



Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance

ISSN: 2330-3131 (Print) 2330-314X (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wasw21>

A Post-Master's Advanced Diploma and a MSW Specialization in Social Service Administration: Design, Delivery, and Assessment of Outcomes

Wes Shera & Raluca Bejan

To cite this article: Wes Shera & Raluca Bejan (2017) A Post-Master's Advanced Diploma and a MSW Specialization in Social Service Administration: Design, Delivery, and Assessment of Outcomes, Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, 41:3, 240-251, DOI: [10.1080/23303131.2016.1256362](https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2016.1256362)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2016.1256362>



Accepted author version posted online: 07 Nov 2016.
Published online: 22 Nov 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 175



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 2 View citing articles [↗](#)

A Post-Master's Advanced Diploma and a MSW Specialization in Social Service Administration: Design, Delivery, and Assessment of Outcomes

Wes Shera and Raluca Bejan

Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

ABSTRACT

Many social workers with primarily direct practice experience have been increasingly moving into upper-level administrative roles within their organizations. Unfortunately, many of these new leaders do not have an adequate base of knowledge and skills needed to manage human service organizations. In response to this identified need the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work in Toronto developed both a post-graduate diploma in social service administration, and a new social service administration specialization within its Master of Social Work (MSW) program. This article describes the design, delivery and evaluation of these initiatives.

KEYWORDS

Leadership and organizational change; management; workforce/workplace issues in human service organizations

Capacity building for human service organizations extends beyond the financial, informational, and resource-based developments to organizational culture and organizational leadership (Austin, Regan, Samples, Schwartz, & Carnochan, 2011). Managers need to understand the organizational logic of internal subsystems (i.e., social relationships in the workplace, formal structure of organizations, worker's knowledge, organizational policies), the external environment they operate in, and the interactions and interrelations between the two (Austin et al., 2011; Hopkins, Meyer, Shera, & Peters, 2014). With the increasing number of baby boomers retiring, it is anticipated that many highly skilled managers will be needed to take on these important leadership roles in a range of human service organizations in the very near future.

Many social workers with mostly direct practice experience have been moving into upper level administrative roles within their organizations and have been asked to take leadership positions as directors, managers, and administrators of social service agencies (Mary, 2005). Most of these mobile social workers are younger professionals with very little leadership-based educational background and no administrative experience (Rank & Hutchison, 2000). Many of these so called "accidental managers" (Freerksen, 2012) have moved up the organizational ladder without preparation in management per se, oftentimes lacking the macro-level educational competencies that graduates from the fields of business, public administration economics, law, medicine, or nonprofit management are fully equipped with (Austin et al., 2011; Bent-Goodley, 2002; Bliss, Pecukonis, & Snyder-Vogel, 2014).

With social workers competing for leadership positions with managers in business and public administration (Martin, Pine, & Healy, 1999), there has been increased interest regarding their leadership preparation, particularly within graduate MSW programs (Bliss et al., 2014). Traditional university programs have not been known to particularly emphasize the concept of leadership in their social work curriculum (Austin et al., 2011). There are very few educational and professional training experiences to actively prepare social workers for management careers within the nonprofit sector, despite the ongoing trend of social workers being promoted to management positions (Austin et al.,

2011; Bliss et al., 2014). The point is, however, that if management content continues to be absent from MSW programs, then most social service agencies will end up with executive directors and managers from other disciplines, such as nursing, public health, or business administration, and once again, social work values and skills in these areas will be left out (Mizrahi & Berger, 2005; Wuenschel, 2006). Many of these professions lack the social work ethical values of progressive policy development and advocacy. Principles of social, economic, and distributive justice (Barusch, 2009), or those emphasizing democratic decision making, community work, anti-oppressive practice, or the “recognition of cultural difference” (Fook, 2003; Fraser, 2000), would then be lacking in the overall orientation of social service organizations (Austin et al., 2011; Bliss et al., 2014; Packard, 2004). It is within this context that a growing interest in leadership within the social work field has steadily developed (Lawler, 2007) with the aim of educating social workers to be credible candidates for managerial jobs by familiarizing them with the day-to-day realities of management in a range of non-profit organizations (Packard, 2004).

