

AN EXAMINATION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE CORE COMPETENCIES IN ACADEMIC CURRICULUM: THE SOCIAL WORK EXAMPLE

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Abstract

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse in conjunction with key stakeholders developed a guideline outlining 18 “Core Competencies” for those working with clients with addiction issues. The curriculum of Canada’s 33 Faculties and Schools of Social Work were examined using the Core Competencies to examine the extent of addiction knowledge and education undergraduate and graduate social work students received. Addiction studies in all social work programs were reserved for elective courses as no required core courses dealt specifically with this topic though faculty teaching in this area did express a desire to shift the focus of addiction studies away from elective to core course offerings. They expressed concern over a lack of attention on substance abuse studies, in terms of selection, availability, and prominence. The majority of competency-based education at the Schools of Social Work is taught at a generalist versus specific addictions level. Although competency-based education is viewed very positively and adopted at the Schools of Social work, only one third of courses match the 18 Core Competencies. There is also a high degree of variation in the number of competencies taught in elective courses. It was found that graduate Schools of Social Work teach fewer core addiction competencies when compared to undergraduate course offerings.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to explore the status of competency-based education and the potential adoption of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse's Core Competencies for the Substance Abuse field in an academic setting, with reference to Canadian schools of social work. This can lead to a better understanding of the degree to which Core Competencies are now taught and mechanisms that can be put in place to enhance competency-based education. CCSA is committed to working collaboratively with the academic community in Canada, including schools of social work, to ensure the adoption of competencies in academic curriculum. Clear recommendations on how to achieve this aim are presented in the conclusion of the report.

Those working in the addictions field come from a variety of educational backgrounds including social work, psychology, nursing, and youth and child care; as well, a small number have specific training in the addictions field. There are also those within the workforce whose personal experiences with the misuse and abuse of psychoactive substances is the primary criterion for having been hired in an addictions counselling role. Currently, there is no agreement on what the curriculum for an addictions professional should be, nor is there a mandatory accreditation body or college regulating the field and overseeing the standards of practice in Canada.

In 2006, the Workforce Development Division of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) collaborated with a variety of key stakeholders from across Canada to develop a set of core competencies for the Canadian substance abuse field to

- i) enhance professionalism within the field by supporting the adoption of evidence-informed practice;

- ii) support the hiring and retention of the right people, with the right skills, at the right time; and
- iii) develop strategies for learning and development that will equip the field for excellence now, and in the future (CCSA, 2007).

Competency-based education is an approach that advocates for and attempts to provide precise measurable knowledge, skills and behaviours by the end of a course or educational program (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It is a skill-development process that is linked more to student and employer needs than to professors' beliefs regarding graduates' requirements. Competencies are specific, measurable skills and/or knowledge needed to effectively perform a particular function or role (Marrelli, 2001; Mirabile, 1997). This approach is now common in both academic and practical realms in the human services field globally including Australia, Costa Rica, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Arguelles & Gonczi, 2000; Australian Training Information Network, 1998; Northern Ireland Post-Qualifying Education and Training Partnership, 1992).

The first phase in the development of the Core Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Field, version 1.0, entailed the identification and comparative analysis of existing and developing Canadian and international addictions workforce competencies. The second phase involved a two-day interactive workshop with members of a National Advisory Group on Workforce Development (NAGWD) and subject-matter experts in the substance abuse field from across the country aimed at gathering feedback on the preliminary draft of Core Competencies. The third phase of the project sought to engage with members of the field at a broad level to further refine and validate the draft Core Competencies document. Several

organizations in the field took it upon themselves to facilitate focus groups and informal discussions across the country. In-depth interviews, email communication and the development of a blog were also used to gather additional feedback.

As part of the consultative process leading to the release of the initial draft of the Core Competencies, CCSA initiated the formation of two "expert" groups, one representing post-secondary education and the other, professional development training. CCSA hosted a meeting of each group to evaluate the competencies report and to map out "next steps" for implementation. The result was the development of 18 specific competencies deemed critical for any professional working in the substance abuse field in Canada to have knowledge of and skill in, and linked to the performance of key roles and functions within the substance abuse workforce (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2007). Members of both groups conveyed a clear appreciation of the importance of adopting competencies in the substance abuse field.

The education experts emphasized the importance of embedding core knowledge and skills in academic curricula. They cautioned, however, that the process of integrating competencies into the academic community is a long-term strategy, and emphasized that a high level of consultation and approval would be required.

As social work studies place considerable focus on preparing students to engage in professional practice, competency-based education has been considered a good fit with social work as both an academic discipline and a professional program (Clark & Arkava, 1979; Grant, 1979; O'Hagan, 1996).

The first goal of this project was to examine the extent to which the 18 Core Competencies for the Substance Abuse Field were embedded in the general and addictions-specific curriculum in schools and faculties of social work throughout Canada. The study's second goal was to determine the extent of knowledge and use of the competencies by social work faculty members teaching addictions courses across Canada.

