

Comparing Outcome Mapping and Network Models (including Social Framework)

Rick Davies, Wednesday, 18 June 2008

Similarities

1. A focus on actors and their behaviour. Real and observable entities.
2. OM's Boundary Partners (and their Boundary Partners, etc) can be easily located within a Social Framework
3. The use of Progress Markers (similar to milestones) could easily be incorporated in the descriptions of what is happening to each actor in the pathway described by a Social Framework
4. From the point of view of third parties, both may seem to be overloaded with jargon

Differences

1. OM seems to limit its focus to Boundary Partners. And seeks to argue away the relevance of looking at more distant linkages between actors (in the "sphere of interest"), because of complexity and the problems of attribution. Network models try to document that wider complexity and analyse the emergent strategy within that structure.
2. OM has a whole sequence of activities, designed for use at different stages of what is in effect a project management cycle. The use of network models has not been developed into such a package. It is simply a set of tools useful for describing both what might be intended and what actually happened, and evaluation is often about comparing those two things.
3. OM has its own conception of types of strategies and types of organisational practices. The use of network models makes no assumptions about appropriate categories in these areas.
4. OM appears to be implicitly consensual in its approach to planning. There is a strong emphasis on intensive and well facilitated workshops that try to be inclusive of all the stakeholders. Network models can be developed via participatory and non-participatory methods (workshops and surveys versus secondary sources).
5. With OM the change model is largely focused on the individual actor (especially the boundary partner), not on the wider structure of actors. Network models can represent expected changes in both (within the individual and within the wide structure of relationships)

Reference on Outcome Mapping

- Outcome Mapping: The Digested Read, by Mary Myaya

References on network models and the associated social frameworks

- <http://mande.co.uk/special-issues/network-models/>
- <http://mande.co.uk/2008/uncategorized/the-social-framework-as-an-alternative-to-the-logical-framework/>