

**FIELD TEST AND ASSESSMENT
OF A
CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
FOR ADMINISTRATORS OF VOLUNTEERS**

by

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The Evolution of Volunteer Administration as a Field of Professional Practice

An estimated 45,000 persons are employed as administrators of volunteer programs (Gowdey, Cooper & Scheier, 1976). Swelling the ranks of volunteer leadership are the uncounted hundreds of thousands utilizing similar skills to lead citizen action groups and volunteer membership organizations without receiving a salary for their efforts. In spite of this sizable work force, the identification of these persons as a distinct occupational group is a more recent phenomenon. It was not until 1976 that the United States 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 ladder was adopted which involves all the duties of personnel administration, as well as tasks in public relations and program development (Career Lattice, 1974).

The process of establishing an occupational group as an acknowledged field of social practice is neither an easy nor a unique undertaking. Entry into the Dictionary of Occupational Titles is only one step. Malcolm Knowles, a scholar in the fields of recreation, social work and adult education, was among those who wrestled with the problems of shepherding each of these disciplines to an adequate level of acknowledgement and acceptance by other older and more established disciplines. As a result of his efforts, Knowles (1973) postulated six phases that appear to be observable in the development of new fields of social practice and the kinds of research appropriate to each phase.

Prior to identifying the phases, it is important to share the impetus for his work.

During my career I have been associated with three emerging fields of social practice--recreation, social work, and adult education. And I have experienced criticism being leveled at each of them by scholars of older disciplines for the naivete of their research. My first reactions to these criticisms were a combination of guilt feelings and defensiveness, which in turn were acted out in scapegoating. It was true that research in "my field" was mostly descriptive, with heavy emphasis on surveys, case studies, and reports of artistic experience; and it **ought** to be more analytical and experimental (guilt feeling). But we are pioneers who are so busy building a new field that we don't have the time to engage in more scientific research (defensiveness). Besides, it is really the fault of the older disciplines, especially psychology and sociology, that our research is in the state it is--they haven't shown enough interest in our field to bring their discipline to bear on it (scapegoating).

These pathological reactions began changing to a reaction of curiosity as I was working on my doctoral dissertation on a history of the adult education movement in the United States. I began seeing the growth of a field of social practice as a genetic process which proceeds as if by natural law according to an organically-determined sequence of phases of development. It struck me that a field of social practice may have developmental needs that change through the stages of maturation--and produce developmental tasks--as does any other organism.... My response to these stimuli has been to construct a speculative theory of sequential research needs in evolving disciplines of social practice. (Knowles, 1973, pp. 298-299)

The multiplicity of feelings expressed by Knowles is familiar to the practitioner in volunteerism.

Administrators of volunteers are an occupational group seeking professionalization and attempting to secure acceptance from other more established occupational groups and disciplines. In their book By the People: A History of Americans as Volunteers, Ellis and Noyes (1978) speak to this trend.

Another major development in volunteerism is the recent concept of it as a distinct field; even the word "volunteerism" is evidence of this new focus. There is now an ever-growing body of knowledge and expertise about volunteers which is transmitted and expanded by academic courses and a variety of associations. Leadership of volunteers, increasingly handled by salaried Directors of Volunteers, has even gained the status of inclusion in the latest Directory of Occupational Titles. Research into the nature and scope of volunteering has become more sophisticated, and new articles and books appear continuously. In fact, this climate of interest and discovery directly influenced the writing of this book.

Leaders of volunteers, locally and across the nation, are recognizing their common purpose and needs. To foster communication and share approaches, they have formed a wide range of organizations. Such

organizations can have one of three purposes: to bring together directors of volunteers working in the same field; to involve a variety of directors of volunteers, regardless of specific field; to assist volunteer programs with information and supportive services. Each type of organization occurs on local, state, and national levels....

All associations in volunteerism share concern about setting standards and achieving the maximum potential of volunteers. An important step in this process is to define the role and responsibilities of the leader--or director--of volunteers. Debate continues over the kind of educational preparation appropriate for those in this position, and over the issues of salary and career ladders. But there is substantial agreement that, whoever provides the leadership, every director of volunteers must:

- 1) identify and make use of each volunteer's interests and abilities;
- 2) develop tasks that are truly productive and have meaningful impact on the issues being addressed;
- 3) match qualified volunteers to tasks appropriate for them;
- 4) make available orientation and training opportunities to insure the effectiveness of active volunteers;
- 5) involve a broad base of volunteers representative of the surrounding community;
- 6) establish liaison with other volunteer programs, through both specific and general organizations;
- 7) advocate the value of and the need for volunteer participation in all facets of society.

