

A BRIEF REVIEW OF LEARNING NEEDS SURVEYS AND CURRICULUM  
DEVELOPMENT IN VOLUNTEER SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

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Leading the volunteer movement are an estimated 60,000 persons employed as administrators of volunteer services programs (Gowdey, Cooper & Scheier, 1976), and untold numbers of citizens organizing community volunteer help groups without pay. Yet in spite of the sizable work force claiming volunteer services administration as an occupation, the identification of these persons as a distinct professional group is a more recent phenomenon. It was not until 1976 that the U.S. Department of Labor's Division of Classification accepted volunteer administrators as professional managers in the Bicentennial edition of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. A six-level career lattice was adopted which involves all the duties of personnel administration, as well as tasks in public relations and program development (Career Lattice, 1974).

Further establishing volunteer administration as a professional group has been the emergence of multiple professional associations. The Association of Volunteer Bureaus, designed specifically to serve the directors and supporters of community volunteer clearinghouses was established in 1951, making it the oldest professional organization in the

field (Sieder, 1966). Since that time the American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services designed only for volunteer directors in health care settings and the National School Volunteer Program for volunteer directors in schools have emerged, quickly acquiring large memberships. The Association for Administration of Volunteer Services was formed in 1961 and remains the only professional association open to administrators of volunteer services programs in all types of agency or community settings.

In concert with this growing professional identity has been the recognition of the need for educational programs to enhance the skills of the administrator in order to more effectively utilize volunteer talent.

Modern volunteers are a unique breed whose ancestors helped build this country. Their potential is incalculable. Key persons on the American scene, closely involved with the volunteer citizen in action are the Directors of Volunteers, a group moving toward professionalism. The largest impact on masses of citizen volunteers may be had through appropriately training Directors of Volunteers. (Okin, 1976)

Underscoring the necessity of educational programs for volunteer services programs administrators, Wilson (1976) contends that ineptly managed and poorly organized programs deter the impact of the volunteer effort.

. . . problems occur because the voluntary effort was not organized effectively. I suggest that our com-

munities can no longer afford the luxury of good programs and good people that fail. We need to objectively look at these failures and ask why and then set about doing something about it. . . . there is one common denominator in an amazing number of volunteer programs experiencing difficulty. It is not the volunteers, not the client, but the person directing the volunteer program. (p. 15)

### Learning Needs Survey

The recognition of the need for special educational programs to meet the needs of the leaders of the voluntary sector has prompted several surveys and conferences on this subject.

NICOV study. A conference convened by the National Information Center on Volunteerism (NICOV) on "College Curricula for the Leadership of Human Service Volunteer Programs" (1970) suggested an "ideal model" for a core curriculum in volunteer administration. The outline of the curriculum follows:

- I. Historical and Philosophical [Background]
- II. Administrative [Concerns]
  - A. Program Operation
    1. Planning (problem solving, decision-making, identify community needs and resources, identify community systems)
    2. Coordinating
    3. Develop community resources

4. Interviewing, placement, orientation, training, evaluation and recognition

5. Roles volunteers can play

B. Office Operation

1. Budgeting, funding, legal, record-keeping, grantsmanship, communication with boards and committees

2. Staffing, staff development and upgrading

III. Communications

A. Mass Media - Public Relations

B. Inter-Intra Agency Communication

C. Public Speaking - Conference Leadership

D. Report Writing

E. Consulting Skills

IV. Field Experience - Application

A. Supervision. (p. 8)

First National Conference Study. A symposium similar to the NICOV conference was convened in 1973. The report of this meeting, the "First National Conference: Education for Voluntary Action" highlights a survey conducted by Wilson (1973). Two hundred volunteer services program administrators in the state of Michigan responded to a survey designed to identify their primary duties and administrative responsibilities. Using an open-ended questionnaire format, respondents were asked to identify their primary duties, the skills most important to their job, emerging trends and issues in volunteerism, and the implications of these emerging

trends to their position. Fifty-six different primary duties emerged from the study. The findings, grouped by four major subheadings appear below. Only those items which appeared more than once were listed. Items accompanied by an asterisk (\*) were listed at least 25 times.

#### Program Direction

##### \*Recruitment

Interviewing

Screening

Orientation

##### \*Training

##### \*Placement/Scheduling

Guidance & Motivation

##### \*Supervision

Recognition of Service

Liaison Between Volunteers & Agency

Evaluation

##### \*Day-to-Day Administration

Writing Job Descriptions

Keeping Records of Activities, Time, etc.

