

The Role Of Public Policy And Leadership In Workforce Investments

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a) How The Workforce And Quality Problem Gets Framed

The modern human services are notably labor intensive. Thus, whatever shapes our core beliefs or assumptions about the people in these roles will help predict the ultimate character and quality of what these systems actually produce. This may seem an overstatement to people of a particular technocratic outlook whereby people in these roles are largely seen as interchangeable. Technocratic thinking of this kind tends to emphasize that it is the formal organizations themselves that are the active agents of quality. This mechanistic view does not give proper recognition to what might be thought of as the “human basis” of quality. By this it is meant that quality of service, in its most fundamental origins, derives from within people more than that it is a product of abstract systems. If this premise is given credence, then we might well look at service systems more comprehensively than simply seeing them as an inanimate massing of structures, positions, budgets and processes. That is, that systems are not objectified “things” but rather a dynamic outgrowth of the people within them.

One limited view of the adequacy of the “workforce” would see it as being simply a matter of whether agencies were able to fill available positions with sufficient numbers of people who possessed the requisite formal qualifications. This would reduce the quality problem to simply one of finding enough workers. A more expansive view, generally widely shared, would acknowledge that having sufficient numbers of “warm bodies” would not be satisfactory if the people employed were a disappointment in terms of their performance. This view would still tend to treat the system itself as a “given”, and concentrate energies instead on getting the best or better people in place to make that system work “as intended”.

A yet more expansive view might go beyond accepting the system, on its present terms of operation, as the starting point. This would permit one to be able to look “beyond” it to other possible assumptions that could affect the problem. It does seem sensible to wonder whether putting in place a system that has relied so heavily on a transient, extensively “casualized”, and low paid workforce was very wise. The wisdom of this strategy becomes all too clearly doubtful when one looks closely at what service users and their families ultimately get when the people that work for them fit this description. Is it wise or sensible to routinely expect quality services to result from such a starting point? Even if the broader economy shifted enough to ensure that all such direct involvement positions were easily filled, there would still remain this question of whether this kind of approach offered any hope for assuring long term quality. It is also quite disturbing that the system, as presently constructed, is so deeply involved in creating such a seemingly unjust pattern of wages and benefits.

This is why it is useful to see today’s workforce crisis as presenting to us a chance to reflect back on the kinds of pivotal decisions and choices that have brought us to this point. Certainly one of these choices has been our desire to see that more and more individuals could obtain more and more services. In this, we have treated as near sacrosanct, the notion that more services equaled better by way of the lives of service recipients. Responding to meet these accelerated “quantity” goals, the service system has been expanded repeatedly. These expansions of service i.e. producing more services, has meant a very rapid growth in service delivery patterns and models that are, in practice, quite highly standardized or uniform. The models of service that have been favored have tended to be ones where a heavy dependence has been placed on using large numbers of low paid direct involvement staff positions. Thus, what has been driving this pattern of expansion are, in reality, service models into which a reliance on this kind of workforce is largely “built in”. The present workforce quality crisis has been “structured” or designed into the problem, in the form of making the use of such positions and the service models that have produced them, a “given” or cornerstone of how we have operated.

The good news in any crisis is, of course, that crises often get us to pay attention to matters that we had previously ignored or preferred to ignore. It is no different in this one in that, if we are astute enough, we can conceivably use it as an opportunity to create a quite different set of assumptions and starting points for how we “structure” or design our systems. All systems have their spoken and unspoken theories that guide their conduct, and the present one is no exception. It is important that we now speak to the kind of assumptions and theory of quality, workforce and our systems that can offer us the best chance to move forward. What follows here is an initial attempt to take up this challenge and chart a way to move ahead.

One “framing” of the problem of an insufficient workforce, is that of acting as if just getting positions occupied by even modestly competent and desirable people would itself be near miraculous in a low unemployment economy. This logic tends to put off the question of quality to the category of “to be considered later” or as being a non-issue. This is, of course, the classic formulation known as a “false choice”, i.e. setting quality and workforce sufficiency as being largely incompatible. In reality, it could well be that by keeping ones eye on what quality really is and where it ultimately comes from, it is actually more possible and probable that one’s workforce decisions will be optimal.

Public policy is premised on the assumption that it actually does matter what governments do or do not do. Governments are a decisive factor in workforce matters, simply due to the fact that the intentions of governments shape the assumptions of public spending, and this spending constitutes the lion’s share of service expenditure. In this sense, governments will, each and every year, be making investments in the workforce, given that upwards of 90% of public spending relates to FTE’s, even if these are ultimately privatized due to purchase of service. Thus the character of what is invested in will be highly predictive of what eventually shows up as a “workforce”. Consequently, what is offered here is a set of proposed “*investments*” that show the greatest promise in terms of creating a workforce that provides optimal value for dollar as it relates to the ultimate quality of the service that is yielded.

