an interdepartmental approach to several major projects, the most popular being CityPlan, Ready or Not, Greenways, and Safer City. Now the City is looking to extend this approach toward a new model of service delivery, the ISD model, expected to be implemented City-wide in 1995. According to a report by the City Manager's Office (1994), the goal of this new model is to provide each neighbourhood in the city with an ISD team to "ensure an open City government and an effective, efficient community-based service delivery" (2). The report goes on to list the following specific objectives:

- To provide user friendly City services
- To improve access to information
- To coordinate inter-departmental responses through line staff at the neighbourhood level
- To improve public process and community participation
- To promote more creative and collaborative problem solving

The modus operandi for this approach will be an ISD team assigned to each neighbourhood to act as a liaison between the City and the neighbourhood as well as to coordinate and enhance relationships among neighbourhood services and organizations involved with community issues. The staff deployment to individual neighbourhoods is hoped to yield a more flexible approach to local issues with less stress on municipal infrastructure. Ideally, the concept of working together will yield more satisfactory resolutions to problems than heretofore experienced. For example, libraries, community centres, fire halls, community police offices, health units, schools, and citizens' organizations ranging from cultural groups to resident associations can all be collaborating on a consultative approach to address community-specific issues. Wherever feasible, responsibility for and authority to resolve community issues will be delegated to the ISD team. The role of the City is downplayed in favour of local communities.

This model explicitly recognizes that community issues are complex and interrelated in nature, and therefore require a sophisticated, multi-pronged approach. In its evaluation of an ISD team working in the Hastings Sunrise neighbourhood in East Vancouver, the report notes that, "The team was able to get action in a broader capacity, share perspectives and respond more quickly and appropriately" (6). The ISD approach is premised on the assumption that the field staff, in conjunction with the community, will be able to solve community issues *in the community* if given the mandate and the opportunity to do so. In essence, the model believes that operating a city covered by ISD teams will forge linkages across teams, across neighbourhoods, and to City Hall and back. This redeployment of City staff is expected, in the longer term, to yield improved communication, more efficiency, and better services for the neighbourhood.

The creation of ISD teams for each neighbourhood represents a major organizational change for City Hall as it leans toward a more rationalized service delivery system. In that the model calls for such rationalization, it shares some overarching principles, but not methods, with the MSC. First, both the MSC and the ISD models are committed to cooperation among services and groups in neighbourhoods. Second, they wish to improve public process and community participation. And third, both models promote collaborative problem solving.

Where they share similarities in guiding principles and goals, the MSC and the ISD models differ in their respective approaches. First, the MSC is a facility located on a site big enough to accommodate its services whereas the ISD team is a group based in City Hall and called out to the community accordingly. Second, the MSC is land intensive and, at least initially, capital intensive. On the other hand, the ISD model requires no additional City resources. The third and one of the most significant differences is the fact that the MSC represents a formal and institutionalized model of collaboration and commits agencies toward working together for neighbourhood improvement while the ISD model is a less formal and loose coalition of partnerships working on a voluntary basis.

This last consideration is also a major drawback of the ISD model. While the ISD approach is to be praised for an informal and incremental approach, that is, building on what partnerships already exist in a neighbourhood, it does not go far enough. There is the issue of whether the ISD team really has the power or political clout to effect change at the local level, or if it is just a troubleshooting mechanism. The ISD

idea could be perceived as merely tinkering with the existing way of doing things, that is, doing more of the same and nothing really substantial and viable for the future.

On a related note, the ISD model appears fragile. Given that individual ISD members hail from their respective departments and are still accountable to them, there is no process to deal with neighbourhood initiatives that conflict with departmental priorities. Further, there is no process as to how team members' dual responsibilities are to be handled when there is disagreement between the ISD team and their respective departments. The report states simply and vaguely that where this happens, "... team members will be expected to take up those issues within the departmental structure" (5). Moreover, there is no mention of how to solve problems that arise within the team itself. In short, a much needed policy or mechanism for the resolution of inevitable conflicts currently does not exist.