In recent years there have been an increasing number of programs developed in this area. Examples of programs focusing on social service administration include (a) programs that are a concentration or specialization within an MSW program (FIFSW, Calgary, Chicago); (b) programs that are offered out of Continuing Education in social work programs (Stanford; San Diego State; University of Texas, Austin; Wilfred Laurier); (c) programs that require an MSW or MA in allied disciplines (University of Toronto); and stand-alone master’s programs in nonprofit management (Fordham, Penn, York, Carleton). The post MSW graduate diploma model is not as evident in social work schools in North America. Our experience does suggest that a post MSW graduate program, like the Advanced Diploma program, has higher quality standards than continuing education offerings in this area and does equip participants with a wider range and depth of skills that they can use in their organizations.

In response to the results of a survey that identified the need, in the social service sector in Ontario, for individuals with the skills and knowledge to lead and manage social service agencies, the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work in Toronto has developed both, a post-graduate diploma in social service administration and a new social service administration specialization within its MSW program. The intent of these programs was to provide a rigorous, comprehensive grounding in the key values, skills, and knowledge required by administrators, managers and leaders of social service organizations. The Advanced Diploma program addressed a recognized need for training in social service management beyond the typical MSW level of training historically or currently offered in social work. The program was primarily geared toward individuals with master’s degrees working in the social services field, at all levels of practice, from clinical work to community development and policy work. Applicants came from across the spectrum of social services, including health and mental health, child and family services, social assistance, multicultural/settlement services, education, social planning and volunteer recruitment. The Specialization in Social Service Administration within the MSW program was developed in parallel to the Advanced Diploma program and was intended to provide an opportunity for MSW students to access core courses and a practicum in social services administration. The assumption underlying this development was that both current practitioners and students completing the MSW need to be able to access education in the area of social administration. It was initially hoped that these two programs would have separate cohorts of approximately 20 students. Due to an insufficient number of applicants for both programs, those admitted were combined into one cohort for the purpose of taking core courses. In terms of financial support for the program, the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work took advantage of an opportunity offered by the Provincial Government for increased graduate growth. The addition of the Advanced Diploma Program and Specialization in Social Service Administration was an integral component of the faculty’s strategic plan and the final phase of its graduate growth plan.

Objectives of the programs

The primary goal of both social service administration programs was to provide a rigorous, comprehensive grounding in the key values, skills and knowledge required by administrators, managers, and leaders of social service organizations. The diploma program addressed a recognized need for training in

social service management beyond the MSW level of training typically offered in social work. The specialization within the MSW program is focused on providing this exposure during the completion of the MSW program.

Students in both of these programs are expected to do the following:

- develop skills in leadership, governance, stakeholder relations, and strategic planning
- develop skills in recruiting and managing nonprofit boards, developing committee structures, enhancing board-staff relations, and ensuring board succession
- gain a thorough understanding of financial management including accounting, budgeting, and forecasting
- develop knowledge and skills in human resource management and labor relations: hiring, training, managing performance, and working with unions
- learn to manage service delivery including developing appropriate organizational structures; carrying out annual planning, program development, and evaluation; selecting and maintaining management information systems; and contracting on behalf of the organization
- develop knowledge regarding legal aspects of managing social service organizations, including labor legislation and regulations, insurance and liability considerations, managing complaint processes, and working with legal staff and consultants

Admissions requirements

Students applying for the advanced diploma in social service administration had to have an MSW or a master's-level degree in a discipline related to social work with at least a mid-B grade average. Applicants for the social administration specialization had to meet the requirements of entry to the MSW program. Applicants for both programs were also required to have a minimum of 3 years work experience in the human services field. Our admissions data for the diploma program reveals a high of 16 applicants in 2010 to a low of five for 2012. The admissions officer and the program director have typically met with or had telephone conversations with potential students prior to the submission of their application to ensure eligibility for the program. The overall acceptance of admission offers, as indicated by the program registration was 80%. Since the fall of 2010, 36 students registered for the diploma program. Eight of these students later withdrew from the program due to financial challenges, work promotions, workload, and family or medical issues. At the time of our web-based survey of graduates the diploma program had 18 graduates and the specialization program had 26 graduates.