Investments are, in their essence, a set of “best guesses” at a point in time. These always represent an act of faith, as there are usually never assurances at the level of data and empiricism, which can be utterly conclusive, even if they are supportive. So, one must turn to both logic and values for guidance. What follows here are strategies that fit well with the idea that the best strategies are the ones that may not be entirely successful, but offer little by way of possible harm i.e. they will likely do some good because, by and large, they have largely done so in the past. Their second virtue is that these are consistent with what is known more objectively to act as repeated catalysts over time for improved human performance. Thirdly, these investment proposals certainly cannot be easily excluded from adaptive strategic thinking and thus provide, at the very least, a legitimate basis for starting a discussion on strategy. Nevertheless, caution is always sensible when there can be no definitive assurances given in advance in matters of such complexity.

b) Investments In Proactive Strategies For Human Resource Development

Invariably, it is only when things we have taken for granted start to unravel that we tend to take notice of them. Were this attitude to be elevated to the level of public policy, then it would take the form of the maxim “don’t act on

anything until you have to” or some such equivalent. This is a perfectly reasonable strategy if one has faith that one can leave things entirely to chance.

A more prudent strategy for public authorities would be to assume that leaving things to chance simply carries too much risk, in that it leaves them hostage to events rather than being able to influence them in their interest. It is not always possible to influence many matters, as there are always limits to the scope of public authority and action. Nevertheless, there is wisdom in devoting attention to the things that can be influenced, even if there are limits and constraints to be lived with.

This decision is to adopt a strategy of proactive engagement. It has many role implications for the government concerned. It will certainly mean the formation of cross sector planning mechanisms targeting particular and timely issues. It will require a continuous appraisal of the short and long term trends. It will also mean a commitment to stay with the issue over time, and considerable efforts to maintain and build constituencies of support for quality related human resource issues. All of these are feasible and are well within the scope of conservative government administration.

The decision to engage proactively brings with it the affirming advantage that one is not helpless, one needn't accept all things as fated, and that one can “make one's breaks” to some degree. It also allows one to change one's circumstances towards conditions that are more favorable. It allows one to take responsibility for doing what is possible even in the face of opposition. It will, above all, involve a willingness to make calculated investments to ensure better future options. A failure to engage the future will lead, at best, to either a neglect of it or perhaps a paralysis to act. Hence, some careful investments of a proactive nature, sets the stage for overcoming passivity by bringing people to decision. Not all action need be for its own sake, as it is quite possible to be deliberate and measured even in the face of uncertainty. The character of the kinds of, (potentially influential), investments that might well be possible is described in detail in the following sections.

c) Investments In Service Redesign

If, as has been suggested, one root of the present overreliance on transient, poorly paid, and casual workers is the way our services are designed, then it will likely be quite fruitful to examine whether service model redesign offers any hope. If one examines long term residential care as a dominant component of public spending, one can see that we have become highly dependent on service models that emphasize shift work, group living and a fair amount of standardization of budgets, households, pay and so forth. In fact, these sorts of models have been the cornerstone of most efforts at deinstitutionalizations, waiting list reductions and advocacy demands.

It is hard to know what is ultimately possible, as we are all hostage to what we perceive as established practice. Without conducting experiments to test new ideas we will likely stay with what we know and is “safe”. One of the difficulties with relying on standardized approaches, is that they tend to put all our “eggs in one basket”, much in the same way that monoculture in agriculture loses out on the advantages of biodiversity. The advantage of standardization and uniformity is, of course, that it relieves many people of the ambiguities that come with having to think for themselves. Nevertheless, we will never be able to escape the pattern of producing more lowly paid positions until we have models of providing service that can work well without these as a “given”.

To do this, it is very clear that we would have to be willing to “remodel” at least a portion of our present services in order to create the necessary laboratory for achieving better results for service users. Though it would be premature to attempt to describe the features of possibly more desirable service models, it would not seem too farfetched to suggest that these might partially operate much like what we have already glimpsed in many examples of what many people, (in the United States), vaguely call “supportive living”. Most supportive living has turned out to be quite viable, attractive in terms of cost, and generally seen as highly preferable by both service users and families. Thus, it offers us the advantages of a “natural” experiment to help us get a sample of the possibilities that might rest within the broader strategy of intentional service redesign.

