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RECONCEPTUALIZING ECCD IN THE MAJORITY WORLD: ONE MINORITY WORLD PERSPECTIVE

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RÉSUMÉ   Cet article raconte les experiences de l'auteur en présentant une idée reconceptualizée de 'early childhood care and development (ECCD)' à deux instituts régionaux qui ont durées quelques semaines, dabords en Afrique et après en Asie du ud Est. Les présentations sont basés sur les expériences de travailler trans-culturellement avec les Autochtones du Canada et sur les experiences de la reconceptualization de 'ECCD' avec les collègues Européans. L'idée reconceptualizée a demandé une plus grande inclusion de la communauté et de la dialogue participatoire à propos la pratique locale de l'éducation infantine. L'argument présente est que si les professionels de ECCD veulent établir les programmes qui sont relevant et sustinables, ils doivent incluire le support des voix locales durant le processus de planification et pendant l'implementation. Les réactions de quatre audiences différants à cette conclusion sont décrites.

RESUMEN   El articulo relata las experiencias del autor al presentar una nueva conceptualizacion de la capacitacion para cuidado y desarollo infantil (ECCD), en dos seminarios de varias semanas de duracion en africa y el Sureste asiatico. Las presentaciones estan basadas en expereincias trabajando a traves de culturas con las primeras naciones aborigenes en Canada. Al igual que trabajando con colegas europeos en crear un nuevo concepto del ECCD. Este nuevo punto de vista requiere un nivel mas alto de inclusion comunitaria y de un dialogo participatorio en relacion a practicas apropriadas a programas de cuidado y desarrollo unfantil. El argumneto se ha hecho que el papel de los profesionales de cuidado y desarrollo infantil es de incluir apoyo a 'voces locales' en planear e implementar pprogramas si es que esos programas van a ser relevantes y sostenibles. La reaccion de cuatro audiencias differentes esta descrita en este articulo.

Introduction

In October and November of 1997 I had the opportunity to share some recent "reconceptualizations" of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) ideas that I have been developing with Peter Moss (Coordinator of the European Child Care Commission, 1986-1996) and Dr. Gunilla Dahlberg (University of Stockholm) with experienced ECCD professionals from two different areas of the Majority World: Africa and S.E. Asia. In both cases the opportunity was provided via Regional ECCD Institutes, which I assisted in developing and which were supported largely through UNICEF with hosting by Regional groups. Both Institutes were fully subscribed (26 in Africa, 30 in S.E. Asia). The Africa Institute was held for a 3 week period and the S.E. Asia Institute for 2 weeks. For both Institutes, in addition to organizational activities, I had responsibility for approximately 1 1/2 days of presentation and discussion.

The focus of my 1 1/2 days was the promotion of community-sensitive and community-supportive approaches to ECCD. The topic was selected, in part, in reaction to the growing influence of Western based or Minority World models of early childhood care, education and development throughout the non-western or Majority World. While there is much in the minority World approaches that should be studied and considered, these approaches should not be understood as *the* way, or the "best" way, but rather as *an* approach to ECCD with particular roots and contexts in the west. Part of the professional tradition of ECCD in the west is a reliance on an "exclusionary" planning model based on a select number of "expert voices". This tradition, by no means exclusive to ECCD professionals, is based on a modernist understanding of knowledge as largely immutable and universal in nature. My purpose was to critique these perspectives and consider alternatives. While the critique at a practice level centred on the issue of exclusion vs. inclusion, at a philosophical level the critique was couched in modernist vs. post-modernist perspectives.

The workshop topic was chosen, in part, in an effort to determine the degree to which exclusionary practices and modernist philosophy have been adopted in the Majority World countries attending the workshops. I also sought to determine the degree of participant receptivity to a more inclusionary and post-modernist approach when this option was presented.