Curriculum and program delivery

Both the diploma program and the MSW specialization have four core half courses: Leadership Skills in Social Service Organizations; Financial Management of Social Service Organizations; Human Resource Management in Social Service Organizations; and Research and Quality Improvement in Human Service Organizations. Diploma students also have two half-course electives or one half-course elective and a major project. The project option provided an opportunity for learners to undertake and evaluate a component of an organizational change initiative within their practice settings. MSW specialization students were matched to social service administration practicum placements in the community and also took either two elective courses or a required course in evidence-informed practice and one elective. In order to make the program accessible to those working in the field, the program was offered in an executive model—each core course was offered one full-day every 3–4 weeks. Diploma students could complete the program over a 5-year time frame or had the option of enrolling in two half courses per term, which allowed them to complete the entire program in 1 year if they chose to. Most MSW students typically completed the specialization in 1 year. The first core courses began in September 2010. Brief descriptions of the four core courses are as follows:

Leadership skills in social service organizations

The Leadership Skills in Social Service Organizations course focuses on the skills needed by senior managers and administrations to take effective leadership within the organization and outside the organization. It is designed to develop leaders with vision, values, and strong skills in stakeholder relations. Key areas covered include:

- understanding leadership
- ethics and leadership
- working with boards of directors/governance
- stakeholder relations
- transparency/public accountability
- public engagement
- strategic planning/social entrepreneurship
- core values that determine the shape and function of organizations
- creating a physical environment that is accessible to diverse community members
- culturally competent service delivery

Financial management of social service organizations

Leaders of organizations of any size need to be able to understand and manage the finances of the agency. The Financial Management of Social Service Organizations course was designed to ensure that students acquire comprehensive skills in financial management and can apply those skills to ensure the financial health of their agency. Topics covered in this course include:

- management accounting
- budgeting and forecasting
- funding contracts
- risk management
- grantsmanship
- fundraising

Human resource management in social service organizations

The greatest asset of a social service organization is its staff, and the greatest potential liability for such organizations relates to difficulties in management of staff. Administrators need to know how to attract and keep the best people and how to protect their organization from liability relating to employment matters. The course Human Resource Management in Social Service Organizations covers key areas in human resource management, such as:

- comparison of unionized and non-unionized environments
- hiring: writing job descriptions, attracting diverse candidates, best practices for candidate selection
- orientation, training, and development
- performance management
- termination
- volunteer recruitment and management

Research and Quality Improvement in Human Service Organizations

Senior managers need to know how to structure their organizations to meet organizational goals, how to identify and measure these goals, how to implement quality assurance processes, and how to modify service delivery to meet these goals, including responding to changing needs. The Research and Quality Improvement in Human Service Organizations course covers topics such as:

- developing organizational mission and vision statements
- identifying and refining organizational goals through consensus building
- quality assurance and improvement
- annual planning
- change management
- engaging stakeholders
- developing programs through logic models and balanced score cards, monitoring processes, and analysis of data and reporting
- program evaluation and service refinement
- management information systems and outcome reporting

In our view, the core curriculum developed in this program has certainly met and, in many respects, exceeded the current state of similar programs in this area. For each entering cohort, we developed a Bio Book to help instructors gain familiarity with the students and to facilitate student networking. The director and teaching team meet on a regular basis to review new developments and make efforts to integrate, both horizontally and vertically, course content and assignments. One major structural method that has been used to facilitate this was through the use of a common core text: *An Empowering Approach to Managing Social Service Organizations*, written by Hardina, Middleton, Montana, and Simpson (2007) and published by Springer in New York.

Each core course used relevant chapters from the text, plus a wide range of other materials, which were typically included in a course pack or available via the University of Toronto Library's electronic journals collection. We have also made excellent use of the Network for Social Work Manager's (October 1, 2013) management competencies to guide the design of our courses. Course syllabi are continually updated to reflect the most current thinking in the field.

Feedback to date on the program's structure, curriculum, and length relative to learning outcomes, has been very positive. Evaluations have revealed beneficial learning outcomes across most courses. In the first few years, we carried out program evaluations every term, concomitantly with regular course evaluations. This early feedback was very helpful for modifying core courses, developing elective courses for the program, offering summer courses, and coordinating course assignments. We now have designated elective courses (Selected Topics in Social Service Administration, SWK 4642) that are offered in the winter and summer terms, and the topics for each term are identified based on a survey of students in the program every fall. The two most popular topics to date are Strategic Planning and Resource Development and Seminar on Organizational Change. Students in both programs can also take a wide range of electives including on-line courses from our MSW program.