In addition, there is the risk that the ISD team may be perceived as an unwelcome interference by City departments. Especially in a traditionally entrenched bureaucracy like City Hall, departments may not be amenable to a body like the ISD team telling them how to deal with issues. In this regard teams may be perceived as a threat, or worse, as a nuisance (Artibise, 1994). Furthermore, there is the risk that the model may not be well received by the community. First, it is imposed onto a community. Second, residents have no say on who will be on the team. And third, cynicism currently characterizes the popular public perception of government, so any help that is forthcoming is regarded with suspicion. Whether resistance to the ISD model comes from within the City or from the community, support for it is vulnerable. Local, grassroots efforts are likely to be given more credibility than non-locals who have parachuted down from City Hall.

Moreover, neighbourhoods rally around a visible and accessible focal point. The ISD team, although it may have a base of operations in a neighbourhood facility, cannot by its composition serve as a community hub or neighbourhood centre where integration principles are translated into tangible programs. In essence, the ISD model represents broad and general policies but has no programs to illustrate its effectiveness. It may be able to encourage partnerships among agencies to coordinate programs, but compliance is voluntary. Without a formalized supporting network "on the ground" like the MSC, the practical manifestations of integration policies will be difficult to develop, let alone monitor and evaluate. Sometimes what is needed are concrete



expressions such as a community garden, park, community police office, or MSC. These are more useful than rounds of consultations and more exciting than conceptual plans on the environment, safety, and community services.

It would be premature to dismiss the ISD approach as a write off, however. Indeed, it is a new, innovative, and cost effective model for the delivery of City services and deserves a trial run. It endorses staff to work across departments in an interdependent and collaborative manner to solve issues brought forward by the community. It recognizes the impacts of social change in communities, and endorses integration of services, collaboration, communication, and citizen participation. In this regard the model embodies a clear and refreshing shift from the traditional mode of discrete, distant, and functionally compartmentalized service delivery by the City.

Given that its principal goals are similar, both the MSC and ISD approaches can be viewed not as competitors, but rather as companions in service delivery. Where the former is "on the ground" and provides a facility for a range and multitude of complementary services, the latter provides the City backbone to support its mandate. The MSC can be the common denominator in neighbourhoods that are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and special-interest based, while the ISD team can be the link that allows local issues to percolate upward to the City level. The two can work in tandem. The ISD team can even have its headquarters in the MSC. Together, they provide a fuller menu of choice regarding community and local government action toward neighbourhood improvement, an issue which has become a prime agenda item for municipalities in the 90s.

#### **4.4 APPROPRIATE SERVICE STRATEGIES FOR VANCOUVER: THE MSC, DISPERSED, AND ISD MODELS**

In a socially and culturally heterogeneous city like Vancouver, choice in service delivery is important. Preconceived, carte blanche prescriptions no longer work as sound planning principles. There are no "catch-all" solutions, but rather flexible and diverse ones that respond to demographic change, economic restructuring, geographical mobility, policy acrobatics of politicians, the vicissitudes of popular public opinion, and technological advances. Furthermore, practical wisdom is premised on the idea that service delivery operates as a continuum. Given this belief, it is not only important that there be choice on the continuum, but also that the units on

it interact in a continuous and complementary manner. Ideally there should be no gaps between units, with each unit mutually reinforcing the other to provide a fuller, more comprehensive service to clients.

Vancouver is fortunate in that it currently enjoys this type of choice. There are examples of dispersed agencies, MSCs, and a few ISD teams that have demonstrated success in what they were supposed to achieve. In short, for what they are supposed to do, they do it well. However, the situation is far from ideal and improvements can always be made. As noted in Chapter 3, collaboration among different modes of service delivery as well as among government departments can be enhanced to ensure the system is sufficiently "greased" to provide optimal service to clients.

