Effective training programs and professional development initiatives are paramount to enhancing the capacity of employees in today’s human service sector. The sector, which includes both public human service agencies and non-governmental organizations, provides services to some of society’s most vulnerable individuals, families, and communities. Yet, the sector is financially constrained and presently experiencing increased demand, and organizations are hard-pressed to allocate funds toward training and professional development. For leaders and managers in the human services, ongoing training and development is essential to sustaining mission and impact; often impact starts with the effective leadership of an organization, which requires ample preparation and training. This paper explores the current challenges faced by the human service sector workforce, provides case examples of innovative training and professional development programs in the United States, and makes suggestions for future research and practice in the area of training and professional development in the human service sector.

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Introduction

Leadership and management training and professional development activities have become increasingly important for public and non-governmental (NGO) human service organizations. The current economic landscape has resulted in a surge in demand for human services across the United States (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2011), especially those critical services funded by government such as health care, job training and unemployment support, housing assistance, and so forth (The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, 2012; County Welfare Directors Association of California, 2009; Harms, 2008). Unfortunately, as rising public need and financial constraints make the effective management and cultivation of resources ever more important, anxieties grow over whether human service organizations can meet the growing demand for talent brought by overall sector growth and an approaching boom in executive-level retirements (Solomon & Sandahl, 2007; Tierney, 2006; Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006; Forbes Fund, 2004).

Regarding this problem, popularly referred to as the leadership deficit, Tierney (2006) estimates that American nonprofit organizations, for example, will need to recruit or develop 2.5 times the amount of currently employed senior managers over the next several years. While labor market forces may mitigate the anticipated crisis (Johnson, 2008), the recent economic climate is likely to have exacerbated a growing demand for qualified leadership in human services. Overall, there remains little disagreement among scholars and professionals that more must be done, especially given the ongoing economic challenges, to develop the next generation of leaders (Linscott, 2011; Jian, 2008).

Against this challenging backdrop, Koch (1999) and Preston (2005) suggest that leaders and managers in the human services space are in need of substantial managerial acumen to efficiently maintain an adequate level of service provision and protect social welfare systems from potential stress and decline. Training and professional development is widely recognized as an important component of preparing new leaders in the public and NGO human service sector (Linscott, 2011; Tierney, 2006). In addition to recruitment and management compensation reforms, scholars and organizations continually prioritize investment in existing leadership capacities through professional development activities, including structured continuing education programs (The Forbes Fund, 2004). A universal consensus has emerged within nearly all professions that academic degrees are only the beginning of learning that continues throughout professional life (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 1); managers and leaders must continually update their skills to remain effective at human service delivery.

This paper will briefly review some theory behind why management and leadership training and professional development is important, followed by examples of innovative and successful training programs at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, in the United States. The paper will conclude with some thoughts on further research and practice in the arena of human service management and leadership development.

The Importance of Human Service Management, Leadership Training, and Professional Development

There have been recent calls for human service professionals and agencies to substantially invest in professional development as the evolving nature of service functions, settings, and delivery methods, demand that leaders continually update their knowledge, skills, and abilities (Coyle & Carter, 2011). Moreover, with specific regard to challenges in management and leadership in the human services, the rising marketization of the public sector and the emergence of the New Public Management orientation (Dunlevey & Hood, 1994; Ferlie, 2002) have led to the infusion of business practices into the work of human service management and leadership, which, for many leaders, requires that they partake in continuing professional education or some other form of training to update their skill set. For most human service managers and leaders, the academic degree that they received was only the foundation of knowledge necessary to effectively achieve impact in their organizations (Germak & Donnelly, 2012).
Continuing education, training, and professional development is conceptualized as a lifelong learning process for professionals beyond academic degrees, which aims to improve skills and knowledge for specific occupations (Cantor, 2006). This form of learning can take the form of a workshop, lecture, training, or short-term non-degree certificate program. Such programs are considered a necessary part of professional career advancement (Stevens, 1996) and a mechanism to deliver improved outcomes for both organizations and service beneficiaries (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Unlike formal academic degree programs geared towards young students and novice professionals, professional development courses targeted to mid- to senior-level professionals may be the best hope at curbing short-term deficits in leadership capacities in the human service sector. Moreover, opportunities for training may be especially useful for aspiring leaders with backgrounds in social work, theology, and the humanities, many of whom have not benefited from prior management education but who make up a significant portion of current human service workforce (Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003). Overall, strengthening professional development programs can benefit the human service sector as a whole by helping to retain talented individuals in the field and preparing them to take on future roles of leadership.

However, the human service sector lacks experience with an established model of leadership development based on formal education (Johnson, 2009). Unlike other professions, there is an absence of support- have made several recommendations for the development of learning programs generally. Paton and colleagues (2007) advise that programs (1) focus on complexities of multilevel governance and blurred boundaries and relationships across complex inter-organizational settings; (2) combine generic and context-specific elements; (3) create structured progressions, focused particularly on early to mid-career development; (4) create challenging content that is applied and informed by psychology of adult development; (5) be part-time, “blended” and accredited. Other scholars have more generally recommended greater theoretical integration in NGO and philanthropic education made possible through concentrated and interdisciplinary liberal arts education focused on leadership (Burlingame, 2009).

