

1988

Training of student services paraprofessionals

Jennifer M. Kloberdanz
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1988 Jennifer M. Kloberdanz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kloberdanz, Jennifer M., "Training of student services paraprofessionals" (1988). *Graduate Research Papers*. 2710.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2710>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Offensive Materials Statement: Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

Training of student services paraprofessionals

Abstract

More publications have been devoted to paraprofessional training within the last five years (Ender and Winston, 1984), an indication that higher education is becoming more aware of the need to utilize paraprofessionals and that training programs must be developed to adapt to this trend. A student paraprofessional is an undergraduate or graduate student without extended professional training who is specifically selected, trained, and given ongoing supervision to perform some designated portion of the tasks usually performed by the professional (Delworth, Sherwood, Casaburri, 1974). The paraprofessional is generally involved in the central activity of the agency with which he/she is associated.

TRAINING OF STUDENT
SERVICES PARAPROFESSIONALS

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Department of Educational Administration
and Counseling
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
Jennifer M. Kloberdanz
December 1988

This Research Paper by: Jennifer Kloberdanz
Entitled: TRAINING OF STUDENT
SERVICES PARAPROFESSIONALS

has been approved as meeting the research paper
requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in
Education.

Thomas W. Hansmeier

November 3, 1988

Date Approved

Adviser/Director of Research Paper

Michael D. Waggoner

November 3, 1988

Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

Dale R. Jackson

November 7, 1988

Date Received

Head, Department of Educational
Administration and Counseling

TRAINING OF STUDENT
SERVICES PARAPROFESSIONALS

More publications have been devoted to paraprofessional training within the last five years (Ender and Winston, 1984), an indication that higher education is becoming more aware of the need to utilize paraprofessionals and that training programs must be developed to adapt to this trend. A student paraprofessional is an undergraduate or graduate student without extended professional training who is specifically selected, trained, and given ongoing supervision to perform some designated portion of the tasks usually performed by the professional (Delworth, Sherwood, Casaburri, 1974). The paraprofessional is generally involved in the central activity of the agency with which he/she is associated.

This review of the literature deals with the training of paraprofessionals. A typical training program will be described, and three training models will be discussed in some detail. Next, some conclusions will be drawn by the writer in regard to the training models. Finally, some questions will be addressed which will affect the future of parapro-

fessional training.

Studies of the use of paraprofessionals in higher education have revealed a positive attitude by college administrators. Delworth and Brown (1977) found that administrators strongly support the use of student paraprofessionals in the areas of tutoring, freshmen orientation, help with study problems, routine testing, research aid, emergency telephone services and counseling students. Student paraprofessionals have assumed important functions in higher education; therefore, their training needs to be taken seriously. The greatest disservice, both to student paraprofessionals and to students who receive their services, is allowing too little time for the training of paraprofessionals.

Ender and Winston (1984) conducted a study of the time devoted to the preparation of new paraprofessionals in 235 training programs. They found that 29% of the programs involved less than five hours of training and that another 45% usually training programs for resident assistants, counseling center peers, and career assistants required 16 or more hours of training. Sixty-two percent of the respondents

reported some type of training prior to beginning their job.

In order for paraprofessionals to function in a student services setting, they need to go through a training process. Training is an ongoing process that seeks to build the competence and confidence necessary for successful job performance (Delworth, Sherwood, Casaburri, 1974).

A study by Hart and King (1979) revealed that training was found to have significantly affected the development of paraprofessionals, whereas selection did not. They organized a study by using four different samples which included eight people in each of the samples. Group 1 was selected and trained; group 2 was randomly selected and trained; group 3 was selected but not trained; and group 4, the control group, was neither selected nor trained. They found that training resulted in the same level of functioning regardless of whether the groups were selective or not.

Basic Training Models

According to Delworth and Yarris (1978), the training of paraprofessionals consists of ten steps:

- 1) Identify the kinds of competence and expertise

that are necessary for adequate performance of each task or role.

- 2) Identify the cognitions, affect, and skills needed for each kind of competence and state these requisites as specific behavioral objectives.
- 3) Assess the trainee's current knowledge and abilities.
- 4) Decide the overall format and sequence of training.
- 5) Determine the particular techniques to be used in training.
- 6) Plan ongoing supervision/consultation processes.
- 7) Design evaluation procedures.
- 8) Design processes to train co-trainers (if any).
- 9) Implement and evaluate the training program.
- 10) Redesign as indicated by the evaluation.