It is premature to simply say that one model is better than the other when each has significant and different contributions to make on its own. Each has demonstrated worth for which the other cannot compensate so it is better that they work together. Again, collaboration is the key. However, further research is required to determine the comparative merits of each model and in which situations these merits can be exploited fully.

For example, in some cases an MSC may not be the preferred choice for service delivery. It requires complicated zoning changes, is land intensive, initially expensive, and may experience neighbourhood opposition due to the relatively large facilities and increase in traffic and parking. In this situation a dispersed model or ISD team may serve the neighbourhood's needs better. At other times an MSC may be exactly what a neighbourhood needs. It may serve the people well plus act as a physical and symbolic hub of collective action where potential is harnessed toward community improvement.

As a summary to this section, Table 1 on the next page represents a simplified consolidation of the comparative attributes of the MSC, dispersed, and ISD models of service delivery.

**TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF BASIC FEATURES OF THREE SERVICE MODELS**

	<b>MSC</b>	<b>Dispersed</b>	<b>ISD</b>
<b>Operating Features</b>	Multitude and range of services offered on one site	Stand alone agencies at separate locations	Deployment of neighbourhood teams comprised of relevant City departments and neighbourhood groups
<b>Themes</b>	Balance Courtship Collaboration	Separate pursuits Sometimes collaboration	Collaboration (especially across City departments)
<b>Advantages</b>	Convenience Holism and continuity in service Synergistic outcomes Service efficiency Expanded facilities Neighbourhood relevance Multi-faceted approach	"Thin" bureaucracy Innovates rapidly Intimate scale Allows for choice in service options Reduces "ghettoization" Meets the needs of a large and diverse population	Requires no costs Requires no space Inter-departmental cooperation at the City level Access to City information and services Neighbourhood relevance Multi-faceted approach
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Large scale Capital intensive Complicated organizational structure Land Intensive Professional territoriality	Fragmentation Duplication Inconvenience Narrow focus Professional territoriality	Limited powers and credibility Fragile organizational structure Intangible - not "on the ground" Professional territoriality

It is inadequate to rely upon one service strategy alone. Each model has attributes that are justifiable in their own right. Some of these attributes complement the advantages of other models, while others minimize the disadvantages. Moreover, different strategies work in different circumstances. Indeed, different strategies are welcome. According to Clague et al. (1984:281):

The unevenness of services which would occur throughout the province, would, in our opinion, be a small price to pay for the gains to be realized through the deliberate experimentation and attention to evaluation. Structures which could be shown as effective could then be replicated, and conversely ineffectual structures discarded.

## 4.5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING POLICY

On the one hand, planning is being forced to recognize that it is important to maintain, even broaden, choice. On the other hand, it is also being pressured to integrate and rationalize services. Planning is in the practice of streamlining, plugging holes and filling gaps, expanding, consolidating, and reducing all at once in the name of greater efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness in service delivery (Lauffer, 1978; O'looney, 1993). In this context planning policy must be reconsidered if it is to know how to maximize choice and opportunities in a socially and fiscally responsible manner.

In the area of social service delivery, the first policy priority is to extend planning to become more integrated with other systems. Implicit in this belief is that planning needs to become more "social." Planning policy must make a conscious decision to embrace social values and implications in all that it does. Regardless of the planning stream, whether it be environmental, transportation, land use, housing, or something else, results always affect society in both deliberate and unintended ways. To become more social and hence relevant, planning must become more interdisciplinary than in the past.

### 4.5.1 *Planning Becomes More Integrative*

At present there are many fields in planning, each with its own area of expertise and responsibility. Sometimes these areas are incompatible and work at cross purposes. At other times they overlap in their work and this creates costly duplication, unacceptable in a time of funding paucity. Part of the reason for this situation is that the planning profession has been trained in the positivistic tradition of specific services with specific functions. However, human needs rarely fall into such neat and discrete compartments. There must be explicit acknowledgment of the complex and interrelated nature of social issues, a recognition that social problems cross sectoral boundaries. Rarely is there "just" a poverty problem that must be dealt with solely by mere welfare payments. Very likely poverty is related to other systems, such as employment, health, education, race, and the like. All these systems have a significant role to play.