Fund-Raising and Budget Keeping

##### \*Liaison and Public Relations Work

Agency-Community Liaison

Volunteer-Agency Liaison

Agency-Agency Liaison (with other agencies using or providing volunteers)

Coordinating Community Volunteer Resources

\*Liaison and Public Relations Work (cont'd)

Developing & Community Education Program

\*Program Development

Assessing Needs that Volunteers Can Meet

Exploring New Program Areas

Updating Existing Programs

Developing New Social Service Programs Which Include  
Volunteers

Interpreting the Role and Use of Volunteers to Staff

Supervising & Consulting with Staff on Their Use of  
Volunteers. (pp. 18-19)

In response to the question asking which specific skills were considered most important for the effective performance of the job, the respondents identified "people" skills (human qualities of warmth and empathy, ability to work with all types of persons and effective communication and training skills) and administrative skills (organizational skills, community assessment, interviewing, screening, supervising, evaluating, budgeting, coordination, consultation).

All of the participants at the "First National Conference" had the opportunity to collectively discuss their learning needs. Ranked by the frequency of identification, the 12 item list appears below:

1. Human relations, social psychology, human development.
2. Leadership, administration and management.

3. Communication skills, public relations.
4. Participative planning process.
5. Counselling process, matching resources and skills to needs.
6. Evaluation:

Community analysis of needs and resources

Collection of information dissemination

Program evaluation

Impact measurement

7. Orientation and training.
8. Technical systems for:
  - Recruiting
  - Supervising
  - Training
  - Grantsmanship
  - Group dynamics
9. Philosophy, history, anthropology, social responsibility and meaning of volunteerism and volunteering to various populations.
10. Political process, non-partisan but influencing "the system."
11. Dynamics of change.
12. Personnel administration for volunteers. (p. 50)

In an address given at the conference, Harriet Naylor, Director of Volunteer Development for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), argued persuasively for the development of a complex multidisciplinary approach to

the curriculum development process for the profession of volunteer administration:

Analysis of the theoretical and philosophical basis must come at an early stage. Otherwise training is likely to be limited to meeting urgent but recurrent needs for operational demands. I believe if we give people at every educational level understanding of the "Why's", the "How to's" come more easily. Without a valuable system of "Why's" administrative decisions are subject to whim and personal idiosyncrasy to a devastating degree, even while technical knowledge is improved.

We need professionals, not mere technicians, people with wide and forward vision, to coordinate otherwise unrelated factors into a functioning administration whole. (pp. 2-3)

Other recommendations arising from study groups and workshops held at the conference identified administrators of volunteer services programs as the top-priority group of persons in need of educational opportunities to develop and enhance their skills. Executive directors and board members of agencies using volunteer resources and line staff working with volunteers were targeted as secondary populations with legitimate and unmet educational needs. Service volunteers were listed as the fifth group in need of educational opportunities.

Resources available to provide needed educational pro-

grams were also identified. Community colleges and university extension divisions were ranked first, followed by existing community agencies, and colleges and universities. The need for flexible, part-time independent study or short term learning opportunities was highlighted. Credit courses were considered important for credentialing and professional status.

Volunteer bureaus study. Based on a survey of 78 volunteer bureau directors and other volunteer program leaders attending a 1970 Association of Volunteer Bureaus (AVB) conference on training volunteer administrators, it was concluded that curriculum for volunteer administrators needs to be both general and practical. The ability to work with and inspire other people was the most important ability respondents felt they possessed. Included in this human skill was the knowledge and understanding of one's community and the ability to work with all segments of the local environment. Other attributes considered of paramount importance were flexibility, resourcefulness, efficiency, patience, sensitivity, leadership and management skills, and general communication skills. Practical experience was considered as important as formal academic training in acquiring these skills. A multidisciplinary course of study, including educational programs in community organization, administration, communication, psychology, public relations and social work, was recommended as the appropriate background for volunteer administration (Jacobson, cited in Smith, 1976).

National Learning Resource Center study. Three hundred twelve persons (37% of the sample surveyed) returned questionnaires distributed nationally by the National Learning Resource Center of NICOV (Gowdey, et.al., 1976). This survey gathered demographic data, as well as the educational needs, and preferred learning modalities of volunteer services administrators. The demographic profile of the population surveyed suggested that:

The average volunteer leader is a 36-year-old, white woman employed by the human service area of health and hospitals in an urban setting. She has completed 16 years of education, with a major in the social sciences. Having been a leader of volunteers for just over seven years, she now has the title of Coordinator of Volunteer Services and receives an annual salary of \$9,675. She has previously participated in educational opportunities for volunteer directors which she considered worthwhile. However, if she decides to attend graduate school she would prefer a generic degree in administration to a specialized degree in volunteer administration. (Gowdey, et.al., 1976, p. 11)

The top two education needs identified in this study were skills in management, administration and supervision; and skills in training volunteers. Recruitment, and volunteer and program evaluation skills followed. High priority was given in one-day workshops within driving distance from home and accessible free or low cost information services. Con-

tinuing education and credit courses at universities and colleges were also requested. The desire for "knowledge itself" in order to do a better job was overwhelmingly identified as the major learning goal (Gowdey, et.al., 1976).

