

Learning and Teaching Administration in Field Instruction: An Israeli Example With Implications for American Jewish Communal Service

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Two points of view have been set forth . . . The first view is that prior experience in direct service provision is important and required as a prelude to education and field instruction for administration . . . The other major view is that social administration is a separate discrete discipline . . .

Schools of social work are more and more establishing graduate programs in administration and management in order better to meet the manpower needs of human service agencies. While there has been a long history of field instruction in social casework and social group work, there has been a more limited experience with field instruction in administration. Not a great deal is known with any specificity about the dimensions, issues, and problems of field instruction for the preparation of social agency administrators. Yet, we want to ensure to the greatest extent possible that these programs are meeting the needs of agencies both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Sometimes serendipitously, we discover information which, although we were not seeking it directly, has a special value in regard to certain issues. A research project on learning and teaching administration in field instruction in Israel¹ provided such an

accidental series of findings which have particular importance. The findings to be reported below have importance for community centers and other types of social agencies and educational institutions in Israel, and for Jewish communal agencies and schools which prepare administrative personnel for work in the United States.

Background

At the time of the research project reported below, the Joseph J. Schwartz Graduate Program for Training Community Center Directors and Senior Personnel of the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and the School of Education, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, was in its fifth year of operation. The program prepares high level administrators for an important communal institution in Israeli society, an institution which is making a significant contribution to the development of Israel.

The Schwartz program was created by the University through the support of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Ministry of Education in order to train senior staff for Centers which are located in all parts of Israel, including small development towns. The community centers serve as informal educational institutions and render other social services in a society which is beset by numerous problems. The graduates of the Schwartz program serve after graduation as senior persons in the community centers and are fulfilling leadership roles in this relatively

¹ I want to express my appreciation to the Vaad Studentim, students, and *madrichim* of the Joseph J. Schwartz Graduate Program for Training Community Center Directors and Senior Personnel, The Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and the School of Education, Hebrew University, Jerusalem for their cooperation and to Dr. Zvi Feine and the late Dr. Arnulf Pins for their advice, encouragement and support on this project. Uri Yannai helped with translation and in other ways throughout the study. My appreciation also to Hebrew University and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee which made it possible for my family to live and work in Israel for the year 1975-76.

new societal institution, which is physically and psychologically in the center of community life.

The crucial focus of the educational program offered is the learning of students in the field placement. It is there that knowledge, attitudes and skills being conveyed through the various classroom courses and informal socialization are put into practice by the students. It is in the field placement that all students are expected to learn and to synthesize from their varied experiences so that they become competent beginning "administration practitioners."

The Schwartz program has formally stated its objectives. Objectives have also been formulated for each of the courses offered in the program, consistent with the enunciated over-all program objectives.

Questions for Study

The study sought answers to the following questions: What do field instructors teach in the field? What are students learning in the field? What are the congruencies and discrepancies between the three sets of information—stated objectives of the program, field instructors' teaching and students' learning? How do students use their time in the field? Additional limited background information about students and field instructors was also sought. What additional knowledge and skills do students think they need? Only selected information from the total study will be reported here.

Method

The objectives for students learning are contained in two documents: *Evaluative Measures for Student Progress and Criteria for Evaluation and Grading in Field Work*. On the basis of these two documents, questionnaires were prepared for students and field instructors to determine the extent to which the field instructor and student thought they focused on potential learning.

A cover memo and questionnaire were

pre-tested and revised. The questionnaires were then distributed to the students during one class period, at which time sixteen students completed their questionnaires. There were eighteen students eligible to participate in the study, based upon their having been in field instruction at least four months (the first and second trimesters of the academic year, 1975-76). Subsequently, two additional student questionnaires were completed; thus all eighteen eligible students participated in the study.

Of seven field instructors, six completed one questionnaire for each of their students for a total of seventeen. One field instructor responsible for one student did not complete the questionnaire. Field instructors completed their questionnaires privately and separately.

Assumptions for Study and Analysis

The three primary assumptions for the study were: (1) The stated objectives for the Schwartz program as found in the program documents are the objectives of the program; (2) the stated objectives of the program when taken together will provide an educational program which can prepare a community center director or senior administrative person; and (3) the statements of the students and the field instructors are true statements of their views of the teaching and learning experiences in each dyad.

A note of caution must be introduced in the interpretation of the results. Since the study covers only one cohort's experience, and even that particular cohort had not completed its entire cycle, the results can be viewed as exploratory, suggestive of developments in the field instruction program, but not definitive results reflective of the five-year experience completed by the program. Further, the study focused on the narrow questions stated above and was not an exploration of the entire field instructional program.