In contemporary times creating and managing change demands coordination with other elements of urban life and judicious organization and deployment of limited resources. To do this planning has to be an interdisciplinary system where a high degree of interdependence is involved, rather than merely multidisciplinary where departments simply work alongside one another and coordination occurs on an ad-hoc basis. If planners are to improve the delivery of social services, they must be ready to come into contact with such diverse fields as health, recreation, education, corrections, children and family services, and income assistance.

What is advocated here is an integrated and holistic model of planning. A 1989 report from Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services titled, *Better Beginnings -- Better Futures: An Integrated Model of Primary Prevention of Emotional and Behavioural Problems* advocates strongly the adoption of integrated models. It states:

... program models for prevention of emotional and behavioural problems cross inter-sectoral boundaries of service delivery. Thus, good primary prevention programs require the cooperation and collaboration of the ministries responsible for public health, community health, education, housing and recreation as well as social services.

(VSB, 1994:3)

Similarly, a plethora of recent local reports supports the idea of better coordination and integration of services at both the senior and front line levels of delivery. The *Sullivan Commission on Education* (Province of B.C. and Sullivan, 1988) recommends that the Ministries of Education, Social Services, Health, and the Attorney General work closely on developing joint mandates and planning processes for integrated service delivery. The report, *Children and Youth at Risk: Toward a Mental Health Plan* (Children and Youth at Risk Steering Committee, 1991) calls for a set of integrated services in a school, including social services, health, alcohol and drug counseling, justice, and recreation. The report, *Making Changes: A Place to Start* (Community Panel, Family and Children's Services, 1992) calls for improved interministerial service delivery and direct services delivered out of neighbourhood-based, integrated centres. In most cases, the reports recognize the schools as natural sites from which to launch such a project, a claim recently substantiated in Dryfoos' book (1994), *Full-Service Schools*, in which she argues for more collaboration in the social service, health, and education sectors to address the mounting problems of inner city youth and their families.

The repeated message here is that there needs to be planned interaction and communication among sub-systems in the social welfare field. Currently, the field is operating without established systems for overall communication and joint planning, and collaboration is largely informal and based on goodwill (Annis et al., 1993; Clague, 1988a). Contemporary planning cannot be an insular practice, isolated from other systems with which it shares responsibility for social welfare. All service functions are connected in some way and planners need to understand the nature of these interrelated and interdependent linkages on a conceptual level.

On a practical level, planners must be able to create new policy instruments, or refine old ones, that can allow more collaboration and integration than heretofore experienced. For example, intensive professional development, improved politically savvy, and required interdisciplinary teamwork may address these issues. Most professionals are trained in a system that is isolated from other systems. What is needed is a strong internal support system that creates an atmosphere that elevates the value of interdisciplinary approaches (Rist, 1992). The thrust of the issue is twofold: to transcend jurisdictional and organizational boundaries, and to have the tools to experiment more broadly, that is, look at the components in the system -- not in isolation but as a network -- and create new ways of working together better and managing the flow of resources more efficiently (Lauffer, 1978).

The full benefits of cooperating with one another, achieving the most out of comparative advantages, diversifying, and enhancing learning are unrealized at present. Cross training and more holistic approaches are unfortunately still admired as "cutting edge" rather than widely practiced. To have a greater impact on ameliorating and preventing social problems, planning must move beyond the tiresome rhetoric and volumes of reports and follow a blueprint for action. If governments expect services and organizations to collaborate and integrate to improve service delivery, they must set the tone themselves in order to first, genuinely improve service delivery, and second, set a good example.