First, it would seem that it is a balance of passion, commitment and favorable employment culture that animate the best of these. Second, that both service users and workers both experience considerably more empowerment than is usually permitted in most group living situations. Third, there is usually an intentional minimization of bureaucratic invasiveness and a commensurate strengthening of “naturalness”. Fourth, the arrangements for living, helping and working are hugely flexible and personalized. Fifth, it is values, vision and personal character that are prized more than are paper qualifications.

Sixth, it is far less likely that supportive living arrangements will collapse in economic hard times, as the key leaders and stakeholders, (staff and citizens), guiding and supervising them, tend to have a “whatever it takes” attitude. Seven, much of what is often called “need” in conventional services has often proven to actually be quite unneeded in supportive living e.g. bureaucratic individual plans, multi-disciplinary teams, professional dominance etc. Eighth, what people *actually need*, value, respect, relationship and so forth, has tended to be both seen and addressed better. Ninth, the guiding values expressed by the formal service systems are frequently better achieved in supportive living than can be said to be true in conventional models. Lastly, service users and their families flee in large numbers from conventional services, whenever real supportive living options are readily available.

The intent here is not to portray supportive living as a panacea, as these models presently also tend to rely heavily on low wage personnel, have their own shortcomings and are easily subverted from their potential. Rather, the point is to illuminate the many ways in which experimenting with other patterns of supporting people may leave us with a great deal more promising leads as to what might be better than if we settle prematurely into relatively fixed, rigid and standardized models of assisting people. Even with comparatively low wages, these workers tend to show better staying power, better suitability to the job, better morale and provide a net result that is far more encouraging from a person centeredness point of view than most conventional service models. Not all supportive living staff stay forever, nor is all supportive living of equally good quality, but this does not lessen the value of what experiments of this kind can reveal to us about what could become possible if we can liberate ourselves from getting too stuck into simply keeping the same old system going unchanged. Hence, the value of ongoing investments in the strategy of service redesign and experimentation.

d) Investments In Exceptional And Innovative People

It is a kind of hidden assumption of many approaches to the workforce issue to see the “product” of all people in comparable positions as being substantially equivalent to each other. This is reinforced by bureaucratic ideas and systems that insist on treating people as being the same. However, even the most casual eavesdropping on most organization’s gossip, would reveal the commonsense observation that it does matter who the specific person actually is that occupies a given role. In this respect, there is no substitute for talent and ability. Giving the wrong person a key role will have predictably disappointing results in terms of what gets accomplished. This highlights the necessity to ensure that both that the right people are placed where they are most needed, and that the right type of person is sought in the first place.

A system that settles for simply filling positions will have failed to address the more essential question of what kind of person could do something exceptional with this role? Not all people selected to help people with disabilities should be seen as equal. Surely, there must be people who do their work better than others as is true with all other human endeavors? The same could be said about all manner of other programmatic challenges in the system, in that some people are more suited to achieving an exceptional or distinctive result than others. Clearly, something of importance will be lost if these sorts of people are not sought and engaged. For this reason it is not particularly useful from a qualitative viewpoint to ignore the unique contribution that comes with gifted people.

These special individuals, with their unique capacities to outperform the average applicant, are usually endowed with abilities that are not easily reduced to the bland descriptions seen in most job postings. They bring with them often hard

to define traits and capacities that often seem more inborn than acquired. Yet, there is no denying that highly particular people are continuously needed and emerge in our systems and communities, and frequently take on challenges that they often seem astonishingly and ideally built for. This sense that some people were seemingly born to accomplish some things may not sit well with many bureaucratically minded persons, but the average seasoned leader is often well aware that these people exist and are effective. In fact, one of the “exceptionalities” that some of these persons may bring is the ability to recognize the exceptional aspects of others.

It would not be stretching things too much to say that one such admirably suited person, properly placed in the exact role which they are most equipped to play, may well prove to be worth more than what many less gifted people are able to accomplish with the same basic starting points. Not uncommonly, the beginnings of the rise of a particular organization to prominence can be traced to the recruitment and nurture of people of such exceptionality and virtue. Similarly, the decline of such organizations is equally traceable to whether such talent is welcomed and harnessed, or whether it is driven out or repressed. This is not meant to suggest that exceptional people are all that are needed, but it is hard to imagine the advancement of quality without them.

A special sub-category of such people would be individuals who might best be described as people possessing “leadership” in the domain that they are involved in. There does not exist a general “all purpose” type of individual who meets the description of being a “leader”. Leadership tends to be more a matter of people having specific arenas where they are most able to ensure that matters move ahead. In a “before and after” sense, those with leadership capacity are able to make things happen in their “niche” and thus become, in their presence and conduct, a key catalyst for progress and direction. There are indeed people who use this same capacity for ill, so it is not simply the presence of leadership that is needed but, more to the point, people who want to use these gifts and capacities for good results i.e. beneficial or moral leadership.

