THE INVOLVEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS IN SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEMS*

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Those who advocate involvement of volunteers in delivering direct services to clients or patients should be able to answer two basic questions:

1. Why should volunteers participate in the delivery of social services?
2. How could volunteers be incorporated in the present service systems?

I will attempt to deal with both these questions, though I will emphasize the second by discussing the way to successfully incorporate the volunteer in the service delivery of an educational institution.

The question "Why volunteers?" is traditionally being answered by using ideological arguments, i.e., volunteers represent the community, or volunteers represent involvement of lay people in decision making, which imply that their use should be encouraged in a democratic society. These arguments pertain to society's ideals, however, and can rarely convince agency directors whose decisions whether or not to use volunteers are influenced much more by what is good for their agencies and their clients rather than by what is good for society at large. Thus, in any discussion of the need for volunteers, one has to be able to show that volunteers are an asset not only to society, but to the agency, also, in that their involvement is likely to give the clients improved service.

In a modern welfare state, social services are provided mostly by professionals, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, etc., who work in bureaucratic organizations. A "professional" is a person who has gone through specialized training in a specific field and who uses scientific knowledge and objective tools as a basis for diagnosis of his clients' problems and for intervention. Thus, a professional is, by definition, an expert in one field and not in others who uses his knowledge and skill to treat that aspect of the client's problem which he knows best. Other aspects are treated by other professionals who may or may not work in the same organization.

A "bureaucratic organization" is an organizational structure that is characterized by a hierarchy of functions and centralized control. Such a structure tends to use a legalistic approach in dealing with problems: The organization is set to deal with certain problems and not with others; decisions about the type of service available are made at the top and funneled down, so as to leave the officials at the lower part of the organization with the

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task of classifying people and fitting them into predetermined solutions, with little room for maneuverability.

Litwak (1968) suggests that such an organizational structure is best used in dealing with technical problems of large scale investment. When applied to dealings with human problems, however, such a structure can have dehumanizing effects on the service recipients, effects which often undermine the very goal of the organization. To mention just a few of these effects:

1. Human services are fragmented into categories which are arbitrary so as to fit organizational or professional criteria, whereas, as we know, human problems are rarely restricted to any particular aspect: sick people are likely to have economic, emotional and family problems, too.

2. In order to seek service, human beings have to be first categorized as "patients, "clients," "inmates," etc., categories that imply certain behaviorial expectations which often carry with them a life-long stigma.

3. A human service provided through a bureaucratic structure tends to be uni-directional---service is given or administered by the official to the client, who is a passive recipient; yet, paradoxically, we know that in order to be helped, to grow, to develop, the recipient has to participate actively in the process.

It is very easy to criticize bureaucratic structures on account of their dehumanizing effects. The name of Franz Kafka is frequently mentioned in this context. However, if one takes into consideration the political realities involved, it is much more difficult to suggest alternative structures that will combine the benefits of central planning and equality in treatment with a high degree of autonomy on the local level which permits more personal and human treatment of each client.

If one is to be realistic, then, the question in the short run is not "How to replace the bureaucratic structure in delivering social services," but rather "How to make the existing system more human." The use of volunteers is often suggested as one way to achieve that goal. That does not mean that the use of volunteers is the only way to humanize a bureaucratic system. Nor does it mean that any use of volunteers automatically humanizes such a system. There are cases where volunteers are used as a facade for human practices by staff (Stanton, 1970).

Nevertheless, in the overall framework of service delivery, the volunteer represents that element which does not categorize the service recipient, does not measure him according to scientific, pseudo-scientific or bureaucratic criteria, does not tell him what to do and what not to do, but does relate to him on a symmetrical rather than an asymmetrical basis. From the recipient's perspective, this means that the service includes somebody who is not a part of the organization, somebody who cares little about grades or blood pressure, but who is interested in the recipient as an individual and who attempts to see things from his subjective perspective. There is no doubt that such an element is needed in the processes of rehabilitation of a sick person, re-adjustment to the community of an ex-prisoner, or progress of a student with learning problems.

To summarize, then, to the question "Why volunteers?" I would answer: To accentuate, extend and deepen the human dimension of the social service delivery system.

This brings us to our second major question: "How could volunteers best be involved in the existing service systems in order to fulfill this humanizing function? This is an important issue, because while it is agreed that involvement of volunteers could give the service an additional dimension, many experts would usually add that this is more easily said than done and that practical problems make such involvement impossible.

