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ABSTRACT

The 4-C Manpower Training Entry Level Course at West Chester State College, Pennsylvania prepared persons with no prior experience for work as teaching aides in day care or preschool settings. The course also provided information on parent education. A total of 35 participants were enrolled in the initial 2 program years. The Entry Level Course was divided into three phases: phase I consisted of a 30-hour seminar on the concepts of child development; phase II was a practicum done in a day care or child development center setting; and phase III assisted the course participant when she returned to her daily working situation. Evaluation of the program was based on pre- and posttest data from the Knowledge of Infant Development Scale. This Scale measured basic knowledge of concepts and terminology in child development. Results showed statistically significant gains for each program year. (BRB)

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FOR ENTRY PARTICIPANTS

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As part of the overall Pennsylvania 4-C Manpower Training Program, a course for Entry Level participants was developed. This course was designed to prepare individuals, with no prior experience, for eventual employment in the child care services field. A total of 35 participants were enrolled in the initial two program years. Pre- and posttest data for both years, on a scale designed to measure basic knowledge of concepts and terminology in child development, yielded statistically significant gains for each program year.

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Problem:

The work of McClellan (1971), Zigler (1971) and Mayer and Matsushima (1969) points to a need for the development of a pool of potential workers in the field of child care. These researchers indicate that a simultaneous up-grading in expectations for a child's day care experience and increase in the demand for places in day care institutions have created a pressure on the labor market for persons trained in the concepts of child development and the techniques of early childhood education. The Entry Level of 4-C Manpower Training Course is an attempt to relieve this pressure.

The 4-C Manpower Training Entry Level Course offered at West Chester State College, Pennsylvania, is an effort to prepare interested persons with no prior experience for work as teaching aides in day care and preschool settings. The course also provides a large component of parent education which offers members information and practical ideas applicable for use to their own children. It is part of a larger overall Manpower Training Program which includes courses also for Teacher/Supervisors and Paraprofessionals who are currently working in the child care services field. In the 1970-71 Program year, the overall enrollment totaled 79, while in 1971-72, 78 individuals were enrolled.

Method:

Seven individuals participated in the 1970-71 Entry Level course while in 1971-72 there were 28 participants. The curriculum assumes that course participants have an interest in children and child care services but lack

knowledge of child development and of means for assisting the child's growth. Therefore, the thrust of the course is to provide the basic skills the participants will need to work effectively as assistant teachers on the preschool level, while simultaneously offering them insights on how they can help their own young children. Because the course is almost always the first introduction class members have to college level work, a great effort is made to maintain an informal, relaxed atmosphere.

The course is divided into three distinct phases. The first is a 30-hour seminar focusing on the concepts of child development. The subject matter of the seminar consists of the areas of developmental patterns and principles, physical, motor, social, psychological and cognitive development. Topics are explored through a great variety of techniques. A typical meeting might begin with a film to orient class members to an area and stimulate their questions and comments. A group discussion which might follow provides an opportunity for the students to obtain information either from the instructor or from classmates. The meeting might conclude with an opportunity for participants to construct teaching materials which could assist their children in developing a particular skill. Other learning situations incorporated into various meetings are guest lecturers, workshops and brain storming sessions. Course members by their entry status, have little acquaintance with the problems of group child care and staff relations. The course had to be designed to give them a knowledge of the situations they will encounter. Much emphasis, therefore, is placed on active participation in role playing situations depicting child-child, child-teacher and teacher-aide interaction.

Class members, by assuming and later discussing various roles, come to develop techniques for problems which formerly were only theoretical to them.

Readings are provided for each area through booklets, pamphlets and kits which reinforce the ideas under discussion at the meeting. While these reading materials have excellent content, they do not require a high level of reading skill in order to be understood.

Class members are pretested at the beginning of the seminar phase and posttested at its end on concepts and terminology of child development. Groups participating have consistently shown significant knowledge gains.

The second phase of the course is a practicum done in a day care or child development center setting. During this phase, the participant has the opportunity to observe children in a group situation and put into practice those ideas and techniques derived from the seminar.

Evaluative visits by the seminar instructor and feedback from the resident staff of the center give the participant guidance and encouragement to help her reach her greatest potential. Participants often report that their seminar preparation and practicum experience give them a new perspective on children and a capacity to work with them that they never thought possible of themselves.

Phase III assists the course participant when she has returned to her daily working situation with children whether as a mother, home daycare mother or assistant teacher in a newly acquired job. Almost without exception students in Phase III state that the course has been a great benefit for both themselves and those children for whom they are responsible.

Results:

All 4-C Manpower Training Participants were administered, on a pre- and

posttest basis, the Knowledge of Infant Development Scale (Dusewicz, 1972), which tests for basic knowledge of concepts and terminology in child development. In both the 1970-71 and 1971-72 program years, the Entry Level Group exhibited statistically significant pre-post gains ($p < .01$). In addition, analyses of covariance on posttest scores, using premeasures as the covariate, for both program years indicated significantly superior scores of the Entry Level than for the Teacher/Supervisor Level ($p < .01$). Moreover, less than a one-point difference separated the mean posttest scores for these two groups in 1971-72. These rather surprising results suggest a need to devote more effort on the Teacher/Supervisor level to basic concepts and terminology in child development rather than philosophies, theories and programs. They also attest to the rather successful development of the Entry Level Training Program.

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