In the program materials from which the objectives were obtained, the objectives are formulated in separate categories for Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills. For the purposes

of this study, knowledge, attitudes and skills have been maintained as separate categories. Of course, they overlap each other and are—in many ways—inseparable. Nevertheless, for the sake of consistency and to make the data more easily analyzable, these separations were maintained.

Field Instructors

Of the six field instructors, five (83%) were male and one (17%) female. The field instructors ranged in age from low 30's to approximately 50 years of age. Their academic backgrounds included one B.S.W., four M.S.W.'s, two doctorates and one advanced diploma.

The Students

Of the eighteen students, fifteen (83%) were male and three (17%) female. Fifteen were 30 years of age and younger with five (28%) twenty-five or younger; the remaining three students included two (11%) from 31 to 35 and one (6%) between 36 and 40 years of age. The students had the following undergraduate major fields of study: Education (4), Social Work (5), Humanities (4), Social Science (6) with one each from Criminology and Law. The additional majors reported are due to dual programs. Four students hold post-graduate diplomas or certification.

Student Tasks in the Field

On the basis of an analysis of responses, the following is a model of primary tasks performed: development of new programs (83%); supervise paid part-time staff (67%); direct leadership (67%). They are also involved in planning, organizing and leading staff development and training program, and work directly with individuals and families. Very few students supervised full-time clerical staff or part-time or full-time maintenance staff.

Half the students did not work with committees and/or Boards of Directors, nor did they work with committees representing the Board. Fifty percent of the students do not

work with groups outside the Center. Over 60% of the students did not have the task of participating on staff, community, or inter-agency committees.

In summary, the students reported they were involved in the development of new programs, supervising part-time staff members, providing direct leadership of Center groups, staff development and work with individuals and families. They were far less involved with committees and/or Boards of Directors, work with groups outside the Center, and had limited involvement with staff, community and inter-agency committees.

Several patterns emerged from the students' field placement assignments. By and large, the students were assigned many administrative functions. However, there was an emphasis upon direct service functions as assignments for students. These functions were internal to the centers and provided little contact for many students with the higher level functions and parts of the Center organization, although it may be the assignments given were at the highest possible level in the day-to-day operations of the Centers.

This emphasis on direct service functions may be required by the context. Community centers have shortages of trained staff and students are potential sources of manpower for working on tasks which need to be done but which could not be done in the ordinary course of events. However, if this is the case, to what extent do students have the opportunity to delegate tasks? The emphasis upon direct service functions also appeared to be related to some students not knowing at a sufficient level how to work with individuals and groups. This emphasis then became a priority focus because it serves the needs of the Center and the students.

Because nine (50%) of the students were direct from community centers where they occupied senior positions prior to coming to the Schwartz program and seven *occupied similar positions while in the program*, (center director, division head, or youth center director), these seven students accounted for a

large percentage of those higher level functions performed by students. Two conclusions can be drawn. At least half of the students were not sufficiently prepared with fundamental individual and group skills prior to admission to the program. Further, there is a need to examine closely the extent to which students from all backgrounds have contact with higher level policy-making bodies in the Centers and with organizations external to the Centers. Thus, there are two sub-groups among the students who bring two different levels of preparation to the program. When students were asked to allocate the percentage of their field instruction time spent on various tasks, the responses confirmed their earlier reports on functions performed.

Areas of Learning

The remainder of the questionnaire was divided into three major sections: knowledge, attitudes and skills. The students and field instructors were asked to what extent each of them thought they as a student/field instructor team focused in the field instruction on the various knowledge, skills and attitude areas, and were asked what additional knowledge and skills they required.

We selected out those results which indicate either strong disagreement between the students and field instructors or the results which appear extreme. In each case, the sum of the percentages of "not at all" and "little" responses were used to indicate *not much attention* paid to a particular matter, according to either students or *madrachim*. The "much" and "very much" responses were combined to indicate *much attention* was paid to particular factors by the student and *madrach* team.²

Positive Learning Areas

There was much agreement between the statements of the field instructors and the

students. Students were involved in much positive learning related to the attainment of the stated goals of the program, including: knowledge of the community (local population, needs and resources, existing services, special influences); the goals and purposes of the Centers; decision-making (formal and informal, changing policies and services, special problems and dilemmas); selection of ways to meet community needs; identification of student strengths and limitations in relation to Center administration work; student ability to recognize need for and seek help; acceptance of others, especially those different from himself; student ability to establish constructive relationships with colleagues, Center directors and senior staff; acceptance of responsibility; understanding and acceptance of Center policies.