In terms of innovation we believe the use of a core text across courses has assisted with the overall integration of the content and has highlighted the importance of a social work perspective on leadership and management. The teaching team has also identified three core themes that are infused throughout the curriculum, including *evidence-informed practice* (Austin & Classen, 2008; Dill & Shera, 2012); *client-centered care* (Linhorst, Echers, & Hamilton, 2005; McBeath & Briggs, 2008); and the importance of *working with issues of diversity* (McKenzie, 2015; Wasserman, Placido & Ferdman, 2007). We believe these themes reinforce the values of social work practice and are pivotal in social service administration. To increase accessibility for working professionals, each course had a full day class every 3–4 weeks, with a course rotation from Thursdays to Saturdays each year. Full-day sessions can be a challenging format for instructors and students but a creative mix of small group discussions, case studies, video clips, digital slide

presentations, and guest speakers can contribute to successful sessions. The assignments in all of the core courses have allowed students to apply their learning to current or previous work/practicum-related situations. They have also provided opportunities for students to reflect on their strengths and areas for further development.

Assessment of learning

The core courses of the program require a wide range of assignments, with the vast majority being completed either independently (on their own) or on/within the organization/practica they work in. They provide students with an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge and develop skills in managerial processes. Some of these assignments have included

- leadership self-assessment to determine strengths and areas for continuing work in emotional and social intelligence and managerial competencies (NSWM)
- development of a strategy for organizational change related to an area of concern in their organization
- reviews of financial reports
- program proposals with fully developed budgets
- detailed human resources case analysis
- development of a strategy to deal with a recruitment, empowerment, or retention issue
- scan of organization accountability processes
- development of a program logic model and strategy for evaluation

Diploma applicants are typically individuals who have been working in the field for some time (5–20 years), have increasingly taken on administrative work, or have been promoted to a supervisory, team leader, or middle manager position and find that they do not have the leadership or management knowledge and skills needed to be more effective in their new positions. Many, typically, focused on developing their MSW practice skills and did not anticipate being in administrative roles. Others welcomed the shift of roles and were enthusiastic about being good leaders. We had a systematic admissions process that resulted in the selection of a new cohort each year. While we would have liked a larger applicant pool, the economic recession, starting in 2008, had a significant impact on many social workers' sense of job security. This insecurity coupled with program fees higher than those charged for continuing education; agencies that cut staff budgets for external professional development; and organizations that developed their own internal leadership training programs converged to have an impact on the number of applications for admission to the program.

In spite of these challenges we have been able to admit a small diploma cohort each September, who were integrated (for core courses) with students taking our MSW specialization in social service administration. MSW students enrolled in the specialization also had to meet the requirement of a minimum of 3 years of human services work experience. The teaching team has consistently commented on the extensive experience and intelligence that this combined group has brought to the learning process.

In terms of completion rates, there were 18 diploma students that had graduated from the program at the point when the survey was conducted. Their average completion time was 1.72 years. Many have enrolled in the program on a part-time basis because of full-time work commitments. As mentioned earlier, we have had 8 diploma students withdraw from the program for a wide range of reasons including financial challenges, work promotions, heavy work load in their place of employment, course workload, and family and medical issues. Twenty-six MSW specialization students had graduated, most within a 1-year time frame.

In terms of assessing the quality of students' educational experience, and teaching and supervision, we have relied on two major sources of data. The first is a complete set of course evaluations that clearly

demonstrate that the core courses were very well received. Students' ratings were excellent for three of the four courses and, in most cases, they exceeded the faculty's overall mean institutional ratings. Students have commented positively on the knowledgeable instructors, the professional experience of guest speakers, the applied nature of the assignments, the quality of dialogue, and the positive class climate. The financial management course was initially not rated as well, but this is a difficult and unfamiliar topic for many of the students and can be quite challenging to teach. Drawing on the yearly feedback, the course has been substantially improved and it has received very good ratings in recent evaluations.

The second source of data, and the primary focus of this article, was a web-based survey to assess the quality and post-program impact of the learning experience of graduates of both the diploma and the specialization programs.