Leadership, in the sense of it we are using here, is the capacity to act to mobilize people behind worthy purposes of service regarding their fellow human beings. The many challenging situations within the world of both service and community work for this to happen, are quite varied and have attracted all sorts of people to them. We have been fortunate enough to have witnessed leadership repeatedly come from the most unexpected sources and individuals. Frequently enough, some of the best we have seen has not come from people whose “bonafides” mirror the status quo symbols of legitimacy, but from people who are outsiders to such circles. For this reason, it is often important to recognize that the catalysts that might most do us the greatest good will often come from the ranks of those who do not appear on the surface to be “leaders”. Individuals such as this are usually more interested in and convinced about the possibility of advances than are most others. This is what gives them the passion and resolve needed to

“break the mold”. They are often the sorts of people that draw like-minded people to them, and thus build momentum for what otherwise might never be attempted.

Again, it would be very deceptive to portray most people with leadership capacities as somehow being saintly or to otherwise overrate or mythologize their contribution. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine how we could ever expect advances in quality without them. It is also true that such people can be sought, identified, encouraged, developed, authorized and challenged to do even better. Thus there is no reason to see governments or agencies as being entirely hostage to whomever randomly shows up. On the contrary, it is a perfectly practical proposal that agencies and governments move the odds in their favor by undertaking what could broadly be described as “leadership development”. These would be efforts that help identify, nurture and evolve the kinds of leadership that the field needs. In most instances, it would require that the agency or system invest in locating and stimulating people with these capacities to engage and resolve the many matters needing leadership. What should not be lost is that “leadership” is a human capacity that can be deliberately and strategically strengthened and supported *if it actually exists*.

This is rarely a matter of simply investing in people at an early stage, as, even with talented people, there may be a need to develop their capacities at other stages of their involvement. Clearly, the needs of novice and untested leaders might be quite different from more senior and proven leaders. Both instances are important in terms of their consequences, and therefore it is even more crucial to see leadership development as being an ongoing or routine investment if it is to have the greatest effect. It goes without saying that not all efforts called “leadership development” can be expected to be equivalent in terms of what they eventually yield. It would not be uncommon to see resources targeted to individuals with limited leadership capacity yield only modest returns, given the weakness of the selection of candidates in the first place. Nevertheless, the shortcomings of a particular approach to leadership development do not invalidate the overall strategy itself. Leadership is always scarce, and there is much to be gained by the thoughtful stewardship of whatever is available.

e) Investments In Critical Thinking And Analysis

It is certainly painstakingly evident in many organizations that, even with the availability of abundant talented people and financial resources, it is quite possible to not succeed if those involved are not operating with high quality thinking. Working “smart” may not be a matter of innate ability so much as whether the person involved is properly schooled in what they are doing. Incompetence may well be present in people, who are otherwise quite favored with natural intelligence, if they are allowed to work with outdated, irrelevant or misguided theories. The outcome of “quality” will be quite directly tied to the merit of the theories of quality that go into its production. Thus it is very unwise

to not give proper attention to the mental contribution to quality, as disregard of this does eventually have consequences.

The conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of quality are all too often hidden from view in assumptions about the nature of “need” and human well being, and the processes that are meant to address and enrich these. What is thought to be good for people is always, for all practical purposes, a *theory* for how one should assist that person. In this field we have seen these assumptions about “what works” include things like segregation, sheltered workshops, institutions, forced sterilization, endless individual planning arrangements divorced from actual service delivery practice, and even congregate living. All of these have been or remain unquestioned orthodoxies for some people, and yet responsible people in the field have fundamentally and successfully challenged the very essence of their legitimacy. This questioning, while painful at the time, has provided us with key shifts in our practices that have undoubtedly yielded much value and benefit for the affected service users. i.e. social inclusion, supported employment, alternatives to institutions, the enactment and enforcement of human rights, person centered practice, and supportive living /individualized residential supports.

One theory might be that these shifts in practice “just happened” and, thus, these sorts of benefits would have eventually manifested even for people who had done nothing to promote their adoption. This would be very unwise to presume, as the emergence of progressive practice ought not to be anticipated where no effort has been made to “earn” these benefits. This is reminiscent of the same sort of magical thinking associated with cargo cults. A more reasoned approach would be to work from the ancient belief that if one were to stimulate thinking properly, work hard and continually challenge and test ones efforts, one could realistically expect that a certain amount of such questioning and probing would eventually bear fruit. There is, after all, a quite clear link between what the mind can grasp and the ability of the person to act on what has been ascertained. “Critical thinking” is not just some form of idle speculative thinking, but rather reasoning and analysis that is gradually improved by rigorous engagement with reality.

