

HUMANITARIAN AID PRACTITIONERS AND THEIR
KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICE SKILLS

Kya Skye

999135207

Development Research Methods (IDAS623)

Tevni Grajales

As a member of the academic community of Andrews University, I pledge that I have not received, used, or given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.

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ABSTRACT

Key Words: professional development, humanitarian aid industry, graduate education

Background

Professionalism among humanitarian aid practitioners is attracting more attention due to the humanitarian sector expanding and being driven to compete in a fast moving, competitive, economic-challenge, and changeable environment. This study will explore, from the perspective of the humanitarian aid practitioner, motivators for and relevance of obtaining graduate education.

Methodology

Humanitarian aid practitioners simultaneously involved in a graduate program will be asked to rank motivators in undertaking graduate education using a card sort exercise concerning attitudes related to higher education. A questionnaire with pro forma demographics will collect information from participants at the start of their graduate education and one year later, and statistical comparisons will be made between the two sets of results. NGO leadership will function as key informants, through semi-structured telephone interviews. In addition, a market analysis of published job opportunities for humanitarian aid organizations will be performed to ascertain what expectations are held for humanitarian aid practitioners by such employers.

Findings

To be presented and discussed in the Research Project Report. A copy of the Research Project Report will be offered to all participants and made available to those who request it.

Discussion and Recommendations

The implications for the structure and development of graduate education programs will be discussed, with comparisons to earlier findings. Recommendations will be presented to the faculty of the existing graduate program and made available to donor agencies if desired.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KAPSKnowledge, Attitudes and Practice Skills

NGONon-Governmental Organization

PTSD.....Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

BACKGROUND

Purpose, Rationale, and Scope

The purpose of this study is to explore links between graduate education programs and knowledge, attitude and practice/skills (KAP) in humanitarian aid practitioners. This study is unique in that it will focus on the perspective of the humanitarian aid practitioner. That is, the focus of this research is on the individual practitioner who occupies a key position between organizations/donors and the target population for aid. Objectives for this study are to outline a hierarchy of KAP that humanitarian aid practitioners identify as important to their work.

Literature Review

Each year, millions of dollars are entrusted by governments, foundations, and the public into the hands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the expectation that these funds will effectively help alleviate hunger and poverty in the world's least developed countries. In return, donors expect implementing partners to provide and deliver programs showing measurable improvements in quality of life among targeted populations. As more rigorous requirements are expected for measuring impact of relief and community development projects, the role of education at all levels may increase dramatically.

The humanitarian aid community continually faces new challenges. Both the size and frequency of complex emergency operations are increasing. Hansen (1995) points out that in 1959 there were ten active global conflicts with 1.4 million refugees, yet by 1995 this figure had increased to at least fifty conflicts with 20 million refugees and 20-25 million internally displaced people. For instance, comparing refugees originating in Somalia and Sudan from 1999 to 2009,

the United Nations (UNData, 2011) reported that refugees seeking refuge in Kenya more than doubled.

Conflict particularly impacts the ability of children to obtain crucial primary education. The 2011 Millenium Development Goals Report (2011) noted that worldwide, 42% of primary age children who are not in school are living in conflict affected areas.

The international humanitarian aid community is challenged by their capacity to meet these obligations. McWilliam (1995) notes that even though there is a willingness by the humanitarian sector to be involved, the system is overextended. The responsibility resides with humanitarian organizations and donors to ensure there is professional human capacity to manage successful humanitarian aid operations in emergency and community development situations.

Non governmental organizations in the context
of the humanitarian industry

Two decades ago humanitarian operations and organizations were not of major concern to the international community. However, the 1980's began a golden era period for non-governmentals in terms of global exposure. NGOs began to offer what the governments could no longer provide which included a representation of the excluded. The result of this situation was that NGOs became over-extended and there was concern that charity funds were not bringing positive outcomes and beneficiary dependencies were setting in. Simon Zadek explains this as follows: "more and more of the stuff [money] was needed, even although it was clear that the more they had, the more were the values and other strengths of the agencies compromised in its use" (Sogge, 1996, p. 2). Currently, the humanitarian industry is a major business and draws significant attention of bilateral, multilateral and non-government organizations (Kent, 2004). With this interest in the NGO industry, the follow-on effect has brought attention to the

competencies and qualifications of humanitarian aid practitioners as the implementers of this funding.

