Nonprofit Capacity Building Through Hybrid Education

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to create a model for developing nonprofit education programming that imparts the skills and competencies the marketplace demands through an educational model that meets the needs of students, current and future nonprofit leaders. The creation of this model, through the research synthesis, interviews and triangulation, is for the purposes of nonprofit capacity building.

Nonprofit organizations, including higher education institutions, must continuously reimagine how to develop the nonprofit managers and leadership of tomorrow. This project seeks to provide a model and recommendations that supports the development and design of education programs that build the capacity of the nonprofit workforce.

Along with many other fields of academic inquiry, nonprofit studies is a relatively recent development. This project also supports the research field in interweaving population studies and calling for the development of shared tools for data collection and assessment.

Objectives

1. Review the historical foundations for the formation of nonprofit management education programs
2. Assess the curriculum of nonprofit management education programs in the U.S.
3. Discuss trends and transformations in face-to-face, distance, online and hybrid learning methods
4. Synthesis research on market demand for nonprofit management/leadership skills and competencies
5. Map the market's demand for nonprofit leader skills and competencies to both curriculum and program design
6. Create recommendations for designing hybrid educations models that honor the historic foundations and institutions of nonprofit education and integrate market and students needs

1. Conduct a literature review of the historical context that supported and generated the development of nonprofit higher education.
2. Conduct a literature review of the major developments in nonprofit education.
3. Conduct a literature review of the adoption, transformation and credibility of online education in graduate-level education.
4. Synthesis research from various contemporary studies on nonprofit management/leadership skills and competencies.
5. Create a model for designing nonprofit management programs that builds on existing research and incorporates opportunities from hybrid learning models.
6. Triangulate recommendations using a SWOT analysis of current program offerings, accreditation requirements and the evolution of hybrid education.

Key Findings

- Outside function skills and competencies, such as public relations, fundraising, and community organizing and advocacy, are underrepresented in nonprofit management education curriculum
- Nonprofit leaders have identified key areas for nonprofit studies to focus which support the sector in the pursuit of social impact and system-level change. These areas are: an understanding of how organization establish a community value, an ability to understand how change happens, an ability to work collaboratively, a recognition of different and appropriate organization structures and business models, and hands on experiences.
- The demand for online courses is growing.
- Faculty and marketplace credibility are barriers in the development and administration of online education.
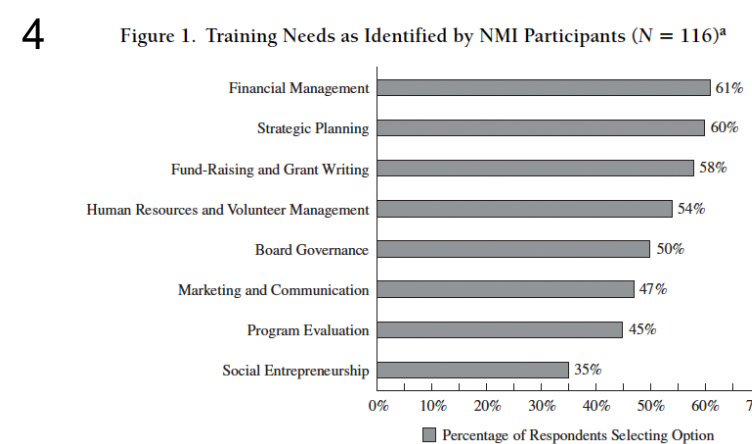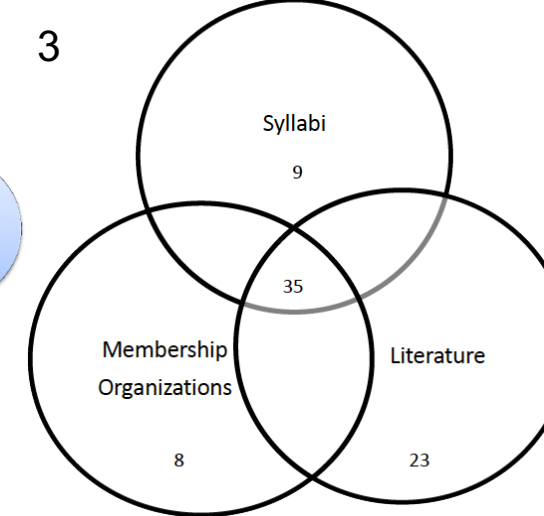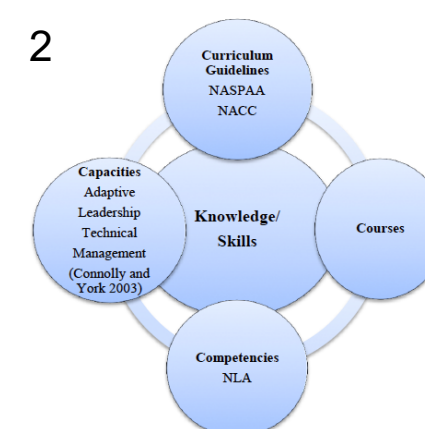
Model

The model that I've created is available at: goo.gl/LhiUbr

The model delineates key factors in designing a nonprofit management and leadership education to develop nonprofit capacity. The factors are location of the program, degree types, accreditation agencies, credit hours, program cost, learning environment, community partners and faculty capacity.

The data and models pictured below are a sampling of the peer reviewed literature data and models that have been integrated into the open-source online model described above.

Figure 1. Training Needs as Identified by NMI Participants (N = 116)[a]

Developing capacity for nonprofit organizations' effectiveness and efficiency is a substantial undertaking. The institutions, organizations and teams, both formal and inform, that pursue this mission are challenged to prioritize an ever growing demand for nonprofit leadership and management competencies. At the same time, during the current coming of age of nonprofit studies, nonprofit leaders and thinkers are asking for tailored graduate and professional schooling for future nonprofit leaders, as demonstrated by Ahmed analysis of 242 nonprofit CEO job postings. To meet this challenge, educators are experimenting with hybrid models of instruction to facilitate education experiences that deliver more, and in a more flexible format. All education curriculum uses online modalities to facilitator coursework, from digital assignment submission processes, to internet research, to on-demand online instructor, to real-time global online discussion groups. The promise of digital has been overstated and underestimated. The work of leading research institutions to learn through MOOCs, such as edX or MITx, demonstrates the need for learning about hybrid learning.

The recommendations for organizations seeking to design programs to develop the capacity of nonprofit organizations are:

1. Position your program strategically within our own organizational structure to develop cross sector or cross functional cohorts of professionals that promote community standards of excellence.
2. Develop degrees and certificates for nonprofit professionals that leverage accreditation and association bodies and support students at different points in their career paths.
3. Create emphasis, through curriculum and assignment design, on outside function skills in programs designed for nonprofit leaders.
4. Test and optimization combinations of hybrid education, face-to-face and online, that achieve learning outcomes while honoring faculty and student preferences.
5. Incorporate service-learning projects to instill blended learning, support career development, build community values and improve outside function skills and competencies.

Data & Model References

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