The production of critical thinking, particularly in a sustained and decisive way, means the provision to people of the chance to dissent, question, analyze, reflect and learn. In some instances, it also means exposing people to other people who can act to stimulate and clarify their thinking. It is predicated on the assumption that people can think for themselves and many can improve their capacities if the opportunities are provided to enable this to occur. It also assumes that there is a justifiable “people development” benefit to be derived from providing to them to experiences that may enable them to step outside their conventional worldviews. This permits them to grasp other possible approaches to the problems they face in trying to be more effectively of service.

There are a surprising number of areas of service where service users and their families feel that progress has been rather unsatisfactory. This includes having meaningful things to do in the daytime, work and employment, relationships, community inclusion, empowerment, stigma, negotiating bureaucracy, attitudes, service design and so forth. It seems realistic that there could be advances in these and other areas, providing that people turn their minds to the reasons for these dissatisfactions. Sooner or later, someone will hit upon a better way to proceed. It is important to see that this is more likely to occur first in places in the field who have “earned” this probability by putting the problem(s) “under the microscope” and rigorously and critically analyzing matters until a way forward is evident.

Part of what processes like this do are to create an appetite in people for problem solving and progress. Further, these intentional occasions for critical thinking tends to reduce the amount of time people uselessly “spin their wheels”, thereby concentrating scarce creative and intellectual time and priority on matters that merit such attention. Further, these tend to build awareness in people of what the problems actually are and commitment to their resolution. If you like, these sorts of investments ready people to engage key problems and struggle with them until headway is obtained. In this sense, these approaches constitute a reasonably powerful antidote to the insidiously difficult to overcome morass of complacency and neglect that can beset the talented and less favored alike.

It is also true that the kind of consciousness that comes with dissent, freethinking and open declaration and discussion of problems brings with it a certain instability. It may often call into question practices and interests that have enjoyed unchallenged legitimacy. It also simultaneously creates the eventual mandate for change that is needed by constructing the intellectual and theoretical justifications that will eventually respond to the challenges of the unconvinced and skeptical. This production of dissent and critical thinking rarely is as subversive as the energies that go into repressing sensible problem solvers, if one takes into account the benefits that come with better practice. Still, it is useful to recognize that while the investment in better theories and critical thinking is fruitful, it does nonetheless have the cost associated with it of creating a measure of discomfort for those who are unable to adapt to a change in thinking, and the processes that produce this result.

f) Investments In Values Engagement And Ethics

It is often observed by people in the field that there has always been a strong link between authentically internalized positive values about persons with disabilities and the type of improved treatment they receive at the hands of both services and society. This is no accidental matter, as it is axiomatic that where social devaluation exists, even at the unconscious level, the targets of that devaluation will experience poor treatment. Human beings are not “value free”, and therefore all human beings are constantly subject to some sort of evaluative

process relative to their status in the eyes of others. This evaluation is deeply influenced by the types of social beliefs and images that are held as being authoritative by society at that point in history.

We have witnessed in the history of the field the prejudicial and harmful treatment that ensues when people are not accorded worth as human beings. The reduction of persons with disabilities to the status of non-human was deeply implicated in many of the scandals and even atrocities of the recent century, such as the state murder program of the Nazi government(s), the widespread forced sterilization of persons with disabilities, the denial of adequate medical treatment in residential institutions, community opposition to persons with disabilities residing in neighborhoods, the denial of the right for students with disabilities to an education and so on. In many ways, these were some of the more notorious and odious of the transgressions against the intrinsic value and dignity of the people involved. However, the cessation of overt dehumanization does not necessarily mean that it has disappeared as an issue.

The lack of relatively more obvious instances of gross dehumanization has created a new problem in our more sophisticated and politically correct times. We are not as conscious of the ways in which values still continue to influence how people get treated, since we have been schooled by past events to disproportionately pay attention to these more overt acts and patterns. Yet, what matters today may well not be the same, given that people with disabilities are now so much more a part of community life. As had been predicted by earlier proponents of community living, the presence of persons with disabilities within community life, at least on a comparative basis to earlier times, has led to a marked reduction in the overt mistreatment of these persons.

Part of this is the everyday inclusion of such person's in the normative life of communities, and the "natural" extension to them of the overt courtesies of community life. Nevertheless, the experience of such persons of community life is hardly ideal, given that their experience of community life is still largely from the margins. Even the most cursory discussions with persons with disabilities reveals that the matters that trouble them about their lives are less now in terms of the overt *commission* of harm than through the *omission* of value being placed on them as people. This expresses itself more in what is missing from their lives than the harm that they overtly experience by way of unambiguous mistreatment. Some estimates of this more specific abuse of people place it as occurring at near twice the rate experienced by non-disabled citizens.