The director of volunteers who successfully adheres to these principles affirms the modern philosophy of volunteerism. This philosophy results in volunteers who are respected, not exploited; who are contributors, not meddlers; and who are the rule, not the exception. (pp. 264, 265, 267)

This excerpt from By the People speaks to three of Knowles' (1973) phases. Labeling the first phase as "Definition of the Field," Knowles contends that practitioners begin asking questions like, "Who else is doing this kind of thing? How many are there?... What, exactly, are they doing and how?... What are their problems and concerns?... In what directions are they moving?" (p. 299). To answer these questions, the field engages in descriptive research, surveys, case studies, demographic profiles and the like.

The second phase, "Differentiation of the Field," occurs when the group becomes fairly secure about its self-identity. At this point, the field begins to experience a need to differentiate itself from other fields of social practice and

to clarify its relationships with them. Among the questions to be answered in this phase are,

What unique social needs is it meeting that can't be met equally well by established fields? What right does it have to claim special resources for itself? What specialized training or talents are required to engage in its field of social practice? (Knowles, 1973, p. 300).

Research modes include comparative studies delineating roles and technologies between and among the fields of practice, exploratory studies probing boundaries, and analysis of social needs.

Once a field is clearly defined and differentiated, it enters into the third phase of "Standard Setting." Concerned with problems of control, it begins to ask and seek answers for questions such as, "What should be the minimum of standards of practice?.... What procedures should be used for measuring its effectiveness?.... How should training institutions be accredited and practitioners be certified?" (Knowles, 1973, p. 300). Answers to these questions are sought through normative-descriptive research, evaluative studies and instrumental research providing improved tools and procedures of measurement.

Phases 4 through 6 are respectively "Technological Refinement," "Respectability and Justification" and "Understanding of the Dynamics of the Field." Knowles concludes his discourse with two qualifications. First, that it may be functional for a field to be involved in two or three adjacent phases of development simultaneously. Second, that the process of developing as a field of social practice tends to be more of a spiral than a linear function. A field may move through all six phases the first time in a fairly superficial way, then repeat the cycle in a more in-depth fashion.

While the titles to articles and books published in the field of volunteerism could be collected to justify at least one complete, but superficial, cycle through the six phases, current attention seems to focus on the first three phases. Descriptive research describing the field and charting its development

has surfaced over the last ten years. A census study in 1974, commissioned by ACTION, the Federal agency serving as the United States Government's branch to support volunteerism, documented that 37 million Americans over the age of eighteen were volunteering at the time of the survey conducted by the Census Bureau. Based on that survey, Wolozin (1976) estimated the monetary value of volunteer services contributed by Americans to more than \$33.9 billion. More recently, the Independent Sector commissioned the Gallup Organization (1981) to poll the U.S. population about its extent of volunteer activity. Among the significant findings was the fact that 52% of the American adult population, and a slightly higher percentage of teenagers (53%) volunteered between March, 1980, and March, 1981.

Based on a modest survey, NICOV, the National Information Center on Volunteerism now merged with VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement, drew the following demographic profile of the administrator of volunteers.

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)

Differentiation of the field may be explored in part by examining representative titles of articles appearing in professional journals. (All titles taken from issues of Volunteer Administration, 1977, 1978, and The Journal of Voluntary Action Research, 1976-1978.). Comparative studies include articles examining volunteerism in other countries: "Volunteering in Israel"; "Towards a Canadian Policy of Voluntarism"; and "Australia: the Impressions of a Friend." The examination of volunteerism in varying socio-economic settings is seen in

the following titles: "Citizen Participation in Rural Community Development"; "Instrumental and Expressive Voluntary Organizations Among Black West Indian Immigrants in New York." Attitudinal comparison studies are also evident: "MSW Attitudes Toward Direct Service Volunteers"; "The Youthful Volunteer in the Seventies: A Tarnished Vision." Special approaches to problems germane to the field of volunteer services administration are demonstrated by the titles of articles appearing in Volunteer Administration in 1977 and 1978: "Administration of the Volunteer Teacher"; "A Primer on Insurance for Volunteers"; and "The Application of Cost-Benefit Analysis to Volunteer Programs." Educational differentiation was the subject of Rehnborg's (1979) study examining eight distinct surveys of the learning needs of the practitioner.

Standard setting, the third phase of development, reflects the central subject of this dissertation. Other indicators demonstrating attention to this concern include Standards and Guidelines for the Field of Volunteers (Jacobson, 1978) and the Basic Feedback System (Reigel, 1977), a tool designed to measure agency receptivity to volunteers. The problem of staff resistance to volunteers has been examined by Woog (1979) through an attitudinal survey instrument.

