

THE PHYSICAL EDUCATOR—A JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER PROFESSIONAL *

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THE Physical Education staff of the Jewish Community Center is an essential part of the professional staff required to meet the needs of members and to support the objectives of the Center. This segment of the staff utilizes a substantial proportion of the facilities and absorbs a significant segment of the program budget. All of this is invested because of a conviction that the physical education program is a vital and effective part of the Center program. Statistically this is borne out by the use of the physical education facilities and program. However, what has not been recognized of recent years is the fact that the physical education worker is a Center worker sharing the same responsibilities as do workers with other disciplines such as social group work.

This was not always the case. In the early years of the century many an Executive and Program Director achieved his role through his functions as a physical education worker. It was in the thirties that the emphasis was placed on social work as being the basic practice in the Center. This was a result of the crying need for adjustment of persons and communities sorely wounded by the

impact of the depression. It is well to note that in the earlier decades of our century great emphasis was placed on the disciplines of the educator, and it was as recent as the early thirties that at least as great an emphasis was placed on the role and contribution of the progressive educator as any other disciplined worker functioning in the Center setting. However, during the 1930's and since, leadership has been provided by the trained social work staff member. He has been able to articulate the objectives of the Center in professional language. He has been able to identify the objectives of the Center with those of his basic professional knowledge and philosophy. Technically he has been able to sharpen such executive tools required by a growing practice as supervision, planning, interpretation and community relations.

It was within this recent framework of development that the Physical Educator assumed the role of the specialist and thus was cut off from those roles of the Center worker that affect the clarification of objectives, the planning for the total agency and the leadership function in relation to the policy making bodies. Instead he has tended to restrict his efforts within the confines of the physical areas associated with the "gym" and focus his interest on "ac-

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tivities" as differentiated from the "individuals" being served by the Center. The "physical education" worker is thus disassociated from the broad activities and objectives of the Jewish Community Center. Within this circumscribed role he does not share too often in policy making. Professional problems such as are involved in supervision, understanding and helping the persons who make up the agency clientele give way to primary concern with administration of the physical education facilities and public relations.

To be sure the description of the relative roles of the social work oriented staff member and the physical education worker may reveal a picture that some agencies will insist does not present the situation as they experience it, and indeed there are some exceptions. However, status and function is a problem of the whole field, and thus the typical experience, which is the one that has been described, is the one with which we must contend.

Why, it may be asked, is it necessary to have what looks like a circuitous backing into a problem which has been described in rather obvious, simple phrases? The answer is also simple. There is no status, no career and no assurance of adequate salary policy unless there is a foundation in a professional role that is accepted as basic to the achievement of the objectives of the agency, in this case the Jewish Community Center. It appears that such a role is as yet not defined and accepted. How to achieve it is the basic charge and challenge of this presentation.

Let us start then with an argument that contends that the responsibility for the clarification of the professional role of the physical education worker in the Jewish Community Center is shared by the physical education worker, the agency professional administration, su-

pervision and the policy-making body. The physical education worker must define for himself a frame of reference in his practice which clarifies what his professional knowledge and skill brings to achieving the objectives of the agency. This frame of reference should not be restricted to a job description which outlines specific projects and responsibilities that might apply not only to his role in a Center but in other settings including schools. Rather there should be an elaboration of the purpose of his function in the Jewish Community Center. Perhaps it would be well if he pointed out just how he participates in serving what Sanford Solender identified as the "Unique Functions of the Center." These are you may recall:

1. Furthering the personality development of the Jew.
2. Enriching the content of Jewish living in America.
3. Providing a Jewish link for the unaffiliated Jew.
4. Deepening Jewry's "sense of community" and quality of communal living.
5. Training Jewish leadership.
6. Strengthening the civic responsibility of the Jew.

He should make clear just how his skill and understanding can assist in achieving adjustment of the individual and develop sound social relationships and good health within a Jewish setting. He should make it clear that as a professional person trained as a Physical Educator and with a commitment to Center work he can:

1. Provide participants in the Center with an opportunity to learn recreational skills.
2. Develop a friendly, wholesome setting for play and "an environment for personal satisfaction, relaxation and enjoyment."
3. Offer opportunities for developing indigenous leadership.
4. Make available resources and skills to clubs and other programs identified with the Center.

Certainly other items can be added to this list.

It is well to observe at this point that the Statement of Principles on Jewish Community Center Purposes adopted in 1948 identifies the role of the professional Center worker in the Jewish Community Center as follows:

"Professional leadership should be particularly trained to understand and meet the interests and needs of the Jewish individual, Jewish groups and the Jewish community, there being a direct relationship between objectives of the Jewish Center and the program, method and personnel required to give it effect."

This follows a statement that the Jewish Community Center fulfills its functions through:

- "1. A dynamic, flexible program of recreation and informal education for the entire Jewish community.
- "2. The use of the group work method."