Whether educational programs should consider organizational needs in developing learning content is debated in higher education generally; however, at least for management training and professional development programs, this focus seems to serve both students and employers well (Wilton, 2008). In fact, Harvey (2005) posits that educational programs should seek to integrate so-called employability into their missions because this is what both learners and employers seek from the arrangement. Given looming concerns about the replacement of departing leaders in the human service sector, attention to the leadership attributes most in demand by organizations is likely to lead to a more integrated system of talent development.

Examples of Effective Training and Professional Development Programs in Human Service Management and Leadership

The following are case examples of human service management and leadership programs designed and implemented by the Institute for Families at Rutgers School of Social Work, New Jersey (USA). The exception is the New Jersey Social Innovation Institute, which was a project hosted by Rutgers Business School; the Institute for Families was contracted to perform a training evaluation of this project. The training programs described below are relatively new or in progress. Therefore, described here are the plans for each of the programs.

Management Fellows Program!

On May 14 and 15, 2012, thirty-eight managers from the Department of Children and Families, local child welfare offices gathered to begin working on a unique capacity-building project that is focused specifically on developing and enhancing their management and leadership skills. With training modules based on the Human Services Leadership Competencies created by the Network for Social Work Management (see www.socialworkmanager.org for more information), the project will extend over 16 months. Utilizing various methods of delivery, participants, referred to as Management Fellows, will work throughout this training and professional development program on strengthening their personal and professional management and leadership skills in order to improve program outcomes for families being served by the Department of Children and Families.

To ensure that the program is highly relevant to their work, Management Fellows will participate in a

1 Supporting information provided by Dr. Shelly Wimpfheimer, director of the Management Fellows Program.
ing accreditation, laws and licensures regulating academic content and necessary educational attainment for management and leadership positions. Moreover, soon to be departing leaders rarely learned management in the classroom and therefore tend to place a premium on field experience over academic experience (Johnson, 2009; Non-Profit Quarterly, 2007).

Still, given emerging trends and challenges in the field, scholars variety of assessment activities throughout the project period. Initially they were asked to complete an assessment of the Network’s competencies and to rate the importance and relevance of the competencies to their own work. In addition, they completed a more detailed self-assessment based on these competencies and prepared an individual development plan detailing the areas in which they wished to focus to enhance their own professional development. Throughout the year, participants will receive individualized support and guidance from an executive coach and selected mentors in the field of organization management. Other assessments related to project content will be done throughout the year to ensure continued program quality.

Through a monthly lecture series, participants will be introduced to national experts in various aspects of organization management and will attend live and virtual discussions focused on the various competencies noted earlier. The goal is for each of the participants to apply the information they receive directly to their own work settings to improve program outcomes in real-time.

In addition to attending these training sessions, the Management Fellows will participate in group problem-solving activities, each becoming a member of a management cluster tasked with completing a capstone project, designed to solve a real and critical organizational challenge for the Department of Children and Families. The program will culminate with all participants presenting their capstone projects to the senior leadership of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families and then making oral presentations at the Annual Management Institute sponsored by the Network for Social Work Management. The 2013 Annual Management Institute, which is an international conference, will be held in Newark, New Jersey (USA).

Rutgers University School of Social Work’s Institute for Families will prepare a comprehensive evaluation of the entire training program, which will be submitted to Department of Children and Families leadership at the end of the project. All participants will receive the Certified Social Work Manager (CSWM) credential upon successful completion of the program. This credential is internationally-recognized and issued by the Network for Social Work Management.

Social Work Leadership Certificate Program

The Social Work Leadership Certificate Program is a professional development project currently in progress and sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers New Jersey Chapter (NASW-NJ) with the overall objective of developing chapter leadership and the prospects for emerging and future leaders. The program will consist of five day-long workshops and three one-hour online trainings. The topics for the day-long workshops include, “Leadership Skills for Social Workers,” “Communication and Professional Development for Leaders,” “Creating Diversity and Social Justice,” “Understanding Transparency in Management and Governance,” and “Managing Successful Partnerships and Collaborations.” In addition, participants will complete a personalized learning project to provide the opportunity to immediately use the concepts and skills they have learned.
The project is structured as follows. The Institute for Families provides the curricula to qualified instructors from the Network for Social Work Management (NSWM), which NASW-NJ will choose from the “Menu of Consultants” that was compiled by the Institute for Families in advance. These NSWM training consultants will moderate and deliver the selected workshops as well as all learning materials and audiovisual equipment for each workshop. NASW-NJ will retain the right to choose instructors and webinar leaders from the available NSWM consultants based on areas of interest for NASW-NJ, the consultants’ specific backgrounds, and budget priorities.

The in-person workshop series will be composed of five day-long workshops delivered over a six-hour time period including breaks and lunch conducted at a centralized training location. These training sessions are scheduled to occur monthly. The online component will consist of up to three one-hour webinars. Each workshop and webinar will feature one or more nationally recognized subject matter experts (NSWM consultants) well-versed in specific areas of leadership development.