Like most public policy, this "new" call for better collaboration and integration is not new at all, but an important message that has unfortunately been repeatedly unheeded in the past. These ideas already came to fruition in the now defunct Community Resource Boards that were created by the provincial NDP administration from 1972 to 1975. The boards were an ambitious program to reorganize the human services along

the themes of service decentralization, coordination and integration, and citizen participation (Clague et al., 1984). It may be time to revisit an idea whose time may have finally come, again.

The more integrative planning called for here requires substantive changes in the amount of power accorded to municipal planning departments. The policy implication is not only integration for integration's sake, but a purposive re-assignment of power to harness local services to prevent and overcome problems that ultimately come to bear in neighbourhoods across the city.

#### *4.5.2 Municipal Planning Becomes More Powerful*

The second policy area that planning must address is the issue of power. Planning in the municipal arena must come to terms with whether it is an agent of reform, that is, fundamental change, or an agent of tinkering where it is buffeted by political decisions. Planning must make this decision in an environment where distribution of power, control, and even change in general are often met with uncompromising stances by senior government systems that believe they know better and have the legislated mandate to prove it. Given the daunting opposition, it is small wonder that the profession has chosen the latter role, that of mere reactor to change, not instigator of it. Hence even when an innovative idea like the MSC is introduced it is nonetheless criticized for representing only a "cosmetic organizational change" with no substantive impact on service delivery (Gandy and Delaney, 1977:109). It is simply a structure where several agencies share a common file "depot" and represents a facilitative response, not a change mechanism.

However there is increasing involvement of local government, and by extension planning. Whether by default or design, local government is becoming increasingly involved in the social affairs of the city. The complexity and rapid changes of modern urban life have forced municipalities to deal with its negative byproducts and offer services to improve community life (Clague, 1988b; 1993). Although traditionally relegated to providing "hard" infrastructure, local governments are forced, by virtue of being the "in your face government," to recognize that social, economic, and environmental issues are all interrelated and distilled at the local level to affect the quality of life of its citizens. The local government is in the "trenches" whether it likes it or not. In order to manage the changes that occur, municipal planning departments

need expanded power. Municipalities must be one side of an active partnership, in a truly collaborative sense, rather than a mere vendor doling out products from head office.

Moreover, there is currently a rediscovery of the importance of neighbourhoods among the city's residents. As a result neighbourhoods have become a potent political force and are enjoying an emerging prestige at City Hall. For example, the recent administrative restructuring at the City has resulted in the flattening of the organizational hierarchy and a resultant transition from distant and internal departmental policy-making to more neighbourhood level decision-making. Further, Gandy and Delaney (1977) claim that the complexity and localized nature of rapidly changing urban areas require thoughtful, localized planning responses. Against this background the City has no choice but to get involved, and it bodes well if this inevitability is equipped and structured with the power and policy levers to ensure the relationship with neighbourhoods is as constructive as possible. Otherwise, the City risks undermining its legitimacy and relevance.

In the leaner, meaner 90s, costly fragmentation and duplication of services cannot be tolerated. Moreover, demographic and economic change, government offloading, increased citizen participation, the expanded role of the school, and the need for a more preventative orientation in service delivery are all rationales that call for a new direction in how the City structures and delivers services to its citizens. The extent to which the City can successfully grapple with these changes depends largely on the autonomy it has and its willingness to merge this autonomy with other systems for the benefit of the overall social welfare system.

#### *4.5.3 The School Becomes More Extended*

Much has been written about the need for the school to expand its mandate and operations to include the provision of social services, and the potential from such a collaboration. Implicit in this belief is a reconceptualization of what the school in its most unencumbered essence really is. The school is a teacher, absolutely, but it is a teacher in the broadest sense of the word. School is about much more than acquiring academic knowledge. It is about gaining survival skills in a highly politicized world as well (Dryfoos, 1994; Poster, 1982; Rist, 1992).