Challenges and criticisms facing humanitarian aid practitioners

In the past decade there has been an expanding literature on the role and challenges of humanitarian aid. Not all has been positive as the following book titles demonstrate: *The Road to Hell* (Maren, 1997), *The Despairing Developer* (Morris, 1991), *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (Reiff, 2002). In particular, motives, ethics, integrity and professionalism of aid workers have come under scrutiny with the humanitarian sector seen as a self-serving industry. Humanitarianism was being criticized for being ineffective and actually harming people's welfare. Furthermore, the codes of practice for the humanitarian sector, or the absence of any such codes were being highlighted by the various stakeholders in the humanitarian industry.

The link between education and social change is becoming an important issue in the present global climate, as argued by Verbitskaya et al. (2002):

“When we talk of sustainable development, we do not only mean issues connected with ecology and environment. The societal aspects of sustainable development are equally important, especially for countries shattered by political and economic crises like Russia and East Europe. The role of education, and particularly higher education, in promoting sustainable development cannot be overestimated.” (p. 182)

Just as humanitarian response is recognized as a partnership, development education in various forms needs to be available to all levels of the community. The aspect of the multiplying effect where information and practices are shared by those who have had opportunities for higher education should not be neglected. It is the educated who should be seen as builders to contribute to the “social and intellectual diversity of civil society” (Uvin et al, 2000, p. 1418).

Certainly, as Harris (2005) advocates, advanced education for humanitarian practitioners must give attention to these complexities of sustainable development.

Summary

The humanitarian sector workforce is often perceived as being in breach of professionalism and lacking guidelines, yet is being driven to compete in a fast moving, competitive and changeable world. Due to an ever growing emphasis on accountability and transparency across the humanitarian aid industry with a greater role and higher visibility of humanitarian organizations in global affairs, capacity-building through education is attracting more attention. While previous studies have increasingly considered accountability, motives in relation to charity, and donor concerns of humanitarian aid organizations, little is documented about the individual humanitarian aid practitioner. This study proposes to consider the impact of higher education on the practice and personal development of the individual humanitarian aid practitioner.

Research Questions

The first research question is focused on knowledge, attitudes, and practice skills (KAP) of individual humanitarian practitioners. Specifically, how does graduate education make a change to sustainable development practice at the individual-provider level and what kind of knowledge is sought by the humanitarian aid practitioner?

A second research question seeks information about what NGO administrators expect from humanitarian aid practitioners in terms of KAP.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study is to explore from the point of view of the individual humanitarian aid practitioner the impact higher education has on their professional development and practice. Humanitarian aid practitioners are defined as individuals who are involved, or preparing to be involved, in the humanitarian sector via a higher education degree program. Figure 1 below represents a conceptual framework outlining the inter-dependant links within this sector. The study focus is the point where the humanitarian aid practitioners and higher education overlap.