How then can the Physical Educator achieve the role of a Center worker as differentiated from his function as a teacher in a school system? Recognition as a constructive, creative partner of the staff team will affect status, tenure, salary and career. If the physical education worker considers himself only as a teacher placed in a Center setting then at best he is an efficient aid and technical expert serving the program created by Center oriented staff usually trained as group workers in a School of Social Work. In such a case he is considered a "specialist" and differs from other "specialists" on the Center staff only because he works full time while the dramatic "specialist" works part time. Under such circumstances his contribution is restricted and the loser is the Center member and the community. How then does the Physical Educator become identified as a Center worker? First of all he must be committed to the objectives of the Center which, by the way, are most hospitable to the Physical

Educator, for as already has been noted the carefully worded, many time considered "Statement of Principles" identifies the Center program as being "a dynamic, flexible program of recreation and informal education." Secondly, he must participate in a training program which introduces him to the objectives and techniques of the Jewish Community Center. His training as a physical education worker is geared primarily to functions in a school system. The class material as well as the practice teaching setting is related to the classroom and the school program. This experience is different from that of the social group worker who, while being trained in a School of Social Work, is being introduced to the program and structure of the Jewish Community Center through both class and field work.

Thirdly, the Physical Educator should document his contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the Jewish Community Center as well as introduce his professional insights by keeping records and writing articles and papers for consumption by the entire field of Jewish Community Center practice.

Now let us focus on the responsibility for further clarification of the role of the physical education worker on the professional administration of the Jewish Community Center. Since in the current stage of development Jewish Community Centers utilize group work as the basic practice, group workers have achieved the leadership role in the administration of Jewish Community Centers. However, the Center in conducting its program husbands staff whose professional callings are other than social group work. The most common of these is staff from the field of education.

Without question the Physical Educator is the major resource obtained from this field by the Jewish Community Center. Rather than consider the physi-

cal education worker as just an assistant to the group worker, the Center should employ the "team" approach which is taking hold as a method of practice in such areas of social work as medical and psychiatric social work and the field of medicine. This approach would permit the Center to utilize the insights and skills of the physical educator in the planning and execution of the program. The sensitivities of the trained educator, and it must be assumed that this a Physical Educator should be, would also be employed in assessing the effectiveness of the total program as well as influencing the development of policy. The Physical Educator's role within the structure of the "team" concept can then be related to all aspects of the Center program.

For instance, we know that there has been rapid growth of program for the aging. It appears that the Physical Educator's understanding of both the physical needs of people at all ages and the educative techniques can enrich the program for this group of participants and give some guidance to both insights and programs being developed by other staff. Illustrations of this are probably already in evidence. Some of the obvious areas are related to planning activity for a picnic and the introduction of a variety of physical activities in the older adult lounge. Similar contributions can be made to all age groupings and activity projects. The significant fact in this concept is the readiness to permit the professional disciplines employed in the Center to make a maximum contribution in service to the participants and the community. Status, function, role and acceptance are all important to the establishment of the Physical Educator as a Jewish Community Center professional.

Up to this point we have dealt with factors and issues that affect the Physical Educator as a professional. We argued

the rationale for the acceptance of him as a member of the professional team; we indicated what he must do in order to really be prepared to function as a contributing member of the team.

We may consider now what is implied in Center administrative practice to establish the position of the Physical Educator as a Jewish Community Center career professional. It has been pointed out that the Physical Educator's role in the Jewish Community Center is basically different than it would be in a school system. The Physical Educator entering the Jewish Community Center field therefore must consider his choice as a career choice. The conditions of work and the acceptance of his role as significant by the community are of utmost importance. Let us for a moment then concentrate on the need for Physical Educators as part of the Center team. Every Jewish Community Center incorporates as a major part of its program a Physical Education Department. In practically all of the Centers the activity of this department is guided by a Physical Educator who is employed as a full time professional. Such a staff member works evening as well as day hours, supervises other full and part time staff, coordinates his program with that of other departments of the Center and relates his skills and activities to the achievement of the overall objectives of the Center. He also assumes community organization and community relations responsibilities and must be a good administrator with an excellent personality. While a full time Physical Education Assistant worker under close supervision may have limited administrative and community contact activities he too must be a paragon of virtues and a master of skills including group work. Let us not forget that in the great majority of agencies he may be the only professional Center worker who assumes

the role of direct leadership and therefore is in a rare position to effect the development of individuals and groups. The Physical Educator is also committed to an all year round service to the Center.

This is quite different from an assignment in a school system where he works nine or ten months and has the summer to himself, where he has no evening work, where he has a schedule so fixed that he can, if he has the energy and will, take on unrelated responsibilities. Thus in attracting physical education staff to our Centers there must be introduced factors that can compete successfully with the school system for the service of capable individuals. The most important item is the difference in function, objectives and role. Here indeed we can shout with the Frenchman "Vive la difference." The Center therefore must make clear to the Physical Educator why his services are required and how he will conduct his program. This requires a good job description, a table of agency organization and a clear statement of the objectives of the Center.