According to this line of thought, there is a major incompatibility between the concepts "volunteer" and "bureaucratic organization," as we understand them. Bureaucratic

systems require a regular and orderly attendance of their workers as well as a long-term commitment to work in the system in order to create stability in service delivery. For accepting such conditions, the workers are compensated by a variety of economic rewards. But long-term commitments and economic rewards are foreign to volunteer work which is based on the idea that people work out of their own free will, without economic compensation. According to that logic, there is no room for volunteers in bureaucratic systems as one cannot be sure that they will come to work regularly since they do not receive a salary, whereas regular attendance by workers is a condition for their continued employemnt.

The major mistake in this line of thought is the implicit assumption that because volunteer work brings no economic rewards to the volunteer, it is an activity which does not entail any rewards at all; that because the bureaucratic system has nothing to offer to the volunteer for his work, it therefore cannot assure his participation over a long period. This mistake has to do, then, with the tendency to associate the term "volunteer" with concepts like "self-sacrifice," "altruism," etc.

In my view, many of the misunderstandings and disappointments concerning volunteer work stem from the fact that we fail to recognize or are reluctant to admit that people who volunteer on a regular basis for an extended period are simply doing something which they enjoy doing. In other words, they are engaged in goal-directed behavior which involves an exchange: For their time and energy they receive in return a variety of personal benefits which they value. It will be argued later that such a view of volunteers could become a possible basis for utilization of volunteers in service delivery systems. Before we can do that, it is important that we distinguish between two kinds of volunteer work and identify the rewards which volunteers expect from their work.

To volunteer means to do something out of one's own free will and for no material rewards. While this definition holds for all types of volunteer involvement, we do distinguish between a person who volunteers to help another person on a one-time basis, and a person who volunteers every week in the same organization for an extended period. An example of the first would be someone who is driving on the highway, sees a stranded motorist, stops, and volunteers to help him. The person is a stranger to him, he does not know if he will ever see him again; his decision to help is spontaneous and the time for the decision is very short. When the driver decides to stop, he does not envisage any personal benefits accruing from his action. His decision to stop is based instead on his conception of human solidarity. Thus, once he extends his help, he probably gains satisfaction from helping another human being in need, but the satisfaction is a result of his deed and not the motivating factor behind it.

The same dynamic takes place on the battleground when a soldier volunteers to perform a dangerous task beyond the call of duty, even to the point of risking his own life. For example, a soldier may jump into a burning tank to save the life of a wounded friend who cannot get out. Such a decision, again, is a spontaneous one and is rarely influenced by the expectation to get a "purple heart" for the resultant action. It comes at the spur of the moment, the situation calls for it, and there is little time to weigh the risks versus the benefits or the opportunity will be missed.

A totally different dynamic takes place when a person volunteers regularly for an extended period at the same organization. Although still an act which is performed out of free will and for no material rewards, the decision to volunteer continuously is not made under pressure of time and situation, and it is not a spontaneous decision. It involves weighing the alternatives available to the volunteer at the time and deciding which one is the most attractive, or, in other words, deciding which alternative will provide him the most rewards that are valuable to him.

The volunteer, then, in this context, is not someone who is doing favors for people, nor is he sacrificing himself or his time; he is simply engaged in work which he has the option of stopping at any point. He will no doubt do so if his work becomes unattractive or less attractive to him, or if other more attractive options open up elsewhere.

The idea that volunteer work involves an element of exchange, from which the volunteer is personally benefitting and is not a uni-directional act, has been demonstrated by various researchers. Sills (1957), in his famous study of volunteers in the Polio Foundation, categorizes volunteers' motivations into self- and other-oriented and clearly illustrates that people have both kinds of motivations when they volunteer. This basic categorization has also been used by other researchers both in the U.S. and in other countries, who have obtained results similar to Sills'. In a recent study in Israel, for example, researchers demonstrated that people have both altruistic and personal reasons for volunteering. More significantly, they found that people who claimed they have personal reasons in addition to the altruistic ones devote more time to their volunteer work than those who claim only altruistic ones (Peress and Liss, 1975).

The question, then, is: "What are the rewards volunteers expect to receive from their work?" Knowledge in this area is not well developed, although from what is known it is clear that the answer cannot be universal because different people expect different rewards for doing volunteer work continuously. As it is impossible to categorize people on an individual basis, we will deal here with four groups and with the rewards that volunteers who belong to these groups are likely to expect. The groups are: (1) Young Volunteers, (2) Retired Persons, (3) Women, and (4) Ex-patients or Ex-clients.

