A Review of the Child Development Associate Training Projects; National and Texas and Competency-Based Training.

This paper reviews the historical and theoretical background of the Child Development Project (CDA), started by the Office of Child Development because of an increased demand for quality day care. Competency-based teacher training requires a set of performance goals that includes a list of demonstrated behaviors, skills or knowledge which the trainee agrees to be accountable for before the completion of the program. The Texas CDA projects described are distinguished by their emphasis on parental and community involvement since each project was required to have an innovative method of responding to the needs of the community. A brief review of the research indicates that the development of competent teachers or child care workers is essential if the quality of care for young children is to be improved. The Child Development Associate training project is one attempt to respond to the need for better trained child care workers. (CS)
A Review of

The Child Development Associate Training Projects

National and Texas

and

Competency-Based Training

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Introduction

In November 1971 Dr. Edward Zigler initiated the Child Development Associate training program, a competency-based program for training and credentialing child care workers. The need which prompted a credentialing system for individuals working with young children, according to Dr. Jenny Klein, was a recognition that "the crucial element in any program for young children is the quality of staff." Acting on this evidence, Dr. Zigler initiated an innovative design for a new profession based on the individual's demonstrated competency in working with young children. Thus, the next logical step in a series of historical developments initiated by Head Start began.

Head Start gave birth to the ideas of compensatory education, a system to equalize educational opportunities for the disadvantaged young child. Expectations for this new nationwide program, among professionals as well as government officials, soared to unrealistic dimensions; however, The Westinghouse Report, indicating that no significant change occurred as a result of Head Start, burst that naive assumption. Compensatory programs did not rectify all the needs of the "disadvantaged" young child. The disillusionment caused many people--professionals, government officials and taxpayers--to reevaluate the original assumptions of Head Start, attempting to identify precisely why no long-term, positive gains could be conclusively shown. The research increasingly indicated a missing variable--description.
and observation of the staff. Each program varied so greatly that, as Weikart indicated, the program or curriculum made no significant difference in the child's development. The teacher made the difference. Out of these findings, the idea of a competency-based credential for child care workers—the Child Development Associate project—was born.

Several social and political changes fomenting in American society also produced a climate readily accepting of the Child Development Associate as a new profession in child care. The demand for day care after 1965 skyrocketed. As mothers or single parents returned to work out of necessity and as women increasingly felt the importance of a career to achieve self-fulfillment, the demand for day care grew beyond the existing supply, particularly the supply of competent child care workers. (This demand will undoubtedly increase with the persistent trend toward mobility and the subsequent demise of the extended family who often substituted as care-givers.)

Also, the growing awareness and subsequent concern about the importance of the early years, supported by most research, created new support for the need for competent workers in day care facilities. Among the middle and upper class mothers especially, the bombardment by mass media had also effectively convinced many parents of their inadequacies and thus the need for professional, quality care for their children.

From a political perspective, the demand for accountability forced professionals, including those in early child-
hood, to consider a competency-based model as a realistic alternative training strategy. For instance, in the Sixties public funds supported numerous social services, such as Head Start, without defineable results; and findings, such as The Westinghouse Report, caused public officials to re-evaluate many programs and to subsequently include accountability restrictions. Heightened public awareness of inequality, particularly in educational opportunities, among American subcultures (including those determined by ethnicity, race and socioeconomic status), also caused a growing concern for accountability in the social services.

Simultaneously severe criticism was levelled against the teaching profession for its incompetence in responding to the needs of minority children. The cries for radical alteration of the present teacher training programs and alternative routes to professional status grew louder. Not only was teacher training too narrow and too rigid but often it was also irrelevant. Some system of accountability needed to be imposed on teacher training, and competency-based models provided a mechanism for responding to those criticisms. By applying systems theory, which is the basis of competency-based training, to education, the feedback loop created individualized programs and the product-orientation of systems theory made accountability possible.