Sharing Knowles' (1973) evolutionary approach to the development of a field of social practice is Houle (1980). Positing a dynamic view, Houle maintains that all occupational groups, even law and medicine, are engaged in the continuing process of professionalization. Fourteen characteristics broadly associated with the professionalization process are identified. The first and most dominant characteristic of a professionalizing vocation is the conceptual task concerned with clarifying its defining function or functions. The next four characteristics fall under the broad heading of performance characteristics: "mastery of theoretical knowledge" (p. 40); "capacity to solve problem" (p. 42); "use of practical knowledge" (p. 45); and "self-enhancement (of the professional)"

(p. 47). Collective identity characteristics subsume the remaining tenets: "formal training" (p. 51); "credentialing" (p. 54); "creation of a subculture" (p. 57); "legal reinforcement" (p. 59); "public acceptance" (p. 61); "ethical practice" (p. 63); "penalties" (p. 66); "relations to other vocations" (p. 67); and "relations to users of service" (p. 70).

Each characteristic is involved in the professionalizing process, yet none is uniquely related to it. Likewise none of these characteristics can every be fully and finally achieved, eliminating the perception of a race to the finish line of professional accomplishment. It should be noted, however, that as an occupational group raises the level of its performance of the various characteristics, its right to call itself a profession increases, as does its right to be viewed by a society as a profession. Without substantial strides towards the accomplishment of a number of the characteristics, professional self-assurance cannot be justified nor can social approval be assured. (Houle, 1980)

Based on Houle's 14 characteristics, the professionalization of the occupation of volunteer administration is clearly embryonic. The certification program field tested in this study speaks to several of these characteristics. Clearly a form of credentialing, the program requires the use of practical knowledge and the capacity to solve problems within the field of practice. It lends itself to the development of a subculture and encourages knowledge and application of the ethical code developed by the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA). The type of thoughtful reflection required in the completion of the portfolio, the central document of the certification process, should help in developing the type of practitioner who will assist in moving the field along dimensions such as a thoughtful analysis of its relations to other vocations and users of service. While not a direct characteristic, the certification advisement process encourages the type of synergistic relationship

between institutions of higher education and the professional association encouraged by Houle (1980).

No matter how the ideal of professionalism is described, it is never achieved universally. The needs of society require that every professionalizing occupation become better than it is, and at least part of the effort it must exert is the improvement of its patterns of lifelong learning. A dynamic concept of professionalization offers educators both the opportunity and the challenge to use active principles of learning to help achieve the basic aims of the group with which they work. They become not merely reinforcers of the status quo, as they so often are now, but the colleagues of all who work to further the power and the responsibility of the vocation. They serve but are not subservient. (pp. 30, 31)

Volunteerism as a field of social practice and volunteer administrators as a professionalizing occupational group, are clearly emerging and evolving. The concluding pages of By the People (Ellis & Noyes, 1978) feature this development.

It has already been noted that volunteerism is emerging as a profession. This professionalization has many benefits as directors of volunteers learn to accomplish program goals with greater effectiveness. Their skilled leadership will do much to combat negative stereotypes and to maximize the potential of volunteer involvement. However, there are dangers inherent in creating a profession in this field, largely because this process may entail the setting of restrictive boundaries.

Because the social service sector presently has the highest proportion of paid directors of volunteers, the push towards "professionalization" has been led by those directors. Unfortunately, social welfare directors of volunteers often overlook their close and continued connection to volunteerism in other fields. They perpetuate the stereotype of volunteering as only client-oriented and as an extension of social work. In the years ahead, social welfare volunteer leaders will have to recognize and collaborate with their counterparts in other volunteer disciplines.

Similarly, this need for collaboration extends to academic courses in volunteer program management. The uniqueness of directing volunteers is that all such leaders must be doubly qualified: they must be skilled in the general techniques of working with volunteers regardless of field, and they must have expertise in the specific field in which they coordinate volunteers. Coursework in volunteerism must reflect its interdisciplinary nature....

While it is critical to set standards for being a director of volunteers, it is just as critical not to violate the essential spirit of volunteerism. The danger is that, in the struggle to gain recognition and status from other professions, volunteerism could begin to use salary as one criteria

for "certification" in its profession. This would be ironic as well as tragic, for it would exclude the many trained and competent directors of volunteers who happen still to be **volunteers**. Pharmacists are pharmacists, teachers are teachers, regardless of whether or not they receive payment for the job done. As a field, volunteerism must take the lead in identifying--and welcoming--individuals into its ranks because of the jobs they do, not because they are paid....