Students and *madrachim* devoted much attention to the development of new programs, which includes planning, decision-making, resources, and organizing. Potentially, such assignments include many of the administrative functions for which the Schwartz program is preparing its students. Encapsulated within new programs may be much of the administrative knowledge, skills and attitudes which are required, although within a relatively protected arena.

To summarize, the Schwartz program does offer major administrative projects to some of its students (the direction of a division Center or branch; the establishment of a major training program, the establishment of an expensive and complicated community newspaper, etc.) and is offering sound administrative learning to its students.

Problematic Learning Areas

Four learning areas were identified in which problems exist relative to the attainment of the goals of the Schwartz program. While much learning is accomplished even in these areas, it was clear that insufficient attention was devoted to the identification and attainment of resources and budgeting, inter-agency relations, and higher level policy-making.

² Although knowledge, attitudes and skill areas were studied, we will report here only on knowledge and skill areas.

It was clear from the responses of both field instructors and students that not much attention was focused on knowledge about where and how the Centers' resources were obtained. Nor was there much attention paid to the development of a budget and the use of budgets in relation to services. There was very high agreement (84% of the students and 76% of the *madrichim*) that not much attention was paid to methods of getting financial support for the agency. This latter finding is a crucial one, especially in a nation in which the Center director's role has special fund-raising pressures.

Similarly, there was much agreement that not much attention was focused on knowledge about institutional relationships between the Centers and the "*Chevra*" (the Israel Corporation of Community Centers) and other local, regional and national organizations. Little attention was paid to methods for interagency coordination, nor was much effort focused upon methods for establishing constructive relations with other agencies and groups in the community.

There was an apparent pattern that significant numbers of students were focused primarily on internal Center organizational matters and not on the sensitive links between the Center and other agencies. This finding—supported by a number of factors—was also underscored by the lack of attention paid to skill in methods for explaining the Center's purposes and nature to individuals and groups and to the lack of focus on public relations tools, written documents (reports, newspaper articles, grant proposals, etc.). Further, not much attention was paid to methods for integrating community groups into the Center or otherwise appropriately serving them. Finally, a significant percentage of the students did not have learning experiences related to the Board of Directors or committees, nor learning about methods for working with them.

From the data, it was difficult to know exactly what was operating in regard to the entire area of assessment. From the point of

view that students were *internally* involved (with little attention focused on the entire Center as an organization and little attention placed on outside relationships), the students would not require methods for assessing community needs and priorities nor methods for assessing an organization, either their field placement organization or another organization. The fact that over 50% of the students paid much attention to assessing individuals and groups is related to the fact that many of their tasks were related to direct services. In regard to assessment in terms of evaluation, very little attention was paid in field instruction to either the methods for evaluation of staff members' performance on their jobs or methods for evaluating the effectiveness of Center services. Of course, the evaluation of the Center as an organization or significant parts of its services provides information directly related to the higher level functions of the Center and requires a higher level perspective.

Additional Knowledge and Skills Needed

Students and field instructors were asked to identify knowledge which had not been taught in class or field and which would be needed in order to do Center administration. The major areas identified by the students were financial administration, budgeting, resource attainment and distribution, and staff relations, including role allocations. The field instructors confirmed the need for attention to budgeting and relationships with senior staff and Board of Directors.

Here too the pattern repeated itself. The students desired more attention be paid to resources and budgeting, to external connections and to higher level involvement in the Centers. When asked about additional skills training needed, in general, the answers confirmed the earlier pattern focused on a need for skills related to the preparation, development and use of budgets, external, interorganizational relations, and involvement at higher levels of policy decision-making.

Conclusions and Implications

There was general agreement, both in the findings and in later exploratory and confirming discussions held with students and field instructors, that a significant group of students did not gain sufficient experience in resources and budgeting, higher level management and decision-making, interagency relationships, and assessment.

Essentially, what appears to be operating is a *two-tier field instruction system* with different learning experiences for more experienced students (50%) and students with little or no experience in community centers (50%). Thus, students with prior experience working with individuals, groups, and with earlier administrative responsibilities receive one type of field placement and instructional focus and those students without such experiences receive another. This differential has the positive effect of individualizing students, yet it also results in two types of education. One type serves those more experienced students; the other type serves the less experienced. Yet both groups are being prepared for the same tasks, higher level leadership in community centers.

