

SRV MATTERS 9

Slicing and Dicing Service Processes part 2

This SRV Matters does some more ‘scrutinising analysis’ based on the last SRV Matters topic (ed. 8). Check out the diagram and reread the last edition [HERE](#).

There is much about the shape of a service that we take for granted. The current service landscape is filled with big funded services that look and act more like businesses than community-based efforts to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people. There are many individuals and family members who have expanded their responsibilities to include managing staff. Dr Wolfensberger provided us with a small schema to help us analyse what we are seeing: three dimensions for forms of services.

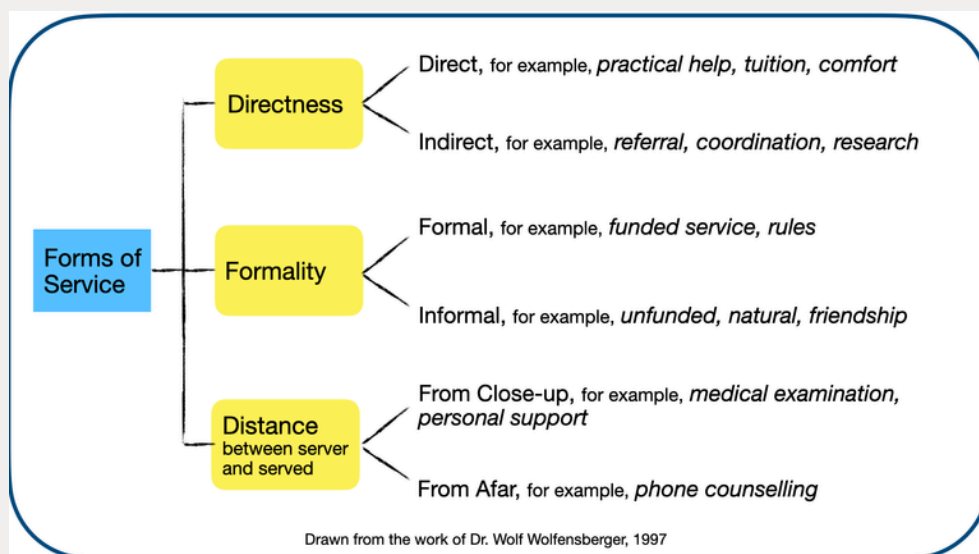
Just a reminder that this edition is not advocating ‘good vs bad’ service forms but rather reminding us to measure the forms of service against the SRV question: is what is being provided and the ways they’re being provided relevant and effective in helping each individual have access to the valued and good things in life? Therefore, to what extent do the

administrative and organisational rules and actions help or hinder efforts for better lives?

Firstly, here are some examples to explain the interplay between the three dimensions of the service forms: distant-close up, formal-informal, direct-indirect. This

edition then goes on to illustrate some issues.

- A School of the Air education program is an example of a distant (from far away), formal (bounded by rules) and direct (direct to/with the person) form of service.
- Unpaid support from an unpaid server (like a family member, neighbour, sports team member or work colleague) is a closeup, informal, direct form of service.
- A day service for a group of older people, an employment service supporting individuals into work, and ‘closeup’ advocacy’ all share that they are closeup (close distance between server and served), formal, and direct forms of service.
- Training, supports coordination, phone-based assessments, program management, fund raising, and efforts via advocacy to ensure that a group gets a service are all examples of indirect, distant forms of service.



SRV Ideas: Improved SRV application

Slicing and Dicing Service Processes part 2 (cont.)

Example issue 1: Consider an example where the worker is in a closeup direct formal arrangement such as supporting personal care and housekeeping in someone's home. Despite one's home typically being an informal environment, that is, having routines but low rules, it is likely that the naturalness of that environment will be affected by that service form, with a strong risk that the number and type of rules from the funder or service manager become expanded.

Example issue 2: Our friend-relationships are typically in the informal (unpaid and low rules) domain. A program using paid workers or volunteers to be 'friends', shifts those arrangements into a formal structure, where the primary obligation of the worker is to the rule setter, that is, the employer or funder. Thus, the fidelity between the person and 'friend' is likely to be considerably reduced due to the service form.

Example issue 3: Some indirect and distant forms of service (such as support coordination and program management) carry a great risk that the pressing needs of an individual or group are not well appreciated, which is likely to be a barrier to acquiring things like valued roles, relationships, purpose, contribution etc, that is, the good things of life.

Example issue 4: The recent threats to funding for community capacity building programs illustrate a potential issue based on the form of service. Funders seem to value close-up and direct forms of service much more than distant and/or indirect services. Fortunately, SRV gives us lenses to use that can be used to highlight (or not) the merits of community capacity building programs, specifically looking at the indirect benefits to individuals of valued roles, increased competence as well as the conscious recognition of social devaluation and wounding etc.

Example issue 5: As if the above doesn't present enough complexities, what about programs that support the development of freely given relationships such as via Citizen Advocacy Programs and Circles of Support? It is likely that the administrative/organisational functions of the Board of Management and paid coordinators are a distant, indirect and formal form of service. That community members are those who respond to the needs of individuals such as for a sense of belonging, purpose, and protection is a form of service that is close-up, direct and informal. One issue is likely to be 'formality (rules) creep', when bureaucratic processes are imposed on the freely given relationships, such as police checks and report writing.

Reminder: Rather than think 'good or bad' forms of service, think about what's the best fit between the needs of the person/group and the form of the service. What's the best fit between what the service is trying to provide and how? To what extent are needs being met, from not at all/minimal to high? To what extent can the limitations of the form of service be buffered, for example, could the rules be reduced or relaxed?

While we have used some 'scrutinising analysis' here, do also keep these ideas in mind if you are designing (or redesigning) a service: consider the service forms of close/distant, formal/informal, and direct/indirect.

(Ideas drawn from work by Dr Wolf Wolfensberger. 1997).