1. Young Volunteers

Various studies show that young people see involvement in volunteer work in terms of the process of maturing and growing up. It is an activity that gives them an opportunity to take responsibilities, to satisfy their curiosity, to be exposed to a new aspect of life, and to broaden their horizons. Some young people relate their volunteer work to the process of career testing. It gives them an opportunity to be exposed to and to try out in an uncommitted way the role which they might consider as a possible career. A successful volunteer experience might thus influence the decision concerning a specific career.

Rewards young people expect from their volunteer involvement, then, will probably be in terms of a meaningful assignment, an opportunity to see how what they are doing relates to other aspects of the service the agency provides, and a chance to ask questions and to share problems with others in a similar situation to their own and with professional staff.

2. Retired Persons

Retired people tend to see volunteer work as a substitute for paid work. Volunteer work gives the retired person an opportunity to combat the feelings of dependence and loneliness that often accompany the process of disengagement from work. Through volunteering, the elderly person proves both to himself and to society his self-worth and the fact that he is not only receiving from society but also contributing to it. This feeling of self-worth, which comes through participation in a creative activity, is an important element in keeping the retired person healthy both physically and mentally in a world that tends to show him that those who do not work are useless.

Therefore, the main rewards the retired person expects would be in terms of the chance to work and be productive along with the opportunity for social contacts that volunteer work gives him. The work must be meaningful, however, and the volunteer expects to see how what he does is related to what others in the agency do.

3. Women

Women with school aged or older children usually constitute the majority of the volunteer force in a society. Traditionally, in the U.S. volunteers from this group are fulfilling a social expectation. To the women themselves, a volunteer job provides an opportunity for social contacts with other people, a chance to meet new people, and, indirectly, a way to help the husband's business or career. This type of volunteer work for women has lately been bitterly attacked by the Feminist Movement in the U.S. which claims that it is exploiting women and leaves them in a subordinate position to men. Without getting involved in this argument, I would suggest that volunteer work for women at that stage of their lives does seem to mean, in addition to what was mentioned earlier, an opportunity to do something different from their routine work, to search for status. For women who have worked in the past and then stopped for a while, voluntarism provides an opportunity to get back gradually into the labor force, to learn a new skill, and, in some cases, to test a new projected career.

The rewards women tend to expect from their volunteer work, then, in addition to the social aspects of the job, are in terms of a task which represents a personal challenge through which they can express their individuality.

4. Ex-Service Recipients

Ex-service recipients, such as ex-prisoners or ex-mental patients, are an important category of volunteers not utilized enough in social service systems. In organizations where such volunteers are used an interesting dynamic occurs: The volunteer uses his own experience as a basis for help. The fact that the volunteer has experienced a similar problem to the one the client is experiencing creates new opportunities for help, which neither the professional nor other volunteers can offer. That the use of such volunteers in treating various kinds of clients might at times have merits is obvious. However, what are the rewards for the volunteer and why should he be willing to engage himself in an activity which will constantly remind him of his past, a past that he often would rather forget?

A person who volunteers in such a context has two kinds of rewards: (1) his volunteer job gives him an opportunity to re-pay a debt to the community which he feels helped him recover; (2) even more important, by helping others in his own position, he asserts his own well-being, his belief that he himself made it and that he is on the side of the helpers and not the helped. Thus, by helping others such a person is actually helping himself.

The common denominator in all the rewards mentioned which various volunteers expect from their work is that they are all related to the job: In most cases the task itself and the ability for self-expression through the task are the most important rewards for the volunteer. Yet to view volunteers in terms of what they personally receive and not just what they give does not mean that the whole act of volunteering loses its altruistic aspect and becomes a business transaction which one measures in terms of profit and loss. Not at all. A person who thinks only about himself and who does not care about others will not even consider doing volunteer work, let alone do it over an extended period. By the very fact that one volunteers, one stresses one's responsibilities for society and one's willingness to contribute to it.

Another point: The rewards related to volunteer work are not economic, i.e., they cannot be defined in concrete terms and cannot be negotiated. This is a basic difference which distinguishes volunteer work from paid work. While in paid work both sides, the employer and the employee, know exactly what each side is supposed to give and what he is getting for it (because objective measurements, i.e., hours and dollars, are used), this is not the case in volunteer work. It is of course possible to define the minimal expectations the organization has of the volunteer, and most organizations which use volunteers do so. But volunteer work is not limited to those expectations, and volunteers often devote to their work much more than what they originally expected. A volunteer also has certain expectations as to the rewards he is going to get for

his work. But as these rewards are largely subjective, rewards about which he cannot bargain, he might be disappointed, and then he will quit his job. However, he might also be pleasantly surprised, if the rewards he gets exceed his expectations, and he will thus be motivated to contribute more.