The concern, however, focused particularly on a competency-based training in child care. Child care workers up to this
point had had no relevant standards. Either an unrelated college degree or no training at all was acceptable. As the research supporting the need for quality staff increased and as the demand for day care became more widespread without meeting the minimum standards for quality, the need for training in child care became obvious. A professional who felt the responsibilities and dignity of belonging to a profession was needed, and a training program which stressed a person's competence with children rather than just a rigidly prescribed academic credential assumed a priority in the field of early childhood. The Child Development Associate responded to this need.
The National Child Development Associate Project

Dr. Edward Zigler and Dr. Jenny Klein designed the CDA as a mid-level professional "knowledgeable about preschool children and competent in providing developmental experiences for them. A CDA would be capable of taking responsibility for the daily activities of young children in day care, Head Start, public or private nursery schools and other preschool settings. . . . Initially the CDA concept is limited in scope to those persons who work with children, ages three to five years, in a group setting."^2 The CDA training programs would strive to insure quality training of a professional so he can skillfully focus on the child's educational as well as developmental needs. The CDA becomes one member of a whole team working with young children and is not stuck in a deadend job. The CDA, however, is not to be confused with a teacher's aide.

According to the most recent reviewing of CDA, the overall objective is to assist the trainees so that the competencies become a natural response in their daily interaction with young children. The additional objectives of the training program for the CDA trainee are: 1) acquisition of the CDA role—help the trainees "to develop concepts of their own work roles, interrelationships with other roles . . . and to examine the expectations held for them by others. . . . " 2) development of teaching style—help the trainees "understand and refine their own interpersonal styles in relating
to children, parents, colleagues and others. ... " 3) acquisition of teaching techniques—help the trainees to develop specific skills in working with children in classrooms and other group settings and 4) socialization into the profession—help the trainees "acquire a broad background in the field of early childhood education . . . and . . . a professional self-image, an ethical position, personal philosophy, commitment to the field and a sense of involvement in professional groups and activities." 3

The following components are integral to the successful operation of the CDA projects:

List of Competencies: The competencies perhaps form the starting point of the whole project from the perspective of the trainee, as well as the executive director and the project director. Their role is key in the design of the training and assessment.

A task force of early childhood educators and child development specialists in cooperation with the Office of Child Development, under the leadership of Barbara Biber, developed a beginning list of competencies. (See attachment for list of competencies.) The competencies as presently defined fall into the following general categories:

1. Setting up and maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment;

2. Advancing physical and intellectual competence;

3. Building positive self-concept and individual strength;
4. Organizing and sustaining the positive functioning of children and adults, in a group, in a learning environment;
5. Bringing about optimal coordination of home and center childrearing practices and expectations;
6. Carrying out supplementary responsibilities related to the children's programs.⁴

"Each competency is stated as a broad theoretical premise and is then divided into a number of subcategories which are operational statements of the premise. Within each of these subcategories, a variety of precise definitions will be developed to use as a basis for assessing whether a person has acquired the particular competence."⁵ This listing admittedly does not completely delineate all the areas of competencies needed for working with children. It is a starting point and hopefully, according to Dr. Ray Williams, the list will be evolutionary rather than static. Probably these competencies will become a central core of competencies required of everyone who works with young children and additional competencies unique to working with particular children, i.e., the Black or Mexican-American child, the handicapped child or the infant, will be added. However, the competencies are specific to the CDA role, and their effectiveness depends on the supportive competence of the rest of the team of workers in a center.
Pilot Training Project: The Office of Child Development funded a series of pilot projects which would implement the competencies through innovative training models. A variety of organizations and institutions submitted proposals following the guidelines of designing a learning sequence which coordinated field, academic, and community experiences to train individuals toward the attainment of the CDA competencies. The field and academic experience needed to complement each other. The guidelines for the field experience indicated that trainees must work within the field setting with children under the supervision of a skillful model and work in a variety of field settings to gain a perspective on alternatives for dealing with children, that appropriate field experiences must be scheduled to maximize each trainee’s learning, and that each field site must include adequate guidance.