Secondly, we must be able to describe the opportunities for growth and development. Is there room for advancement for the Physical Education Assistant within the agency? If not, will the field give him opportunity for growth? For the Director of a department the questions are the same. Obviously the field must be so structured that it can give assurance that qualified people will be given an opportunity to assume more complicated and challenging positions with the development of more skill through experience. Here it might be said that a career plan should take into consideration the fact that the Physical Educator in a Center should think of his life work as that of Center Physical Education Director. This requires that consideration be given to ways and means of involving him as he matures more and

more in the areas of planning, interpretation and policy making.

At this time it is appropriate to consider the factor of salary in developing professional status. There are at least two reasons why this item was not considered earlier in this paper. First of all it appeared to me that logically this is the proper place for the discussion. Secondly, and this might have been dictated by an intuitive defense mechanism, I had a feeling that no matter what was said on this subject what followed would be anti-climax.

There is really nothing exciting to say about salaries. Salaries serve a function for the agency and for the staff member. The salary structure from the agencies' point of view must be adequate to: (a) attract qualified personnel; (b) to retain personnel; (c) to provide motivation for maximum effort, interest and service.

From the staff members' point of view salary provides a living, status and tangible indication of worth. There is much more that can be said and each one of you can add in personal terms to the meaning of salary. How one structures a salary too is a matter which not only affects the Physical Educator but all members of a staff. However, there are some special problems pertaining to the Physical Educator on a Center staff.

First there is the question of the entrance salary for a person entering the field as he graduates. He must be paid at least as much as he would receive if he were entering a position in a school. What this means is not as obvious as it appears from a bland statement. Consideration must be given to some of the following items. What *other* earnings will our new teacher in the school system realize? Usually such young men can expect between three and five hundred dollars in a camp plus a hundred to two hundred dollars as a result of seasonal supplementary work such as

refereeing. Therefore, if as a field we are to compete with the school system the entrance salary for a Program Assistant should be somewhere between \$4,300 and \$5,000 depending upon the given community. Since it is possible that these figures may not apply in specific instances let us suggest that a formula that would cover most situations would require "school salary plus \$700." Since the competition with the school system is direct and uncomplicated to pay less seems to leave a residue of resentment, even with those individuals who feel more comfortable and a sense of greater self realization in the Jewish Community Center setting. Years later some of our workers feel that they are defeated because they didn't take advantage of the school system offer. The basis for such feeling should be eliminated.

Then there is the concern about an increment program. The increment should parallel that of other professional staff in similar positions. Again what is a sound increment is not something that can be stated in static terms. If we accept practice, there should be no increment smaller than about \$300. One judgment that can be made is that the larger the salary the greater the absolute amount of the increment although the percentage may not be as great.

In this series of considerations I conclude with the question of *range*. There is a growing tendency to widen the range. The range is one of the two salary factors that must be taken into consideration in structuring a career job. The other is the absolute amount of money paid. The range for the Physical Education Assistant should be broad enough to enable him to remain on such a position as long as he wishes and of course produces. He should be able to think of himself as on a par with a classroom teacher or a division head in one of the social group

work positions. Again we must be wary of a real figure such as the one quoted because the dollar and our standards are both mobile and relative. For the professional who has the capacity and desire to become the Director of a Health Education Department there should be a range broad enough so that he can achieve a salary ceiling that would parallel that of a Program or Assistant Director. This concept is most important, for only when this is done will there be tangible evidence that the Physical Education Director has status as a Jewish Community Center professional, and that the experienced person is valuable to the total agency. This would also mean that there is recognition that the Center is prepared to encourage Physical Educators committed to the Center field to make this their life work.

Since the field of teaching is involved in the concept of tenure, this is an important factor to be considered. On the whole the practice in the Center field implies tenure. To be sure not many agencies function on the basis of a written contract. Nevertheless the concept of tenure dominates the practice. With the growing acceptance of codes which make ample provision for seniority, severance and evaluation this should not be a matter of great concern.

Other personnel practices relate not only to the Physical Educator but to all staff and here I can only say that as a part of the professional team there should be continued examination of those factors which enhance work satisfactions and establish professional practice on a high level. To this end retirement and health insurance programs should be developed and expanded.

So the question may be asked again, "How do we accomplish all of this and more too?" Some answers are contained in this paper. Some may not be too succinct and sufficiently detailed. I

could hide behind a story that I came across the other day, in a release from one of the Federal Departments. It appears that there was a centipede that suffered from foot trouble! He could gain no release from his problem so he sought advice from the Wise Old Owl. After cogitating on the situation for a respectable period of time, the owl came forth with the suggestion that the centipede change himself into a mouse and thus reduce his problem 96 per cent. The centipede saw the logic of the proposal and went away. A few days later the mouse returned with the complaint

that he wasn't able to effect the transformation at which point the Wise Old Owl said, "Look, I am an executive. I simply formulate policy. The details have to be worked out by someone else." Although I think it is a good story I have no intention of assuming the owl's role. We must work together on the matter of furthering the Physical Educator's role as a Jewish Center professional within the framework of the team approach. It is in this spirit that I urge a plan of cooperation with the other professional Center workers in advancing practice, status and personnel standards.