Defining continuous volunteer work in terms of an exchange, in which the volunteer not only gives but also receives, shatters certain widely held myths pertaining to volunteers. This approach, however, promises to provide a possible basis for volunteers' involvement in bureaucratic service organizations.

In this last part, I would like to come back to the second question posed earlier---"How can volunteers be involved in bureaucratic service delivery systems?"---and present some principles for such involvement, with an emphasis on volunteers in educational institutions.

It seems to me that an educational institution which is interested in involving volunteers will be able to do so successfully if it makes the following assumptions:

1. Volunteers have a unique role which will not be performed without them.

2. Volunteers are not a part of the bureaucratic organization in an administrative sense, and therefore cannot be expected to follow all the regulations that paid workers are expected to follow.

3. Volunteers work because they are rewarded by their work; they will quit if their rewards stop or diminish.

The task of the volunteer in the educational institution has to be defined in the context of these assumptions, and he has to be helped to perform it. This task shoul basically be a complementary or supplementary task to that of the professional teacher or instructor. The volunteer relates to an individual pupil or group on a symmetrical basis and on this basis he helps the particular pupil or group to achieve a previously defined goal. The fact that this task would not be performed if the volunteer did not perform it makes it a unique task and creates a situation wherein the volunteer has responsibilities. Another element that makes this task unique is the fact that the volunteer uses a different approach from the teacher. He encourages the student to relate to him as a friend, and the relationship between them is based on mutual affection rather than authority.

To place the right volunteer in the right job requires a thorough knowledge of the job to be filled and also a thorough knowledge of the volunteer. Such knowledge goes beyond biographical data and should include knowledge of the volunteer's personal plans and goals in life. It is impossible to achieve a perfect fit between the job and the volunteer right away. Indeed, there is no need for it either. People are not machines and can adjust themselves to conditions which are less than perfect. What is important is to try to understand the subjective world of the volunteer and find him a task that is based on its unique phenomena.

The relationship between the volunteer and the professional with whom he works is the basis for any meaningful involvement of volunteers in the social service system of the school. In order to "get the most" out of a volunteer, the professional teacher has to know him well and help him perform his task, through it achieving his personal goals. In one study (Schmitthausler, 1966) which focused on the use of non-professionals in an educational system, the researcher found that a group of young volunteers who were motivated to volunteer, among other things, by the opportunity it gave them to test a possible career in teaching, expected to receive professional feedback from the teachers. They were disappointed when the teachers totally ignored that aspect; the teachers were sure the volunteers did not expect any rewards for their work.

The professional who understands that the volunteer has personal as well as altruistic goals will tend to be less suspicious of the volunteer

and less fearful of his criticism. On the other hand, he will be able to demand more from the volunteer. And the volunteer who is conscious of his personal goals will be less inclined to see himself as somebody who does favors for the teacher, the school, or the students.

The fact that the volunteer is not an integral part of the organization's bureaucracy and that he is not, therefore, in the administrative sense, the teacher's subordinate is a major reason for friction between them. The volunteer's use of methods differing from those of the teacher adds another dimension to this friction. In order to prevent such conflict from reaching the point of explosion, openness between the teacher and the volunteer is an important condition. Viewing the volunteer as receiving and not just giving can be a basis for such openness.

The rewards volunteers expect are usually related to interest, responsibility, and willingness to contribute to an important cause. The teacher has to help the volunteer get these rewards by frequently consulting with him and involving him in questions and issues in which the volunteer may be interested. The teacher should also report to the volunteer periodically on the progress of the overall effort of which he, the volunteer, is a part. If the teacher is successful in creating an atmosphere of cooperation between himself and the volunteer, he will have little trouble in motivating the volunteer to work continuously for an extended period.

To conclude, one of the basic goals of the school is to create an atmosphere in which learning can take place. Learning, it is agreed today, can take place in many forms and is not limited to the teacher-pupil relationship. By involving volunteers the school introduces to the process of learning people who can help the child experience a variety of new experiences while under the school's auspices and supervision. A school which recognizes that contribution will have little difficulty making the adjustments that are needed in order to involve volunteers in its program.

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