Perhaps the most prominent indicator of failure to value is the relatively high rates of social isolation of persons with disabilities and, in particular for many, the relative narrowness of their circles of relationship. It also reveals itself in the continued poverty of persons with disabilities, the stubbornness of negative stereotypes, the weak performance of our systems of generating open employment, the disempowerment of people relative to the service system and

professionals, the high rates of rejection of disabled infants through amniocentesis, the almost automatic and frequently illegal assigning of “do not resuscitate” orders in hospitals, the activism and resentments against special education students by regular education parents and teachers, the patently superficial “politically correct” behavior of many, and in the weak effect of the advocacy of the people themselves.

The sheer subtlety of the values transactions that underlie such conduct is very difficult to challenge because the “culprit” is, as often as not, complacency and indifference more than the affirmation of negative value. Equally, it also increasingly reflects the politics of our communities and the generally low levels of influence and priority that all poor people experience to some degree or another. Thus the values emphasis must shift from the prior focus on getting into community itself to how to advance the situation of people *once they are established in community*. Hence, we see and have been involved in for some time, the positive values challenges that relate to *the quality of community living* rather than obtaining community living itself. In an even more fundamental sense, the next era of challenges really will relate to whether much comparative value priority will be placed on the human potential of persons with disabilities. To make matters even more difficult, these are questions that go well beyond the human service workforce, as they also speak directly to what the public does or does not value.

A dimension of this problem of value that often gets obscured is what might be thought of as the harming of persons with disabilities as it would relate to whether they receive ethical treatment at the hands of people. By this it is meant whether they experience the kinds of ethical scrupulousness that ordinary citizens would insist upon. Indifference may readily express itself as a disinterest in people more than it does as the violation of legal norms. Perhaps the most common instances of this kind of poor treatment is seen in services which largely ignore the will, wishes and sensitivities of particular persons with disabilities, such that many matters which are of importance to them are allowed to languish.

The dark side of the present system ethos revealed by the “person centered” service movement is shown in the question of why do we need such a grass roots movement in the first place? We need one because of an apparently routine failure, at the ethical level, to relate to people in a “person centered” way. As such, who they actually are as a person is all too often a matter of insufficient importance to the many services that fit people to them rather than develop services with them. Beneath this service design problem lays a failure to sufficiently value the personhood of people, as well as operational ethics that serve to disenfranchise people from having a meaningful say about their own lives. It is no accident that we often lack “person centered” ethics and reflexes, though it is interesting that this is so rarely taken up explicitly as the values failure it really is. It is all the more poignant given the intense sophistication present today in the values people claim they endorse.

As has been noted in earlier periods in our history, the engagement, and examination and challenging of values is highly related to the vitality of our underlying social movements towards progress. It is values, ideology and passion that are the fuel of social change, and the absence of an emphasis on these will have predictable effects in terms of freezing matters at the status quo level. Though it is also rarely straightforwardly faced, it can also lead to dynamics of decline and decadence. The presence of widespread values complacency and even moral conceit, will undoubtedly lead to the creation of deceptive mythologies about the actual virtue of conduct involving persons with disabilities. Such self-serving masks of reality both act to inhibit real problems from surfacing, and the expression of authentically positive values and ethics.

This is evident today in the unconvincing claim by so many that all that they do is for the service user or consumer's benefit. Surely, such a systematic claim of fidelity to people is improbable, even on the surface. Yet these types of claims have become so routinized as to be reflexive, even when they are clearly mythical and magical when viewed skeptically. The problem is usually not one of sincerity, since most claimants are well intentioned and probably honorable. Rather, the difficulty is that we now collectively lack *values realism* and ethical scrupulousness as is expressed in our inability to see any longer see or give importance to the link between expressed values and actual conduct. The longer such a normative divergence is culturally institutionalized, the harder it is to have a reasonable expectation about *values being lived with painstaking integrity*.

