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CAMPS: A Failed Manpower Planning Venture*

Roger A. Lohmann

In 1967, the U.S. Labor Department and Office of Economic Opportunity and other federal agencies undertook an experiment in regional manpower planning labeled the Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System, or CAMPS. This paper, written during my graduate program in public administration, 1969-1970 reflects my experience as a rural community action program director and an ex-officio participant in the CAMPS planning process of a rural region in southern Minnesota during 1967-1968.

Definitions

It is customary when beginning a paper such as this to engage first in a definition of terms. In the case of the present consideration of aspects of manpower planning in Minnesota, this seems almost superfluous. A great multitude of definitions of planning have been put forth. Virtually none of them, however, would encompass the collaborative activities of the Community Action Program (CAP) Councils and Cooperative Area Manpower Planning Systems (CAMPS) committees currently operating in the state.

Richard Lester states that “planning approaches the future with the aid of systematic analysis, so as to minimize surprise and uncertainty and to eliminate [unnecessary] mistakes and waste” (Lester, 1966, 6). More specifically, manpower planning is said to “enlarge job opportunities and improve training and employment decisions, through the power of informed personal choice and calculated adjustment to rapidly changing demand” (Lester, 1966, 20).

A bibliography prepared by T.J. Keaveny at the University of Minnesota Industrial Relations Center suggests that manpower planning activities are feasible on two distinct levels. Aggregate planning is that dealing with “labor supply and labor demands for all occupations or all industries within a given geographic area” (Keaveny, 1966, 4). The second method is disaggregate planning, or “planning for “requirements and manpower supplies for specific occupations or specific industries within a given geographic area” (Keaveny, 1966, 10).

Background

In addition to these definitions, there is some basic background information which is necessary to understand the current status of CAMP and CAMPS collaboration. In 1946, Congress approved a new Employment Act which created the Council of Economic Advisors, the first national institution charged with manpower

* This paper was written in September, 1969 as one of the requirements for the Master’s in Public Administration at the University of Minnesota. At that point, the gender-specific term “manpower” was still in widespread use among policy-makers and researchers for job training and vocational education activities.

planning at the national level. This was the first explicit acknowledgement by the U.S. government of “the new economics,” with its implications for federal management of the national economy. One of the cornerstones of the Keynesian economics on which it was based provided the theoretical basis for all modern economic policy and its recognition of the importance of employment in maintaining overall economic balance. In 1962, when the New Economics was once again in vogue with the Kennedy Administration Congress approved the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA). Rather than providing mechanisms to remedy or compensate for manpower problems such as unemployment due to skill obsolescence this Act sought to provide mechanisms for the rational development of manpower resources. Two principal programs were created under the act: institutional training, administered by the vocational education system, and on-the-job training, administered by the Department of Labor.

The second significant development with regard to federal manpower activities came in 1964, when Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act, which also provides two separate mechanisms for manpower development activities. Community Action Agencies (CAAs) created by the act are in essence a new form of limited-purpose local government, existing almost totally with federal support and primarily designed only to administer federal grants-in-aid as part of the War on Poverty.

The other development growing out of the EOA is the seldom discussed Bureau of Work and Training Programs (BWTP), which has in the first five years of its existence grown into a major force within the Labor Department. Initially, BWTP consisted of a single office administering a single program, the Neighborhood Youth Corps which is funded from the EOA but delegated the Labor Department. The agency’s program has since grown in staggering fashion to include an ever widening array of complex and confusing programs which leaves many observers dazed.

CAMPS

The final variable to be added to the mix here is the CAMPS program. On March 3, 1967, Interagency Cooperative Issuance Number 1 was released, cosigned by the Manpower Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bureau of Adult and Vocational Education in the U.S. Department of Education and the Welfare Administration of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

This document, in addition to representing one of the few instances in recent history when representatives of several federal agencies have placed their signatures on the same sheet of paper, was also the outline and structure of something to be known as CAMPS – the Cooperative Area Manpower Planning Systems.