The suite of core technical competencies developed by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse contains:

- 1 Case Management
- 2 Community Development
- 3 Conflict Management
- 4 Counseling
- 5 Crisis Intervention
- 6 Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness
- 7 Ethics and Professionalism
- 8 Family and Social Support
- 9 Group Facilitation
- 10 Mental Health
- 11 Outreach
- 12 Pharmacology
- 13 Prevention and Health Promotion
- 14 Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation
- 15 Screening and Assessment
- 16 Teamwork
- 17 Treatment Planning
- 18 Understanding Substance Use, Abuse and Dependency

Methodology

There are currently 33 Canadian universities that offer a Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) degree while 28 offer a Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) degree. During the 2007–2008 academic year, there were 8,556 students enrolled in B.S.W. programs and an additional 2,335 at the M.S.W. level¹ (see Table 1 in Appendix A). Outlines for each social work course offered in Canada were obtained either from each school or faculty of social work or downloaded directly from the department's website when available in that format. Course objectives were then examined to determine which, if any, aligned with CCSA's recommended Core Competencies.

A series of key informant interviews were conducted with social work faculty. The goal was to uncover information on the current status of competency-based education as applied to substance abuse studies. Interview-candidate selection was initiated by first contacting the administrative assistants at all 33 faculties or schools of social work in Canada.

The administrators were asked to identify faculty members who were actively teaching courses in substance abuse for the purpose of a confidential telephone interview. A total of 22 faculty members were identified of whom 15 (68.2%) completed an interview.

The interviewees were asked five questions about substance abuse competencies based on the key objectives of this study (see Appendix B: Telephone Interview Guide). The interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes in length. The interviewees were located in 14 universities from across Canada, including British Columbia (3), Manitoba (2), Ontario (6), Quebec (1), New Brunswick (1) and Newfoundland (1).

There are no university departments in social work in the Canadian territories or Prince Edward Island, so these regions were excluded from the study.

¹ There are also eight doctoral programs, but these were not examined as part of this study as the Ph.D. in social work is not a practice degree.

Results

i) Curriculum Review

Table 2² summarizes the Core Competencies and indicates the number of faculties/schools with at least one course that teaches subject matter corresponding to the particular competency. The presence of the Core Competencies in social work course curriculum was examined along two dimensions for both undergraduate and graduate programs: presence in required courses that all social work students take as part of their degree requirements, and as an elective offering.

When a core competency is taught in a required course, the content is present, but is typically taught from a more generalist orientation than an addictions orientation; this is the norm in social work education. When a core competency is taught in an addictions-specific elective, it is taught from an addictions orientation, but only a small minority of students in each program receives this knowledge.

² Appendix A offers a complete breakdown of competency by each B.S.W./M.S.W. program.

Table 2: Competencies Summary Table

Competency	B.S.W. Required Courses n=32	B.S.W. Addictions Electives N=23	M.S.W. Required Courses n=28	M.S.W. Addictions Electives n=5
1 Case Management	6	3	0	0
2 Community Development	25	4	9	1
3 Conflict Management	3	0	0	1
4 Counselling	25	9	13	3
5 Crisis Intervention	9	0	3	0
6 Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness	32	12	24	3
7 Ethics and Professionalism	30	2	8	1
8 Family and Social Support	21	8	6	4
9 Group Facilitation	24	2	7	0
10 Mental Health	6	3	2	2
11 Outreach	0	3	0	0
12 Pharmacology	0	16	0	2
13 Prevention and Health Promotion	4	15	2	3
14 Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation	13	1	28	0
15 Screening and Assessment	11	11	3	2
16 Teamwork	5	2	1	0
17 Treatment Planning	0	12	0	3
18 Understanding Substance Use, Abuse and Dependency	0	21	0	4
Average	6.7	5.6	3.8	5.8

It was discovered that a majority of social work undergraduates in Canada receive formal education in the following six Core Competencies:

- diversity and cultural responsiveness,
- ethics and professionalism,
- counselling,
- community development,
- group facilitation,
- family and social support.

However, no faculty or school of social work currently teaches outreach, pharmacology, treatment planning or understanding substance use, abuse and dependency as part of its core curriculum. On average, 6.7 competencies are part of the mandated curriculum for an undergraduate social work student in Canada with a range of two at the University of Victoria to 11 at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (Table 4, Appendix A).

Twenty-three (23) of 32 (71.9%) undergraduate social work programs offer an addictions elective to their students. However, the curriculum within these electives varies

greatly, with the number of competencies being taught ranging from two (Renison College, Waterloo, Ontario) to 13 (University of Victoria) with a mean of 5.6 (Table 5, Appendix A). The most commonly taught competencies in these electives are understanding substance use, abuse and dependency (91.3%); pharmacology (69.6%); and prevention and health promotion (65.2%). Thus, there is a good blending of knowledge if a social work student chooses to study addictions. It is interesting to note that of the 23 addictions-specific elective offerings, not one had conflict management or crisis intervention as part of its stated curriculum, while only one had program development, two taught team work and three offered case management, mental health or outreach as part of the addictions curriculum. Thus, while undergraduate social work students do have introductory/basic knowledge in many of the Core Competencies, there remain many areas where they would require ongoing education or professional development.