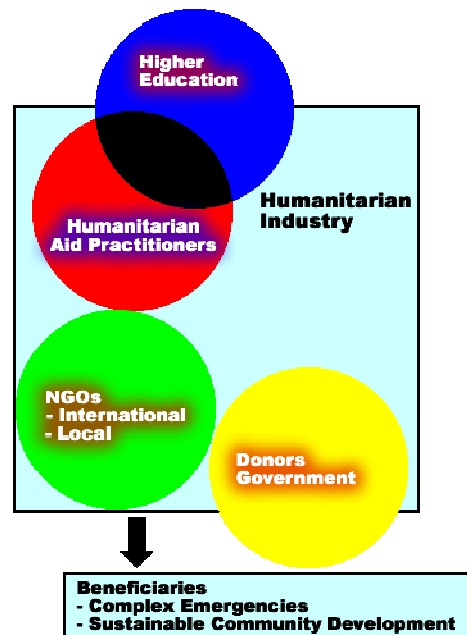


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Ethical Considerations

The investigator occupies a non-teaching role in the program from where the majority students will be sampled. The investigator is sensitive to potential conflicts of interest including education programs having a vested interest in a positive result and students feeling obligated to participate in the research. These issues will be overcome by candidature at a non-affiliated university and separation of research activities from education requirements of the study participants. Participants will be provided information about the purpose of the study and the protections to their identity and responses. Each graduate student participant will sign a consent form attached to the questionnaire. Code numbers will be provided for identification to all participants, with the key held only by the investigator.

Those key informants invited to participate in a structured telephone interview will give consent by agreeing to the telephone interview(s). They will be offered the opportunity to receive a copy of the report of the study at its conclusion.

Data Collection

Selection of subjects

Two groups of participants will be recruited from the humanitarian community in East Africa. The target population for the first group will consist of students entering a graduate program in international development, who agree to participate in two data-gathering activities: a card-sort exercise at the start of the study, and two questionnaires, a year apart. A sample of 75 students will be sought.

The target population for the second group will be administrators and leaders (presidents or project directors) of NGOs in East Africa who will be recruited by a mailed invitation to participate through a telephone structured interview. A sample of 35 respondents will be sought.

Table 1 summarizes the data collection methods in this case study research. Details for these data strategies are outlined in the narrative below.

Table 1: *Data collection methods*

Target Group	Data Collection Methods
Individuals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Card-sort exercise 2. Questionnaire survey with pro forma demographics
NGOs/Donors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semi-structured interviews with key informants 2. Market analysis of job opportunities and educational requirements 3. Job description/human resources policy review

Card sort exercise

The card sort exercise will be used to determine the importance student participants attach to different reasons for enrolling in a higher education degree program.

Card domains were generated based on literature review and previous professional and research experience with NGOs, and the card domains have been pilot tested on a number of humanitarian aid practitioners. In the card-sort exercise participants will be provided with

nine cards, each with a particular reason written on the front. Participants will be asked to rank them in order of importance from most important to least important.

Questionnaire/survey instruments

Each student participant will be requested to respond to two questionnaires (see Appendix A). The first questionnaire will be administered during the study program. The second questionnaire will be administered approximately twelve months after completing the study program. A pro forma data set will obtain data on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the participant, and will form part of the first questionnaire. The identity of participants will be protected by assigning a code number to each person, known only to the investigator, who will provide the second questionnaire to the specific participant.

Key informants (both NGO leaders and donor representatives) will be requested to participate in a structured interview. The questions (found in Appendix B) will feature open-ended questions about their expectations of the KAPs of prospective employees for humanitarian aid positions in their organizations.

Market analysis

Market analysis of published advertisements of job opportunities for positions in East Africa will be made over a six-month period, focusing on what educational and KAP are expected for directors of humanitarian aid projects.

In addition, leadership informants will each be requested to provide a current job description for a project director position. Pertinent human resources policies which exist regarding qualifications for management employees will be requested.

Data Analysis

Cross-tabulations of participant responses will be made using selected demographic factors, and a statistical comparison using a student t-test will be made on the responses to the two questionnaires to display shifts in KAP after one year as a graduate student. The themes arising from structured interviews, advertisements, and existing human resources policies will be summarized.

FINDINGS

To be presented and discussed in the Research Project Report. A copy of the Research Project Report will be made available to all participants if requested.

DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications for the structure and development of graduate education programs will be discussed, with comparisons to earlier findings. Recommendations will be presented to the faculty of the existing graduate program and made available to donor agencies if desired.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRES

APPENDIX B
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS