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CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME IN
COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN THE FIELD
OF ADDICTIONS

by Louise Ellis

No. 1984 - 3

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**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME IN
COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN THE FIELD
OF ADDICTIONS**

by Louise Ellis

No. 1984 - 3

This working paper was prepared by Louise Ellis under contract with the Consultation Centre, Programs Branch, Ministry of the Solicitor General, Canada. It is made available as submitted to the Ministry.

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The working paper is available in French.
Ce document de travail est disponible en français.

Overview

- In the 1970's, the problem of alcohol and drug abuse in Newfoundland and Labrador was rapidly increasing due in part to inadequate addictions resources, especially in isolated communities.
- The Extension Service of Memorial University devised a training programme whereby community service workers throughout the province could gain both information about addictions and the communication skills necessary to alleviate the problem in their own communities.
- A series of Introductory Workshops laid the groundwork for a Certificate Programme, which was a two-year, part-time course involving both theory and practical experience.
- The programme has resulted in personal and professional development for the participants, a network of local resource people, and considerable impact on the social problem of addictions throughout the province.

The Problem

The story of Memorial University's "Certificate Programme in Community Education in the Field of Addictions" is one of hope. It began with a letter from a social worker in Stephenville to the University's Extension Service, a letter which pleaded for a programme to train community service workers in Newfoundland and Labrador to deal with a very real problem of alcohol and drug abuse.

Statistics on the subject corroborated this woman's concern. The province's addiction problem had reached alarming proportions: the number of problem drinkers was estimated at 23,000 in a population of 500,000; and the general consumption of alcohol had increased by 92% between 1971 and 1976, while the number of potential drinkers (i.e., over 15 years of age) had increased by only 12%. A host of resulting social ills were becoming more apparent, especially the incidence of crime: for example, the number of convicted impaired drivers soared by 238% from 1970 to 1975; and 97% of Inuits convicted of a crime in 1977 were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offence. Related health problems were also on the rise: between 1970 and 1973, there was an increase of 129% in the primary diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver, and a 237% increase in the primary diagnosis of alcohol-related psychiatric problems.

And finally, there were the widespread economic ramifications. For the addictions problem was taking a heavy toll on social, health, and criminal justice services, which were already overburdened and inadequate, as well as creating severe financial problems for scores of individual families.

Not only did this letter alert attention to a problem which was eroding the social fabric of the province, it pointed up the urgent need for people trained in the addictions field. Indeed, Newfoundland-Labrador was the only province in Canada that had no alcohol and drug commission, no government agency to deal with such issues, no educational institutions which provided adequate training - in short, it had few addictions resources of any kind. As a consequence, all the human service workers who felt ill-equipped to handle alcohol and drug abuse in their work had no recourse to enable them to do so. And their helplessness was further exacerbated by the fact that the province had a sparse population dispersed in isolated communities with very limited resources.

The Response

So it was that the programme development supervisor of the Extension Service* became convinced of the gravity and

* currently Chairman of the new Alcohol and Drug Dependency Commission.

urgency of the problem. The solution did not, however, appear to lie in traditional training methods, such as "importing" experts from outside the community on a short-term basis, leaving one's job and/or community to undertake full-time academic training, or merely acquiring a body of knowledge. All these approaches seemed too impractical or limited to effect real social change.

What was required was an intensive but part-time training programme for individuals whose work already involved them in addictions issues and who were eager to understand and treat their clients more effectively. Most importantly, it was believed that the training should provide the participants not only with a core of information about addictions, but also with the communication skills necessary to pass on that information in their local areas. This "training-of-trainers" approach would therefore create a ripple effect throughout the province. By becoming permanent local resource people, the participants would be able to promote greater understanding and collaboration among their fellow-citizens, as well as disseminate much-needed information.

