Creative Pedagogies
Across the Child and Youth Care Undergraduate Program

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March 8, 2017

Introduction:

• Abstract

The School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC) is currently undergoing a process of renewing the undergraduate curriculum in order to be increasingly responsive to multiple, complex contexts within the 21st century (SCYC, 2015). Within the dynamic contexts of contemporary practice, the important role of creativity is increasingly being recognized. Creative and innovative pedagogies— which may include, for example, arts-based, wellness-based, metaphorical, narrative, embodied, imaginative, flexible, or choice-based student engagement— are a consideration in the reconceptualization of the SCYC’s curriculum. As a fourth year undergraduate child and youth care (CYC) student I have experienced various creative pedagogical approaches in the program. This has led me to wonder, what collective knowings exist in the department about the use of creative pedagogies, involving both teaching and evaluation practices? Using qualitative, exploratory methods, a focus group will be utilized to bring together instructors and faculty who draw upon innovative pedagogical practices in their distance and on-campus classrooms to share their experiences and create a set of recommendations for the SCYC’s Undergraduate Program Council. The research is intended to inform the renewed curriculum to optimize responsiveness to diverse and dynamic contemporary contexts.

• Objectives

1. To document how creative and innovative pedagogies are being used within both distance and on-campus undergraduate CYC classrooms.
2. To create a set of recommendations for the SCYC in order to inform the curriculum renewal process.

Methods:
The present research was a qualitative, exploratory study.

Sampling

The target population for this research were instructors and faculty in the undergraduate CYC program who have experience utilizing creative and innovative pedagogies in their classrooms. A letter of recruitment was sent to all undergraduate instructors and faculty via a distribution list, and a sample was drawn through availability sampling. A total of seven instructors and faculty participated.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two in-person focus groups using semi-structured interview questions were conducted. Responses were thematically analyzed.

Guiding Sentence

"Preparing our students to work with children, youth, and families in changing and evolving circumstances in an ethical and responsive way." 

Professional Leadership Course

An instructor for all students that initiates building community and introduces students to important skills for their CYC degree.

Continuity & Coordination

In order to consider the program as a whole, such as how clusters link to each other and how assignments and activities.

Flexible Pathways

Courses can be created with pre-written learning outcomes, but the pathways to achieving those outcomes can be left open for flexibility.

Process Courses

Offering courses that utilize creative methods, small group work, and reflexive practices in order to center decolonization, decolonization, and power dynamics, and providing opportunities to reflect on the learning.

Instructor Training & Mentorship

Including opportunities to share ideas, having pedagogy conversations, and course leads outside of one’s context.

Foundational Knowledge

Continually engaging with the theories that form the foundation of the program, and writing more reflexive pieces. 

Re-Design Weekly Expectations

Reducing assigned readings in order to shift classroom engagement, including engagement with diverse mediums within class activities.

Engagement

• “Part of creating that space for me, within the data analysis course, is making that course live beyond excel, beyond the computer screen.”
• “If you don’t engage with people on all of those fronts— those most marginalized students who are entering an overly colonial institution - we lose those students.”

Learning as a Process

• “I don’t think it can be iterated enough in our courses that the process of shifts inside of yourself is something so profound, but it rarely is concentrated on in the work.”
• “Invest more in a progressive linked learning journey and learning process that is cumulative across courses.”

Relationship and Community

• “Having times for community building, you know, that actually really, really matters. Not just a half hour at the end of the term.”
• “There’s not only a relational piece, but there’s also relational accountability that happens between all of us in the classroom. I consider myself a learner as well.”

Social Justice

• “That we can create a space where social justice isn’t a word, but is a practice. And that ethic of being here is so deeply integrated into everything we do, rather than parcelled out in an ethics class.”

Being Responsive

• “Contexts are completely changing and shifting, and we have to be able to respond pedagogically to those shifts... we have to be responsive.”
• “One part of it was making sure that students really shared their skills, their interests, their strengths.”

Conclusion:

In this research, creative pedagogies encompassed evaluation methods, teaching methods, and classroom practices. Instructors drew upon these methods to be responsive to students and global contexts, to facilitate the process of learning, and to enact social justice. Instructors’ recommendations intended to strengthen these approaches across a coordinated program. The research contributes to an understanding of some of the creativity occurring in CYC classrooms and offers possibilities to build upon these practices moving forward.

References:


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Acknowledgments:

This research was supported by the Jamie Cassels Undergraduate Research Award.