To meet this challenge, the traditional role of the school should be expanded to become a political arena in Friedmann's terms (1987). The arena is political because it can challenge the pseudo-neutrality of positivistic thought and recognize the diversity of values, opinions, and judgments that exist outside of the established order. The process is political because it is humanistic, whereby mutual learning and obligation take precedence.

If Friedmann's household unit is the point of departure on the track to political emancipation for everyday citizens, then the school represents the first pit stop. That is, after the household, the school is the next level of organization where the reclaiming and vitalizing of political community continues. Presently, the school system indoctrinates children into the belief that the status quo is acceptable and should not be challenged. However the school, too, can be fertile ground for planting the "germinal seeds of a new order" (Friedmann, 1987:25).

Habermas states that "strategic action must be institutionalized" (Forester, 1989:223) and the school has rich potential as a viable institution for political education and mobilization. The school is an empowering place where social relations are created and where practical, self-managing, and self-renewing practices are cultivated. Because of its educational role, the school represents an opportunity to enhance the capacity for critical and analytical thinking, build networks, nurture self-reliance, and build immunity to alienation. Outside of the home, it is the foci of everyday social activity for children and where consciousness and cooperation are encouraged.

Schools can play the role of socializing and humanizing tomorrow's leaders by imparting the knowledge, skills, and organizational acumen necessary for the fundamental democratization of life to be achieved outside in the real world. If society is to grapple with the multiplicity and diversity of views that exist, and if it is to acknowledge other ways of knowing and experiencing, what better place to start than in the home and the school, where sheer intensity and duration of exposure can create a critical disposition. In these places, children can explore "possibilities, consequences, values, and uncertainties" and form real, active solutions (Forester, 1989:23). Minzey and LeTarte (1972) and Ringers Jr. (1976) argue that education is one of the few social utilities that is common to all groups in our society, and that schools are the one facility that all neighbourhoods have in common. In this context

they have rich potential to bind diverse elements together toward achieving positive goals.

In schools, traditional daily practices and social and political structures can be analyzed and debunked, and new ones considered. It is here where people can construct a synthesis of analysis and vision, sensitivity, and the strategic thinking necessary for a socially useful life. The school is capable of tapping into intangible hidden assets in the community -- these being heart, soul, hope, diversity, expertise, and commitment -- and harnessing and transforming them into tangible, long term collective wealth.

The policy challenges represented by an improved system of social service delivery in general, and by the MSC model in particular, may be provocative yet they are well calculated risks. The implications for policy listed here are not far fetched, nor are they new. The call for planning to become more integrative, for municipal planning to become more powerful, and for schools to be more extended are basic organizing principles that reaffirm the value of preventative, and not just ameliorative, social services and their contribution to long term personal and community health. In a social services context where numerous and different experiences are a given, there is a need to experiment with policy and practices that support a decentralized, community based framework. Centralized, preconceived, and prescriptive plans have already been tried. Their failure is a reflection of planning's neglect and a wake up call to try something else.

#### **4.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The research findings and policy implications presented here are speculative interpretations of an issue. The issue of MSCs in all its many permutations and complexities suggests that further investigation is needed to yield more theoretically robust information. First, a comprehensive assessment, including a cost/benefit analysis, of variations within the MSC model itself as well as of the MSC and other models would contribute greatly to evaluative power.

Second, an investigation of ideal organizational structures for the MSC is needed. This would include identifying optimal management and program arrangements; criteria for compatibility among the different agencies that operate out of the MSC; and a

determination of the types of services that are most amenable to collaboration and potential integration.

Third, it is helpful to know how to create and wield policy levers in such a way as to enhance their performance and make them more palatable to those that must implement them. For instance, information on how policy can remain robust yet flexible to withstand the uncertainties of the future would be useful, as would direction on how comprehensive or incremental policy must be in order to be effective. In other words, the issue is how to make policy more tactical.

