

CAN COMMUNAL SERVICES BE CLASSIFIED AND EVALUATED?

URI YANAY, PH.D.

*Paul Baerwald School of Social Work, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Jerusalem, Israel*

Jewish communal programs can be classified and evaluated according to a system using the three parameters of program objectives, type of clientele, and degree of continuity. This system is useful not only in evaluating a program at one point in time but also in indicating the changes that it undergoes over time. This system has been in use since 1976 in the Israel Association of Jewish Centers.

Communal work encompasses a wide variety of programs. This article suggests a classification system for these programs according to their objectives, degree of continuity, and type of clientele. Based on these distinctions, eight basic types of communal programs can be observed. This system of classification can be used to define, monitor, and evaluate different programs provided at one point in time, as well as to indicate changes that a given program underwent over a period of time as reflected by graphic presentation of its location in a spatial cube created by the three continua of program objectives, program continuity, or type of clientele. This approach has been practiced and found to be useful by the Israel Association of Community Centers since 1976.

THE RATIONALE

The imposition of constraints on resources for social services creates an urgent need to plan more efficient and effective programs. This, in turn, requires systematic evaluation based on a comparison of alternatives. This article presents a conceptual tool to enable differentiation among the various programs offered to communities and their classification according to well-defined, established criteria.

Presented at the World Conference of Jewish Communal Services, Jerusalem, Israel, July 4, 1989

The ability to differentiate between one program and another is the basis for any systematic, scientific approach. It must be done through definition, enumeration, and comparison. Any planning or evaluation effort—using either quantitative or qualitative methods—must be based on such a process (Yanay, 1985). It enables the decision maker, whether professional, executive, or evaluator, to distinguish among different communities and the programs they provide and to compare between past and present, planned and implemented programs in one given community.

Among the factors commonly used to classify programs are their program characteristics: the providing organizations or agencies; the subject, type, or domain of a program; the number of participants or beneficiaries; the group characteristics (mainly age, sex, or geographic origin of participants); the cost of activities; staff and leadership; supervision; program location; and the like (Abt, 1970; Kirschner, 1966; O'Donnell & Reid, 1972; Salzberger & Rosenfeld, 1972; Zald, 1970). Although such listings facilitate a somewhat systematic approach, they are characterized by an inherent weakness that derives from their emphasis on *external*, administrative factors, rather than on the *internal* characteristics that emerge from the underlying concept of the program, its goals, and objectives.

Assuming that local communities provide programs as means to meet planned

social ends, then conceptually the evaluation of any given program ought to be done by relating and comparing internal, well-defined conceptual and programmatic characteristics and not only external, administrative factors. The model described herein evolved from empirical work and observation in communal services in Israel and abroad (Yanay, 1989). The resulting classification system has proved useful for monitoring and laying the foundations for the evaluation of alternative modes of intervention.

**FIRST PARAMETER: CONTINUITY
OF PROGRAM—ONE
TIME VERSUS ONGOING**

The first parameter characterizes the program according to its continuity. Continuity is measured by the period of time during which a program is provided by an agency on a regular and consistent basis. Some programs are one-time events, and others are ongoing, offered over an extended period of time. As for the clients, some programs may be needed, enjoyed, and consumed on a one-time basis only, such as visiting an exhibition, attending a special lecture, receiving a physical examination, or participating in a flea market.

Continuity is useful as a principle of classification inasmuch as it represents a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the implementation of any planned process. The assumption is that, if any process is to be planned and a social goal is to be achieved, a mechanism allowing for prolonged (interpersonal) interaction must be developed. The program must therefore be a continuing one. This also provides reassurance and security to the local population that, whether or not they use the service, it is there to be consumed. A continuing program also opens the arena for reciprocal adaptation between an agency and its environment. It facilitates greater coordination of effort among agencies and bonds individuals and groups in the population into a process either as clients or service providers.

The concept of ongoing programs is in itself complex. It is possible to distinguish between two types: (1) those to which each meeting is a direct outgrowth or at least dependent upon that which preceded it (adult education, treatment groups, retraining programs, etc.) and (2) those to which the program is ongoing but each interaction is separate and independent, e.g., hot lines, babysitter services, and information and referral services. In the former, a process is assumed for attaining a given goal, whereas in the latter the mere existence of a service in the community may be important, as individuals and families use it when needed.

Although agencies sometimes define programs as short-term and long-term, these terms are relative and vary from agency to agency. What is considered short-term in one may be viewed as long-term in another. The average program cycle in one community may be 3 months, whereas in another location it may last a year. It is difficult therefore to assign absolute values to the time factor. Consequently, here, too, a continuum is useful, allowing the local community to define a one-time cycle in its own terms.

