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Health in National Health planning

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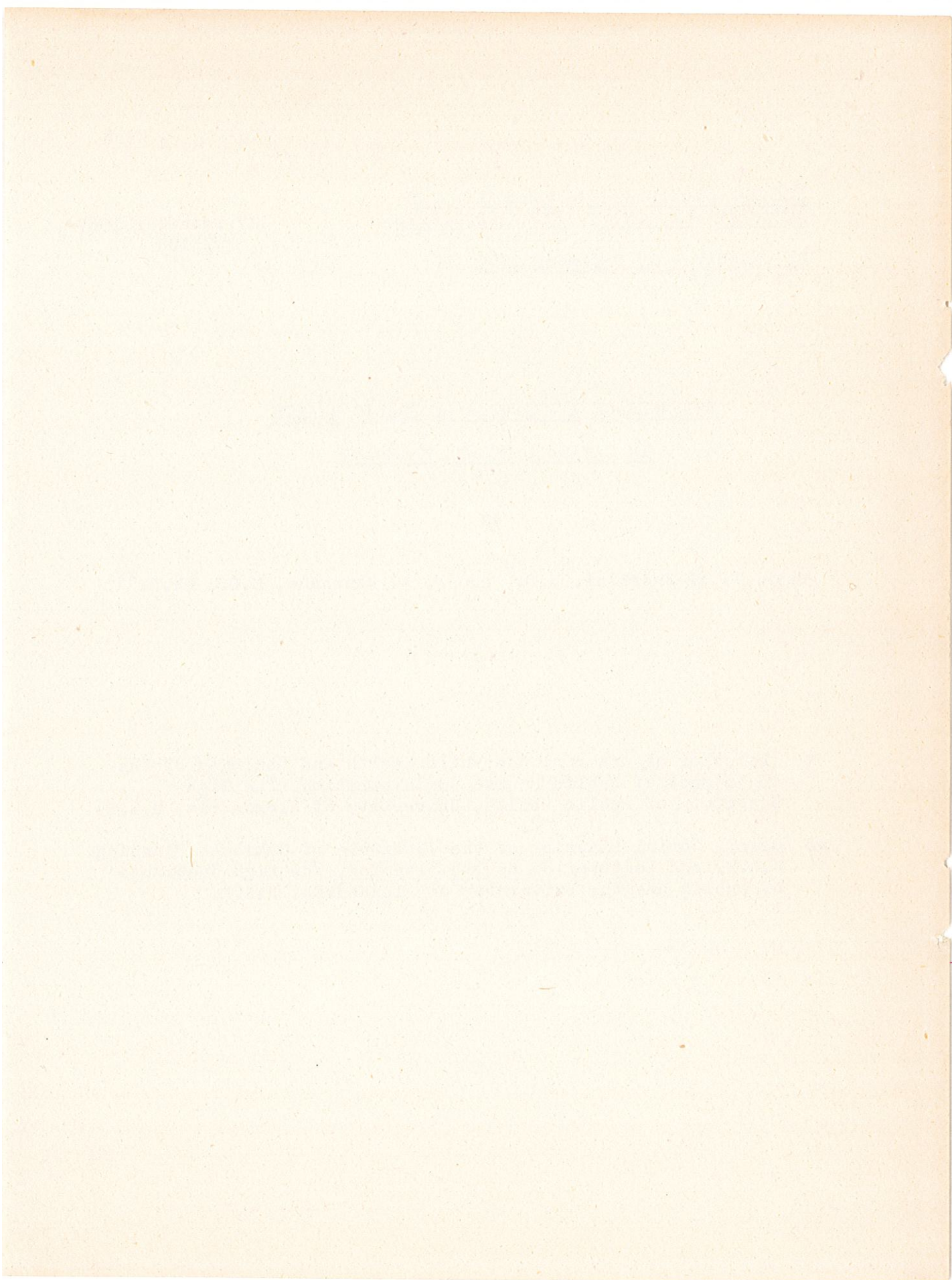
THE ROLE OF INSTITUTES OF PUBLIC HEALTH
IN NATIONAL HEALTH PLANNING

by

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INSTITUTES OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

An institute of public health is a training agency which attracts trainees from one or more of the disciplines active in the field of public health to indoctrinate them with the concept of teamwork in public health. This is achieved through exposing the job of every member of the team to the other members under the assumption that such knowledge will help form a team spirit. The operational capacity of the trainees as individuals of the team is promoted through inservice training programs. Thus, the institute of public health is an agency which develops the human resources for the health plan. It also contributes to the development of other resources necessary for health plan formulation and implementation through its research activities as a development institute.

