

# NEW YORK'S PUBLIC SERVICE CAREERS PROGRAM

*the origin of a program  
to develop disadvantaged  
manpower for human services*

The intent of the Public Service Careers Program (PSCP) as set forth in the 1966 "New Careers" Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, was:

First, to recruit "unemployed or low income persons";

Second, for work "designed to improve the physical, social, economic or cultural condition of the community or area served in fields including, but not limited to, health, education, welfare, neighborhood redevelopment and public safety";

Third, the program was to "assist in developing entry level employment opportunities";

Fourth, it was to "provide maximum prospects for advancement and continued employment without federal assistance."

Finally, the PSCP was to combine work with "necessary educational, training, counseling and transportation assistance and such other supportive services as may be needed."

This legislation was aimed at solving a dilemma which persists on the American scene—the concurrent surplus of unskilled, unemployed and the vast deficit of skilled workers in the human service occupations. Supporters of the program argued that for the nation it was the first step in what could be a total revolution in the delivery and content of human services. For the unemployed, they proposed it as a first step from poverty to a worthwhile career. The program's coupling of a job guarantee, a career ladder, and supportive services was the basis of these assumptions.

New York City received a grant of \$3.6 million to set up its PSCP. With these funds, the city has attempted to provide jobs with training and career potential, educational upgrading through high school, personal and group counseling, and assured placement in a job with a future.

The New York City grant was the larg-

est single allocation made under the legislation. During the first 13 months of operations, the PSCP has demonstrated the validity of some formerly uncertain assumptions, has accumulated important data and has promoted change in institutions that were considered almost immovable. It has also made clear some of the program's greatest problems both in the original design and in its day-to-day operations. New York is, therefore, an excellent place to make at least a partial evaluation of the results to date.

This evaluation will examine the program in the light of the original legislation—how well the city's program meets the five points outlined above. It will draw on reports by the different administering groups, the trainees and personal interviews, including reports from City University, PSCP counseling office, statistical office, and internal evaluation by MCDA staff.

## RECRUITMENT OF UNEMPLOYED AND LOW INCOME PEOPLE

In designing the program, the issue of who should participate was critical. Experience has shown that community involvement in planning stimulates strong commitment and interest in change. If one of the purposes of the program was to bring change to bureaucratic institutions, developing this advocacy role was crucial. The Neighborhood Manpower Service Centers (NMSC's) who did most of the recruiting, filled this role in the early stages. In future cycles and program development, involvement of this kind should be sought in greater depth.

In addition to community support through the NMSC's, Mayor Lindsay announced his endorsement at a televised press conference. His support, the NMSC's participation, mailings and caseworker referrals brought a large number of applicants.

As of October 7, 1968, a total of 1177 persons had been recruited, of which 1108 were accepted; 958 of these persons decided to join the program. The

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following is a profile of the final group:

- 89% Female
- 11% Male
- 50% Receiving Public Assistance
- 100% Unemployed or Underemployed
- 74% Entering with a Reading Level of 8th Grade or Higher
- 26% Entering with a Reading Level Below the 8th Grade
- Average Age - 30 Years
- Average Number of Dependent Children, 3

Thus, the recruitment intent of the program, to find "unemployed or low income persons" was met. However, recruitment should not be viewed only in light of basic eligibility. It should also be related to program success. If a significant proportion of the trainees fail to graduate from the program, the selection criteria are either too loosely drawn or inappropriate.

#### APPRAISAL OF SELECTION CRITERIA

The staff resented the strict cut-off lines and qualifying tests of many programs, but they found no workable substitute. Too many poverty training programs had taken in anyone and ended up helping no one. These experiences and the common hostility to testing argue for the development of new selection techniques or better and fairer tests, but until then, programs must be realistic about criteria in fairness to the trainees.