Obviously, one mechanism for ongoing education is to pursue a Master's degree in Social Work after earning a B.S.W. However, the required M.S.W. courses touch on significantly fewer core addictions competencies than do the required B.S.W. courses (3.8 versus 6.7). While diversity and anti-oppression education is a core component of all undergraduate training, research is a requirement of every graduate social work program in Canada with many schools having specific program evaluation courses. Thus, each M.S.W. student would receive some formal training in program evaluation along with a continued emphasis on diversity and cultural responsiveness. After those two offerings, the only other core competency taught with any consistency at the graduate level in social work is counselling, and even that is only a requirement of 13 of the 28 M.S.W. programs (46.4%). Fewer than one-fifth of the graduate programs have a specific addictions elective as part of their curriculum, and of those five programs, two do not have a corresponding

undergraduate program (University of Toronto and Wilfrid Laurier University) and one does not list an undergraduate B.S.W. elective as an option (University of British Columbia). Thus, only at the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Regina is there indication of both an undergraduate and graduate elective in addictions in the curriculum. From the lack of addiction specific studies at the MSW level it appears as if social workers are expected to have been educated in this area prior to entering graduate school as addictions courses are not part of the vast majority of graduate social work curriculum options. Thus, while graduate training enhances the skills and knowledge of social workers, little of this enhancement directly relates to the addictions Core Competencies as developed through the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse initiative (CCSA, 2007).

ii) Key Informant Interviews

The 15 key informants were in near-uniform agreement about the central importance of teaching substance abuse-specific competencies in social work programs. Their main reasons were

1. the widespread prevalence of substance abuse problems in our society;
2. the desire to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical experience in the social work field as it relates to substance abuse; and
3. the routine delivery of substance abuse services in the social work field.

The interviewees clearly stated that more attention should be directed at teaching substance abuse competencies in social work studies. Students consistently express a high level of interest in substance abuse course work, yet there is a very limited selection of courses available. The interviewees said that

more attention should be directed at teaching students about theories and practices related to substance abuse. Moreover, interviewees agreed that more substance abuse studies should be offered as core instead of elective courses. If substance abuse studies were embedded in social work curriculum, then more students would be exposed to this type of study. The shift towards core studies would also serve to heighten the profile of substance abuse studies and thus satisfy student demand and faculty support for this area of study.

Key informants offered detailed feedback on their approach to pedagogy and freely shared details on the purpose and content of their curriculum. The majority of the interviewees stressed the importance of combining theoretical and practical approaches to substance abuse studies. At the same time, the interviewees made an effort to locate substance abuse studies within a broader legal, social, political and historical context. The majority also indicated that their courses were designed as broad overviews of substance abuse, as would be expected in undergraduate courses. As such, courses cover a wide range of topics over a relatively short timeframe. This approach does not allow faculty to fully elaborate on key themes and topics—not surprising given that the average number of competencies covered was under six at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Thus, despite teaching introductory courses on substance abuse, the majority of items deemed to be central to the actual practice of addictions counselling were not covered in the addictions-specific electives. One critical example shared by several key informants was the inability to fully explore direct practice interventions and clinical applications due to time constraints.

One participant commented that graduate students are required to demonstrate a higher level of clinical skilfulness when compared with undergraduate students. In terms of competency development, this distinction reflects an acknowledgment of varying levels of knowledge and skills depending on the

student's level of education. This incremental approach to assessing competencies is consistent with the format of the Core Competencies whereby knowledge and skill levels are outlined along a continuum from foundational to advanced. However, there are currently only seven identified elective courses at the graduate level offered at five institutions to social work students across the country and this severely limits the student's ability to incrementally develop competencies in this area.

Key informants indicated their awareness of the reality that employers are increasingly looking at competency-based standards when hiring. The limitation is that students only have time to learn about the foundations of substance abuse. Several professors made attempts to bridge the theory-to-practice gap through interactive learning approaches, including case studies, role plays, group work, field visits and keynote speakers. For example, one interviewee asked students to design an ideal treatment or prevention program as a final assignment. Students were asked to provide specific details about a target population, model of treatment, assessment and treatment techniques, an evaluation framework, and even staffing and building requirements. Some professors encouraged students to gain direct experience in the field through practicum or volunteer activities and also taught their students how to access services in the field and how to assess the quality of these services.

The standard of field experience was also applied to faculty themselves. Some of the interviewees stressed that faculty required a combination of field and academic experience in order to be relevant to their students. The theme of practical applications to social work studies was echoed throughout the interviews.