As an integral part of the national health system, the institute of public health should conduct its activities according to the needs of that system and be consistent with the country health plan objectives. In a developing country all components of the health system should be planned in such a way so as to provide the means to meet specific health goals within the framework of the overall national development goals. For example, if bilharzia negatively affects an increase of productivity, the national health plan should be concerned with the control of bilharzia before giving priority to an item such as cancer research. In a developing country, it should be stressed that the activities of the health system should be those which are wealth creating rather than welfare creating. Consequently the health system should be geared to regulate health hazards which affect development.

Manpower needs

National health planning requires manpower of three essential types:

- (1) Theoreticians who are actually engaged in the determination of the health planning structure for the country and who are concerned with the establishment of the priorities with which the plan frame is concerned;
- (2) Technical level manpower such as the health economists who work with the theoreticians and academicians in developing realistic and feasible plan frames;
- (3) Health Plan Implementors. Those who in the field implement the plan. They are not just physicians and nurses but all persons at the operational level who affect the outcome of the health plan. This includes all paramedical personnel (social workers, aides, therapists, nutritionists, agriculturists, sanitary engineers...etc) and ultimately every citizen since public health planning implies a knowledge and application of its principles by everyone if it is to be effective.

The Generation of High Level Manpower

The strategic human capital or high level manpower in a national health plan can be further categorized as follows:

- (1) Managerial and administrative personnel in the field of public health;
- (2) Professional public health personnel. It is true that physicians, dentists, engineers and others are professionals according to their basic technical training, but they are not geared by that training for the massive approaches required for public health work and hence need to be oriented for such an approach by means of special training.

(3) Qualified teachers in the field of public health;

(4) Research workers in the field of public health.

These categories of public health workers occupy strategic posts in the field of public health where they are leaders. They are leaders giving autonomy to the public health movement. The role of the institute of public health is to transfer the unskilled public health workers who are potentially or actively engaged in public health work into skillful workers. They are going to have wider scope of vision and a deeper insight into the public health problem by receiving such training. By the formal training of this high level manpower in the field the institute of public health occupies a strategic position in the execution of the health plan for it provides the health system with the essential human resources.

TRAINING IN HEALTH PLANNING

Health planning is part of the overall nationwide planning for development. Although the health plan could be isolated and synthesized and assembled out of the resources needed, at the end it should be integrated within the national plan for development. If this concept is accepted by a community then a need for health personnel trained in the techniques of planning is surely going to arise. Provision of the necessary training to acquire and master these skills is the responsibility of an institute of public health if there is not another agency in the community which is more capable to train health planners within the team of social planners. The incorporation of the training of health planners with the social planners is the preferred method. If this opportunity is lacking, the trainers in health planning in the school of public health have to show the complementary activities to health planning theoretically or in case studies.

The health plan is executed through an administrative body and a team of field operators. The administrative body is headed by high level manpower. Personnel of this caliber and responsibility ought to have a common understanding with the health planners. It is the responsibility of a school of public health to develop this capacity among the health administrators and technical leaders and supervisors. Such a capacity develops through exposing them to the knowledge, techniques and vocabulary of health planning during their formal training in the institute of public health. Through this type of sensitization the administrators and operators would be expected to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of health planning and its problems which would lead them to become active participants in the execution of the health plan.

The Training Curriculum Contents

The curriculum constructed to face the needs for the adequate training of the health manpower is suggested to include the following items:

- (1) The ideology of development. The lack of instilling development ideology in the trainees results in the production of trainees who are not trained to function within their own country. Due to the lack of ideological formation, many public health workers receive training which prepares them much more suitably for work in the USA than for public health work in a developing country like Egypt. Thus ideological formation is needed as an integral part of the curriculum in all developing countries.

- (2) Core Curriculum. A core curriculum for development should be required of all trainees which they would take before specialization. These core courses would concentrate on development problems, development ideology and the importance of the health sector in augmenting the achievement of development goals. These core courses would have as their aim to instill a sense of personal commitment to development objectives in the trainees. The core courses would be conducted in such a way that the trainees from all disciplines would have to work together on solutions to the problems presented to them.
- (3) Decision Making. In executing the health plan the managerial leader or field team leader is going to be faced by situations in which he has to make decisions of priority in execution or decisions to use alternative technical approaches. This aspect of planning is of the utmost importance for planners and plan executors and in as much as it is possible to teach decision making, it would be taught in the institute of public health.
- (4) Techniques of Planning. The techniques of planning as well as the different approaches needed in planning such as linear programming, Pert, Input/Output Analysis, Systems Analysis, Operational Research; all these are to be given in detail to planners while plan executors are to become acquainted with these techniques so that they will understand by what methods the plan frame is developed and structured.
- (5) Manpower Planning. The mutual relation of health planning and the national development plan concerning manpower planning is to be part of the curriculum.

