PRESENT DAY CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE TRAINING OF CYCS

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ABSTRACT: This article takes a brief look at four concerns relating to the future of child and youth care training, particularly with respect to the design and development of the CYC curriculum: the shift to a systems-based model of care; the retention of a reflective element within the context of more competency-based training; the awareness of changing philosophical perspectives of care; and the differences in professional scope between pre-service and in-service training.

In thinking of the future training of CYCs one can begin by translating today's observations into tomorrow's forecasts. In other words, one can reflect on those salient issues pertaining to the present day training of CYCs and consider how these issues may influence our concerns about future CYC training. In this brief submission we will take this conceptualized approach in thinking about the future of CYC training, particularly with respect to the designing and development of CYC curriculum. Although our outlook may be shaped in the context of preservice clinical instruction in Canada, we believe that our concerns have applicability throughout the international professional field. Furthermore, we have decided not to explore the ramifications of recent developments in distance education and interprogramme accessibility. While these new realities offer enormous opportunities in training CYCs, for the purposes of this discussion we will focus specifically on current issues of curriculum design; with full awareness that these recent developments in instructional technology and interprogram collaboration do, nevertheless, play a role in contributing to the concerns we identify in this short paper.

Concern #1:
Holding onto the Classical 'Soul' of CYC Work: Maintaining the balance between *training* an intervention specialist and *developing* a care practitioner.
   The shift from a more intrusive residential model of care to a more comprehensive systems-based model has resulted in a far more expanded and multidimensional role definition for working CYCs.
   Consequently, preservice CYC training programs have been involved in modifying curriculum structure, content, and delivery to reflect this trend. As the CYC worker becomes responsible for servicing increasingly diverse client groups within more diverse settings, he or she will be

expected to utilize a varied repertoire of intervention strategies in responding to numerous client needs. In preparing future CYCs to acquire this ever expanding repertoire of intervention skills, techniques and strategies, are we running the risk of losing the classical 'soul' of CYC work?

Years ago when the CYC role was specific to residential care work, dominant therapeutic approaches centered on the application of attachment theory and some learning theory in the development and maintenance of a caring, nurturing, and growth enhancing environment. In this regard, the CYC worker was trained with an emphasis on the use of 'self' in working as a care and milieu specialist, and as a nurturing/instructional change agent. Today's reality shows an expansion to this orientation in that CYC curriculum is constantly being upgraded to "equip" the CYC student/worker with an enlarged repertoire of skills and tools to use in a multitude of varied settings with diverse client groups. Does this mean that CYC training is becoming more technical in content and structure? To think of this in another way, are we running the risk that the CYC "care specialist" of the *past* may become *tomorrow's* "technician" of psycho/educational skills and tools? The primary question to ask in this regard is, How conscientious will we be in the future in continuing the emphasis on the importance of care, attachment, nurturing, and the use of "self," while still preparing CYC's to work in the larger, more complex service delivery marketplace?

Concern #2:
The Politics and Religion of Competencies in Designing CYC Curriculum

As presented in our first concern, if we believe that it is important to teach a multitude of skills and abilities *without* losing sight of those introspective dimensions involved in developing sensitive and reflective CYC practitioners, then how do we, as CYC educators/trainers, accomplish this balancing act when the present institutional culture is becoming more oriented to the technical language and thinking of "management-by-objectives?" Here we are trying to design a curriculum that promotes interpersonal/psychological attractiveness, sensitivity, effectiveness, and potency, while at the same time having to utilize an onslaught of competency based terminology imposed on us from governmental and in-house institutional bodies. It should be noted that we accept the importance of designing a competencybased curriculum to ensure accountability, professional ability, and coherence (and we are cognizant and most appreciative of the existence of "affective" objectives in the taxonomy). However, in our recent work at Vanier College we have found this movement towards competency-based curriculum design frustrating, because this ambitious approach inadvertently "bureaucratizes" the process of curriculum development. This would definitely be the case when competencies are imposed from *above* rather than developed from *within* a training program. This process can resemble "the tail wagging the

dog." More specifically, using all our creative energies to design a curriculum that is bound by predetermined competencies can result in our losing ourselves as educators, and our students as learners, in a bureaucratic scavenger hunt searching for that perfect, measurable "Bloomesque" learning outcome.

