

PASS and PASSING

PASS. When, after 1968, Wolf Wolfensberger began to develop the ideas that became his definition of the principle of normalization, he and his colleagues at the Nebraska Psychiatric Institute operationalized that developing principle. They intended to render normalization applicable, in detail, to actual human service settings and organizations and to offer users the means to define and assess the service quality of human service programs. The first version of PASS (*Program Analysis of Service Systems*) was an early 1970 unpublished mimeograph edition aimed to direct money, which was available for new service development in Nebraska, to those proposals most in accord with normalization (Wolfensberger, 1999). The first published edition of PASS, sometimes called *PASS 2*, followed Wolfensberger's move from Nebraska to Canada's National Institute on Mental Retardation (NIMR) and NIMR's publication of Wolfensberger's seminal book, *The Principle of Normalization in Human Services*, in 1972.

PASS says, in effect, that a program guided by the principle of normalization must consider several important sub-ideas. A program adheres to normalization when it:

- a. Encourages and enables the integration of people who use services within the valued culture;
- b. Uses age- and culture appropriate ways to interpret service users and to structure their experience;
- c. Organizes its responses to service users so that the responses fit each individual and are internally consistent in meeting each individual's needs;
- d. Orients its efforts toward the growth/development of each service user; and
- e. Carries out its activity in enhancing and positively interpreting settings. (Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1973, pp. 3-4)

PASS provides, within each of these sub-ideas, specific questions (called "ratings") that users of PASS can answer about a particular program after a careful examination of that program. Sixty-eight per cent of PASS ratings directly address issues specific to the normalization principle. The remaining ratings deal with issues that are important to programs of quality (e.g.,

administration, staffing, governance, finance) but not directly pertinent to normalization.

Here is an example of a PASS rating—one focused on an aspect of normalization. The rating, “Age-Appropriate Activities, Routines, and Rhythms,” is based on the fact that human service programs tend to impose certain portrayals or interpretations (i.e., of the service recipients) and certain structures (e.g., how time is used, via schedules, etc.) on people who use services. “Age-Appropriate Activities, Routines, and Rhythms” asks raters to judge whether the activities planned for people and the patterns-of-life arranged for them (routines, rhythms) are similar to those of valued people of the same age. PASS offers six possible “levels” of judgment for this rating, with “Level 6” as the highest. If this issue gets a “low” rating from a PASS team, then PASS says that service recipients are more likely to be misinterpreted (e.g., thought of as child-like) by others and to have their time be weakly used. (Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1975, pp. 25-26)

Wolfensberger and his colleague Linda Glenn designed PASS so that teams of trained raters could make valid judgments about the quality of an assessed program vis-à-vis the normalization principle. The design of PASS included weighted ranges of scores attached to each “rating,” enabling both the second and third editions of PASS (Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1973, 1975) to render a quantitative evaluation of service programs and proposals. Because PASS evaluations yielded those numerical scores (and sub-scores related to particular issues prominent in the instrument), PASS made it possible for users to compare service programs: (a) either the same service across time, e.g., from one year to the next; (b) within a given service field; or (c) across different fields, e.g., residential services for people with developmental disabilities with residential services for people who are aging.

The ability to conduct useful and valid evaluations of human service programs by means of PASS depends on the availability of trained and experienced raters. Wolfensberger early developed the design for multi-day workshops to introduce participants to PASS. The design of PASS workshops incorporated three requirements: (a) the training must help learners understand and manage a complex set of issues; (b) conscious attention must be paid, in the training, to the examination of the critical role of values in human services; and (c) through the practicum portion of each training, workshop participants must be placed in a position to experience the ideology and ideological conflicts often hidden beneath the surface of human service practice

(Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1975). From the start, each PASS training workshop encompassed five very full days, with two days of didactic presentation about normalization and PASS, two intense days in practicum fieldwork at actual service programs, and a final day of reporting and explicating findings (Thomas, 1999). Participants were usually exhausted at the end. Many, however, marked their learning at those workshops as the means to acquiring new eyes about human service values and practices. One participant at an early PASS workshop recalled an appreciation that PASS “took a stance” about values issues—that it “didn’t aspire to moral neutrality” (Osburn, 1999).

Between the publication of PASS 2 in 1973 and the development and consequent shift to the use of PASSING in the 1980’s, thousands of copies of PASS were sold and thousands of people took part in PASS workshops—especially across the English-speaking (and parts of the French-speaking) world. (Thomas, S., 1999)

PASSING. *PASSING* originated as an effort to enable normalization-based assessments of service programs that were easier to do than was PASS 3. The idea was that additional and more understandable explanatory text would make a wider use of normalization-related evaluation more likely. The first (unpublished) version of *PASSING* (Thomas and Wolfensberger, 2007) was used only in Dane County, Wisconsin. The first published edition appeared (with NIMR again as publisher) in 1983. Workshops to train raters and leaders about PASSING began with the availability of the 1983 edition. PASSING workshops were initially structured in a fashion similar to earlier PASS 3 events, with adjustments having been made to account for differences between the tools.

The original and the 1983 published editions of PASSING had Wolfensberger’s definition of normalization at their core. At about the same time, however, Wolfensberger, acting on long-standing misgivings about normalization, reconceptualized it as Social Role Valorization—often shortened to “SRV” (Wolfensberger, 1983). Certainly the importance of aiming at valued social roles for people subject to social devaluation had become more prominent in the definition of normalization before SRV was conceptualized. Wolfensberger and his colleague Susan Thomas prepared a third edition of PASSING, fully based on SRV, which was published in 2007 and is still in full use (Wolfensberger and Thomas, 2007).

PASSING is based on the assumption that the occupation of valued social roles by those who use services is the desired outcome of a service program. PASSING contends that the attainment of valued social roles by people who are socially vulnerable is the key to their getting the “good things of life.” According to PASSING, two avenues lead to the acquisition of valued social roles (p. 1-2). First, a person takes on valued roles if her social image is enhanced—if she is seen and continues to be seen positively by others. A major part (sixty-four per cent) of PASSING rests on the assertion that positive perceptions of people who use services are influenced in major ways by the often-unconscious things that service agencies do or do not do. PASSING serves as a tool to foster analysis—and correction when necessary—of practices that bear on the social image of those who use services. For example, the PASSING rating titled “Image Projection of Service Activities & Activity Timing” asks for a judgment about whether a service engages its recipients in ways (i.e., activities, etc.) that all match cultural expectations for such things for people in general and for people of the same age as recipients, so as to avoid reinforcement of already existing negative stereotypes about those recipients (Wolfensberger and Thomas, 2007, pp. 215-224).

The second avenue toward valued social roles involves active work to develop the personal competency of each person using services. Thirty-six per cent of PASSING’s ratings focus on efforts by an assessed program to help a service recipient develop and demonstrate personal competency that is important to him and to others. Here is an example of how PASSING enables judgments about a program’s effort to develop recipients’ capacities: the rating “Intensity of Activities & Efficiency of Time Use.” That rating asks PASSING teams to make judgments about several related issues, among which is the question of whether the assessed program offers activities (of high demand; reflecting high expectations) that are potent and challenging in relation to recipients’ likely potential. A low “level” on this rating is an indicator of weak effort by the program to lift the personal competencies of those who use the service. (Wolfensberger, and Thomas, 2007, pp. 403-412).

Like PASS before it, PASSING has been translated into French, making it available as a primary tool for teaching about SRV not only in North America but also increasingly in other areas around the world.

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