The academic experience, according to the guidelines, needed to support the practices of the field experience so the trainee understands the philosophical basis for making decisions while working with children. It therefore needed to include the following areas: 1) child growth, development and health; 2) history, principles and practices in early childhood education; 3) relevant ethnic studies to assist the trainee in gaining an understanding of the cultural heritage, 4) local resources and the needs in the community and 5) techniques to create, implement, and assess early childhood programs and curricula planning.
Besides these components in the training project, each one needed to assume the qualities of a competency-based training program in which the individual trainee is cycled into the program at his own level of competence and planning takes place on the basis of trainee feedback and periodic assessment. The field experience must constitute at least half of the trainee's time. The training program could be completed within no less than two months and no more than two years, but needs to take into account the trainee's previous experience and knowledge. The field sites and the academic training need to be innovative and varied. Another stipulation which is not uniquely competency-based is that every project have a counseling component which includes initial entry assessment, a supervisory system, and personal as well as professional counseling.

According to the guidelines, the trainees must be at least 17 years old or have a high school diploma. The project also had to plan for a local advisory board which included community and CDA representation.

CDA Consortium: The Consortium which was initially funded by Office of Child Development now operates as a private, non-profit corporation with an identity distinct from government agencies. Hopefully, according to Dr. Williams, this frees the Consortium to act more independently and will maximize participation.

In its formation, the CDA Consortium sought to get representation from a wide variety of national organizations and
individuals with common interest in the development of young children. Extra care was taken by Dr. Ray Williams, the Executive Director, to get competent and varied representation, especially from minorities. Each category of national organizations in the CDA Consortium membership elects spokesmen to the policy-making Board of Directors so that their collective viewpoints will be represented. The Consortium also includes a small support staff, with Dr. Ray Williams, as the Executive Director, responsible for the daily operations and overall coordination of the project.

The specific responsibilities of the CDA Consortium fall into four distinct areas: 1) The development of a system for assessing and credentialing CDA's; 2) The promotion of the CDA credential so that it is nationally accepted and integrated into existing methods of certifying; 3) The dissemination of information about CDA to promote an understanding of the experimental nature of the project and to assist in the public support of such a method of improving quality care for young children; and 4) The refinement of the CDA competencies.

Assessment Plan: Naturally one of the major concerns of the whole CDA project is the assessment of the various aspects of the project. The Consortium has been given the responsibility of developing a prototype procedure to assess the competence of trainees and has proposed procedures by which credentialing may occur with general acceptance.

The first method of accomplishing this is an informal mechanism of soliciting feedback on the list of competencies.
from any group involved with young children. Second, the assessment, at least to some degree, will occur in the development of specific training programs so that various techniques and interpretations will exist. Third, various institutions and research labs can submit proposals for the development of specific parts of an assessment procedure. Several of these have been funded already. Fourth, a network of clusters can exist which "will function as a feedback loop with the total project to maximize the effect of local and regional input."7

In reviewing the CDA project, the long-term implications, as delineated by the Office of Child Development, include the two major reasons for starting the project: increased demand for day care and increased demand for quality care. Hopefully the actual project will give credence to a competency-based profession and will simultaneously legitimize field training as a method of training professionals. The weaknesses are evident--particularly in interpreting and implementing the competencies and in evaluating the trainee's performance--but the prospects for improved quality in the care of young children is very appealing, in light of the increased demand.

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Texas Child Development Associate Training Projects

The Texas Office of Early Childhood Development, during its initial planning stages, realized the increasing need for day care in Texas and recognized the quality of staff as crucial for the maintenance of quality day care. OECD felt that the CDA program met these concerns and therefore launched their own CDA program. An informal relationship developed between the National CDA Consortium and the Texas CDA pilot projects primarily to exchange ideas and resources. Texas, however, looks to the National Consortium for the final credentialing system.

With an increased appropriations to the state Office of Early Childhood Development in 1972, OECD decided to fund several projects to pilot the CDA concept in Texas. Using the national CDA guidelines, OECD requested proposals from colleges, universities, research labs, high schools and day care centers. Each of these proposals was carefully reviewed by an interagency ad hoc committee and OECD under the direction of the Project Director, Caroline Carroll.

The Texas projects were distinguished by their stress on parental and community involvement since each project had to include an innovative method of responding to the needs of the community. They were also expected to give the trainees actual field experience with parents and the larger community. Also, unlike the national projects, the Texas CDA projects were not giving priority to Head Start trainees but were training all interested day care workers. Naturally, too, the Texas projects...
interpreted the competencies to meet the unique needs of Texas.