Preliminary Phases

Memorial's Extension Service was well suited to devising such a programme. It had community learning centres, highly sophisticated audio-visual facilities, and above all, a field staff of 12 representatives in communities throughout the province. The advisory committee established to design and monitor the programme based their plans right from the start on feedback from individuals with first-hand knowledge of community needs and concerns. The initial step was therefore a Design Workshop: held in June 1979, it involved potential resource people and a cross-section of community service workers from across the province. Following the Design Workshop, there was a Pilot Workshop to test, evaluate, and revise the design plans.

Out of these workshops evolved a plan for Phase I - Regional Introductory Workshops. The purpose of these five-day workshops was to offer to a sizeable number of human service workers some basic information regarding alcohol and drug abuse and to encourage broader awareness and healthier attitudes about the subject.

The Introductory Workshops were held in five centres in Newfoundland and Labrador. Besides gleaning useful information on such topics as basic pharmacology, the

social causes and effects of alcohol and drug use, and current prevention approaches, the participants had the unique opportunity of sharing their own knowledge and experience and of initiating a cooperative community team.

The Certificate Programme

Upon completion of the series of workshops, there was unanimous agreement to proceed with the second and major phase of the project - a Certificate Programme, consisting of a two-year, part-time course to provide more in-depth training in addictions. With a continuing spirit of collaboration, the Advisory Committee drew up both the content of the course and the selection criteria according to feedback from the Design, Pilot and Introductory Workshops.

The programme was composed of two four-week summer institutes in 1980 and 1981, as well as three-day workshops, practicums, community workshops (given by the participants), and correspondence courses.* Application was open to anyone whose work touched on the field of addictions, such as social workers, guidance counsellors, nurses, clergy, police officers, correctional officers, educators, addictions workers, and citizen action group workers. The maximum number of participants was limited to 30 to ensure a high degree

* See Appendix for details.

of interaction with resource people. Selection was based on the following criteria:

- location and permanence in community/province;
- job role and duties;
- previous academic and practical knowledge and experience;
- personal commitment;
- employer support;
- contacts with community groups; and
- leadership/presentation potential.

Funding for the project was the result of a coordinated effort on the part of the Consultation Centre of the Solicitor General Canada, Memorial University, the employers of participants, and the participants themselves.

The Results

The results of such a complex long-term project are difficult to gauge. But clearly two of the most salient objectives have been met: strengthening the participants' knowledge about addictions, and providing training in communication and leadership skills to enable them to better handle addictions problems with their clients and other members of their community. Information was presented by some of the best resource people available in Canada,

and through a variety of materials - print, videotapes, audiotapes, and resource kits. The skills taught included counselling and interviewing techniques, public speaking, and organizing citizens' groups and community workshops.

Even more difficult to gauge but nonetheless significant were the participants' positive changes in attitude. Besides altering their views of addicts, they were able to explore their possible prejudices and general feelings about others as well, such as native people, women, and professional groups other than their own. Throughout the two-year programme, as knowledge and skills were acquired, an increase in self-confidence became readily apparent.

One of the most convincing indications of the programme's success was the dedication of the participants: of the 23 people selected, only two left the course (for personal and family health reasons) and many sacrificed holidays, income, and leisure time to complete the programme. After graduating, a substantial number identified themselves as resource people in their communities and have encouraged cooperation among concerned citizens. Although geographically separated, they have created somewhat of an addictions network throughout Newfoundland and Labrador based on an awareness of available resources (both material and human) and on the personal relationships established during the programme.

It is understandable, however, that the benefits of the programme vary from one participant to another, depending on many factors, such as the nature of his/her job, or the interest expressed by the community. Because the programme was only recently completed (April 1982), it is not yet possible to assess long-term effects in a broader social context. It has been suggested that follow-up assistance should have been given to the graduates in order to increase community impact; and that before the course started, more support could have been offered within individual communities by, for example, holding public meetings.