The interviewees also indicated that they encouraged their students to understand that academic training alone is not sufficient to competently offer services in the social work field. The interviewees repeated that university education provides a foundation

through which students learn about substance abuse issues; however, ongoing professional development and clinical practice in the substance abuse field is essential for effective service delivery. This, again, is consistent with CCSA's previous consultation with faculty members from colleges and universities on the Core Competencies (Graves & Plouffe, 2008) who reinforced the importance of addressing workforce demands. These faculty members confirmed the importance of a practical teaching style, but went on to recommend directly engaging both employers and regulators in the development of competency-based education. They further suggested that this could be facilitated through a national conference with educational and training experts from across Canada, including key stakeholders such as provincial governments, provincial addictions agencies, colleges and universities, employers and regulators, and front-line practitioners in the field.

There is no formal process for integrating competencies into academic curriculum. Professors focus on teaching a wide range of topics that are aligned with the learning objectives of a particular course and national accreditation standards. As such, competencies are identified through topic selection. It appears that faculty first design curriculum and then determine the degree to which it matches a set of competencies. As well, faculties and schools of social work do not have a precise method of measuring competency development, nor do they have a standard set of well-defined competencies.

The majority of interviewees recognized that their competencies were developed through an informal process. One interviewee commented, "I feel that addictions-specific competencies in social work curriculum are intuitive." Close to two-thirds of the interviewees were aware that CCSA released the Core Competencies in November 2007. The interviewees consistently expressed a positive viewpoint on the content of the Core Competencies, particularly in terms of their practical value in helping to prepare students

to offer services in the social work field. However, this means that nearly one-third of the key informants were not aware of the Core Competencies prior to being contacted for an interview, although all of the interviewees did visit the CCSA website to download the Core Competencies once they agreed to be part of this study.

Once reviewed, the majority of the interviewees acknowledged the influence the Core Competencies had on their curriculum. Several made a conscious effort to compare curriculum they had designed against the Core Competencies. As noted, there was a level of agreement between the social work and CCSA competencies. It was noted that the Core Competencies often confirmed or validated existing teaching practices. One of the interviewees viewed the Core Competencies as a helpful reference text. However, in general, key informants still thought there were gaps between the social work competencies and CCSA competencies. For example, more concentrated attention is devoted to women, children, youth, seniors, and Aboriginal people in the academic setting. This increased focus also applies to harm reduction strategies and clinical styles such as empathy.

There was also an appreciation of the importance of developing students' knowledge and skills in an incremental fashion. The interviewees saw competency-based education as a starting point for necessary follow-up in the field through professional development and clinical practice.

Overall, the interviewees had a positive impression and appraisal of the Core Competencies and viewed them as aligning well with their curriculum. Some viewed the Core Competencies as a useful tool/resource to help organize their coursework. However, several key informants were opposed in principle to this incremental approach to post-secondary learning, which can appear to compartmentalize knowledge and skill rather than integrating learning in a holistic manner. This is an indication that there may be some

resistance to the general idea of a competency-based approach by social work educators. The interviewees also expressed that time constraints prevented them from exploring each competency in sufficient depth with their students.

iii) Competency Comparison

Table 3 displays the 18 Core Competencies outlined in the Core Competencies report and where these match the competencies that the interviewees identified as being taught at their faculties and schools of social work. Table 3 indicates that half of the competencies mentioned by social work faculty match those outlined in the Core Competencies report. This represents a fairly

high level of agreement when one considers that faculty did not use the Core Competencies as a reference point for developing their original curriculum.

CCSA's 2007 consultation with educational experts found that, like the faculties and schools of social work, competencies at colleges and universities are tied to learning objectives of curriculum. However, competency-based language is more common in colleges than in universities as it is often connected to the focus on college students' vocational needs. The higher level of competency agreement at the schools of social work may reflect their focus on the students' vocational needs.

Table 3: Competency Comparison

Core Competencies	Social Work Competencies	Match
1) Case Management	Case Management	Yes
2) Community Development	Not applicable	No
3) Conflict Management	Not applicable	No
4) Counselling	Individual Treatment and Empathy	Yes
5) Crisis Intervention	Not applicable	No
6) Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness	Working with children, youth, seniors and women Aboriginal issues	Yes
7) Ethics and Professionalism	Ethics	Yes
8) Family and Social Support	Not applicable	No
9) Group Facilitation	Group Treatment	Yes
10) Mental Health	Mental Health	Yes
11) Outreach	Not applicable	No
12) Pharmacology	Pharmacology	Yes
13) Prevention and Health Promotion	Prevention	Yes
14) Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation	Not applicable	No
15) Screening and Assessment	Assessment	Yes
16) Teamwork	Not applicable	No
17) Treatment Planning	Not applicable	No
18) Understanding Substance Use, Abuse and Dependency	Not applicable	No
There is no specific harm reduction competency, although this principle is reflected throughout the Core Competencies document, where applicable	Harm Reduction Strategies	Not applicable

Discussion

There is no obligation or accreditation expectation for any social worker educated in Canada to have any knowledge of psychoactive drugs or addictions. No faculty or school of social work mandates that students take a course in addictions at either the undergraduate or graduate level. In fact, one-third of undergraduate social work programs in Canada do not offer their students any course in addictions, required or elective, while only five of 28 graduate programs have a specific addictions elective option.