In engaging in this critique, I wished to pose a number of questions and dilemmas to the participants, including among others:

1. To what degree do Euro-Western child development and child care theories fit local perspectives regarding development and care?
2. What role should local perspectives play in the education and practice of ECCD practitioners?
3. If local and Euro-western thought are not congruent, which perspective do you believe is "better"?
4. In your country how congruent are parents' and trained caregivers' perspectives regarding appropriate child care practices?
5. To what degree are ECCD practices at programme, parent and policy levels actively exclusionary - that is, primarily expert or small-group driven?
6. To what degree are those countries or programs that challenge Euro-western perspectives, prepared to see their own positions as also relative when challenged by groups within their own country?
7. To what degree has Euro-western thought regarding children, child development and childrens' programming influenced training and related support structures in the Majority World?

The questions were intended to be provocative. No "easy answers" were waiting in the wings. Individuals were expected to examine their own practice and ideology as well as those of other individuals and institutions with which they work.

The motivation for approaching my relatively small part of the overall Institute in this way follows from two major preceding activities: (1) My ECCD work with a number of First Nations or Aboriginal Peoples in Canada over the past

eight years, and (2) my collaborative work with Peter Moss, starting in 1992, and with Gunilla Dahlberg in 1994, on developing a critique, primarily within the Minority World, of exclusionary practices and a Modernist philosophy found throughout most of North America and in much of Europe as well (Moss & Pence, 1994; Moss, Dahlberg, and Pence in press). Peter, Gunilla and I have jointly and separately presented these ideas at a variety of academic meetings in Europe and North America.

The experiences from both of these collaborations have led me to question many of our "normal" practices in ECCD. I am increasingly concerned that ECCD's (and many other professional groups in health, education and the social services) quest for "Best" and "Appropriate" practices can undermine not only indigenous practices, but also the confidence of communities to actively plan for the care and well-being of their children. In this respect I believe that we can learn from Robert Chambers, experienced majority world rural development specialist, who after more than forty years experience in the field notes that "...'we', who call ourselves professionals, are much of the problem, and to do better requires reversals of much that we regard as normal." (Chambers, 1994, p. ix).

First Nations Work

My own reconceptualization process, as an ECCD professional with then twenty years experience in the field, commenced with an invitation in the late 1980s to work in partnership with a Tribal Council of nine aboriginal communities in north-central Canada. The Council anticipated the availability of Federal dollars to develop child care services on-reserve and they wished to also develop a training programme for their community members that would prepare them to fill those positions on-reserve or to seek similar employment off-reserve.

Families and the well-being of the communities' children had emerged as a priority of the Tribal Council in the mid-1980s. In a vision statement from the late 1980s they identified children's care and well-being as central to the future of the communities:

"The First Nations of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council believe that a child care program developed, administered, and operated by their own people is a vital component to their vision of sustainable growth and development. It impacts every sector of their long-term plans as they prepare to enter the twenty-first century. It will be children who inherit the struggle to retain and enhance the peoples' culture, language, and history; who continue the quest for economic progress for a better quality of life; and who move forward with a strengthened resolve to plan their own destiny."
(MLTC Vision Statement, 1989)

In anticipation of receiving training dollars from the Federal government the Tribal Council had engaged in an extensive search for a post-secondary partner, approaching numerous colleges and universities in western Canada. A number of the colleges, and a few universities, had ECCD related programs which the council reviewed. What they typically found was a fairly mainstream curriculum with a few aboriginal "add-ons": aboriginal quotes, anecdotes, or stories from a variety of aboriginal communities across the country.

However, in reviewing the materials, the question that arose was: "What of us, our people and communities, is in this?" The honest answer was: "Not much!".

When the Tribal Council's search brought them to the University of Victoria, my response was that we did not have an aboriginally oriented curriculum of any kind. They asked if we would consider working with them, in partnership, to develop a truly community-based and community relevant curriculum. Impressed by the degree of their commitment to children and families and the clarity of their request to join and support, but not lead the initiative, I accepted the proposal to join in a partnership project.