Evaluation of impact

While ongoing formative evaluation (course evaluations and program evaluations) were used to modify and fine tune the program there was a need to determine the impact of the program on participants and organizations once they had completed the program and were engaged in work roles in social service organizations. The Social Service Administration Alumni Survey was developed in January 2014, cleared through the university ethics process and launched electronically, via Fluid Surveys (a web-based survey platform). Follow-up consisted of several reminders to increase the response rate. This survey of graduates consisted of several components including questions on each of the core courses, questions on the personal, professional, and community impact of their completion of the program, and questions regarding the impact of their new knowledge and skill on their organizations. Significant opportunity was also provided to encourage qualitative comments on the questions asked. The research team selected an academically validated questionnaire, the Leadership Program Outcomes Measure, developed by Black (2006) and in collaboration with Earnest (2009) to evaluate the outcomes and impact of executive leadership programs. It was determined that the instrument could be adapted to assess the impacts of the social service administration diploma and the specialization program on graduates. This questionnaire, was selected as the core instrument within the web-based survey designed to assess the impact aspects of the program.

Graduates from the diploma and specialization programs (since 2010) were invited to participate in the survey ($n = 44$). We received 20 responses, for an overall return rate of 46%. Nulty (2008) argues that online surveys are much less likely to achieve response rates as high as surveys administered on paper. It is essential, however, to minimize nonresponse error by comparing the profile of survey respondents to the composition of those who had completed the program. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of respondents. This profile is very similar to that of the students enrolled in both programs (as determined from the annual Bio Books for each incoming student group). While the respondent profile does reflect the overall student body, it must be noted that this actual number of responses is low and allows only basic descriptive analyses, hence it should be considered exploratory and limited.

Learning from courses

Graduates were asked in the survey to reflect on the core courses taken during their study and to rate (on a 5-point Likert scale—a *great deal* to *not at all*) the major areas of learning within each of these courses. The regular course evaluations have previously indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the required courses.

In the area of leadership skills, respondents seemed to have learned the most in the area of *organizational change* as indicated by a significant majority (69% a great deal; 26% a lot). *Understanding leadership* (37% a great deal; 53% a lot) and the area of *strategic planning* (26% a great deal; 52% a lot) were the next highest areas to contribute toward increasing students' learning. Several students stated that the leadership self-assessment exercise has made a significant contribution to their awareness of their emotional and social intelligence. The remaining components of the course received very good ratings.

Table 1. Summary of respondents' demographic characteristics.

| | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Program year (<i>n</i> = 20) | | |
| 2010 | 9 | 45% |
| 2011 | 6 | 30% |
| 2012 | 5 | 25% |
| Student status (<i>n</i> = 20) | | |
| MSW full time | 10 | 50% |
| Advanced diploma full time | 6 | 30% |
| Advanced diploma part time | 4 | 20% |
| Age (<i>n</i> = 20) | | |
| 31–50 | 15 | 75% |
| Under 30 | 4 | 20% |
| 51+ | 1 | 5% |
| Racialized status (<i>n</i> = 20) | | |
| White | 13 | 65% |
| Racialized | 7 | 35% |
| Gender identity (<i>n</i> = 19) | | |
| Female | 18 | 95% |
| Male | 1 | 5% |

Participants' qualitative comments, as illustrated (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006) in the following quote, were also reflective of their overall satisfaction with this course:

When I began the SSA with U of T, I was a director in the social service organization I work at. I found this course to be extremely valuable to my role and it also helped me towards my future role as Executive Director.

Areas of focus in the financial management course receiving positive responses included: management/accounting (37% a lot); budgeting and forecasting (37% a lot); and service effectiveness (32% a lot). However, students did not perceive this course as being as helpful as they had hoped. The majority of respondents who had taken the course in its earlier development were not satisfied. It should be noted that course evaluations, from later offerings of the course in subsequent years, have documented more-positive responses. It also should be noted that this is a difficult course to teach. Most students do not engage enthusiastically in this content area and find it a particularly challenging area.

Students perceived the course on human resources management very positively in relation to their learning experience. Well over half of the respondents indicated in their ratings that they had learned a great deal or a lot in all but one of the content areas of the course (volunteer recruitment). A major strength of the course was the practical applicability of the concepts and tools used in the course. Only a few students identified areas for improvement. Open-ended responses also revealed students' satisfaction with the course in general but with the instructor as well. A few of these comments included: "Absolutely fantastic course. [The instructor] was able to make the course material interesting and relevant" and "This course was extremely useful and I appreciated it greatly."