Paraprofessional training programs can range from very limited to very elaborate. They also vary depending on the setting in which the paraprofessional is employed, but there are some basic concepts that

need to be taught to all paraprofessionals.

Training should involve both generalist, or core helping, and job specific skills (Delworth, Sherwood, Casaburri, 1974). First, generalist or core helping training, usually called initial preservice training, provides the background and skills necessary to be a successful helper. These essential areas are: knowledge of the paraprofessional's role, awareness of self and the power associated with being a role model, community skills, student development theory, communication and relationship skills, goal-setting and assessment techniques, campus resources and referral techniques, and cross-cultural relations. A good rule to remember is to teach only those skills that the trainee must have to begin functioning in his/her job and to save the others for the second type of training, especially if time is a factor (Ender, 1984).

The second type of training, job-specific or inservice, deals with skill upgrading and teaching of new skills. It consists of four specific areas: goals and objectives, policies and procedures, ethical concerns, and job-specific knowledge and skills (Delworth and Yarris, 1978).

As mentioned above, there are certain skills of which all paraprofessionals in a student services setting need to be aware. The helping relationship and communication skills are important aspects of any training program.

Three Training Models

There are three basic models, all based on the work of Carl Rogers, for the training of paraprofessionals (Meade, 1978). These models can be used in the initial preservice training and deal specifically with communication and relationship skills for paraprofessionals to utilize in their positions. Before any of these models can be implemented, there should be a matching of the trainees qualifications, work setting of the trainees and the goals of the training program. Each model has its strengths and weaknesses.

Human Relations Training Model

Another name for Human Relations Training is "empathy training"; the skill of empathy is stressed in the training. Carkuff (1969) developed the Human Relations Training (HRT) model and has been the most influential in terms of his approach to interpersonal-

skills training. Carkuff translated Roger's formulation of proper counseling procedures into behavior.

There are two specific core dimensions of counselor functioning. The first is the facilitative or responsive, which involves certain listening skills: empathy, respect and concreteness that tune into the client's frame of reference. The second dimension has to do with action-oriented or initiative activity which includes the skills of genuineness, ability to confront and immediacy. This requires the helper to express effectively his/her own views and feelings to the helpee.

Human Relations Training is usually conducted in a group setting. Three modes which are the essentials of the training are lectures, modeling by the trainers, and facilitation of experiential learning (Meade, 1978). The trainers who conduct these training programs need previous experience in both group processes and various communication dimensions. There are two phases in this training method.

1. The discrimination phase distinguishes between "good" and "bad" responses (Meade, 1978).
Once the trainees can do this task with

consistency, they begin to practice making verbal responses which incorporate the various skills that Carkuff (1969) defined as important in helping.

2. The communication phase, which is the heart of Human Relations Training, is where the trainees learn to talk about their own life problems and to respond to others who present their problems (Meade, 1978). There is a short interchange where the helper responds by using one or more of the facilitative skills. Next, the group observes and gives feedback, while the trainer facilitates group discussion and appropriate modeling and information (Meade, 1978). The trainer should be ready for any intense feelings that might emerge.

HRT has proved effective with paraprofessionals who work with people who have serious emotional problems. It encourages the expression of strong, difficult feelings and requires that the trainers learn to respond effectively to people dealing with serious concerns such as suicide or sexual assault (Meade, 1978).

The model has strengths in that it provides a vehicle whereby a trainee verbally responds to another trainee's statements. It is a deceptively simple skill, difficult to acquire, but when someone does master it, great progress can be made with a client (Meade, 1978). Another strength is that it is a proven method that can be applied by professionals who have been systematically trained.

Some weaknesses of the model should also be noted. First, it is likely to be repetitive and boring for those who are more experienced. Second, there is a failure to show that changing the trainee's verbal responses has any substantial effect on changing the helpee (Meade, 1978). Third, the related research is lacking in methodology and some of the reported data are inaccurate. A final weakness is that the model still lacks a clear conceptual and operational definition of the construct of empathy and its role in the helping process.