The training program will accommodate up to 35 participants total. The Institute for Families will distribute an evaluation tool to collect evaluation information at the conclusion of each workshop. The analysis of the collected information will be provided to NASW-NJ and could be used to develop future training programs. In fact, the Institute for Families will compile a training manual for delivery to NASW-NJ at the end of the grant period, including all of the training curricula, based on all that was learned during the program. This manual could be used by NASW-NJ to train new leaders in the future. Finally, upon completion of each workshop, participants will receive a certificate of completion and continuing education hours will be issued.

Nonprofit and Public Management Certificate Program

This certificate program is designed to build and enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of current and future leaders of nonprofit and public human service organizations and to assist them in strategically managing the many challenges presented in today’s human services environment.

Inspired by the work of the Dean of the School of Social Work at Rutgers, Richard Edwards, as well as many experienced faculty and leaders, this certificate program covers the essential skills needed for the successful management of human service organizations, both public and private. Each workshop is a dynamic and interactive learning experience designed to give participants skills they can implement right away. The required workshops consist of the following themes followed by workshop sub-topics:

**Qualities of Leadership**
- Define leadership and examine different theories of leadership
- Describe the roles, functions, values and ethics of leadership
- Explain the required knowledge, skills and abilities of leadership
- Distinguish different styles of leadership
- Understand emotional intelligence

**Human Resources Management**
- Discuss strategies to recruit and retain the high quality workforce necessary to assure the success of organizations
- Identify ways to maintain a discrimination and harassment free environment
- Promote and enhance the skills and abilities of employees by creating systems and procedures that maximize productivity and lifelong learning
- Identify the key components of Human Resource Management (including recruitment, performance evaluation, benefits and compensation, equal opportunity employment and employee relations)
- Explore ethical issues in human resource management

**Management of Budgeting and Finance**
- Describe function and types of budgets
- Analyze spending plans
- Describe the importance of a business plan
- Evaluate key financial documents
- Identify essential internal controls necessary to assure the financial integrity of the organization

**Managing Change**
- Discuss the evolving social service marketplace and the impact of changes in public policy, demographics, economics, and other environmental factors on social service organizations
- Describe theories of organizational change and their applicability to social service organizations
- Analyze strategies for overcoming resistance to change
- Assess ways to implement change that are consistent with organizational mission, vision and values

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Supporting information provided by Doug Behan, director of Continuing Education at Rutgers School of Social Work.
Strategic Management

- Identify the benefits of strategic management as a tool for balancing competing values
- Differentiate between strategic planning and strategic management
- List the major elements of strategic management
- Construct alternative content-related and process outcomes for an organization.

The Nonprofit and Public Management Certificate Program also requires that participants complete three elective courses offered on a variety of management-related topics. Different from the other cohort-style programs described in this paper, this certificate can be self-paced. That is, a participant can take the required eight courses – five foundation and three electives – at times of his or her choosing. This provides flexibility for working professionals that seek to further their skills in management and leadership.

Social Innovation Institute

The New Jersey Social Innovation Institute is a training program for social innovators and enterprising non-profit organizations developing business plans and investment proposals for new social businesses enterprises. Special consideration will be given to participants that are significant job creators for New Jersey residents.

The objective of the first statewide Social Innovation Institute, launched in January 2012 and concluded in July 2012, was to empower new social entrepreneurs to develop their venture ideas. In January 2012, 15 teams of social entrepreneurs were selected to participate in the institute. These teams completed a six-month initiative that included social entrepreneurship training, mentoring and technical assistance in partnership with the Support Center for Nonprofit Management in New York and the New Jersey Department of Labor. Specifically, the initiative:

- Provided training, mentoring and technical assistance to participants
- Facilitated networking with potential investors, experienced business leaders and individual entrepreneurs who were interested in engaging in social venture initiatives in New Jersey
- Developed actionable business plans and investment proposals for local and national foundations and social investors
- Supported the efforts of nonprofit organizations and social entrepreneurs who were actively engaged in social and environmental problem solving through enterprise especially through job creation.

After the training period, further consulting and assistance has been provided by business student teams at Rutgers Business School and from volunteers from local corporations.

Conclusion

The examples of training and professional development programs highlighted above are merely a small sample of the various ways in which capacity can be built in the human service sector. At present, these programs are effective in attracting the attention of managers and leaders seeking professional development opportunities in the human service field. However, importantly, the effectiveness of these trainings has yet to be determined. It will be necessary to conduct rigorous evaluations of these training programs in order to suggest that these training methods are effective. Nonetheless, there is a dearth of professional development opportunities for human service managers and leaders, and these programs represent a step in the right direction. Further work in developing similar programs in countries outside of the United States is suggested. In doing so, cross-cultural evaluation and comparison will add value to the research base in human service management and leadership development.

References

3Supporting information provided by Dr. Jeffrey Robinson, NJSII director and assistant professor at Rutgers Business School- Newark and New Brunswick.