Though it may not seem so to many people, a lack of values integrity i.e. a reliance on spoken rather than lived values, does not provide a sound basis for assuring service quality. Quality in terms of how people get treated, is actually much more likely to emerge when people *struggle* to behave honorably towards people, rather than to peremptorily assume they are already successful. We have tended to rely much too heavily on setting in place formalized expressed values than in struggling with their enactment. Hence, the next generation of investments in the domain of values, needs to transcend this fixation and move along to *the waiting challenges of values realism, values integrity, ethical scrupulousness and mythology unmasking*. Investments of this kind are hardly going to set us back in terms of progress with our "*right relationship*" with people, and they offer hope for stimulating us to move ahead on deeper aspects of quality.

g) Investments In "Right Relationship" Partnerships

Our future "workforce" ought to more properly conceived of as including what is largely an unpaid set of potential collaborators called "the community". If one looks at the many things that are now normatively sought as being desirable for the well-being of people with disabilities, one sees immediately that these cannot be intrinsically rendered by services, since their provision is utterly dependent on the cooperation of various elements of the community. e.g

relationships, employment, community participation and so on. Formal services may certainly play a role in helping or hindering their access, but the striking thing is that these “desiderata” are essentially the contributions of communities and often do not require the presence of paid services whatsoever.

Of course, when the “field” more directly consisted of supporting persons with disabilities almost entirely separate from the community in segregated settings, then the reflex to look at the “work” of the field as being done solely by staff made a certain sense. However, such a former vision of the “field”, and thus the “workforce”, is now quite misleading when one factors in the singular role the community must play if we are to succeed. This leads to the possibly radical notion that the paid workforce is only one of the workforce(s) that now constitutes the bulk of the active core players in the field.

Professionals, in particular, might have difficulty in conceiving of ordinary citizens, and even the service users themselves, as being partners. However, it is also likely that citizens would be as equally mystified by the concept of themselves as “fellow professionals” were this to be applied to them. Fortunately, this is not what partnership needs to mean, since “partnership” may better refer to a cooperative merging of the efforts of two *distinct* groups of people towards a *commonly held sense of purpose*. This latter sense of partnership does not confound the distinctiveness of their roles and identities by a forced and unnatural diffusion of each into the other, since it permits each to remain distinctive.

Nevertheless, most senses of partnership suggest a collaboration of two or more parties with similar ends in mind. Part of the quality problems that we are currently experiencing, is partly due to the emphasis we tend to place on only one party in the partnership i.e. the paid workers, professionals and managers component. Our investments in them, in the direction of “community building”, have been relatively slight given how much the goal of community is highlighted in our rhetoric. Even more strikingly meager, has been the field’s investments in ordinary citizens, particularly if one thinks of them as being a “core” element of our “workforce”. Of course, we don’t actually see them that way, and thus their neglect is entirely understandable given the “paid professional only” paradigm that we usually use to think about the “workforce”.

This is seen most strikingly in the case of the family and friends of many persons with disabilities, and the tiny percentage of public spending that has gone into flexible family support and its adult appropriate cousins. Such a spending pattern reflects the general assumption that the work of families and friends merits less investment priority than does that of “mainstream” services. This is an odd calculation, given that family and friends are the most dependable long-term form of social support for persons with disabilities. In many cases, “regular” services seem hugely transient and undependable by comparison. Yet, we clearly have a

rather weak partnership with families and friends if their testimony is to be taken as credible.

We face the combined challenge of both creating partnerships with the community and undertaking them in a manner that is properly beneficial and respectful. Were these proposed relationships to expand and prosper then we would most certainly make even more progress with community. However, using today's strategy of benign neglect of community investment, and our singular reliance on paid services as the route to benefit and quality, we can see that our progress remains unsatisfactory. For many people, the disappointing results with community inclusion have been baffling, as they would have expected a direct line correlation between increased spending on services and advancements with social integration. However, it is predictable that increasing the spending levels on services, that largely do not work particularly well with community, would produce exactly the muted results we now commonly see.

In a very direct sense, the quality of community progress is highly related to the quality and number of these proposed community partnerships. By ignoring the nurture and health of these relationships, the field leaves itself highly vulnerable to a severing of the most crucial pathway out of segregation and marginalization. The "prize", or successful indicator of success with the community, would be that people with disabilities are accorded valued social roles in their community and thus relieved of the endless "less than others" version of community living that is too commonly their experience at present. Consequently, there is much to be gained by enlisting the community in a plethora of partnership relationships towards this end. The more we limit our focus and attention solely to services and their, (largely internally oriented), management, the more these vital partnerships will languish.

We seemingly do not have many recent examples to turn to as to what form an investment in the unpaid world would look like. Yet, upon reflection, the whole of community services had their roots in the kinds of grass roots roles and voluntary commitments that have made it possible for paid service come into being. In fact, this move to paid service has been so successful in its dominance, that both the citizenry and professionals are now at a loss to imagine the kind of revitalized partnerships that would be more empowering and effective than those of the moment. Equally, our mutual discussion of what a "good" relationship between the partners would look like has also faded as a preoccupation. This lack of a shared framework for the relationship is not something that should be downplayed, as it is highly improbable that pleasing results will come from relationships that are not on the right footing.

