

Introducing Geriatrics/Gerontology into Curricula

Annual NICE Knowledge
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Strategies to handle curriculum development on Older Adults

- Three different approaches:
 1. The needs of the population
 2. The needs of the students
 3. The normative approach: using accreditation bodies

1. The needs of the population

- By the year 2020 the population aged 65 and over will be higher than 15 and under
- Need to adapt curriculum to the needs of a changing world – rapid demographic changes
- That they like it or not, social work graduates and other professionals will have to work with older adults

2. Educational needs of the students

Drawing on the experience of curriculum development of Dr. Marie Beaulieu, Director of M.A. Gerontology, Université de Sherbrooke

- What is *normal* aging vs *pathological*?
- Stereotypes on aging
- Social involvement of a *healthy* population group – community development
- Social work intervention and loss of capacities, bereavement, end of life, etc.
- Social work in support of the caregivers

Educational needs of the social work students – cont'd

- Working in an interdisciplinary context where the medical point of view is often structuring for the other professions
- Need to have a broader knowledge than the psycho-social in order to be effective social workers
- Need to master assessment tools – in a perspective of home care

Strategy of curriculum development

- Developing this course content through a mandatory course?
- Developing this transversally throughout several courses?

Questions

- The strategy of the Universities looks like each one develops their own curriculum, according to their means and knowledge. We have here outstanding examples of this.
 - How to make sure all Universities develop the proper curriculum content?
 - How to ensure their overall quality and adequacy throughout the country?

3. The normative approach

- Going the other way around: through accreditation bodies. Is this a more effective strategy?
- The accreditation process for CASWE:
 - To develop educational policies on knowledge and intervention with Older Adults, to be adopted by the AGM
 - The Board of Accreditation develops accreditation standards, to be adopted by the AGM
 - Once adopted, the Schools have to put this course content in place

The normative approach – cont'd

- This process is looking quite straight forward, however, in the real world...
 - in order to develop Educational policies, one might need to set up a Standing Committee or an Interest Group on Social Work with Older Adults
 - Process is long and onerous, but feasible
 - Once adopted, the standards will be enforced throughout all the Canadian Schools of Social Work

The normative approach – cont'd

- Following this procedure, other Interest Groups have developed educational policies and standards for specific population groups: e.g. people with disabilities, First Nations, the Francophone reality, etc., that were adopted by the AGM and are now a part of the accreditation standards.

However...

- There are some negative aspects to this process:
 - The proliferation of standards pertaining to specific population groups
 - Developing standards may depend on the interest and initiative of specific persons or groups, who become a kind of «pressure groups». What about the population groups that don't have that kind of support or interest? Such as the unemployed, the underprivileged, the illegal immigrants, etc. Who will voice the voiceless?

Questions

- The Elderly appear to be one of these voiceless groups up till now – there are no standards pertaining directly to them. I did a word search for ‘elder’, ‘old’, ‘aged’, etc. nothing... The very words are missing...

Questions cont'd

- However, there might be other ways to address special needs of specific population groups: how about a transversal approach? This would at least have the advantage to prevent the proliferation of standards.

Questions – cont'd

- transversally there are several standards addressing globally the needs of several population groups: e.g. *The school's objectives shall take into account ethnic, cultural and racial diversity in the Canadian population, and reflect the same in curriculum content (...). (Note: Diversity throughout this document refers to ethnic or linguistic origin, culture, race, colour, national origin, religion, age, physical status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and political orientation).*

Questions – cont'd

- Is this transversal approach satisfying? Or do we believe that if a population group is not explicitly mentioned in the standards, Schools will forget about them?



Thank you.