Students identified the program logic model (a great deal 78%; a lot 17%) and data evaluation techniques (53% a great deal; 42% a lot) as the components that they learned most about in the course on research and quality improvement. Again students noted the direct applicability of the course material to their work or practicum settings. The ratings for other course components were also very positive. Illustrative comments included: "Brutal course but learned the most in this one. I have to tell you it is the one that I use the most, loved the instructor" and "This was a terrific course. The material was heavy but the professor was quite helpful as was the class. The learning opportunity was awesome."

Overall utility of the program

When asked about the knowledge and skill areas that students found most useful since graduating, most respondents indicated that understanding leadership and management was the most helpful area of

learning from the program. Skills related to organizational change and quality assurance were next. Budgeting and strategic planning were mentioned by only a few graduates.

Impact of the program

To determine the personal, professional, organizational, and community impact of the program, an outcomes assessment component was included in the survey. As was previously mentioned the team selected an academically validated survey tool that had been designed to evaluate the outcomes of executive leadership programs and was thought to be adaptable to the evaluation of the diploma and specialization programs. The EvaluLEAD theory of leadership development and the Leadership Program Outcomes Measurement (LPOM) Survey (Black & Earnest, 2009) was selected as the primary focus of the evaluation. The personal-, professional-, and community change dimensions of impact were operationalized in the survey. Each dimension had a number of items that respondents rated on a 5-point Likert scale (*a great deal to not at all*). Organizational impact was assessed using a yes/no response format. Open-ended space was also provided with the questions so that respondents could make comments or add reflections. The overall results are provided in Table 2.

Personal Impact

Participants noticed substantial personal changes as a result of their enrollment in the social service administration programs ($M = 3.26$). The changes receiving the highest mean ratings were those related to overall growth (3.82), increased levels of self-confidence (3.68), creative thinking (3.59), and leadership (3.37). Respondents' qualitative comments reconfirmed their quantitative ratings. Indeed, accounts of increased confidence and leadership abilities were palpable skills that respondents felt they were left with upon graduating the program. Illustrative quotes included: "I feel more confident taking a leadership role in various projects and making suggestions as to what gaps need to be filled and how that can be accomplished"; "I have an increased level of self awareness and more confidence in my leadership competencies"; and "I truly believe I am a better leader as a result of this program."

Increased levels of social and emotional intelligence and increased familiarity with management practices were identified as important developments in the participants' leadership journey. Illustrative comments include: "The SSA program has elevated my creative thinking and emotional intelligence" and "I feel more confident in knowing what best practices in management look like: writing grant proposals, developing logic models etc."

Professional Impact

Professional changes were identified in many areas (overall $M = 3.20$). Earning power (3.70) and more responsible organizational roles (3.70), knowledge sharing efforts (3.64), professional development (3.35), and problem solving skills (3.17) received the highest ratings by the respondents. Although work promotions were only indicated by a few, participants made enthusiastic comments that directly attributed their promotion to their participation in the program: "I was promoted to Executive Director through a succession planning process" and "New, better job, new organization, higher salary."

Table 2. Overview of participant ratings of program components and outcomes.

| Overall Likert scores: Questions (1–5 scale) | Likert 1: Assessment of personal impact | Likert 2: Assessment of professional impact | Likert 3: Assessment of community impact |
|--|---|---|--|
| Number valid | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Mean aggregate rating | 3.26 | 3.20 | 2.94 |
| Number of subscale questions | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| Chronbach's alpha score | CA = 0.828 | CA = 0.902 | CA = 0.939 |

Once again, the knowledge and skills acquired through the SSA program, boosted participants' confidence and ability to make management-related decisions, to untangle challenging situations, to better understand the complexities of their work, and to have the courage to seek opportunities for newer and more rewarding careers. Related comments included: "As I graduated from the SSA program, I encountered some changes at work. I used the concept of change management I had learned in the Leadership Course and was able to achieve results with my team members" and "I applied for the Executive Director position at my organization once completing the program, which I would not have done otherwise."