**SECOND PARAMETER: TYPE OF
CLIENTELE—CHANGING VERSUS FIXED**

The second parameter characterizes programs according to the requirements of participation. In some programs enrollment is open to the general public on a "come-and-go" basis; in others, constant participation is required. In the latter case, participants may have to commit themselves as a means to ensure continuity of attendance of a fixed group of people. In the extreme case, there may be a legal requirement to participate; for instance, a youth attending an activity group under court order as a condition of parole.

This parameter is useful for purposes of classification inasmuch as it too represents a necessary, but insufficient, condition in any planned process. Again, on the assumption that the local population is stable, it is

not sufficient that the program itself be ongoing; there must also be some obligation of ongoing attendance by the same group of participants.

As with the first parameter, the type of clientele is not a purely dichotomous variable. It can be represented along a continuum at one end of which there is no prerequisite of constant participation and at the other end of which regular participation is a precondition. Examples of the first type include attending a lecture or lunch club, and at the other extreme are such activities as a rehabilitation process and therapeutic groups at a local agency.

For both the client and agency, client participation represents a kind of contract that defines the level of enrollment, the obligation of the client to participate, and, very often, the required payment for services. Paying for a service minimizes the uncertainties characterizing service agencies and their negotiation with clients. Some agencies guarantee a given program only if a fixed clientele is secured. In cases where it is not, the program may be cancelled or perhaps redefined as a series of one-time events for which the risk of operating costs is relatively low.

By crossing the two continua described, a classification is suggested of four major types of programs:

1. Ongoing program with fixed clientele
2. Ongoing program with changing clientele
3. One-time program with fixed clientele
4. One-time program with changing clientele

Up to this point, the continuity of the program and its clientele has been the basis for classification, allowing for the above four types of programs. The user is free to select the third parameter that will give this classification an additional dimension, either theoretical or practical. One can suggest that the program subject (education, social, sport, art, culture, etc.), initiator (local or outsider), staff, fees, or other variable having theoretical or practical value be used for this third parameter. In a study based on this classification (Yanay, 1982),

the third parameter selected was that of program objectives.

THE THIRD PARAMETER: PROGRAM OBJECTIVES—SERVICE VERSUS CHANGE ORIENTED

For theoretical and evaluative purposes, the third parameter selected in the previous study (Yanay, 1982) differentiated between change and service objectives of a program.

Programs usually have an objective that is defined in social terms (Etzioni, 1961). It is the desired social end at which the program is aimed, on either the individual, group, or community level (Algie, 1975). Some social programs are aimed at maintaining the status quo while minimizing tensions and stress, and others aim to initiate a change in the existing social balance and create new social situations (O'Donnell & Sullivan, 1969). Thus, a program may attempt to meet the needs of a particular individual or group in distress by compensating for deficits or alternatively by providing tools for changing the situation. For example, in the case of occupational re-entry of the handicapped worker, service organizations can (1) provide sheltered workshops and occupational activity within the framework of the individual's limitations or (2) rehabilitation, which results in an improvement in capabilities and the means for coping with and participating in the general labor market (Shapira, 1974).

The role of "people-changing organizations" has been discussed in the literature (Hasenfeld, 1972; Vinter, 1963). Perlman and Jones (1967) identify a continuum ranging from "service-oriented" activities on one end to "change-oriented" activities and community development on the other. The location of a social program on this continuum is determined by the degree to which the aim is preserving the status quo as opposed to generating change.

Often, over the course of time, programming goals shift from a change to service organization or in the other direction, from service to change (Macarov & Golan, 1973). Thus, for example, the tenant committee,

established as a task force for initiating desired changes in housing conditions, may become, over time a service mechanism that provides opportunities for social and leisure-time activity. Similarly, a child care program, started to help working parents by caring for their children while they are at work, may become a vehicle for parents to bring about change through local organization.

Perlman and Jones (1967) hold that, for both internal and external reasons, service and change functions cannot be integrated. On the internal level, services, by their very nature, tend to delay change, whereas the absence of a service or dissatisfaction with the level of services is likely to expedite change. On an external level, the status of the agency in relation to its organizational milieu differs when the focus is on services as opposed to change. In the first case, interorganizational cooperation is encouraged; in the second, there is a threat to the existing equilibrium among organizations at the local level.

The definition of service versus change oriented is not dichotomous. Rather, this variable can be represented on a continuum along which any program can be empirically located and assigned a value. For example, a community work project, such as organizing tenants for cleaning the neighborhood,

can be defined as a service to the community, as a step in inducing change, or as a program located along this continuum, at a given distance from its abstract poles.