Evidence-based practice has become a touchstone for social work educators in the 21st century and key informants in this study likewise emphasized the importance of teaching research-based approaches to substance abuse studies. This finding was consistent with CCSA's own consultations with the academic community in Canada (Graves & Plouffe, 2008). However, one of the most cherished and entrenched principles of the university system is that of academic freedom. Thus, to what extent can an external body with no academic authority or accreditation function direct or even influence formal education?

The creation of the Core Competencies by CCSA was not intended as a dictate, but rather as a framework to assist in the preparation of addictions counselling professionals. Nonetheless, there were concerns raised regarding curriculum created by an external organization, especially since social work programs must already pass rigorous accreditation reviews based on professionally-developed national standards. Although the competencies are grounded in research, specific concerns were expressed with one key informant stating, "I believe that it would be impossible to force college and university professors to fully integrate and follow all 18 competencies."

It is evident from the curriculum review that despite the lack of mandated addictions education Canadian social work students do obtain a grounding in the Core Competencies that would provide them with basic skills to provide addictions counselling. However, is it the responsibility of the university or the employer to create a specifically-trained addictions/substance abuse counsellor? In the United States, with its greater scales of program size, social work departments and faculties are able to provide more specialists in areas as diverse as School Social Work and Employee Assistance Programming, particularly at the graduate level, while in Canada only a few universities have developed specialized undergraduate curriculum for child welfare.

The traditional goal of universities has been to educate and enlighten while competency-based education has been critiqued in the past as being highly reductionist, overly technical and bureaucratic—leading to the deprofessionalization of the field rather than the intended goal of professionalization (Csiernik, Vitali, & Gordon, 2000; Hyland, 1995). While faculty responsible for teaching addictions courses nearly all agreed that there was value in promoting competency-based educational standards in a post-secondary setting, several pertinent issues remain:

- How should compliance be ensured?
- How could the competencies be broken down into a single course/term?
- How would one audit courses to ensure competencies are properly taught?
- Which competencies should be focused on?
- Would professors actually follow through with this approach?

The majority participating in the interviews were interested in a collaborative approach whereby it was still possible to integrate the Core Competencies, but in a manner that respected academic freedom and individual choice. Some of the interviewees saw the value of standardizing curriculum to ensure consistency and avoid personal bias. Numerous references were made to allowing research to guide curriculum delivery. However, the concern about a prescriptive approach to competency development needs to be contextualized within the stated intent of the Core Competencies project:

"The purpose of this initiative is to provide jurisdictional partners with a common resource that can then serve as a foundation-piece in the development or enhancement of education and training curriculum, professional development activities, recruitment practices, performance evaluation, and strategic workforce planning" (CCSA, 2007).

Thus, the Core Competencies can be treated as a "menu" from which different jurisdictions can supplement existing programs to address their needs. The development of competency-

based education demands active participation from the schools of social work; however, effective development and implementation requires the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders, including government at all levels, provincial addictions organizations, employers and regulators, colleges and universities, front-line practitioners in the substance abuse field, and allied professionals. The key informants in this study clearly demonstrated a willingness to enhance competency-based education to better prepare students to enter the workforce by "hitting the ground running".

Perhaps the most critical practice implication for social workers, social work educators and addictions educators is that even social work students who do not become addictions counsellors will inevitably interact in their practice with clients who have addictions issues, be it in child welfare, the criminal justice system, school social work, the workplace, family counselling or hospital social work. Thus, having greater knowledge in the Core Competencies would be an asset for professional social workers, their clients and their client systems.

Conclusion

Professors at faculties and schools of social work conveyed an appreciation of the importance of offering competency-based education to their students. There was also a high level of interest expressed around providing specific addictions knowledge and courses. CCSA's Core Competencies were viewed in a positive manner in terms of both structure and content.

It was noted that social work students inevitably offer services to people with substance problems when practising in the field, both directly and indirectly. This vocational focus of Canadian social work programs is consistent with the goals of competency-based education. For example, faculty acknowledged the importance of equipping students with core knowledge and skills to match requirements of practising in the field. Key informants noted that in addition to meeting accreditation standards, academic curriculum must also be cognizant of and responsive to the requirements of regulatory bodies and employers in the field.

The majority of addictions studies were reserved for elective courses as no core courses dealt specifically with this topic. Faculty did, however, express a desire to shift the focus of addictions studies away from elective to core-course offerings. They expressed concern over a lack of attention to substance abuse studies in terms of selection, availability and prominence.

