

Perspectives on Expertise

Historians: Britt Prokop, Sheila Oehrlein, Naomi Stanton, Claire King, Anonymous

WHAT DID YOU HEAR? WHAT ARE THE BIG IDEAS?

- Expertise comes from experience, scientific and technical knowledge. How do we develop expertise in youth workers? The different ways/types of knowing. Is there right and wrong ways to respond in complex situations and is this a reflection of expertise or novice?
- Valuing different ways of knowing – phronesis; apprenticeship opportunities; reflective practice
- Whether/how to certify youth work is a dilemma. That Greek wordy thingamajig – ways of knowing. Experts in the field do not find it easy to define/quantify their practice. Reflective practice is key to youth worker “competency.” We need evidence of what youth worker do.
- Acknowledgement that expertise reflects knowledge, skills and “voodoo” (magic, mystique, and all forms of praxis and phronesis)
- “reflection” is conceptually related to “expertise” and is environment-setting sensitive (eg – if chaos reigns and time to do so is absent, and reflection is lacking, then so to, does expertise “suffer”
- Made sense.
- Core competencies are fine but we also need the magic in youthwork.
- What does expertise really mean? Being an expert versus having expertise?
- Need to look beyond competencies
- Need to hone our skills/no right answers
- Sometimes training can be detrimental/training versus professional development
- Certification – then what? authentic feedback is crucial.
- Mentors – community – staff driven professional development

WHAT DIDN'T YOU HEAR? WHAT'S MISSING?

- I didn't hear about the relation between how knowledge and expertise in this field is like ethical dilemmas. Often, there are not right/wrong actions – there is plenty of gray area – how we move forward, reflection
- What do young people want adults to know/be able to do?
- The parallels between the ways we think young people grow/develop and the ways we should support youth workers to grow/develop. It's all about human development – we can look to youthwork to help us frame how to build expertise.
- A convincing argument for core competencies.
- The very term “competency” – like the term “tolerance” can be construed as a minimalist term, by which we mean that at least this is needed to begin to demonstrate effective practice with young people, but the goal is to gain expertise, proficiency...
- There is an assumption that “competency” is connotative of purely technical skills. Could we see the CYCCB competencies to evaluate whether this assumption is accurate?

WHAT QUESTIONS AROSE OR LINGER?

- Is there something lost between being a novice and being an expert? If the mystery of being a novice is a sort of gut reaction and common sense, is something lost when every action and reaction is intentional? There is value in novice entry-level and what we are able to develop.

Testing as a measure of competence is a mistake – if we argue it is inadequate as a measure for youth – why is it adequate for adults?

- Do we want a profession or a discipline?
- Do we want a profession or a discipline? What will core competencies bring and how will they change our work? Who decides what we need to know? Do we need to define our field and what an “expert” is/knows in order to resist this being done from the outside?
- Expertise – can it be taught? (the group was not sure there is a definitive answer); can it be learned? (the group felt definitely yes)
- Competencies – by virtue of their essence are competencies an end or a beginning / jumping off point?

WHAT NUGGETS, GIFTS, PIECES OF WISDOM SHOULD BE CAPTURED & ARCHIVED AS WE MOVE FORWARD TO DECIDE WHO AND WHAT WE WANT TO BECOME?

- The value of reflective practice and taking time as a valuable asset to staff development. Deliberate practice with feedback: what is sad is the high value we place on this but the little time we are willing to put aside to invest in staff development.
- Bureaucratization of process is scary to folks at my table – and testing is especially scary to Kari
- There are different ways of knowing. Expertise comes from experience, not the fulfillment of pre-specified criteria. As young people do, so do youth workers, need space to make mistakes – part of human development. Public money = externally imposed criteria. Core competencies move the profession toward a scientific approach. Required competencies are not universal – cannot be a core system? Staff need reflection time as part of their role in order to develop expertise. Youth work is an apprenticeship, not an assessed test.
- Working with the dilemma (case studies, vignettes, simulations) can accelerate learning which leads to expertise for novices who do not have the time/experience that leads to expertise.
- The “craft orientation” favors a hyphenated approach to youth work that is setting transcendent (eg-teacher-youthworker, public health-youthworker, youth minister-youthworker, coach-youthworker, etc.)