Just as "right relationship" may not exist between service users and their service providers, it can be equally inferred that problems may also lurk within broader community partnership relationships. Not the least of these, is that the paid sector of the field essentially "writes the rules" for the unpaid segment. In

this, it disproportionately dictates its preferences to the unpaid parties, by reserving to itself the final word on matters. Surely, the rendering of all of the citizenry to being a tool of the service system hardly constitutes the kind of basis of equal respect and influence that one would expect in a just partnership. However, a “right relationship” of this kind may not always be, in fact, what the field is actually seeking in practice with the community.

Thus, the wise course would be to reexamine these potentially strategic partnerships more closely with an eye to seeing where they need help to become both, “righter” from an ethical partnership viewpoint, and more effective in terms of their ultimate yield of gaining valued social roles for persons with disabilities. The possible investments we might make in this newly configured joint “workforce” are not entirely new to our field, though their role of relative importance to our mission and values does need a reappraisal.

h) The Special Leadership Development Challenge Of The Coming Generational Change

Though it is only dimly perceived by most people in the field, the present generation of “baby boom” era leadership has already begun to leave the field. This process will accelerate over the next decade and result in a massive outflow of the generation of leaders that has helped argue for, construct and defend the current community service system. In many ways, it is this group of leaders that “holds” the field’s values and vision, and when they leave it will create a discernible “values and direction vacuum”. If there is another generation sufficiently in place to both take up the leadership challenges, and to preserve some measure of values continuity, then the transition may not result in a crisis at the very heart of the field’s purposes and priorities.

Some might see these demographic changes as enabling much-needed “new blood” into an increasingly entrenched community sector. This might presume, of course, that the new entrants were already somehow oriented to and committed to the goals of the field. This seems improbable, since the field has largely ignored this coming crisis even up to the current moment. Consequently, it seems much more prudent to imagine a transition to a new generation of key players that will largely be unplanned, and therefore far less predictable than is assumed by those who see no cause for worry in not making provisions for the future.

A more thoughtful approach, even at this quite late date, would be to recognize that leadership development must intensify *prior* to this trend reaching its fullness. It would also be sensible that the young be given special consideration, particularly as it relates to the values and leadership challenges they will have to shoulder all too soon. It would also be wise to begin to define now the types of leadership that would be optimal for the field, even if it had to import some of this from other sectors. Further, this next decade will be the last

full decade in which existing leaders can work with upcoming leadership before they are no longer so easily accessible as experienced leaders in the field. Lastly, these existing leaders can help give the field a final important bonus by using their combined career credibility to argue forcefully for the kinds of renewing and revitalizing “people investments” that can help propel the field into even more years of progress. It is difficult to imagine any such progress if the crisis is ignored. Thus, it would not be overstating matters to see what does or does not happen on this issue in the next few years to have immense long-term importance.

It must also be remembered that the present youthful generation may not have in their experience any sense of how bad things can actually be since they have not witnessed it. Similarly, many involved at present may well believe that once the clock moves forward it will never move back. This failure to give credence to the possibility of the collapse of the gains of the present community living movement is naïve given the vicissitudes of history and the utter improbability of dependable public fidelity to a group as socially and politically at risk as people with disabilities have been. Hence, prudence alone would suggest we take this transition very seriously. Indeed, lives may depend on what we do or fail to do.

Conclusion

The proposals put forward here reflect a sense of the most strategic possible investments that can be foreseen regarding improving the likelihood that the field will advance on matters of quality. It is simply not conceivable that investments of this kind can be made entirely from the private sector, and this leaves a decisive vacuum that must be filled by the public authorities. The investments described here are principally “people building” investments, though they are conceptualized much more broadly than is customary in much of “workforce” planning. Even so, they would strike most people as reflecting common sense in terms of generating quality. At their root is the assumption that if the field can’t or won’t do what is needed, it simply cannot be expected that quality will result.

The strategies described here are essentially oriented to building human capacity to both articulate and pursue the many aspects of quality that will result in the greater well being of persons with disabilities. These include the reconfiguration of outdated services, the encouragement of critical thinking, the attraction and sustaining of leadership and distinctive contributions, the ever important strengthening of positive values and ethics, and the improvement of the capacity of people to partner and work cooperatively. These may seem self-evident and that is a testimony to their durability as sound strategies and investments.

The strategic importance of investing in people is not in that it solves all

problems. Rather, it simply makes all problems easier to solve, if one has the people one needs. It is the argument here that what is needed is not just people, but the *right* ones. It is also the case that we are not helpless in the face of this challenge. However, we must be careful to make strategic decisions as to what we will commit ourselves to by way of investments. This is best done thoughtfully, in public and with the help of each other.