Microcounseling Model

The Microcounseling or Microtraining model is derived from Ivey. In this model, teacher-trainees are taught specific classroom skills which include asking

questions, presenting material, creating student involvement and increasing student participation, and learning general skills in verbal and nonverbal communication. This model provides an introduction to interviewing for relatively inexperienced trainees such as undergraduate students or beginning graduate students. The program is divided into component skills which are sequential. The basic format of this model is as follows (Meade, p. 45):

I. Beginning Skills of Interviewing

A. Attending behavior

1. Eye contact
2. Relaxed, open posture
3. Verbal "following behavior"

B. Open invitation to talk(open versus closed questioning)

C. Minimum encouragement to talk

II. Listening Skills: Selective Attention

- A. Reflection of feeling
- B. Summarization of feeling
- C. Paraphrasing

III. Skills of Self-Expression

A. Expression of feeling

B. Expression of content

C. Direct, mutual communication

IV. Interpretation

The earlier skills in the above outline are the real foundation of effective interviewing. There are specific steps taken to learn each skill: 1) there is a didactic presentation of material in written form; 2) there is a modeling part done by the trainer, teacher, etc.; 3) finally, each person is required to practice the skills to clarify what he/she knows.

Before this training model is used, there needs to be a determination as to which skills are most relevant to the type of interviewing the trainee will do (Meade, 1978).

A strength of this model is that it is a consistent, well-integrated approach to teaching communication and helping skills. The major advantage is the rigor of its behavioral and conceptual definitions (Meade, 1978). Some other strengths are its client-centeredness and its flexibility of use.

A weakness of the model is the limited research relative to its quantity and scope. The model's lack of theoretical grounding limits its heuristic value in

terms of generating research and doing advanced training (Meade, 1978).

Interpersonal Process Recall Model

The Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) model, developed by Kagan, focuses on interpersonal developmental tasks: understanding, affect, specificity, and exploration (Meade, 1978). Understanding concentrates on the skills of paraphrasing and clarification; affect works on response of emotions and bodily states; specificity focuses on honest labeling of feelings; exploration is where the listener responds and gives the client freedom and latitude to expand on the issue (Meade, 1978). This allows the trainee to create an individualized helping style which contains these broad elements.

The interpersonal developmental tasks place emphasis on self-study by means of stimulated recall. The model arose out of the accidental finding that videotaping an individual, then allowing the person to view the tape, provided a potent stimulus for his/her recall and exploration of the recorded experience (Meade, 1978). The dynamics or the process of the exchange is viewed rather than a specific skill.

The primary task of this model is the videotaping of an interaction followed by the "stimulated recall." There are three stages in this training model: (1) the interviewer views the tape and explores his/her own reactions, (2) the interviewee does the same, and (3) both parties engage in mutual recall of the interview (Meade, 1978). There is a modeling component, but the primary learning modes are didactic and experiential.

A strength of this model is that it does allow trainees to develop expertise in the process of human interaction (Meade, 1978). It is the most complex of the three models.

One weakness of this model is that it emphasizes self-confrontation and analysis of one's interactions. IPR is not "empathy training", and one may argue that it is not even "skills training", if skills are to be defined in behavioral terms (Meade, 1978). Another weakness is that IPR is not considered a systematic program, to use in the training of student services paraprofessionals. A final weakness is that this model is not specific enough to be used by a trainees who wish to learn particular ways of dealing with hurting persons (Meade, 1978).

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the discussion of the three training models, the observations is made that there is no ideal model for all situations. The ideal training program would be a combination of all the models outlined above (as long as training goals were identified and the process the trainees should experience); then the specific components can be identified for use in the training.

Eleven different methodologies and techniques can be used to assist in training: core conditions, instrumental training, microcounseling, roleplaying and simulated training, written materials, group discussion, lecture, audiovisual media, field observation, workshops, and subgroup consultation (Delworth and Yarris, 1978).

Different kinds of training do different things, and the major task of research is to identify which approach is most effective in a particular setting. To get the desired results from these training programs, adequate time should be taken to initiate the skills to be achieved.

Based on her experience, this writer has concluded that the Microcounseling model is preferred, since

considerable knowledge has been gained from this array of techniques. Each helping skill was mastered before going on to the next level of skills. Triads are formed to assist in feedback to enhance the learning process.