Organizational impact

In terms of organizational impact we used a yes/no question to determine whether graduates' program experience had led to increased involvement in a range of areas within their organizations. Respondents indicated that the program had a positive impact on their organizational involvement in the areas of program evaluation (73.3%); human resource challenges (73.3%); liaison with stakeholders (68.8%); evidence-informed practice (62.5%); the development of new partnerships (56.3 %); and increasing organizational transparency (56.3%). These areas of increased involvement reflect very well on the utility of the program's curriculum to the realities of a diverse range of activities in graduates' human service agencies. The results also identify areas within the curriculum that need strengthening.

Community impact

While the mean rating ($M = 2.94$) of community impact was lower than other domains (which understandably takes more time), respondents did identify areas wherein the program experience led to increased involvement in the community. These areas included: Toronto-wide networking (56.3%); a stronger vision for community change (56.3%); a stronger commitment to social justice (50%); and involvement in championing a new cause (50%). A few quotes illustrate this increased activity: "I have become more aware and have skills and an understanding of how I can support my community by being a good manager"; "I can also support staff members to develop their own skills and in turn effect community change"; and "I've become involved in the beginning stages of a new community association in my area."

Overall impact

Respondents were asked to rate the overall level of change that resulted from their participation in the program. The mean rating of overall impact was 3.87, and a large majority (74.3%) indicated that there had been a significant or very significant overall change (personal, professional, organizational, community) as a result of participation in the program.

Conclusion

This review of the Advanced Diploma and Specialization in Social Service Administration at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work has described the creation and implementation of an innovative program designed to help social work practitioners and MSW students gain knowledge and skills to become leaders and managers in the human services field. The experience of those taking the program has been very positive both during and after the completion of the program. Graduates were able to specifically identify a range of impacts that are attributable to their participation in the program. In spite of these positive outcomes, we have found it challenging to secure sufficient admission numbers to warrant the continuation of the diploma program. Some of the factors that have been identified by students and the teaching team, as contributing to this lack of demand, include:

- The program is perceived to be expensive.
- The two culture dynamic in class (diploma and specialization students combined) impacts the depth of learning.
- Academic course requirements while working full time are challenging.
- Many potential applicants take continuing education courses.
- There is significant competition from other programs.
- Term *diploma* is problematic and typically more connected to college programs.
- Most agencies no longer provide professional development monies for their staff.
- Increasing number of agencies are providing leadership/management training in-house.
- Economic recession has had an impact on workers ability to spend on further education.

Over the past several months the faculty has been considering a number of options for responding to the current situation. While the decision has been taken to phase out the Advanced Diploma in Social Service Administration over the next few years, there does appear to be a commitment to maintain and enhance the Specialization in Social Service Administration within the MSW program. The faculty is also developing a continuing education Certificate Program in Human Services Management and Leadership for practitioners. This continuing education certificate program will be offered in collaboration with the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies.

Further research is needed to explore the challenges encountered in delivering this program and to develop a more in-depth understanding of what type of programs and/or modes of delivery might be more effective for learners in both MSW and post-MSW programs in the area of social service administration. A major area of future development is the need to design programs that infuse principles and practices of management and leadership that are congruent with social work. Our emphasis on evidence-informed practice, client-centered care and working with issues of diversity were very well received and can be expanded.

The challenge for all schools of social work is to provide high-quality educational opportunities for those who wish to advance into supervisorial or managerial roles. Doing so requires an understanding of the barriers that practitioners face, not only in terms of their personal and professional lives, but also within their organizations, their interorganizational networks and the communities they work in. Social workers have a solid set of competencies that can be employed in managerial roles. They can provide leadership in supporting interdisciplinary teams, employ strategies of empowerment in working with staff, work effectively in collaborations with a wide range of agencies, and advocate for policy/resource changes at all levels of governance. In particular, they can bring a client-centered, evidence-informed approach to management practice that is much richer and more capable of achieving social justice objectives than the "managerialistic" trend that is increasingly dominant in the human services today.