The following projects were selected: 1) the EPD Consortium composed of Texas Woman's University, Texas Christian University and Stephen F. Austin University; 2) Tarrant County Junior College; 3) a loose cooperative of Texas A & I University and Pan American University and 4) Texas Southern University.

Caroline Carroll, the Project Director, stressed the importance of giving the trainees full responsibility, under skillful supervision, of a variety of activities in the day care center including opening and closing the center so that the trainees would understand the scope of the responsibility and the need for understanding in working with parents and other staff, as well as with the children. Secondly, she stressed the importance of the CDA as a new profession with all the responsibility and dignity of that role. This demands that each trainee have a portfolio of his experiences and evaluations to document his training and that the trainee be exposed to professional organizations, journals, and workshops. Miss Carroll also felt that it was crucial for the trainees to know the local community resources and to work with the cultural differences of various communities so they can more fully understand the young child.

Up to this point in the Texas CDA program, each project assumed an individual character in response to the needs of their trainees and their communities. The EPD Consortium has 66 trainees with approximately 22 in each project. The Consortium helped to pool resources and also to design the overall performance objectives—both terminal and enabling objectives for each competency. Using these guidelines, each university then constructed
its own training program.

Stephen F. Austin University placed its greatest stress on the trainee as a person whose self-image reflects his competence in dealing with interpersonal relationships, including those with children.

Texas Christian University enrolled its trainees from a variety of ethnic and educational backgrounds. They are attempting to tackle the enormous problem of individualizing for such a varied trainee population. They discovered a variety of field sites, including an urban settlement house and well-equipped church centers, to give the trainees experience in different environments.

Texas Woman's University has fourteen trainees with the hope for expansion. The strength of their program is their outstanding training sites. One of the centers has a director trained in the Merrill-Palmer Institute who uses the outdoors in extremely innovative ways, and another center is an old home which provides a natural environment for the children as they explore. Its various rooms also give greater opportunity for varied size groups, and the outdoor play areas are particularly adaptive to the needs of young children.

Tarrant County Junior College has 40 trainees who are all working on a two-year associate degree. Their program stressed the importance of trained day care workers and the essential need for parent involvement and education, especially on a one-to-one basis, so that parents can maximize the time
spent with their children (given the fact that the parents work long hours). The most significant and unique quality of their program is their extensive use of video tape and other audiovisual materials to teach and to evaluate their trainees.

Texas A & I University and Pan American University cooperated primarily to exchange ideas and materials for the improvement of their programs but each has its own concerns. Texas A & I University has 31 trainees of mixed racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as from rural and urban areas. Their training sites, which are often bilingual centers, are located in rural areas, small towns and one major city so that trainees have the opportunity to experience a wide variety of field sites. Pan American University has an entirely Mexican-American trainee population and all their sites are bilingual.

Texas Southern University has 50 trainees in its program, the majority of whom are Black. The staff divided the training into four tracks: 1) the academic track in which the trainees have a college degree but want some background in early childhood; 2) the academic, bilingual track which is similar to the first one except it stresses bilingual programs—field sites and academic training; 3) the non-academic track which is a program designed so the trainee will be credentialed upon completion but will receive no academic credit; and 4) the non-academic bilingual track which is similar to the third one but stresses bilingual training.
The most unique characteristic of this program is their choice of field sites. The trainees are working in sites of low-quality attempting to renovate the building, materials and program through careful supervision and hard work. The Project Director felt that this was a realistic approach since many of the CDA trainees would be working in similar centers after their training. TSU also has emphasized outdoor play and gardening as a unique and natural method of working with children.
Review of Research

The Office of Child Development in a recent summary of the Child Development Associate project stated that, "The best facilities, materials and curricula, the best intentions of parents, program directors, and teachers cannot guarantee high quality child care or effective educational programs unless those who deal directly with the children are competent, knowledgeable and dedicated."8

Conners and Eisenberg studied the effect of teacher behavior on verbal intelligence of children in Head Start programs. They found that specific teacher behaviors significantly altered the child's response and his intellectual progress (as measured by the PPVT). After studying these varied teacher-child interactions, they felt that to validly debate the efficacy of Head Start's long-term benefits it was essential to take into account "that changes attributed to an enrichment program are determined by specific variables in the environment, . . . "9 and that the personality and behavior of the teacher are the most influential variables in that environment.