Wishing to avoid situations where trainees would be unable to succeed, the program staff originally agreed to require at least an eighth-grade reading level. While this did exclude many people, it also meant that those accepted had a real chance of reaching the goal of a high school diploma. The Gates Reading Test was used to make this determination. Once accepted, the trainees were referred to the program's education division at City University. City University tested all trainees with

the California Achievement Test (CAT), which they felt gave truer readings than the Gates with respect to the graduate equivalency exam (GED).

It soon became clear that the results of these two tests varied by approximately one full grade—the Gates showing one grade higher than the CAT. This meant that the recruiting agencies believed they were maintaining the agreed upon standards while City University complained that they were being sent many ineligible trainees. As this continued, much of the material specially prepared by the educational staff, had to be revised to accommodate the less advanced group.

This occasionally led to an uneven quality in the educational effort. Later in the program, the accidental loosening of criteria became standard practice and persons with sixth grade scores were accepted.

In evaluating the appropriateness of the selection criteria, we thought it would be useful to compare the records of trainees above and below the eighth grade level to determine whether the less advanced persons were able to compete successfully. Since the first step in the program was passing the high school equivalency exam, this is one standard by which to judge the two groups.

One sample group of scores taken in April and May, 1968, shows that of the 68 persons who entered with a reading level above the eighth grade, only 10 failed the GED, or 14.8%. In the same group, of the 24 trainees who came with less than eighth grade skills, 14 or 58½% failed. Of the total 24 who failed in both groups, 58½% were from the less advanced group. Although these results were taken before many of the trainees had completed the program, and, therefore, did not represent final scores, they suggested a significant obstacle to overcome. The most recent data supports this early hypothesis and makes clear that students entering with scores below the

eighth grade have grave difficulties in passing the high school equivalency exam in the allotted period of time.

#### STAFFING AND ROLE DEFINITION

This PSCP staff came from varied sources and included people with training, counseling and administrative backgrounds. All had some relevant program experience, but few had worked closely in building this type of project. Many of the staff were, therefore, unprepared for the problems that would develop.

One of the initial situations in which the staff would be involved was work site resistance to the new trainees. The introduction of new jobs, new selection criteria and new groups of employees into any institution is bound to cause anxiety and hostility in existing staff. One of the most difficult problems to work out is the advocacy role a counselor should play in these situations. For instance, should counselors support the trainees not only in private sessions, but also in more public confrontations with the employing institutions? Stimulating the development of this advocacy role in staff and trainees most certainly will disturb the tranquility of the work site, but it may be necessary in achieving real change. This is not the kind of role a counselor has traditionally played. Thus, few relevant histories or statements are available. Some effort was made to introduce the staff to this and other issues.

#### TRAINING IN WORK TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY

The jobs developed were in three main areas: health, education and social service. Table I illustrates how this segment of the program operated, and how many trainees have completed training as of December 1, 1968.

#### WHAT HAPPENED AT THE JOB SITE

On the surface, it seems that these job descriptions meet the goals stated in the legislation by bettering the human

service aspect of the city's environment. However, a survey of trainee opinion taken by City University indicated that the actual jobs were often unlike the descriptions. In many cases, trainees complained about being given only clerical work or receiving no transferable training.

This situation seemed to result from problems at several levels in the employing agencies. First, at the director's level, the staff found general agreement with the program's aim, but they also found a lack of concrete action to see that the staff also supported it. Occasionally, PSCP staff suspected that work site directors saw the program merely as a source of paid extra hands. Second, when the trainees reported to work, their supervisors often gave them few responsible assignments. Sometimes the supervisors were too harried by their own jobs to take time out to direct the trainees in any demanding work. More often, they seemed to distrust the PSCP group, fearing that any responsibility delegated to a trainee meant a loss of their own prestige and

reason for being there.

This kind of fearful resistance is common to any professional group faced with an incursion of outsiders. Two factors usually combine to make the resistance effective. One, most professional groups constantly try to upgrade their entry standards so that less skilled or less educated recruits threaten this effort. Two, all professional groups have to protect the prestige and job security of their members and, therefore, are reluctant to accept new criteria for advancement which they believe favor outsiders.

