Week 3 Project

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Program Analysis

The Ohio Higher Education University System is a state run government agency that is managed by the Chancellor of Education and advised by the Ohio Board of Regents, a nine member committee appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate. One branch of the Board of Regents is the Business the Division of Economic Advancement that works to retain, attract, and grow Ohio's businesses (State of Ohio, 2015). Within this branch is the Workforce Training & Adult Education section program called ABLE (Adult basic Literacy Education) that addresses adult literacy concerning GED, English Language skills, and other skills they need to be successful in post-secondary education and training, and employment (Ohio higher ed, 2015). The sub-program of ABLE that was chosen for evaluation is the English as an Other Language or ESOL, specifically the ESOL program that is administered for Tuscawarus, Carrol, and Holmes Counties.

The mission statement of ABLE is “**To provide lifelong learning opportunities that will enable eligible adults to develop necessary skills for personal and professional success.” (Buckeye Joint Vocation School, 2015). The program was started by US government funding from the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Dept. of Labor, 1998). It is looked upon by government and the business sector as a necessary program especially with the increase of workers from other countries. It is perceived by non-English speaking students as vital to success at work and with the family. On the local level the program is aimed at non English speaking employees of the local businesses which include two poultry processing plants, three large product packaging plants and two meat packing plants. These industries hire many workers for low wages to fill positions and English is not a requirement for hiring.**

The ESOL program is to provide instruction for learning English free of charge to anyone that want to learn. There are no prerequisites or requests for identification made to any student. Essentially it is open to all, even undocumented aliens. It is operated out of a local church activity center once in the morning and once in the evening two days a week. This location covers all three counties. The program has always been able to maintain funding minimums but evaluations or statistics are very minimal, number of student, their native language, class attendance, and graduates of the different levels, etc. The main concern of the program is to keep numbers high enough to maintain funding.

A breakdown of the stakeholders of this program starting at the top is as follows. The State of Ohio, Ohio Higher Education, and Chancellor of Education has developed this program to increase economic viability in the workplace by educating illiterate workers. The State funds the program at the county level and monitors results to justify the spending of the money. They are basically concerned with number of graduates that can contribute to the workforce thereby boosting the economy. The program director at the county level oversees the day to day operations of the program with interest of satisfying the funding requirements. The instructors and volunteers are there to teach but also act as salespersons to keep the number of students above the minimum needed to maintain funding. The students are there to learn English but they are not there for the main objective of the program to learn English to gain employment. Although this is a concern, the majority are there to learn English to help their family and children and adapt to the American culture. They see themselves as 3rd class citizens not being able to speak the language. Last, the local business community is only concerned obtaining workers that they can communicate with. This information at the county level was obtained by observations and personal conversations with the stakeholders by the author.

Looking at the program in a political perspective follows. What was noticed about the program was the requirements for being an instructor are not stated in the program. There are only two instructors in the county program. The program lead instructor at this time was formally one of the office workers in the Adult Education office and left to become the number two instructor. When the lead instructor left and she became the lead instructor at which time she hired her sister to fill the position of second instructor even though more qualified persons had applied for the position. Her sister has no qualification or certification for teaching ESOL. As Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2010) state that the reason we have anti –nepotism laws is to avoid interpersonal relationships and bias. It seems that the political environment at the county level pretty much depends on who you know and not what you know. The funding is from the State of Ohio and standard evaluations are done every year for the program to maintain funding. The classroom space is donated by a local church and no technological equipment is provided. Some local businesses occasionally supply food and drink to the students but nothing is obtained by the businesses that benefit directly from the program. The program also supplies free of charge to students eye exam and glasses to make sure the students can see to read.

As for any ethical challenges involved in the evaluation of this program, it is definitive that a thorough evaluation would show unethical practices are being used to operate parts of the program and a lack of concern as to how the students are taught or the context of the lesson material for the benefit of the student instead of the businesses that benefit from the program. This might be a problem when trying to obtain data on the local level.

References

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