History teaches that Americans care enough to get involved. As volunteers they identify problems, seek solutions and, above all, act. This is the legacy and the future of participatory democracy, or rather "initiatory democracy" which:

...makes for persistence and incisiveness. It forces the asking of the important questions and the pursuit of the pertinent inquiries. It develops an inner reserve that refuses to give up and that thinks of ways for causes to be continually strengthened for sustained breakthroughs.

The question should not be whether or not volunteering is good or bad, but rather how and when it can be applied. "Volunteerism is not primarily one philosophy against all others. Volunteerism is an instrument which can be used in the service of any philosophy." It is a **method** of achieving goals, of channeling the efforts of citizens toward desired ends. As such, citizen volunteers are "social capital," perhaps the most valuable natural resource the country has. The challenge is to use this resource fully, mobilizing the human energy of volunteering to shape our collective future. (pp. 271, 272, 273)

Administrators of volunteers are a professionalizing occupational group. Organizations such as the Association for Volunteer Administration, the group sponsoring the certification program, have been actively assisting the field in meeting the challenges it faces.

History and Development of the Association for Volunteer Administration

The origins of the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) date back to 1958. It was during that year that a group of administrators of volunteer programs from mental health/mental retardation facilities convened in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Kansas City, Missouri. Twenty-two volunteer directors representing 12 states met:

- a) to explore methods of establishing channels of communication for interstate exchange of information regarding volunteer services in mental hospitals; and,

- b) to decide whether the group wished to set a pattern of meeting periodically under the auspices of one of the national health or welfare organizations. (AAVSC, 1958, p. 1)

Subsequently, in 1961, a constitution and bylaws were adopted forming the American Association of Volunteer Services Coordinators (AAVSC) (Buckley, 1970).

Considerable change characterized the second decade of the Association's history. Recognizing the definite need "...for one effective national organization which would represent all the individuals who are currently employed for the purposes of directing or coordinating the services of volunteers" (AAVSC, 1969, p. 2), AAVSC broadened its base for potential membership. In 1969, salaried coordinators of volunteer programs from all occupational settings, not just the mental health field, became eligible to join.

In recognition of its growing international constituency, the organization changed its name. Dropping "American" from its name, AAVSC became The Association for Administration of Volunteer Services (AAVS). A revised purpose was adopted at the same time.

The purpose of this corporation shall be to promote volunteer services administration as a profession; to provide the exchange of knowledge and experience in the creative use of volunteer services; and to promote professional education and development. (AAVS, 1975, p. 3)

Perhaps more significant than the change of name was the revision of the membership statute. Following a volatile debate, the ranks of active membership were expanded to include nonsalaried, as well as salaried administrators, retired persons, educators, and researchers in the field of volunteer administration. Yet, in spite of each of these changes, membership remained at a stable 400 and 500 persons. In 1975, on the eve of a financially necessary dues increase from \$35 to \$50, a record membership of 700 plus persons was achieved.

Although solvent, the growth and development of the AAVS could hardly be considered stupendous during its first 15 years. Annual meetings were held, registrations of 200 persons were considered respectable. A newsletter was published monthly. Apart from two meetings annually, each member of the Board of Directors operated from his or her home, as funds did not permit a central office with salaried staff.

AAVS was not alone in its fledgling state championing the cause of volunteerism and promoting the development of its leadership. Multiple national organizations, each carving out some section of the volunteerism pie, existed. The Association of Volunteer Bureaus represented the concerns of the leadership of volunteer clearinghouses and voluntary action centers. The Association of Voluntary Action Scholars provided an opportunity for educators interested in voluntary organizations to coalesce. NICOV, the National Information Center on Volunteerism, initially focusing on criminal justice volunteerism, later broadened its scope to become a national information center and publication house for the field. NSVP, the National School Volunteer Program, focused on volunteer opportunities and concerns within education. NAVCJ, the National Association of Volunteers in Criminal Justice, fulfilled the intent of its name by concentrating on volunteering performed within the broad area of adult and juvenile justice. VITA, Volunteers in Technical Assistance, sent trained persons to all parts of the world to provide volunteer help on technological projects.

During the Nixon Administration, ACTION, the Federal agency serving as the governmental arm supporting volunteerism, came into existence. To balance the Federal involvement in volunteerism, private sector initiative was encouraged to create NCVA, the National Center for Voluntary Action. With George Romney as its chairperson, NCVA focused on technical assistance in the form of training programs, the publication of a magazine and information

exchange. NCVA was later to merge with NICOV and become VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement (NCCI).