Some of these problems were solved by making clear to the regular staff what the PSCP's goals were - that the goals did not threaten existing positions but merely introduced new manpower into the system from the bottom. Once it was clear that PSCP graduates would not receive preferential treatment in promotions and raises, tensions eased. This kind of enlightenment should precede the arrival of trainees.

Occasionally, it was necessary to terminate a work site which turned out to be totally unsuitable for the program.

The Bureau of Special Services was one such case. This bureau provides unusual individual services to clients who are sick, elderly, etc. Too many trainees reported doing cooking, washing, and cleaning for sick clients, or dancing with residents of a home for the aged. These are all valid services for which there may be a clear need, however, they are not jobs which are appropriate for the PSCP since they do not lead toward a career ladder job.

It should be stressed that in the majority of cases where meaningful work and training were offered, the PSCP graduates turnover rate of 15% compared favorably with the same rate for regular employees in similar jobs, approximately 25%. This comparison underscores the vast potential of persons presently employed. Our experience has shown that rather than being irresponsible and unmotivated, they respond enthusiastically when given two things: (1) responsible jobs, and

**TABLE I**  
**TRAINING IN WORK TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY**

Career Ladder	Number Phased In to Date	Trainees Graduated	Employing Department	Number of Trainee Slots	Job Description
Nurses Aide Technician Practical Nurse Registered Nurse	215	55	Department Of Hospitals	240	As nurses' aides, trainees assist in routine patient care such as taking temperature, pulse and respiration, urinalysis, charting and care of patient unit.
Case Aide Ass't. Caseworker Caseworker	456	353	Department Of Social Services	440	As special service aides, trainees assist in homemaking services for those clients unable to cope by themselves.  As public assistance aides, trainees assist caseworker in field visits, filling out forms and related clerical duties.
Education Aide Assoc. Teacher Teacher	283	1st cycle not yet completed	Board of Education	240	As education aides, trainees assist in non-instructional duties such as preparation of materials and audio-visual equipment, operation of duplicating machines, preparation of lunch, taking attendance and keeping bulletin board.

(2) adequate preparation for them.

## EDUCATION

The educational component of the program was organized and administered by the City University of New York through its community college system and focused on three areas of study: preparation for the High School Equivalency Exam (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL) for Spanish speaking trainees, and Human Relations (HR). ESL trainees were to take an intensive language use course, and then switch to the regular classes when their skills reached a certain level. Three community colleges participated under the direction of the City University of New York. Classes were held both at work sites and in community facilities. Small classes, individualized instruction, and a variety of instructional materials were expected to compensate for any educational deficiencies trainees might have.

GED classes were taught by a team of one teacher and one assistant, 12 hours per week. HR classes were taught by one teacher once a week for three hours. The more intensive ESL classes met four and one-half days per week, with a team of two teachers. ESL trainees spent the remaining one-half day in HR classes which were taught in Spanish. No class was larger than 20 students. City University provided materials for each group of teachers which included an outline of skills to be learned, a teacher's guide, a supplementary unit of exercises, and an annotated list of instructional materials available from commercial publishers.

## STUDENT GAINS

With these resources focused on the program, there should be measurable results. One way of evaluating progress is to compare test scores at entry with scores made after four months in the program (240 class hours).

A City University report states that a gain of .1 per month would be normal in a regular school setting. Thus, over the four month period, a .4 gain would

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### The Author

John Dearden is a Professor in the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard University. Before joining the Harvard faculty, Mr. Dearden was manager of the Financial Systems Department for the Ford Motor Company. He is the author of books on cost accounting, and management control and information systems.