References

- Austin, M., Regan, K., Samples, M., Schwartz, S., & Carnochan, S. (2011). Building managerial and organizational capacity in nonprofit human service organizations through a leadership development program. *Administration in Social Work, 35*, 258–281. doi:10.1080/03643107.2011.575339
- Austin, M. J., & Claassen, J. (2008). Implementing evidence-based practice in human service organizations: Preliminary lessons from the frontlines. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 5*(1–2), 271–293. doi:10.1300/J394v05n01_10
- Barusch, A. S. (2009). *Foundations of social policy: Social justice in human perspective* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Bent-Goodley, T. B. (2002). Defining and conceptualizing social work entrepreneurship. *Journal of Social Work Education, 38*(2), 291–302.
- Black, A. M. (2006, October). *Leadership Program Outcomes Measure-LPOM*. Paper presented at ILA Conference, Chicago, IL.
- Black, A. M., & Earnest, G. W. (2009). Measuring the outcomes of leadership development programs. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 16*(2), 184–196. doi:10.1177/1548051809339193

- Bliss, D. L., Pecukonis, E., & Snyder-Vogel, M. (2014). Principled leadership development model for aspiring social work managers and administrators: Development and application. *Human Services Organizations Management, Leadership and Governance*, 38(1), 5–15. doi:10.1080/03643107.2013.853008
- Corden, A., & Sainsbury, R. (2006, March). *Using verbatim quotations in reporting qualitative social research: Researchers' views*. University of York, York, UK: Social Policy Research Unit.
- Dill, K., & Shera, W. (Eds.). (2012). *Implementing evidence-informed practice: International Perspectives*. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Fook, J. (2003). Critical social work: The current issues. *Qualitative Social Work*, 2(2), 123–130. doi:10.1177/1473325003002002001
- Fraser, N. (2000). Rethinking recognition. *New Left Review*, 3, 107–120.
- Freerksen, A. (2012). From clinician to administrator: Skills, struggles, strengths, and strategies. *Advocates' Forum*, 1–12. Retrieved from <http://ssa.uchicago.edu/skills-struggles-strength-and-strategies>
- Hardina, D., Middleton, J., Montana, S., & Simpson, R. A. (2007). *An empowering approach to managing social service organizations*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Hopkins, K., Meyer, M., Shera, W., & Peters, C. (2014). Leadership challenges facing nonprofit human service organizations in a post-recession era. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance*, 38(5), 419–422.
- Lawler, J. (2007). Leadership in social work: A case of caveat emptor? *British Journal of Social Work*, 37(1), 123–141. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bch404
- Linhorst, D. M., Eckers, A., & Hamilton, G. (2005). Promoting participation in organizational decision-making by clients with severe mental illness. *Social Work*, 50(1), 21–30. doi:10.1093/sw/50.1.21
- Martin, M. E., Pine, B. A., & Healy, L. M. (1999). Mining our strengths: Curriculum approaches in social work management. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 18(1–2), 73–97. doi:10.1300/J067v18n01_08
- Mary, N. L. (2005). Transformational leadership in human service organizations. *Administration in Social Work*, 29(2), 105–118. doi:10.1300/J147v29n02_07
- McBeath, B., & Briggs, H. (2008). Designing client-centered, performance-based human service programs. Chapter 8. In L. Ginsberg (Ed.), *Management and leadership in social work education* (pp. 126–139). Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.
- McKenzie, K. (2015). Issues and options for improving services for diverse populations. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 34(4), 69–88. doi:10.7870/cjcmh-2015-012
- Mizrahi, T., & Berger, C. S. (2005). A longitudinal look at social work leadership in hospitals: The impact of a changing health care system. *Health and Social Work*, 30(2), 155–165. doi:10.1093/hsw/30.2.155
- Nulty, D. D. (2008). The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: What can be done? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(3), 301–314. doi:10.1080/02602930701293231
- Packard, T. (2004). Issues in designing and adapting an administration concentration. *Administration in Social Work*, 28(1), 5–20. doi:10.1300/J147v28n01_02
- Rank, M. G., & Hutchison, W. S. (2000). An analysis of leadership within the social work profession. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 36(3), 487–502.
- The Network for Social Work Management. (2013, October 1). *Human Services Management Competencies*. Retrieved from <https://socialworkmanager.org/competencies/>
- Wasserman, I. C., Placida, V. G., & Ferdman, B. M. (2007). Dancing with resistance: Leadership challenges in fostering a culture of inclusion. In K. M. Thomas (Ed.), *Diversity resistance in organizations* (pp. 175–199). London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Wuenschel, P. C. (2006). The diminishing role of social work administrators in social service agencies: Issues for consideration. *Administration in Social Work*, 30(4), 5–18. doi:10.1300/J147v30n04_02