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DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK: RESPONSIBILITY FOR QUALITY OF CARE

Child and Youth Care (CYC) Practitioners are responsible for an non-enfranchised, vulnerable population dependant on the integrity of the service providers.. In a very dramatic sense we are periodically made aware of scandalous situations of child/youth maltreatment. We are often aware of less dramatic but important situations which call into question the attitude and behaviour of staff, agency policy, and governmental policy and regulation. In addition, there are situations in which core values of the field are truly in conflict. Our early childhood education colleagues in the U.S. have described themselves as in a state of "ethical crisis". Child and Youth Care is surely in this same situation.

Sophisticated and differentiated ethical discussion can play a major part in our being responsible for standards of practice and having a significant influence on the policies which impact our work. Professional ethics are not synonymous with personal morality or governmental regulation. They are not absolute answers for problems. Professional ethics are the organised and systematic reflection of the field on our values and the issues we confront. For some problems answers become apparent. For other situations, ethical analysis can identify the values and issues to be considered. It seems apparent that systematic articulate statements of the values and standards of CYC will enhance our impact on policy. (It is interesting to note that in North America CYC does not have clear statements on corporal punishment or the deprivation and manipulation of food).

In North America, a group of educators is forming to facilitate the development of professional ethics. Currently, we are collecting background material, ethical statements, and the teaching material available in North America. The group will be working closely with the National Organisation of Child Care Workers Associations and the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations.

After this initial information collection the group will design specific projects such as:

1. Exploring the possibility of a North American Ethical Statement for CYC
2. Developing research projects to explore the ethical concerns of the field, the process of ethical thinking, and the impact on the quality of care
3. To facilitate the discussion about the content and process of teaching ethics

This FICE conference would present the following:

1. Background material on the nature, structure and function of professional ethics
2. Description of the North American Educators Project on Professional Ethics
3. Discussion to achieve an international perspective. (Some international consensus on values and standards of practice might enhance our impact on policy and quality of care)

Mißstände und Skandale sind in der Heimerziehung in Noramerika nicht selten und die Konferenzlerin ist der Meinung, dass die Heimerziehung sich in einer "ethischen Krise" befindet. Eine tiefeschürfende Diskussion über berufsethische Fragen ist deshalb notwendig, mehr noch: Sie ist die organisierte und systematische Reflektion über die Ziele und Werte der Heimerziehung und hat notwendigerweise Auswirkungen auf die Qualität der Arbeit. In Nordamerika hat sich eine Gruppe von Erziehern zusammengefunden, welche die Diskussion vorantreiben und die Erfahrungen, die im Ausland in diesem Bereich gemacht wurden, aufarbeiten will.

Selon la conférencière, les professions socio-éducatives en Amérique du Nord se trouvent confrontées à une crise déontologique suite à des scandales plus ou moins importants. Une discussion approfondie d'un code déontologique s'avère donc indispensable. En plus, cette réflexion organisée et systématique aura certainement une influence positive sur la qualité des prestations. En Amérique du Nord, un roupe d'éducateurs s'est formé pour mener à bout cette discussion et pour s'inspirer de ce qui a déjà été élaboré à l'étranger en cette matière.