- (6) Economics of Health Planning. The study of the economics involved in health planning should be required for the health planners in training at an institute of public health. A working acquaintance with the concepts and vocabulary of the economics of health planning would be necessary for those trainees who are or would be plan executors.
- (7) Organization and Management. The topic of organization and management of public health programs would be required of all trainees but in depth study of organizational approaches and problems would be required of the administrative and executive personnel.
- (8) The Health Plan and the Community Development Plan. The integration of the health plan in the national community development plan is a topic of special concern for all trainees of the institute of public health in order that they have a thorough knowledge of how health activities are related to the broader issue of community development.
- (9) Approach to Field Work. After completion of the core curriculum and of their various specialty programs the trainees would be grouped into interdisciplinary teams and would go to the field for on sight application of what they had learned during the academic portion of their training.

The Language of Teaching

The use of the local language, more specifically in the core courses, cannot be over stressed. Teaching in the local language serves the purpose of tying the concepts presented to the reality surrounding the trainees. It is one instrument for reducing the alienation problem which leads to unfruitful dissatisfaction and ultimately to the exodus of precious manpower.

THE INSTITUTES OF PUBLIC HEALTH AS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES

The institutes of public health as development institutes would undertake research and training. The training activities would be tied to the research activities and the research activities would in turn be tied to the health plan. With this approach, research results would be immediately fed into the training programs and the field would have the benefit of rapid communication of recent research as well as providing feed-back to the planners through the institutes of public health.

Within this concept the institute of public health would train the technically trained people to become "change agents". In addition, it should be viewed as a formation center for all levels of field workers and the development core curriculum should provide short periodic refresher courses in site by means of mobile interdisciplinary teams who would conduct field seminars for periods of a week or more for all field workers.

Further, as a basic part of its development role, such an institute would have the role of consultant to the community. Some of the development core courses should be offered as a part of a health education program for the general public.

Expanding the Technical Health Resources

The researches carried out in the institute of public health contribute to enrich the technical resources which are of importance in health planning. Such research would:

- (1) Enlarge the knowledge about certain health problems, their components and mechanism of development. This added knowledge might help in changing the planning focus or in reorienting planners to new approaches in solving the problem.

- (2) Aid in the development of new techniques in solving the health problems. This new tool might be of help in generating a health plan or in developing an already present plan to **Solve** a health problem.
- (3) Make use of physico-chemical or biological sciences in synthesizing new products which would be of use in attacking an agent of the environment, raising the tolerance of the host or disturbing the interaction between the agent, host and environment, so creating the problem. This new product might be a steering factor for a health plan or could be a source of modifying an existing plan.

Enriching the Organizational Resources

The research and study carried out in an institute of public health might contribute toward the enrichment of the organizational resources which are needed for health plan implementation of an efficient nature. Studies conducted in institutes of public health in the following areas would be most fruitful in this regard.

- (1) Systems Analysis;
- (2) Operations Research;
- (3) Job Analysis;
- (4) Experimental work assignments;
- (5) Reorganization.

The results of these studies would definitely supply the planner with organizational tools which could contribute to plan formulation and future plan implementation.

The Formulation and operation of the Health Plan

The institute of public health has a definite role in the formulation and operation of the health plan.

- (1) The school of public health as one unit might be a consultant agency for the health planning authorities in the community at the different planning levels: national, regional or local. The consultative capacity might cover the following fields:
 - 1.1. Technical planning;
 - 1.2. Administrative planning;
 - 1.3. Operational planning;
 - 1.4. Evaluation of the plan.
- (2) The staff members of the school of public health could give their personal consultation for the health planning authorities at the different levels. Each could be of value in his field especially so if he can participate in a specific project.
- (3) The institute of public health participates in the operation of a health plan through the rate of generation of manpower it supplies. The productive capacity of the school ought to be geared to the optimal level necessary to maintain the maximum number needed for the operation of the plan. This rate could be determined statistically and maintained through a statistically regulated quening.

Role of the Institutes of Public Health in Manpower for Health

The health personnel comes to the institute of public health with certain specialized skills. The following points delineate the process which the institute as a development training institute undertakes with respect to the trainees.

(1) Recruitment of trainees. Through this process the nature and number of the high level manpower are determined.

1.1. The nature of the high level manpower. The pre-requisites for admission to the institute would set the parameters of the educational and experience level of the trainees. The required qualifications would be one factor in forecasting what sort of graduate the trainee would be.