In addition, the overriding attention to the technical thinking and writing involved in the *mapping out* of competencies, learning outcomes, teaching activities, evaluation methodologies, and performance indicators may interfere with our effectiveness in defining curriculum content and exploiting that personal formative process, as mentioned above, that we want to nurture within our students. Consequently, the process of curriculum development may become an overly technical and bureaucratic task devoted to defining structure over content, rather than an intellectual pursuit concerned with integrating the substance of philosophy, values, clinical theory, research, practice methodologies, and personal development into a dynamic curricular framework to be used in clinical education and training. In summary, the question to ask is, In the future training of CYCs how do we maintain, and even maximize, a dynamic comprehensive process of curriculum design and development within a growing autocratic, technical, and competency-based institutional culture?

Concern #3:
The Prevailing Philosophical Lenses and their Permeation into Curriculum Design.

How, as CYC educators, do we philosophically empower ourselves in preparing CYC students to practice the "state of the art" as well as the "state of the science" in the CYC field? In this regard, our own identification of chosen philosophical lenses is critical, particularly with respect to establishing a common ideology that will serve as the glue of a meaningful and coherent curriculum. Moreover, if we see ourselves as change agents in the CYC field, then we must not only keep abreast of changes in all relevant CYC domains, but also be aware of the impact of these changes on our philosophical lenses. Shifts of orientation such as: from a disability orientation to that of an ability orientation; from a problem-focus model to a needs-focus model; and from a service-oriented model to a person-oriented model, are recent examples of changing perceptual views that offer empowering opportunities for clients, CYC students/workers, and CYC educators/trainers. The questions worth asking are, What lenses are we using now and perhaps in the future, and How do we employ these lenses in our training of CYC students/workers?

Concern #4:
The Differences in Professional Scope of Preservice and In-service Training

With the ongoing development of new treatment approaches and the desire for a higher degree of clinical effectiveness, agencies are taking a

more active role in providing clinical in-service training to their CYC workers. (As a function of a low number of preservice training programs, a more complex reality of licensing criteria, and the historical drive to certify workers, this trend has been more prevalent in the United States.) In-service training can provide a high degree of accountability and performance, because agencies are more able to exercise precision in interconnecting agency philosophy and strategic plans with worker training needs and job expectations. Consequently, in their drive to ensure relevant training for their present and future workers, agencies are collaborating more with preservice and other forms of external training programs, such as those programs that prepare workers for certification.

Dynamic and collaborative relationships, of any degree, between agency and preservice/external programs are definitely to be desired for a multitude of clinical and educational reasons. However, the operational mandates of these two entities are different in professional scope. Agencies are more situationally focused in determining the training needs of their present and future workers. Situational variables often include agency philosophy of treatment, licensing and managed care requirements, job classification structure, treatment team makeup, staffing ratios, professional development resources, and most important of all, the particular needs of the children, youth, and families who are receiving agency care and treatment. In contrast, preservice programs and external programs preparing workers for certification tend to focus beyond the realities of local agencies to the evolving developments, opportunities and demands related to the broader professional field. In addition to preparing CYC students for successful employment in local agencies, CYC students and worker certification candidates are also being trained to succeed in what is, *and what will be,* occurring in the broader professional field. In this regard, the question to ask is, In the desire to avoid "overtraining" or "undertraining," to what degree are preservice CYC students, and workers for certification, being prepared not only to succeed in local agencies, but also to successfully enter into the broader professional CYC field?

Closing Comments: Keeping the Faith

In thinking about the future of ever-changing service delivery systems, clinical models, training needs, and curriculum design, we must not lose sight of the needs of children, youth and families. Whatever CYC educators and trainers do in preparing and upgrading the level of performance of CYCs, we must keep ourselves honest in the belief that all training and professional education is an essential investment for improving quality of care. To put this in more concrete terms, the future of the professional training of CYCs must continue to maintain its primary focus on improving the lives of children, youth and families.