CAMPS is one of a series of coordinated efforts to be mandated from Washington during the months when it was becoming Apparent that the legislative “scattergun” tactics of the Great Society and particularly the 89th Congress were having

unanticipated consequences. Taken together these documents illustrate the efforts of the federal government (primarily Congress and the executive branch) to to enforce coordination and cooperation on a wide variety of independently power bureaucracies. They also demonstrate a fundamental over-simplification of the intergovernmental nature of the federal system.

It is common to speak of American federalism in *tri-part* terms – referring to “the” federal government, state governments and local governments as the three levels or layers of the system While this means of conceptualizing may once have been accurate, and many still be adequate for eighth grade social studies classes, it tends to creep into the design of programs such as CAMPS and results in a structure inadequate for the tasks involved.

Perhaps the first and greatest mistake in this area is to assume that there is a hierarchical federal structure with “higher” levels responsible for the actions of “lower” levels and with authority flowing downwards from higher to lower levels. One strongly senses such an authoritarian view in the CAMPS concepts. The manual referred to above, for example, is loaded with detailed instructions from federal officials as to how regional, state and local CAMPS committees are to proceed. CAMPS local committees, for example, are to submit their plans to state committees for approval, and state committees are to submit their plans to federal regional committees for similar approval.

If one accepts the pessimistic view that CAMPS is, and should be, merely a formalistic exercise in group process bearing little or no relationship to the actual decision-making processes with regard to manpower programs, this situation is perhaps acceptable. If, however, one takes the view that CAMPS should be concerned with actual cooperative manpower planning and program coordination in an effort to improve decision-making processes, this situation is little short of absurd. It is simply unrealistic to assumed that local, state or regional actors in manpower areas are going to calmly and rationally discuss their organizational strategies and plans on a voluntary basis, when they are fully aware not only that others on the CAMPS committee may be interested in thwarting precisely those plans, but also that the CAMPS structure allows for those plans to be overrun at several separate higher levels but those same antagonistic interests. Social science research strongly supports the view that the self-interested motives of those operating in this kind of organizational settings are simply too strong to allow fully open cooperation and collaboration to happen.

One of the characteristics of agencies involved in manpower programs is their ‘laissez-faire’ nature. As Lester states, “manpower functions and policy-making are rather decentralized and are scattered among such a variety of agencies as to make coordination a serious problem.” Perhaps the single greatest problem growing out of this is the one alluded to above – there simply is no single agency with enough influence to force all of the other agencies in this field to cooperate with one another fully and openly. Each of the agencies involved in this planning process is at least potentially capable of generation sufficient clientele support and other forms of

political power to render itself relatively immune from any actions by the other agencies and at the same time to attempt aggrandizement or encroachment activities against the others. While there may be correlations between such aspect as size of the budget or of the personnel complement and the relative power of the agency in this constellation there certainly are no direct relationships between relative power and level (federal state or local). Recent conflict in Minneapolis between the federal OEO Regional Office and the local CAP agency should make this abundantly clear. The local MOER board certainly did not find itself the helpless victim of federal authority, although it may have attempted to appear so in the newspapers.

The concept of CAMPS calls for the development of national, regional, state and local (labor-market area) CAMPS committees. The system as envisioned in Cooperative Issuance Number 1 is for two purposes:

1. To plan and carry out a coordinated program of needed manpower services, and
2. Cooperative implementation of needed manpower services.

To carry out these goals local CAMPS committees are to carry out the following tasks (ICI Number 1, 1967):

1. Develop an area manpower plan for the upcoming fiscal year which ccords with the instructions transmitted through the State coordinating committee.
2. Transmit fiscal year manpower plans approved to the State coordinating committee for reconciliatory adjustment and approval action.
3. Prepare periodic progress reports (on the progress of plan development).
4. Endure effective and timely implementation of approved plans through the fiscal year and to coordinate the execution of the approved pan with due allowance for adjustments.
5. Implement all adopted plans with the resources made available.
6. Establish interagency working relationships and service agreements.
7. Assume that each committee member is fully cognizant of the content, intent and operation of other programs, and the relationship all programs bear to broad program objectives.
8. Exchange data of mutual interest and to disseminate information to the maximum number of users.
9. Promote community wide acceptance of successful joint ventures.