1.2. The number of trainees. There are several factors which would determine the number of trainees to be admitted among them are the following:

1.2.1. the teaching and training capacity of the institute;

1.2.2. the demand of the field (i.e., the health plan requirements);

1.2.3. the supply of trained recruits;

1.2.4. Placement of former graduates. Do graduates in fact locate in the community for which they were trained?

(2) The teaching Curriculum

2.1. The contents of the curriculum;

2.2. The length of the curriculum;

2.3. The mode of presentation;

2.4. The flexibility of the curriculum to fit the types of personnel trained to face their individual needs. In multidisciplinary training there are major fields according to the candidates interests. This would

- determine the shape of the curriculum into two distinct parts.

2.4.1. Core courses according to the previous description for all candidates;

2.4.2. Specific interest courses according to the candidates qualifications and future field of endeavour.

- (3) Evaluation of students at the end of the course.
 - 3.1. Written essay examinations urge the candidate to stress theoretical studies.
 - 3.2. A term paper obliges the candidate to be more actively engaged in the training process.
 - 3.3. Collection and presentation of field data is an educational process completing the training efforts as well as an evaluation of the capacities of the candidates after their training.
- (4) Follow-up of Graduates. The graduates of the institute would be followed-up as to their allocation and performance.
- (5) The Research Carried Out by the Institute.
 - 5.1. The explanatory research demonstrates the concealed facts.
 - 5.2. Experimental Research.
 - 5.3. Evaluation of the present operation of the health plan.
- (6) Participation in the Health Plan Implementation.
 - 6.1. Consultation in planning and in the implementation of the health plan;
 - 6.2. Pilot projects;
 - 6.3. Demonstration operation.

When the Institute of Public Health Participates in the Health Plan.

The planning process is a timeless process. The same can be said for the educational process. The role of the school of public health might take place in any of the following phases of health planning.

- (1) Pre-planning phase;
- (2) Planning phase; or
- (3) Post-planning phase.

- (1) In the pre-planning phase the institute of public health would participate in the following ways:
 - 1.1. Training of planners;
 - 1.2. Collection of data concerning the types and magnitude of the health problems;
 - 1.3. Exploring the resources for health planning.
- (2) In the actual planning phase the institute of public health would participate as follows:
 - 2.1. Provide technical consultation on health problems;
 - 2.2. Provide consultation in the administration of the planning agency;
 - 2.3. Participate in the formulation of the plan frame.
- (3) In the post-planning phase the institute would conceivably participate in the following ways:
 - 3.1. Provide consultation in the execution of the plan and its implementation;
 - 3.2. Evaluate the plan operation and achievements from the standpoint of public health;
 - 3.3. Evaluate changes in the community after the enactment of the plan to determine the achievements in order to access to what extent this influences the replanning process.

Barriers interfering with the Development Role of the Institutes of Public Health.

The institutes of public health are faced with certain barriers inhibiting their role as a development institute. Some of these barriers are related to extrinsic factors outside the institute, and others are internal barriers from within the institute itself.

(1) Barriers the Institute faces as a training unit.

- 1.1. The inaccessibility of the literature on health planning. Although health planning is a relatively new field of pursuit, there is a good deal of literature in periodicals and Journals. These are not always either available or accessible to the institutes of public health either due to language barriers, to currency problems or to political conditions.
- 1.2. The teaching books such as text books would be of help in building up the basic concepts of health planning but there is a great lack of such teaching material. Books in the local language should be composed to help further the concepts and techniques of health planning.
- 1.3. There is a lack of qualified teaching staff in the field of planning and even more so in health planning. There are very few specialists in the technical disciplines of public health who advance to the level of health planner.
- 1.4. Often the available teaching aids and planning techniques are accessible in such a way that they are more suited for the developed countries. This places a heavy burden of interpretation of such material in such a way that it is applicable to the developing nation. This process requires a staff of professorial staff at the institute of public health which would have themselves undergone extensive training.

(2) As a development institute, the institute of public health is faced with two additional barriers.

2.1. The first barrier is in the nature of an organizational problem. The institute of public health, to play its role as a development institute, ought to be an integral part of the health system. This requires a high level of functional integration and implies a good system of communication among all those agencies in any way affecting the health sector and its planning.

2.2. To become a development institute it is necessary that the institute itself exhibit team work both in training and action. This means that the staff of the institute have to be committed to the interdisciplinary approach and they must be able to demonstrate their ability to work as members of the team.

These barriers are not insurmountable but they do present distinct problems for an institute of public health if it is to gear itself toward a fuller integration with the total health system, and to play its role in the development of high level health manpower committed to the goals of the national development plan.