INTEGRATION OF THE THREE PARAMETERS

Each of the three parameters described above can serve as a principle for classifying programs under communal work:

1. Type of clientele is represented on a continuum ranging from changing to fixed.
2. Program continuity is represented on a continuum ranging from one time to ongoing.
3. Program objective is represented on a continuum ranging from service to change.

The integration of these parameters can be represented both in a three-dimensional space as shown in Figure 1 and in tabular form (Table 1).

- **Program type I:** Service-oriented ongoing program with fixed clientele. Includes all regular programs that serve a given number of participants. The services are usually given in kind. Among the various

Table 1.
A CLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNAL SERVICES

Type of clientele	Program Objectives			
	Service-Oriented		Change-Oriented	
	Fixed clientele	Changing clientele	Fixed clientele	Changing clientele
Ongoing program	Type I Hobby class, senior citizen club	Type II Lunch club, babysitter service	Type V Vocational training, treat- ment group	Type VI Legal advice bureau, educa- tional game library
	Type III Summer camp, planned travel activity	Type IV Lecture, bazaar, performance	Type VII Immigrant organization forum, immunization	Type VIII Emergency tenants' meeting, introductory meeting of single- parent families

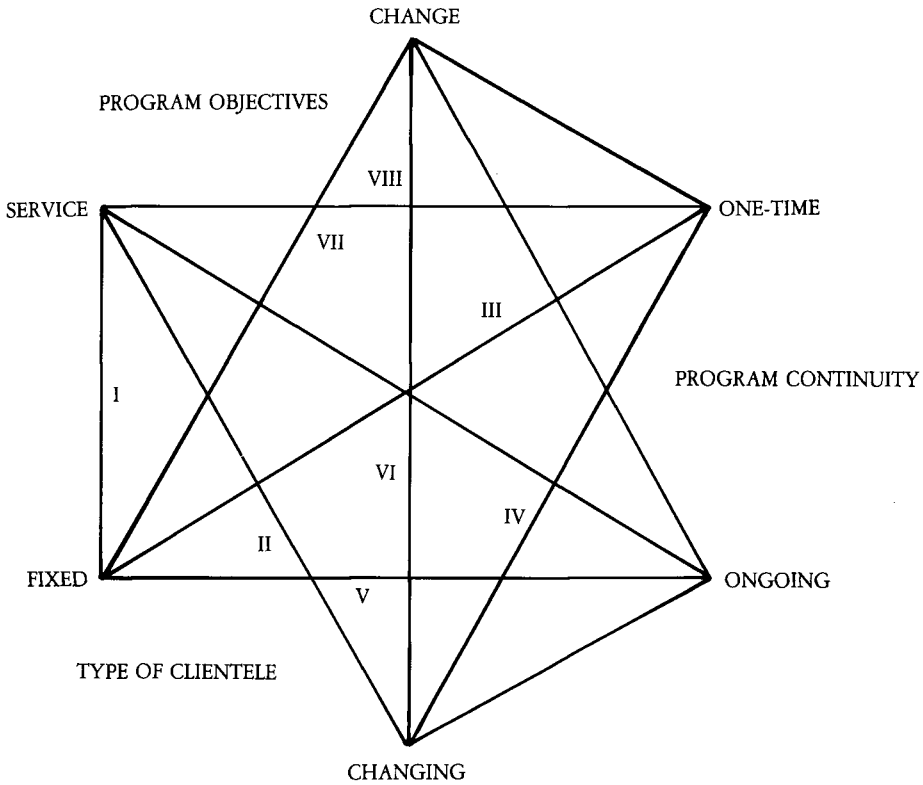


Figure 1: A three-dimensional presentation of a classification of communal services.

programs of this type are hobby classes, senior citizen clubs, and sheltered workshops.

- **Program type II:** Service-oriented ongoing program with changing clientele. Includes all services offered on a regular basis for any number of participants. The public can join the program on a one-time basis, such as a babysitter service or lunch club.
- **Program type III:** Service-oriented one-time program with fixed clientele. Includes all one-time activities offered at a given time with predetermined participation, such as summer camps and travel activities.
- **Program type IV:** Service-oriented one-time program with changing clientele. Includes all one-time activities open to the public, such as a lecture, a bazaar, or a performance.
- **Program type V:** Change-oriented ongoing program with fixed clientele. Includes all ongoing programs for a predefined population with an aim toward change, such as vocational training (or retraining) or treatment groups.
- **Program type VI:** Change-oriented ongoing program with changing clientele. Includes all ongoing programs provided for any number of participants where the public can join or depart at any time, such as a legal advice bureau and an educational game library for children and parents (to encourage skill development).
- **Program type VII:** Change-oriented one-time program with fixed clientele. Includes all one-time activities offered at a given time for a predetermined group with an aim toward change, such as organizing elections for committees

among newly arrived immigrants or immunizing a specific group from among the elderly before winter.