Sigel and Jackson in their study of teacher roles in intervention programs began with the thesis that "the success of these intervention programs is ultimately dependent on the teacher's acceptance, commitment and skill in carrying out programs."10 They analyzed the teacher's interaction with the child in the implementation of the curriculum to determine the effectiveness of each program, and concluded that in fact
the teacher was the significant variable. Their research focused primarily on teacher attitudes and personality characteristics. They felt that particularly in any program involving minority children, the teacher's attitudes often unconsciously but poignantly are communicated to the child.11

McDavid presents a convincing case for the teacher as an agent of socialization and thus in that role a key factor to the success of any program. He felt that the teacher serves as the main reinforcer and model of behavior; and since modeling and reinforcement are two of the most crucial methods by which young children learn, the teacher, therefore, significantly alters the child's behavior and learning. He concluded that since the children's responses to reinforcement vary so widely, "it follows that analysis of the role of the teacher must direct attention squarely to her management or reinforcement contingencies."12 Thus, the teacher again is presented as a significant variable in determining the success of any program.

Beller and Scott in their study of teaching styles and effectiveness found that specific behavioral patterns in teachers caused significantly different behavioral response in the children and significantly different changes in the children's problem-solving skills, attention span and responsiveness.

Weikart in his major comparison of three categories of preschool intervention programs--cognitive curriculum (programmed), language training curriculum (child-centered) and the unit-based curriculum (open framework)--found that the
initial findings indicated no significant differences among the three categories employed in the program assessment.\textsuperscript{13} He felt that as long as the curriculum included a rich variety of experiences the children would indicate some gains. He concluded though that the curriculum was designed primarily for the teacher rather than for the child; and therefore, to the extent to which the teacher was well-trained and supportive of the curriculum, the success of the program was inevitable. He found that as long as the staff commitment was genuine the results in each program remained constant. "Clearly, the results of the different programs directly reflect staff model, not curriculum model, effects..."\textsuperscript{14} and therefore he felt that preschool programs need to shift the emphasis from a search for the curriculum to an analysis of staff models and the development of staff with competence and commitment to young children. He points out that "Of course, there are better ways of doing things, better equipment, books, procedures; but better because they help us (teachers) do the job more efficiently, not because they are new or different. However, these things are not central to the good that can happen when an adequately organized group of teachers tackles the problems of nurturing young children."\textsuperscript{15}

Lilian Katz in several of her studies and research findings echoes Weikart's findings that the method or curriculum is not significant except in relation to the teacher's style—the tempo, vitality, sociability, and other personality characteristics.\textsuperscript{16} She concludes from reviewing the research on
teaching styles that especially in programs where the teacher performs a wide variety of roles it becomes imperative that the teacher develop an awareness of the needed responses and a skillfulness in the implementation of the curriculum model so that the children can internalize from the clarity and consistency of the model the objectives of the curriculum in the broadest sense of the word. 17

Berger in her longitudinal comparison of Montessori and traditional prekindergarten programs found that the teacher, including her unique responses and emphases, caused a more significant variance among child performance than the differences in the curriculum as she had initially anticipated. She discovered that where the teachers' behaviors correlated most highly, the results in the children's development had a similar change, but the curriculum seemed to have relatively little distinguishable correlation to those changes. She also felt that specific teacher styles elicited consistent changes in language development, communication and conceptualization. She concludes that "It is rather evident that the quality of intellective stimulation in Montessori classrooms can vary a good deal. . . (but) pupil outcomes are largely dependent upon the individual teacher's mode of structuring the classroom environment, her teaching preferences and capabilities, and the resultant press. . . ." 18

From this brief review of the research, it is evident that the need for competent teachers or child care workers is
essential to improve the quality of the care for young children and to show any positive gains. The Child Development Associate training project responds to those needs.