The overall success is undeniable. As well as having a direct impact on the addictions field, it serves as a model for a grass-roots approach to a variety of social problems. It has proven that in relatively isolated communities where experts and resources are limited, a serious social problem can be dealt with economically and effectively; and that concerned individuals with similar feelings of inadequacy can band together and find a creative, adaptive, and cooperative response to such problems.

It is fitting that the last word be given to one of the participants, Brian Henderson, a classification officer with H.M. Penitentiary in St. John's, now "specializes" in

alcohol-related problems in his work. He has set up a weekly "addiction group", coordinates an inmate AA group, and gives staff training sessions in addictions to new recruits.

It had to be probably one of the best programmes I've ever been involved in. The organizers really tried to accommodate your needs, even though there was such a diversity of participants - people with different views from all over the province. The programme exposed all of us to problems we had in common in our fields....

It used to be when we brought a drunk in off the street and he went through the stages of withdrawal, it didn't bother me, it was just a joke. I had the idea that it can't happen to me. Now it's different. The programme has opened my eyes and changed my attitudes from black to white....

Overall, the resource people were excellent - they were down-to-earth and used a lot of their own personal experience, they didn't just come and read to you from a text....

Not only have we been exposed to alcohol and drug problems, but we've learned how to organize. Now if I want to get a group of concerned citizens together to tackle a problem, I feel reasonably confident and have the resources to use the media, have posters put up, get a place to meet, and get up and speak....

AppendixComponents of the Certificate Programme in Addictions

SUMMER INSTITUTE 1980 (July 28 to August 22, 1980)

The content of this four-week institute covered both knowledge of addictions and training skills for workshop leaders, under the following headings:

a. The Nature of Addictions

Dimensions of the use and misuse of addictive substances - physical, mental, emotional, social, economical, legal and spiritual.

b. Intervention Strategies

Knowledge and skills of the helping process applied in both individual and community contexts.

c. Training Techniques

Basic knowledge and skills related to design, implementation and evaluation of community seminars and workshops.

d. Practicum

Planned opportunities for the application of knowledge and skills acquired in the other content areas. Including field visits, individual and group projects.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS I (September to December 1980 after Summer Institute 1980)

A practical experience for participants to utilize their new knowledge and training skills.

Each participant was required to plan and deliver at least one, one-day workshop for community service workers in their local area during the fall of 1980.

THREE-DAY WORKSHOP (January 1981)

Theme: "Community Education Strategies"

A focus on the theory and practice of community education strategies and interventions. Participants reviewed, analyzed and refined presentation techniques used in community workshops.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE I (February to May 1981)

Theme: "Perspectives on the Problems of Addictions"

Major approaches to the definitions, causes and problems related to addictions.

SUMMER INSTITUTE 1981 (Four weeks - Summer 1981)

The contents of this four-week institute covered further knowledge of addictions and a refining of training skills for workshop leaders, under the following headings:

a. Contemporary Issues in Addictions

Advanced knowledge and skills related to current addiction problems and proposed solutions to them.

b. Community Mobilization Strategies

Knowledge and skills in community needs assessment, group dynamics and motivating community action to deal with addictions problems.

c. Advanced Presentation Skills

Analysis and refinement of education and training skills related to independent study, small-group experiences and large-group activities. Further refinement of presentation and leadership skills.

d. Advanced Practicum

Further planned opportunities for the application of knowledge and skills acquired in the other content areas.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS II (September to December 1981 after Summer Institute 1981)

A further opportunity for participants to utilize their addictions knowledge and refine their training skills. Each participant was required to plan and deliver at least one, one-day workshop for community service workers in their local area.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE II (Winter 1982)

Theme: "Theoretical and Practical Solutions to the Problems of Addictions"

Major current approaches related to prevention, treatment and ethics in the field of addictions.

THREE-DAY WORKSHOP (May 1982)

Theme: "Integration of Programme Development Techniques"

An analysis and synthesis of all of the previous content areas and practical approaches throughout the second-year programme.

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