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System logic modelling: The next step in logic models?

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System Logic Modelling (SLM) has been developed as an outgrowth of a popular approach that has been used for decades by program planners and evaluators known generically as *Logic Modelling*. Evaluators, in particular, have used the Logic Model for at least twenty years or so when attempting to understand how a program is intended to work for the purposes of measuring effectiveness. ***SLM is the next step in logic modelling.***

SLM draws upon established theories and principles of Logic Modelling and extrapolates these so as to be relevant to **service systems** as a totality. SLM seeks to build "service systems" instead of simply "programs" through understanding how population-level impacts, interventions, processes, and resources are interrelated into a system as a whole. Fundamentally, SLM seeks to clarify the design of the service system including the underpinning system logic or theory of action whilst placing the system within a particular social-environmental context at a given historical point in time. The proposed analysis will critically examine the complex *relationship* between problem identification and formulation, the target group's need-for-service, service system objectives, resources, programs, services, interventions/activities, outputs, and anticipated outcomes and will address the key questions:

- What reason do we have to believe the intended outcomes will be achieved using this service system model?
- On what 'theory of action' do we base our belief?
- What "contexts" is the service system placed within and how does this influence it's shape?

A service system's underlying logic should make explicit a number of key dimensions that influence the shape and structure of the overall system, how it is supposed to work, what service provision will result, and, ultimately, what longer-term community-level outcomes (impacts) may be expected. SLM can help build a common understanding of the service system and expectations for resources, consumer and carers reached, and results. Therefore, SLM is good for sharing ideas, identifying assumptions, team building, and communication. SLM is also helpful for service system design or improvement, identifying tasks which are critical to goal attainment, those which are redundant or have inconsistent or implausible linkages among service system components. Finally, SLM points to a balanced set of key performance measurement points and evaluation issues, thus improves data collection and usefulness.

If the logic supporting the proposed service system model is inadequate in terms of establishing a plausible relationship between social-environmental context, historical period, problem identification, target group 'need-for-service', goal formulation, decisions around what programs and services should be included, outputs, and outcomes, then it will be very difficult to evaluate whether or not the service system model is effective. Therefore, it is crucial that the service system's logic, (normative theory), is clearly spelled out during it's early planning and developmental phases.