There was agreement that core substance abuse knowledge and skills must be embedded in academic curriculum to be effective. Consistent with faculties and schools of social work, CCSA's own consultations with the academic community in Canada demonstrated support for the process of incorporating Core Competencies into academic curriculum. However, it has

been emphasized that this task must be based on a long-term collaborative strategy.

The majority of competency-based education in the schools of social work is taught at a generalist-versus-specific addictions level. Although competency-based education is viewed very positively and adopted by the schools of social work, only one-third of courses match the 18 Core Competencies. There is also a high degree of variation in the number of competencies taught in elective courses. It was found that graduate schools of social work teach fewer core addictions competencies when compared with undergraduate course offerings.

It is also important to consider the gaps between the existing state of competency-based education and the Core Competencies. In particular, there are substantive differences in terms of the process for designing and measuring competencies. Competency-based education within social work programs is developed informally and without explicit measurement, whereas the Core Competencies developed by CCSA were done in a systematic manner that could be readily and easily measured.

Faculty interviewed during the course of this study expressed a desire to have direct engagement in the process of ongoing development, implementation and evaluation of competency-based education. This includes a willingness to conduct applied research to determine the effectiveness of teaching competency-based education. They also supported a collaborative-versus-prescriptive approach on integrating the Core Competencies into social work curriculum.

It is hoped that this report will serve to advance the goal of fully embedding the Core Competencies into academic curricula in a manner that respects the autonomy of the

academic community in Canada. Progress in this area will enhance professionalism and support the adoption of evidence-informed practices.

CCSA is committed to directly engage with the schools of social work at college and university levels, offering advice, support and consultations on how they can adopt the core competencies in a manner consistent with their needs. It is important to extend the lessons learned through the social work experience to multiple disciplines across the academic community. For this reason, CCSA intends to engage the academic community in Canada in an effort to strengthen competency-based education.

CCSA is prepared to facilitate a national meeting of post-secondary institutions whereby faculty from a wide range of disciplines can share their experiences with competency-based education and identify practical strategies on how to further embed the Core Competencies into their academic curriculum.

CCSA looks forward to working collaboratively with the academic community to encourage their leadership in strengthening competency-based education for the substance abuse field. This could include monitoring best practices and assisting the academic community to conduct applied research to determine effectiveness of this approach. CCSA could also coordinate information sharing within the academic community on the progress and status of competency-based education for the substance abuse field.

APPENDIX A

Core Competencies by Program

- Table 1: Social Work Students by Program
- Table 2: Found in the main report
- Table 3: Found in the main report
- Table 4: Bachelor of Social Work Required Courses
- Table 5: Bachelor of Social Work Addictions Electives
- Table 6: Master of Social Work Required Courses
- Table 7: Master of Social Work Addictions Electives

Table 1: Social Work Students by Program

University	B.S.W.	M.S.W.
British Columbia		
University of British Columbia	90	106
University of British Columbia Okanagan	91	25
University of Northern British Columbia	129	53
University College of Fraser Valley	79	
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	30	
Thompson Rivers University	109	
University of Victoria	456	35
Alberta		
University of Calgary	385	140
Saskatchewan		
First Nations University of Canada	149	9
University of Regina	457	51
Manitoba		
University of Manitoba	669	165
Ontario		
Carleton University	349	90
King's College University	99	54
Lakehead University	191	31
Laurentian University	315	45
McMaster University	178	39
Renison College	94	
Ryerson University	835	*
University of Toronto		317
Wilfrid Laurier University		268
Université d' Ottawa	26	63

University of Windsor	137	45
York University	629	120
Quebec		
Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue	197	
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	295	43
Université Laval	410	109
McGill University	239	81
Université du Québec à Montreal	684	
Université de Montréal	222	88
Université du Québec en Outaouais	249	43
Université de Sherbrooke	207	102
New Brunswick		
Université de Moncton	127	19
St. Thomas University	84	
Nova Scotia		
Dalhousie University	210	154
Prince Edward Island		
Newfoundland		
Memorial University of Newfoundland	135	40
TOTAL (n=35 Schools)	8556	2335

* new program

Canadian Association of Social Work Educators, 2008

Table 4: Bachelor of Social Work Required Courses

Competency	Required Courses	Competencies Covered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
British Columbia																				
University of British Columbia	13	10		3		1		6	6	2	2	1			1	1	1			
University of British Columbia Okanagan	12	7		1		2		3	5	1	1					1				
University of Northern British Columbia	11	7	1	1		1		8	5	2						1				
University College of Fraser Valley	9	5				1		5	5							1	1			
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	11	4		1		1		7	2											
Thompson Rivers University	9	5		1		1		6	1	1										
University of Victoria	7	2						3	3											
Alberta																				
University of Calgary	14	8		1		1		8	8	2	1				1	1				
Saskatchewan																				
First Nations University of Canada	8	5				2		2	1	2	2									
University of Regina	9	6		1		1		1	1	1	1									
Manitoba																				
University of Manitoba	11	4				1		2	1		1									
Ontario																				
Carleton University	10	4		1				3		1	1									
King's University College	13	7		1		2		4	2	2	2									1
Lakehead University	11	6				1		4	1	2	2					1				
Laurentian University	9	7		1		2		2	1	1	1	1								
McMaster University	12	6		2		1		3	1	1	1									