Local area CAMPS plans are to be forwarded to the appropriate state coordinating committee. The functions of state coordinating committees are to (ICI Number 1, 1967):

1. Receive federal planning guidance information and transmit it to local area committees.
2. Supply technical assistance to local areas.
3. Prepare a plan for those portions of states not covered by local CMPS committees.

4. Review and concur in local plans.
5. Combine local area plans with a plan or plans for the balance of the state into a state plan.
6. Transmit reports prepared by the local area committees.
7. Promote the joint development of the various components of a comprehensive manpower proposal.

For these and other purposes, states are organized into 10 federal Regions, each of which has a Regional CAMPS Committee. These 10 Regional CAMPS Committees are to:

1. Develop expertise in CAMPS
2. Periodically review the results of approved manpower programs to determine if the goals are being achieved.
3. Review state plans.
4. Provide technical assistance to states (ICI Number 1, 1967).

Finally, the national CAMPS committee is to (ICI Number 1, 1967):

1. Develop overall direction of the CAMPS system.
2. Develop national manpower goals and guidelines and plans for transmission to the states and local committees.
3. Coordinate the joint activities at the operating levels.
4. Plan the greatest possible use of cooperative funding arrangements.
5. Act as a catalyst in diffusing news (about CAMPS plans and planning).
6. Provide leadership in resolving conflicts caused by the system.

When these functions are reviewed, several conclusions are apparent. First, the national level group obviously designed the system reserving the choice roles for itself and kept any regional threats out of the system by making the regional role as meaningless as possible. Further, there is an obvious naivete already discussed in viewing the American federal system as a simple hierarchy. In addition, there appears to be a radical difference between what CAMPS calls planning and what is usually thought of by that term. It seems clear that the term manpower planning in the CAMPS sense refers to the process of distributing grant-in-aid funds on a year to year basis. This is a very limited concept of planning for two reasons. First programs and activities which are funded in the manpower area depend to some extent on the nature of applications submitted. Secondly, national manpower planning and policy based only on manpower development programs established by Congress and funded through the federal bureaucracies has to be a very partial sort of planning with relatively little impact on the economy as a whole. This is in marked contrast to the definitions of manpower planning introduced in the first section of this paper. Thus, whatever allocative planning may actually occur as a result of the bureaucratic bargaining taking place at all levels in the difficult CAMPS context also discussed above is likely to be insignificant from the standpoint of national economic policy. As a result, the sole accomplishment of the CAMPS planning

system in Minnesota to date is a printed compilation of the separate activities of the “cooperating: agencies which is referred to as the State Manpower Plan.

This rather harsh judgement should not be a reflection against the individuals who have participated in the CAMPS system. The previous discussion should make it abundantly clear that personal and group abilities are not at the heart of the problem. The problem is a structural one and very likely any group of persons would encounter similar difficulties and unproductiveness simply because the mechanism is not designed for actual coordinating and planning.

Certainly, others might conclude that CAMPS would work more effectively by upgrading the quality of the personnel involved. However, even if this solution were feasible (it isn't), it would still be only partial rehabilitation at best. The structural problems would remain. One could also conclude that CAMPS would not have been deemed necessary were it not for the sudden creation, development and apparent bureaucratic threat to existing agencies by the Community Action Agencies at the local level and the Bureau of work and Training programs at the state (the feds call it the district), regional and federal levels. It is a very real possibility that the other agency signatories in a CAMPS program perceived the CAP-BWTP network which was developing as a potential bureaucratic threat to their own realms and saw CAMPS as a means for tracking the activities of these upstarts.

Whether one is wont to accept any of these conclusions the core conclusion seems unavoidable that CAMPS has failed to take the intergovernmental nature of manpower planning sufficiently into account. The agencies and individuals involved are sufficiently diverse that if coordination and planning in a meaningful way is to result, it can occur only if and when these same individuals and agencies actually perceive elements of their own self interest in coordination. Coordination is not something which can be imposed by fiat, legislative or otherwise and the CAMPS experience makes this clear. While many people are attending CAMPS meetings regularly and overseeing the preparation of documents such as the STATE Manpower Plan, they are certainly not engaged in any meaningful planning or coordination.

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