This multiplicity of national organizations, with an underlying basis in volunteerism and with various and overlapping purposes, presented the backdrop for the formation of the Alliance for Volunteerism. Spearheaded by Ivan Scheier, a forerunner in the field and founder of NICOV, the Alliance was formed in 1975 through the generous support of the Lilly Endowment, Inc. AAVS, along with each of the groups already listed, as well as Call for Action and several volunteer service organizations, including the Association of Junior Leagues, the National Council of Jewish Women, Church Women United and National Council of Negro Women, National Black United Fund, and others, became the nucleus of the Alliance for Volunteerism ("Alliance for Volunteerism," n.d.).

Membership in the Alliance during its four years of funded existence proved pivotal to AAVS. With the president (or his/her representative) of each member organization serving on the Board of Directors of the Alliance, the various groups supporting and promoting volunteerism came face to face in an organized, predictable and directed fashion. Through Alliance support, AAVS was able to open and staff, with an executive secretary, a national administrative office headquartered in Boulder, Colorado. Similar support given to other member groups enabled several organizations to co-locate in Boulder with AAVS. The resulting dialogue led to cooperative conferencing, joint projects and fiscal savings through shared office services. With basic existence insured and major clerical duties removed from the shoulders of the Executive Committee of AAVS, the Association was able to seriously examine its programs, its structure, and its overall effectiveness.

While not the subject of this particular discourse, it is worth noting that the existence of the Alliance allowed the member organizations to speak with a

more unified and strengthened voice. Through the Alliance, it became possible to tackle important public policy issues and begin to navigate the Federal legislative system.

"Volunteerism" in the name of the Alliance was a significant breakthrough. While still not recognized by the dictionary, the term connotes "all that is done by volunteers" (Ellis & Noyes, 1978, p. 11). The utilization of the word by a national umbrella organization helped to focus attention to the field itself, as opposed to the cause for which service is delivered, the frequent reference point for volunteerism in the eyes of the public.

In other words, it is natural for people to focus on the purpose for which they volunteer, be it to fight cancer, to promote research against birth defects or to help the elderly. Their attention centers on their cause and its organization, be it a voluntary organization such as the American Cancer Society, a public structure such as a county hospital, or an informal structure such as a neighborhood crime watch group. While the cause may be the critical ingredient governing involvement, it masks the nature and form of the involvement, that of volunteering. The use of the term volunteerism in the title of the Alliance served to highlight the common denominator between the organizations it coalesced and to draw the term to greater public attention.

Association with the Alliance afforded AVA the opportunity to again reorder its structure and name. In October of 1979, AAVSC/AAVS became the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA). In an effort to ensure a policy making structure, the Board of Directors was reduced from 28 to 14 persons. The four standing committees reflect the priorities of the Association: Professional Development focusing on educational concerns, professional standards, certification and international exchange; Public Information responsible for publication of the newsletter, journal, and public relations; Public

Policy charged with keeping membership informed of legislation and cogent public policy issues; Resource Development, with a focus on securing funds and other resources to achieve the purpose of the Association (AVA, 1979).

Support from the C.S. Mott Foundation in 1980 enabled AVA to develop a marketing campaign; revise its public relations materials, its membership benefits package; and establish a program whereby other organizations with compatible purposes can affiliate. As a result of these efforts, AVA has over 1000 individual members and 13 affiliate group members (Martin, 1982). AVA's affiliate organizations include several metropolitan and state level organizations, as well as national groups such as the American Red Cross, the National Council of Jewish Women, Literacy Volunteers of America, Association of Junior Leagues, Inc., and National Association of Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Directors. The opening paragraphs in the Association's promotional brochure summarize the concerns of AVA:

The Association for Volunteer Administration is the professional association for those working in the field of volunteer management who want to shape the future of volunteerism, develop their professional skills, and further their careers. AVA is open to both salaried and nonsalaried professionals.

AVA's international membership of program administrators, agency executives, educators, researchers, consultants, trainers, and authors enjoy the support of like-minded professionals who share common concerns while broadening their professional base of knowledge through AVA workshops, conferences, and programs.

The association provides for its members many programs on the local, regional and national level for professional development, subscriptions to the leading publications in the field, group insurance programs, and professional certification opportunities. AVA membership offers you the opportunity to work with other leaders in the field to help in the building of the profession of volunteer administration. (AVA, 1981, p.1)

Evolution of Certification within AVA

The concern for standards was inaugurated early in the history of AVA. With a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, several meetings and workshops were held between 1960 and 1963 "to explore the possibilities and