There are a number of implications which can be drawn from this finding for us in the United States. One issue is whether or not and under what circumstances schools of social work and schools of Jewish communal Service should require prior experience in practice and/or administration? If common experiential backgrounds are not to be required, does an educational "happenstance" similar to the Israel experience occur in the United States? If so, do students who enter with different backgrounds and then receive qualitatively different learning experiences—both of degree and kind—enter the field of Jewish communal service in administrative roles with very different levels of preparation? Further, should programs which prepare for administration as a major field in graduate training insist on prior experience of significant proportions in direct practice in order to

avoid dual channeling into and through the educational program and into the employing agencies? There are, of course, both curriculum and organizational issues at stake in the answers to these questions on the part of the preparing schools, as well as implications for employing agencies.

Several options were recommended to the Schwartz program in order to deal with this issue: (1) require more direct service experience prior to entry into the program; (2) structural changes could be made in the program to provide enrichment, i.e., use of inter-semester breaks, mini-courses, "satellite" learning experiences where students are placed for particular learning needs in locations other than their field placements for limited periods of time, use of summers prior to the start of the program and prior to graduation from the program could be used. (3) Increase the time (number of days per week) in field instruction during the academic year and (4) alter the process and content emphases in class and field to compensate for the limitations found, including adding needed content through assignments, class learning experiences and/or in the field by field learning assignments and focus for teaching, etc.

Some other options were also identified: (5) alter the structure and the process for the inexperienced group only; (6) improve preparation of the field instructors, perhaps some of them are inadequately prepared in the learning areas identified, or they missed learning opportunities in some manner. Or, it is possible they make judgments about some students which preclude sufficient attention to the learning needs identified above while they pay more attention to specific direct service functions, internal to the Centers.

Another option is to focus on the improvement of the Centers so that limitations or idiosyncratic factors in the Centers may be minimized or worked around, such views of student roles, potential threats and problems for Center senior staff, the nature of policy decision-making and interorganizational rela-

tionships of community centers, etc.

In general, educational programs which seek to prepare higher level administrators encounter difficulties in obtaining for students learning which is sufficiently congruent with the tasks they are being prepared to do. This difficulty is closely related to the reasonable "self-protective" mechanisms which specific individuals and organizations must possess.

These limitations relate to the vulnerability of the agency and of the executive. But there has been a historic reluctance from the point of view of the agency to place students even in group work and casework where high risk was involved.³

One way of dealing with this problem in the United States is to form a team in areas of concern in which the executive is team leader and the student is the junior team member. This serves to protect the administrative areas about which the executive might have concern but also provides the student necessary learning.

The Israeli experiences reported above are from a particular context: a program and field instruction which prepare senior personnel for community centers. Since there is little other such formal administrative training for human services administration in Israel, no comparisons there are yet possible. There are generic human and administrative issues which are embedded in organizational life in all cultures, certain issues cut across national boundaries. The specific issues identified in Israel are generic issues, no doubt applicable in the United States programs which prepare for administration in human services and the employing agencies of Jewish communal services.

Two Points of View

Two points of view have been set forth about the issues we identified above. The first view is that prior experience in direct service

provision is important and required as a prelude to education and field instruction for administration. According to this view, students in human service administration need prior experience in direct service. The other major view is that social administration is a separate, discrete discipline which can prepare knowledgeable and skilled administrators without prior direct service experience. From this latter perspective, a good manager can lead an airline without having been an airline pilot. Similarly, an administrator of an agency which provides casework service, among other services, need not have been a caseworker.

Needed Research

Further research is clearly needed in the United States on the issues identified here. In Israel, the graduates of the Schwartz program move into jobs as agency directors and senior staff. In many ways they are required by the nature of their communities and their jobs to do everything. In what jobs in the United States, however, are persons trained as Jewish communal workers and social work administrators employed? What are the administrative demands of their jobs? How many are employed as executives and higher level administrators? The Israeli experience is somewhat more akin to the American Jewish smaller community and agency where executives have to function as generalists. Do persons trained as administrators assume leadership in smaller American Jewish agencies and communities, or in what roles in larger metropolitan areas? What experiences do American graduates have and what strengths and limitations of their training can be identified?

What is the work experience of MSW graduates from administration programs with and without prior experiences of various types? If there are differences in the United States similar to the Israeli experience, what should social work educational programs do about them and how should field and other learning differ for each group? What should be the different expectations by agencies when

³ This assessment is based on a personal discussion with Professor Beulah Rothman, Adelphi University, about the history of field instruction.

these differentially prepared graduates, some with more and some with less administrative knowledge and skill, enter employment and practice following graduation?

A proliferation of administration programs in schools of social work and the preparation of Jewish communal workers are attempting to meet the need for supervisory and

administrative workers. We all want these tasks to be done well and the graduates to be fully prepared for entry into professional service. It appears there is much to learn and consider for American Jewish social welfare agencies and the preparing schools based on our serendipitous findings about the preparation of administrative personnel in Israel.