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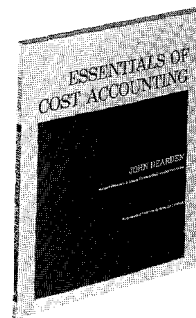
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be expected. The results shown above indicate improvement at least two and sometimes three times as great as anticipated.

	Reading	Arithmetic	Language
Entry Mean	7.8	7.2	7.6
Four Month Mean	8.9	8.4	8.9
Mean Gain	+1.1	+1.2	+1.3

It is estimated that a reading level of approximately 9.5 is required to pass the GED exam. Thus, trainees entering with a reading score of 8.0 would have to progress 1.5 grades in the program, or at the rate of .15 per month (allowing 9-12 months). The results of the four-month testing indicate that this is quite possible.

City University also reported important gains for ESL trainees. After four months or 512 class hours, the mean gain of all trainees was found to be 68%. On the basis of this data, education staff projected that advanced students could be transferred to the regular program after 512-762 hours (four to six months), and intermediates after 1024-1280 hours (eight to ten months). These gains and the advances in the GED preparation are significant not only for the students to whom they represent new opportunities, but also to the public as proof of the feasibility of raising educational skills in a short period of time. The most convincing proof, however, is that to date, 74% of those trainees who took the GED exam and whose scores have been reported, passed. The New York State average is 60%.

#### EDUCATIONAL ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

The most serious problem yet to be resolved comes when trainees are hired as full-time staff in their agencies. Once they are hired and have passed the GED exam, a further educational ladder should be available. The program is beginning to work in this direction, with the following results reported by City University.

An agreement has been reached with

the Department of Hospitals which allows PSCP graduates working there to be released from work on a half-time basis so that they may continue to attend education classes. Fifty-five trainees now alternate one week working with one week in class under this plan. At present, federal money pays for their education hours. Hopefully, future programs will carry the concept a step farther and have the employing agencies pay for the time. It is important for the present that the release time principle be established.

The Borough of Manhattan Community College has agreed to grant three advance credits to trainees who successfully complete the PSCP. Similar proposals are currently under review at the two other participating Community Colleges. Manhattan Community College has also developed a new program of study leading to an Associate Degree in Social Service Technology. Normal matriculation requirements and tuition charges will be waived for 60 trainees in the first year. This concession was obtained after negotiation between the President of the College and the Commissioner of Welfare. Such top level persons are usually essential to successful negotiation of percent setting agreements.

#### COUNSELING

The PSCP counseling effort attempted to assist the trainees with personal and vocational guidance. Counselors helped individual trainees with their most pressing personal needs and also conducted bi-weekly group sessions with 10-15 persons. Such sessions usually covered problems the trainees had encountered on their jobs or in the educational section. Often, by sharing their different approaches to common problems, the group broke down any feelings of individual loneliness or insecurity and many times the discussion developed to the point where the group began to make demands on itself — usually demands to accelerate the pace of individual and institutional change. Often this meant indignation

and anger were stimulated. Again, this was a departure from the most traditional concept of group sessions which stressed a release of tension through airing gripes.

Beside this aspect of their work, counselors were expected to distribute time cards and pay checks. This duty has caused the most difficulty for the trainees and staff. As is so often the case, payroll operated less than perfectly and required re-submissions and changes. This did assure that counselors saw the trainees regularly but counselors and trainees both objected. Not only did pay procedures interrupt the time counselors had set aside for individual sessions, but also it placed a strain on the counseling relationship. Trainees began to view the counselor less as a supportive source of help and more as a representative of an unsympathetic bureaucracy. Staff and trainees have complained about his confusion of roles so the program administration is now considering using payroll clerks.

#### OBLIGATION TO HIRE AND UPGRADE

The employing agency's obligation to hire program graduates was a critical element in the original design. In the past too many programs turned out well-trained graduates who were unable to find work because of the educational requirements attached to jobs, qualifying lists and a scarcity of budget lines. The PSCP set out to avoid this dilemma. In theory, the availability of PSCP trained persons, the assurance of their passing the GED, and the on-site work experience, would incite heads of city departments to find ways around past obstacles. In some cases, these barriers proved more formidable than expected.