Table 5: Bachelor of Social Work Addictions Electives

Competency	Courses per University	Competencies Covered	Competencies																	
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
British Columbia																				
University of British Columbia	0	0																		
University of British Columbia Okanagan	0	0																		
University of Northern British Columbia	1	7		X				X		X	X				X				X	X
University College of Fraser Valley	1	5							X					X	X				X	X
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	1	8	X						X		X			X	X		X		X	X
Thompson Rivers University	1	5							X					X	X		X			X
University of Victoria	4	13	X	X		X			X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X
Alberta																				
University of Calgary	1	8							X		X			X	X	X		X	X	X
Saskatchewan																				
First Nations University of Canada	1	4				X				X				X						X
University of Regina	1	4				X				X				X						X
Manitoba																				
University of Manitoba	0	0																		
Ontario																				
Carleton University	1	4												X	X	X				X
King's College University	1	8				X			X		X			X	X		X		X	X
Lakehead University	1	4				X											X		X	X
Laurentian University	1	9				X			X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X
McMaster University	1	4							X				X	X	X					
Renison College	1	2											X							X

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Ryerson University	2	7	X				X					X	X		X		X	X		
Université d'Ottawa	1	4			X							X	X					X		
University of Windsor	1	5			X	X	X					X						X		
York University	2	4					X					X					X	X		
Quebec																				
Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue	0	0																		
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	0	0																		
Université Laval	0	0																		
McGill University	1	4			X							X			X			X		
Université de Montréal	0	0																		
Université du Québec en Outaouais	0	0																		
Université de Sherbrooke	1	5			X							X		X			X	X		
New Brunswick																				
Université de Moncton	1	4										X			X		X	X		
St. Thomas University	1	5											X	X	X		X	X		
Nova Scotia																				
Dalhousie University	1	not available																		
Newfoundland																				
Memorial University of Newfoundland	1	5		X	X			X						X				X		
TOTAL (n=31)	n=23	5.6 (average)	3	4	0	10	0	12	2	9	2	3	3	17	15	1	11	2	12	22
Competency	Courses per University	Competencies Covered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

Table 6: Master of Social Work Required Courses

Core Competencies	Required Courses	Number of Competencies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
British Columbia																				
University of British Columbia	3	3				1			1							1				
University of British Columbia Okanagan	2	7		1				1		1	1	1								
University of Northern British Columbia	5	4		1				2	1											1
University of Victoria	7	3		1				1												1
Alberta																				
University of Calgary	8	3				2		1												2
Saskatchewan																				
First Nations University of Canada	8	5				2		2		1	1									2
University of Regina	3	1																		2
Manitoba																				
University of Manitoba	7	2				2														1
Ontario																				
Carleton University	6	6		1		1			1	1	1									1
King's University College	8	4		1				2			1									3
Lakehead University	5	5		1				1		1	1									1
Laurentian University	5	3				1		2												2
McMaster University	6	2						1												1
Université d'Ottawa	6	6				2	1	2	1											2 1
Ryerson University	6	3		1				3												1
University of Toronto	6	5				1		1	1			1								2
Wilfrid Laurier University	8	6		1		1		1		1	1									2
University of Windsor	7	4				1		2	1											1

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York University	6	2						1											1	
Quebec																				
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	6	5						1	1									1	1	1
Université Laval	6	2							2										1	
McGill University	5	3						1	1										1	
Université de Montréal	4	2							1										1	
Université du Québec en Outaouais	6	6				1			1	1								1	1	1
Université de Sherbrooke	6	3						1		2									1	
New Brunswick																				
Université de Moncton	4	2								1									1	
Nova Scotia																				
Dalhousie University	6	3						1	1										1	
Newfoundland																				
Memorial University of Newfoundland	9	7					1	1	1		1	1							1	1
Total (n =28)	5.8	3.8	0	9	0	13	3	24	8	6	7	2	0	0	2	28	3	1	0	0
	(average)	(average)																		
Competencies	Required Courses	Number of Competencies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

Table 7: Master of Social Work Addictions Electives

Competency	Number of Courses	Competencies Covered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
			British Columbia																		
University of British Columbia	1	8		X		X			X	X				X	X		X			X	
University of Northern British Columbia	1	3				X				X		X									
Saskatchewan																					
University of Regina	3	4						X							X				X	X	
Ontario																					
University of Toronto	1	9				X		X		X		X		X	X		X		X	X	
Wilfrid Laurier University	1	5			X			X		X									X	X	
Total (n =5)		5.8 (average)	0	1	1	3	0	3	1	4	0	2	0	2	3	0	2	0	3	4	

APPENDIX B

Telephone Interview Questions

Competencies and Social Work Project

1. Please discuss briefly the importance that you place on teaching substance abuse-specific competencies in a social work curriculum.
2. To what degree does your addictions course(s) already reflect competencies?
3. Are you aware of the Core Competencies for the Substance Abuse Field that were recently released by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse?