- **Program type VIII:** Change-oriented one-time program with changing clientele. Includes all one-time activities open to the public aimed at change, such as directing an emergency tenants' meeting or organizing an introductory meeting of single-parent families.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This analytical system for classifying service organization activities differs from most accepted methods in its focus on the internal as opposed to external characteristics of each program. This distinction is central since the definition of clients, duration, and objectives lies at the core of any program, particularly for evaluative purposes. The combination of the three parameters conceptualized above forms a three-dimensional cube (Fig. 1) within which a given program can be located according to its definition.

The location of a program, both empirically and graphically, is significant for purposes of planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Thus, for example, it is possible by means of this classification system to determine where most programs at a given time stand and whether there has been a change in program objectives or other parameters, such as changes in program continuity or obligation to participate.

The precondition for the use of this classification system therefore is consistency. Every program must be defined a priori in precise terms according to these three dominant factors. Only if a program is carefully defined can it be located precisely in the spatial area of the cube according to its characteristics at a given point in time.

The above classification system can be used not only to classify a given program on a three-dimensional spatial cube but also to demonstrate the dynamics of that program over time. Any change in a given program will affect at least one of the

parameters described. A change can occur in each of the three dimensions, resulting in the relocation of that program in the spatial area described. If the program has not been redefined as new but retains some of its basic features, its new location within the three-dimensional cube can be examined after a given period of time. For example, a one-time mass service program, such as an open lecture on the rights of single-parent families, may yield a request for further activities on the subject. As a result, the program becomes ongoing and the core of participants crystallized. Thus, the program shifts from service to change-oriented, from changing to fixed clientele, and from a one-time to an ongoing operation.

The use of this analytical tool requires careful definition of each program. Thus, in the previous example, it is important to define the objective of the first meeting conducted by the agency. If it was planned as a one-time service, a change indeed occurred, and it can be evaluated as desirable or undesirable. If, however, the purpose was to induce change and the one-time lecture was intended to attract participants, the program can then be evaluated as a means for initiating a process of change.

It is also possible to examine the relationship between ongoing programs and a one-time event in the final stage. If, for example, a group of youth enrolled in an ongoing program that is aimed at inducing change organizes itself for a one-time mass party, it is important to know whether this party was conceived as a part of the ongoing program (and should be evaluated as such) or whether it occurred in isolation from the process, in which case it should be evaluated according to different criteria.

The suggested classification makes a dual contribution, both conceptual and empirical. Conceptually, using this classification requires the definition of the program objectives and construction. This classification facilitates the understanding of what an organization and its staff do and the level of agreement among the staff about the

objectives of a program. In addition, it makes it possible to examine the consistency of any given communal program.

The assumption is that if a program is effective in achieving the desired goal, it will be pursued and if it is not effective it will be replaced by an alternative one. However, programs are not static. They can develop new goals that, rather than being examined in terms of their original goal, may be evaluated by other quantitative, easy to measure, and impressive yet foreign criteria (Gross, 1968). Processes of goal displacement or goal shifts (Hall, 1982) take place not only because of external reasons (Zald, 1970) but also because of internal reasons, which may be related to the professional staff in the organization (Jenkins, 1977) among other factors. Using such a classification tool may serve as a means to alert program planners to such a process once it has started.

The contribution of this classification system may lie in the requirement to discuss and demonstrate the differences between the program objectives, (i.e., service versus change) and the means selected to achieve it. Such a discussion points to the level of agreement among the staff regarding the objective and the program selected. The existence of a given level of agreement may be an operational prerequisite for establishing a program and examining it over a period of time. The lack of agreement among professional staff over program objectives and the methods to reach them not only hinders the possibility of establishing a communal service but also limits the ability to examine and evaluate its achievements since there are no agreed-on criteria for such a measurement.

Here we come to the second contribution of the classification, the empirical one. After the goal and the program selected for achieving it are determined, it is then possible to place each program quantitatively on three continua. Locating a program at its initial point makes possible, after a period of time, a second examination that can define, even quantitatively, a

change in its spatial location. This change indicates the gap between what was planned and what was actually done in terms of goals or program as defined by continuity and type of clientele.

The unit of analysis in this article relates to programs and not to their components, such as sessions or discussions. The system hardly attempts to answer all the issues relating to social program evaluation, but it makes a conceptual and empirical contribution in terms of describing programs in general and in particular those operated by human service organizations. This system may be used by other welfare organizations that wish to know what they do and to what extent they adhere to their stated aims.

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