The Microcounseling model is preferred because it embodies at least one of the characteristics of the other two models.

1. Relative to the HRT model, which stresses empathy, empathy can be sought in the Microcounseling model, too. The use of listening skills, reflection of feeling and summarization of feeling, can assist the counselor in expressing empathy to the client.

2. An aspect that the Interpersonal Process Recall model has that corresponds with the Microcounseling model is the concentration of recall by using videotapes. It is an optional learning mechanism in the Microcounseling model but can be a very valuable tool depending on the motive of the instructor. The experience of the videotape method further improves the learning.

All in all, with implementation of certain aspects of each of the other training models into the Microcounseling model, the ideal training model for the

helping relationship in a given situation will be reached. With proper planning and organization of the training program, any trainer can help the trainees learn the needed skills. For future professionals, the Microcounseling model should be considered an asset for use in any training program.

Training of student paraprofessionals will be an ongoing issue in the future. The future development in student paraprofessional training will be determined by professionals' answers to three critical questions (Delworth, Sherwood, Casaburri, 1974).

This writer has provided recommendations for what she feels is needed for better structured paraprofessional training programs.

1) Will generic training or specific training be emphasized?

Generic training should be emphasized here. In order to help a wide variety of people, paraprofessionals will need a broad array of skills rather than a few specific ones, a diversity of skills to benefit the client as well as the paraprofessional. Being able to help a client in all sessions can prevent giving the client the "runaround". Another positive

point about generic training is that if paraprofessionals are few in number they will still possess the skills to handle all types of client situations. A greater number of paraprofessionals will be required if they are specialized.

Generic training can be very valuable for employment of the student paraprofessional after graduation. The paraprofessional will be able to experience a variety of situations with generic training. Many employers will prefer this type of candidate over one with specialized training.

2) Will this emphasized training be an academic course versus in-service training?

It has been suggested that paraprofessional training, to reach its maximum level of effectiveness, should be offered for an academic term for credit (Ender and Winston, 1978). In this way, the paraprofessional can receive academic credit for the training, along with excellent preparation, before the position starts. The training can also allow the student a chance to decide whether a paraprofessional position is right for him/her. Another advantage is that the academic course could be a possible screening device to

be used by the instructor. The instructor would be able to determine what students used the course for refinement of communication skills at a quality level. In-service training would not allow these advantages for the students or the instructors.

3) What will be the required length of the training program?

The length of the training program should be a semester if using it as an academic course. Spreading it over a few months will help the trainee master helping skills and become a better role model. Research evidence indicates that short, intense training experiences, such as a weekend retreat, generally will not result in significant levels of behavioral change on the part of the paraprofessional (Delworth, Sherwood, Casaburri, 1974). For this reason, training could be a possible prerequisite for obtaining the peer position. Practice and refinement of skills can be accomplished in an extended training program. Mastery of these skills can only be more beneficial in helping a client. Successful helpers will then be the result of this semester training course.

In conclusion, student services professionals will need to research and monitor the effectiveness of their existing training programs for paraprofessionals to ensure the availability of newer and improved programs in the future.

References

- Delworth, U. & Brown, M. (1977). The paraprofessionals as a member of the college guidance team. Paraprofessionals today: Volume I: Education. New York: Human Services Press.
- Delworth, U., Sherwood, G., & Casaburri, N. (1974). Student paraprofessionals: A working model for higher education. American Personnel and Guidance Association.
- Delworth, U. & Yarris, E. (1978). Concepts and processes for the new training role. Training competent staff. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Ender, S. (1984). Student paraprofessionals within student affairs: The state of the art. Students as paraprofessional staff. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Ender, S. & McFadden, R. (1980). Training the student paraprofessional helper. Student development practices: Strategies for making a difference. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.
- Fulton, D. (1980). Teaching staff to be trainers.

Training competent staff. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Hart, L. & King, G. (1979). Selection versus training in the development of paraprofessionals. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 26, 235-241.

Meade, C. (1980). Interpersonal skills: Who, what, when, why. Training competent staff. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Mugnier, C. (1980). The rise of the paraprofessional. Paraprofessional and the professional job structure. American Library Association.