#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

In her assessment of MSCs some twenty years ago, Burns points out that they are more a reflection of inadequate coordination than inadequate quantity or quality of resources themselves (Gandy and Delaney, 1977). This situation still holds true today (Rist, 1992). The MSC is a model that coordinates and pools the best of what is already available in social services and offers them to people at one time, in one place.

It is a century-old model reinvented for a contemporary time that is punctuated by a rising demand for better services, shrinking resources to fund them, and an increasingly variegated populace. The model provides insights into the value of synergy, leadership, efficiency, neighbourhood relevance and scale, facilities and access, and systems. Further, the MSC underscores the importance of balance, successful courtship among agencies, and long term collaboration.

However, the model is only one stop on the continuum of social services. Also prominent are the traditional dispersed model of service delivery and the new ISD model, all of which should be viewed as complementary, and not competitive. It has not been substantiated that services found at the MSC are qualitatively better than elsewhere, but because of services' proximity to one another there is the potential for tapping into other networks of support. Further, the MSC is able to bring together people who otherwise might not in a way that isolated services never could. At the MSC paths cross, networks are more dense, and effects are broader.

Nonetheless other models must also be considered. In the social welfare field choice and experimentation are important as there are no simple "either/or" solutions. Just as

social problems are connected, so are their solutions integral parts of a whole. The MSC is a big asset in the service delivery continuum but it is only one step in the process, a work in progress along with the others.

Ultimately the task is to determine how planning can be used as a tool of intervention to improve the delivery of social services to citizens and improve the communities in which they live. Specifically, planning needs to reconceptualize how it structures and delivers services that are preventative, proactive, and supportive of individual and community priorities. To do this, the profession must explicitly recognize that the old methods of planning are no longer relevant.

To meet the challenge of improved service delivery strong policy anchors must be in place. For one, planning policy could be more integrative. Rather than practicing the traditional functional compartmentalization of the past, planning must subscribe to the functional interdependence required of the present. Second, municipal planning could be given more power, or "teeth," to better deal with the fallout of change that occurs at the local level. Third, the traditional role of the school can be extended to include a more politically aware and astute stance.

The MSC concept is offered as a model of collaboration and integration with great promise. In a time of complexity and change, it can be a stabilizing force. In an era of multiple public interests where mandates, priorities, methodologies, and partisan stripes will always differ, it is important to look at the overall picture and the MSC does this very well.

The ideas here are nothing new. This thesis does not offer any groundbreaking insights, but rather a reminder of a plain and persistent message: collaboration works. The idea is old. However, ways of conceptualizing, structuring, and delivering services can be new and improved.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### OVERVIEW

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the efficacy of the multi-service centre (MSC), or "one-stop-shop," model in the delivery of social services. Examples of the MSC model in Vancouver include Britannia Centre, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, and Strathcona Community Centre. In all these examples, an elementary school and a neighbourhood house or community centre play a prominent role.*

*Services delivered at the community level are increasingly favoured by City Hall (and confirmed via the CityPlan citizen consultation process), and your answers will be useful in determining whether the MSC model is an appropriate vehicle for this new direction. Ultimately, your knowledge, experience, and input will help identify and analyze the factors important in improving service delivery in the city.*

*The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will focus on selected criteria for determining efficacy. Please answer all items to the best of your ability. All your responses will be strictly confidential.*

*Thank you for your contribution and please let me know if you would like a summary of the results.*

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## 1. FACILITY ARRANGEMENTS

- a) Do facilities offered at the MSC enhance program delivery?
- b) Do you think resources are utilized fully?

## 2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYNERGY *(synergy is defined as opportunities for different agencies, programs, staff, and users within an MSC to combine efforts and create better results than had they worked independently)*

- a) Does the MSC model encourage inter agency cooperation?
- b) Does inter agency cooperation happen?
- c) Are there opportunities to achieve synergy within an MSC?
- d) What is the nature of the synergy that exists? Does it take place on an administrative level? staff level? user level? community level?