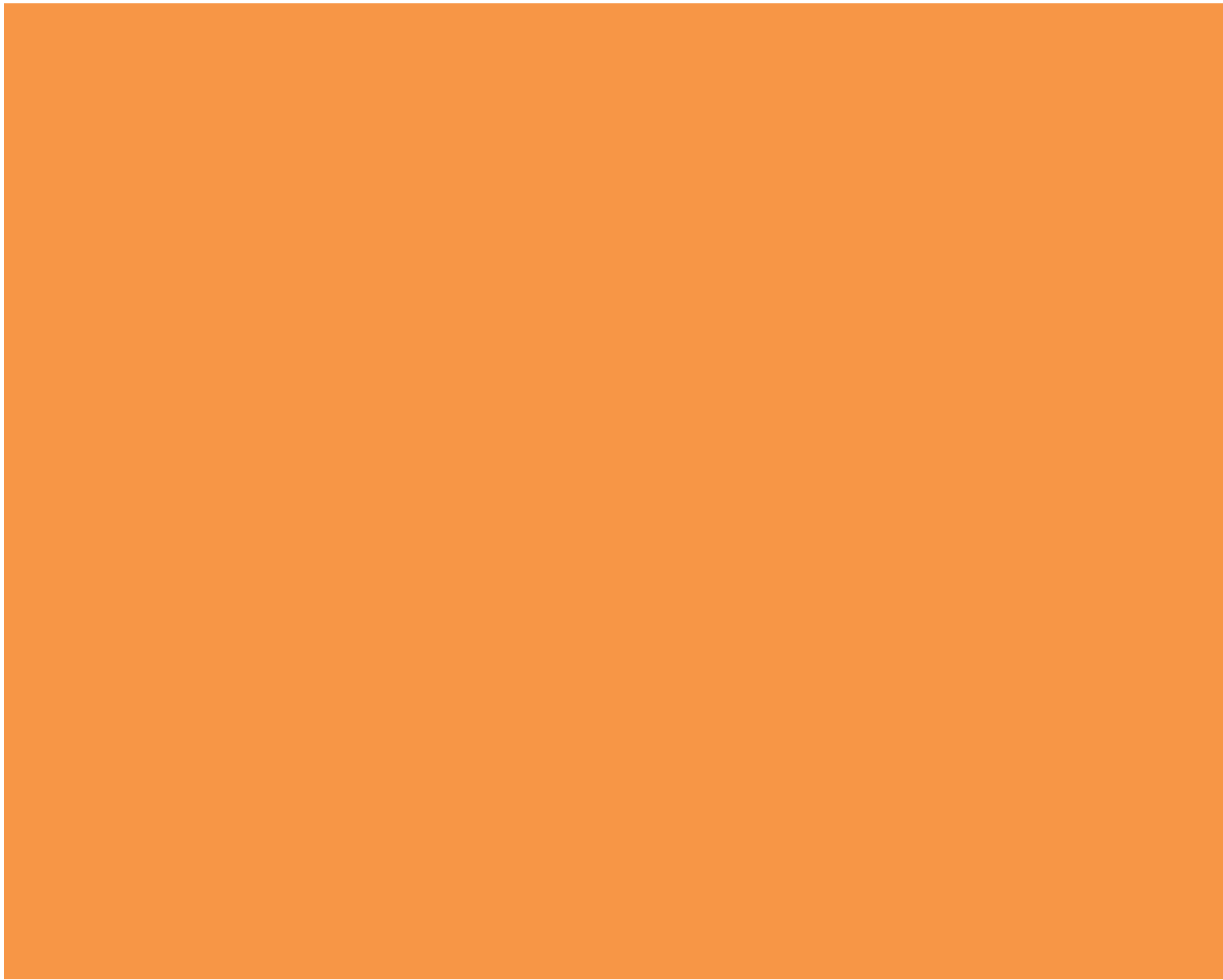
If yes, what influence will these competencies have on the addictions curriculum you deliver to your students? Which competencies would be important to add?

If no, would you be willing to examine the competencies and consider incorporating them into your curriculum? What type of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities do you feel would be worthwhile to add to your existing curriculum to further enhance it?

4. What are your views on competencies developed by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse—as an external specialized body outside of the social work accreditation process—being adopted and integrated into college and university addictions curriculum?
5. Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add on this topic before we conclude the interview?

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