In New York, as in most cities, existing budget lines are inadequate for the city's manpower needs, and the budget is too tight to create new lines. In addition, Civil Service requirements are difficult to meet, and once met, often

put you at the end of a long line. Thus, in some agencies, PSCP had problems in placing its graduates.

One successful approach it developed was to locate vacancies in a department above entry level, which were accumulating large amounts of unspent monies. New entry-level positions could then be created and paid for by means of a budget modification. While a budget modification is anything but simple to accomplish in New York City, it is possible, given enough time and persistence. This was the route taken in the Social Service Department. Vacant caseworker positions were taken and redefined to case aides. The aides were then paid out of unspent caseworker salaries. Three hundred and fifty-three persons are now employed in the Social Service Department as a result of this effort.

This hiring problem is still unresolved in the Board of Education and in the Department of Hospitals. In these cases where another approach is necessary, it may be productive to work out some arrangement with the union by means of which their aide level members can be upgraded. PSCP graduates could then fill their lines. Private foundations, union funds and Federal money have made some progress in these cooperative ventures.

Another placement problem relates to the difficulty of finding entry-level jobs for males in the human services. Most less skilled jobs in this area are denoted as female jobs, and an employer would resist hiring a male for

them. Male trainees share this attitude and see the jobs as somewhat demeaning. Unfortunately, jobs at the next higher level command higher salaries, and are unlikely to be relinquished by unions and civil service organizations. Thus, in terms of hiring and upgrading, serious problems remain.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of important lessons have emerged from the PSCP experience in New York. First, in fulfilling the program's first intent to recruit "unemployed or low income persons" it has shown that the poor can be attracted to and motivated by real jobs and real educational opportunity. The fact that many of the trainees had difficult day care problems which they solved themselves underscores this point.

Second, a new and potentially powerful approach to the city's health, education and welfare manpower problems has been implemented. By creating entry level jobs in the public interest the second and third goal, "to improve the physical, social, economic or cultural condition of the community" and to "assist in developing entry level employment opportunities" were reached.

But despite this commendable record, the program's goal to "provide maximum prospects for advancement" has been the most elusive. Clearly, trainees still face serious obstacles to occupational mobility. Originally, the program

staff intended to work around existing credential requirements. However, it soon became clear that the system was practically impregnable, being protected from above by legislative sanction and from below by vested interest. Therefore, the issue is still unresolved and the program has adopted the more traditional route to hiring and upgrading.

It seems, on the basis of this experience, that rather than offering new careers to trainees, the PSCP has provided new entry into existing careers. While this does not approach the far reaching goals outlined in new careers literature, it does take important steps. It begins to solve some of the city's most pressing manpower problems by making new city employees of persons formerly unemployed, and by introducing new manpower in the understaffed human services field.

Other new steps taken are release time agreements for education and new arrangements for converting work experience into college credit. Hopefully, more benefits like these will follow in the future months of the program.

In summary, then, it seems fair to say that the PSCP has a good record to date. Many of the program's original objectives have been reached and issues which were formerly unclear have been carefully examined. It remains now to refine training and education methods and to find a solution to the hiring and upgrading problems.

### AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE INDUSTRY TO SPONSOR MANAGEMENT COURSES

A broad educational program designed to develop management personnel for the various segments of the automotive service industry is now being readied for inauguration next fall at Northwood Institute, Midland, Mich.

The program is being sponsored and financed by a special industry-wide committee consisting of representatives of manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers,

trade associations and trade publications. Andrew Anderson, president of Northern Supply Co., Bay City, Mich., is chairman of the committee.

Details of the program will be formulated at Northwood Institute and current plans call for both a two-year and four-year course plus a special 10-week program.