## 3. ACCESSIBILITY

- a) Can users get information on how to access different services?
- b) Do MSCs meet the range of needs that exist in the community in which they operate?
- c) How do you know?
- d) Do you think the MSC is user friendly?
- e) How do you gauge feedback?

## 4. MANAGEMENT

- a) What are the goals of the MSC?
- b) Do you think the goals of the MSC are understood?
- c) By whom?
- d) Are services offered by the MSC congruent with its goals?
- e) In the MSC, are the roles and responsibilities clear for the following:

- organizational structure
- management responsibilities
- policy and procedures
- staffing
- financial accountability

building operations  
program development

- f) What might be the process for dispute resolution among the different agencies that operate out of an MSC?
- g) What type of special skills are required for staff of an MSC?
- h) What type of special leadership qualities are necessary for a director of an MSC?

## 5. EFFICIENCY

- a) Do you think human resources are utilized fully?
- b) Do you think services are utilized fully?
- c) Is there duplication?
- d) Is this duplication justifiable?
- e) How is the lag time between identified service need and service response?
- f) When compared to the financial costs of a dispersed model of service delivery, does the MSC provide more, about the same amount of, or less services?

## 6. EFFECTIVENESS

- a) From a user's point of view, do you think services improve due to their location in an MSC?
- b) From an administrative point of view, do you think the administration of services improves due to the location of several agencies on one site?
- c) From a user's point of view, do you think services become more accessible due to their location in an MSC?

## 7. PARTING COMMENTS

- a) What is your overall impression of the MSC model?
- b) What is your opinion on how social services should be delivered by the City of Vancouver?

## **APPENDIX B: MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES STUDIED**

The multi-service centres (MSC) listed below represent only a portion of the different forms the MSC model can take. Each has a different management structure and program orientation. What they do have in common is that each collaborates extensively with schools and/or agencies on site to provide services for their respective communities.

### **1. Britannia Community Services Centre**

1661 Napier Street

Vancouver, B.C. V5L 4X4

Britannia Community Services Centre is the most fully developed expression of the multi-service centre (MSC) in Vancouver. On a 17 acre site, this MSC offers a wide range of facilities and services to the Grandview-Woodlands and Strathcona neighbourhoods. Some of them are:

- An information centre
- Childcare services, including pre-school, out of school care, and special services
- Community education
- An integrated library serving both elementary and secondary school students as well as the general public
- Recreation programs for all ages, ranging from physical fitness to social and cultural activities
- Britannia Elementary School
- Britannia Secondary School
- 4 gyms and 1 racquetball court
- Senior citizens' drop-in centre
- Teen centre
- Swimming pool and associated facilities
- Fitness centre
- Ice rink
- Track and sports fields
- Tennis courts
- Community meeting spaces

- Social service agencies
  - Cultural Festivals
- 

Source: Britannia Centre pamphlet

**2. Kiwassa Neighbourhood House**

2425 Oxford Street

Vancouver, B.C. V5K 1M7

Kiwassa Neighbourhood House is located adjacent to Tillicum Elementary School. The two organizations work in collaboration to serve the North Grandview-Woodlands and Strathcona neighbourhoods. Some of the services offered are:

- Children's Programs
  - Pre-teen Programs
  - Employment Programs for Youth
  - Family Programs
  - Childcare Programs
  - Adult Employment Programs
  - Senior Programs
  - Settlement Programs
- 

Source: Kiwassa Neighbourhood House Program Guide

**3. Strathcona Community Centre**

604 Keefer Street

Vancouver, B.C. V6A 3V8

Strathcona Community Centre is located adjacent to Lord Strathcona Elementary School. The two organizations work in collaboration to serve the residents of the Strathcona neighbourhood. Some of the services offered are:

- Pre-school
- Children's Programs
- Youth Programs
- Adult Programs
- Senior Programs
- Cultural Festivals
- Strathcona/Hastings North Neighbourhood Police Office

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Source: Strathcona Community Centre Guide