**Competency-Based Teacher Education: Its Characteristics and Assumptions**

The philosophical underpinnings of the Child Development Associate training project become evident only when one first gains a perspective of the scope and implications of competency-based models. Both the parameters of this model and its differences from a traditional training model are important distinctions.

Massanari very generally defines competency-based teacher education as a "program specifically and explicitly designed to provide learning experiences and instruction to prepare for a specified teaching role; completion requires that the person possess specified requisite knowledge and practice specified teaching tasks." He places the stress on the demonstration of previously stated performance objectives. Competency-based teacher training requires a set of performance goals which are specified prior to entry. They usually include a list of demonstrated behaviors, skills or knowledge which the trainee agrees to be accountable for before completion of the program.

Second these specifically stated performance objectives determine the nature of the method of assessment which is also agreed to prior to entry. The assessment measures usually come at various points during the training and on various levels, but each is in tune with the original performance
objectives.

Third, the performance rather than completion of academic courses is the ultimate basis for evaluation. Knowledge is assessed only as it is integrated into the trainee's performance; and therefore, the training program design must balance theory and practice. It also adheres to the principle that "academic learning has significance only as it contributes to the achievement of competency." The strong emphasis on demonstration also requires that the trainee experience a significant amount of interaction in a field site. The balance of theory and practice, as well as the process of a valid assessment, cannot be adequately completed without extensive field experience.

Naturally these elements imply particular characteristics of a program. Since a competency-based model individualizes for its trainees, a mechanism such as modules, tracks, or training packets by which trainees chose according to their needs often distinguishes this model from the traditional semesters and course hours. Also the trainees' feedback into the system creates the basis for the next operational step and thus the trainee, perhaps with the teacher's counseling, designs the program.

Obviously, too, in order to respond to each individual, the program cannot be restricted to lectures and reading assignments; the teaching materials must vary widely to include all possible alternatives to a learning situation, including group learning to insure an esprit.
Since competency-based teacher training is viewed as a continual process of reassessment in the achievement of competence, it implies a career ladder in which additional levels of competence are possible. For instance, Andrews in his Manchester Interview feels that competency-based training begins the trainee as an observer, then moves him into a paraprofessional level in which he is participating under the careful direction of a competent professional and finally the trainee achieves the role of a competent professional himself. This achievement allows him to begin the cycle again on a higher level and thus a differential staffing pattern naturally results.

**Conclusion**

From a review of selected research on early childhood programs, the conclusions clearly indicate that the teacher plays a crucial role in the development of the child, both his cognitive gains and his affective development. This evidence clearly illustrates the growing need for training the teacher, as well as focusing early childhood research on teacher effectiveness and competence and not on curriculum improvement.

The Child Development Associate training project attempts to respond to that need. It also attempts to meet the increased demand for day care and for quality in day care. The guidelines outline a competency-based training program
which is designed according to a list of previously-stated general performance objectives; however, each pilot project, both the national and the Texas projects, have interpreted the implications of the training process differently. Also, several institutions and organizations funded through the CDA Consortium are developing assessment procedures so that the trainees can be evaluated and credentialed on the basis of their demonstrated performance of the competencies.

In reviewing the literature on competency-based training, the task of implementing such a model poses some very difficult dilemmas. The instruments for measuring competency often are not sensitive to all the variations of the teacher-child interaction. The competencies also do not readily include the affective measures of teacher behavior, and therefore stipulate only easily-measured behaviors.

The CDA programs also face the dilemma of trying to achieve national acceptance of this credential. The opposition will indeed be great.

In spite of the many obstacles to the success and widespread acceptance of the CDA credential, the project offers an opportunity to significantly improve the quality of care for young children. It is crucial that this need is met as more young children enter caring arrangements outside their homes.


3. Guidelines for CDA Training Programs: Discussion draft, p. 3.

4. See CDA List of Competencies in Appendix for complete delineation.


7. Ibid., p. 5.


11. Ibid., p. 15.


15 Ibid., p. 56.


20 Elam op. cit., p. 1.


22 A quality which is particularly significant for early childhood training programs since it duplicates the teaching technique which the early childhood professionals need to know and be competent in as children learn best in natural settings.

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