AAVS study. A research questionnaire conducted by the Association for Administration of Volunteer Services (Hootman, 1975) generally concurred with the finding of the National Learning Resource Center study. Two hundred and seventeen practitioners (37% of the sample surveyed) responded to this study requesting additional information and research on program evaluation (72%), volunteer training effectiveness (71%), program development (60%), cost/benefit analysis (47%) and ethics and standards (31%).

California Community Colleges report. Based on the suggestions from several workshops held at different community colleges in California and from a Steering Committee of knowledgeable voluntary action leaders, Trost (Circa, 1975) developed a core curriculum in Volunteer Program Management published by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges. The recommended program includes four core courses in volunteerism; cooperative work experience requirements, and related support courses to expand the students background and skills in administration, personnel management, interpersonal relations and supervisory skills. The four core curriculum requirements are each divided into three distinct learning modules as

follows:

- I. Fundamentals of Volunteer Organization and Management
  - Module 1: The Evolution of Volunteerism
  - Module 2: Structural Patterns of Volunteer Organizations
  - Module 3: Administrative Requirements
- II. Fundamentals of Volunteer Program Development
  - Module 4: Understanding the Community
  - Module 5: Ways of Getting from Here to There
  - Module 6: Internal and External Public Relations
- III. Program Management and Maintenance
  - Module 7: Recruitment and Training
  - Module 8: Job Development
  - Module 9: Retainment of Volunteers
- IV. Organizational Change
  - Module 10: The Individual and His/Her Relationship to the Organization
  - Module 11: Groups, Group Process and Organizations
  - Module 12: Interpersonal Relations in a Social Environment

Each module is accompanied with performance objectives for the student together with a detailed course outline and suggested resources. It is significant to note that faculty recommendations included experience in the field as a prerequisite for instructional responsibilities. The antici-

pated difficulty in finding both credentialled and appropriately experienced faculty was noted.

Adelphi University report. A similar undertaking was initiated by Adelphi University, Long Island, New York. Through funding from the Kellogg Foundation, a Center for Volunteerism was established. One of its goals was the development of a graduate level, credit certificate program for managers of volunteer services programs. Formulated on the basis of more than 50 informal interviews with members of the volunteer and academic communities and a review of the literature, a multidisciplinary course of study totaling 24 credit hours was proposed. Two courses from the graduate school of business management, one course from the graduate school of social work and one elective course, accompanied four core courses in volunteerism and a field experience requirement. The titles of the core courses in volunteerism are suggestive of their content. The courses are:

Foundations in Volunteerism

Issues in Volunteer Services Management, Parts I & II

Applied Management of Volunteer Services Programs

Volunteer Services Administration in Action

It is significant to note that the key obstacle in achieving curriculum approval from the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee was their dearth of knowledge about the significance and impact of voluntarism. Because of the multidisciplinary and distinctive nature of the curriculum, finding an appropriate "academic home" for the program was

an arduous task. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences 14  
offered the least offensive available option (Rehnborg, 1978).

"Expert" recommendations. There is scarcely a text on volunteerism published that fails to recommend the learning needs of the volunteer administrator (Ilsley, 1978a, 1978b; Naylor, 1976; Schindler-Rainman & Lippett, 1975; Shaw & Stubblefield, 1977). Suggestions frequently focus on the tasks inherent in the job, such as the recruitment and retention of volunteers, orientation and training, supervision, recognition, and evaluation. Although each "expert" bases his/her analysis on multiple years of personal professional experience in the field, the recommendations arise from observation without the benefit of systematic surveys or other research methodology to confirm the suggestions.

An article by Schwartz (1978) deserves special attention because of its slightly different focus. In addition to general administrative skills, she recommends primary attention be given to the development of counseling skills. The volunteer director must understand the needs and motivations of each volunteer to properly place and retain the volunteer and to insure harmony between the volunteers, the clients and the staff.

Summary. As the various learning needs surveys suggest, the job of administering a volunteer services program is indeed multifaceted and complex. The position appears to require administrative skills of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and evaluating, along with knowledge of community organization, public relations, and inter/intra personal skills in communication, and skills in counseling. Magnifying the complexity of the position are emerging social trends confronting volunteerism, and therefore the administrator of a volunteer services program or organization.

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