The ECCD partnership project received development funding support for the period 1990-93. During those years we cooperatively developed a two year, post-secondary Diploma in ECCD and took an initial cohort of students through the full two years of instruction. The approach developed was called the Generative Curriculum Model (GCM) (Pence & McCallum, 1994; Pence, Kuehne, Greenwood-Church, Opekokew, 1993). The model is community-based, with face to face instruction by instructors from or near the community. The model incorporates instructors familiar with "mainstream" ECCD content and approaches, but also community members, and in particular Elders, who are seen as the carriers of culture in their respective communities. In many cases the information from the communities is complementary to or compatible with the western texts. But in some cases, it is not. Throughout the learning activity, students, instructors and community participants are asked to engage actively and respectfully with the information, sharing their own beliefs and values while considering all other "voices" and texts and the relevance of that information to the communities and individuals as they know them.

When the programme was evaluated in its final year, an Elder from outside the Council area, but one who was very familiar with the communities, was asked to evaluate the overall programme. She noted in particular that the "unintended outcomes" were particularly dramatic:

> "The most significant [unintended] outcome of the Indian Child Care Program is the renewed interest and impact of the Elders in the Life of the communities...This revitalization of cultural pride and traditional values cannot be measured in dollars and cents and as it permeates into the life of each community the benefits will be continuous and positively affect the lifestyle of future generations."
> (Jette, 1993)

On reading the Elder's evaluation, my own perspective on the GCM work shifted from that of understanding it as a curriculum development project to a community development project that utilized university level curriculum as an entry point for community development.

Reconceptualizing ECCD Work
The second influence on my decision to undertake this particular workshop theme for the international Regional Institutes was my work with Peter Moss on developing the book *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality*, and again with Peter and also Gunilla Dahlberg on a

second volume currently nearing completion and tentatively titled *The Young Child in the Civic Society: Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Care and Development*. The first of those projects, the *Valuing Quality* book, was the result of Peter and I sharing our experiences: my own largely with First Nations' communities and his work with the European Union's Childcare Commission. Through our separate activities we had both become committed to the promotion of "inclusionary" practices - processes that seek to bring a wide range of "stakeholders" into the discussion, planning and implementation of ECCD programmes. The *Valuing Quality* volume describes the need for and provides examples of work that promotes greater inclusion: of children, parents and communities into the regulation and provision of child care services.

Having completed the volume, Peter and I felt that we had only begun to scratch the surface of a largely underdeveloped but critically important, perspective on ECCD. We were both intrigued by a number of the ideas put forth in one of the chapters in *Valuing Quality* - a chapter co-authored by Gunilla Dahlberg. We invited Gunilla to work with us in writing what Peter once jokingly referred to as "Desperately Seeking Quality." The three of us tend to associate our work with many of Lewis Carroll's writings such as; *Through the Looking Glass or Alice in Wonderland* wherein the familiar take on new and unexpected forms and meaning. The exercise itself has been fascinating and fruitful as we explore the outer edges of paradigms where shifts occur in often wild and wonderful ways.

For this work we have drawn inspiration from a range of post-modernist thinkers including, to name a few: Foucault (1979, 1984), Lather (1991), and Habermas (1987). Recent work in the sociology of childhood by writers such as James & Prout (1990), and the Childhood in Society Project led by Jens Qvortrup with representatives from throughout the Minority World (1994) has been valuable in our "reconceptualizing" activities. Within the U.S., recent critiques of the child development literature by Michael Cole (1996), critiques of modernist evaluation by the Thomas Schwandt (1996), and the work of individuals in ECE such as Kessler and Swadener (1992), Lubeck (1995), Mallory and New (1994) and others from the Reconceptualizing ECE Conference group have also proved useful, as has the cross-cultural ECE work of Tobin, Wu and Davidson (1989). Perhaps the most prophetic voice from the Minority World has been that of Loris Malaguzzi (1993), whose deviation from the established route of ECE, over four decades ago, has opened new understandings of practice as yet only partially appreciated throughout much of the world.

Looking more specifically at ECCD and child development literature in the Majority World, most "indigenous" authors have been keenly aware of social and cultural biases in the dominate, western child development literature. Most, however, have had to walk a narrow line of maintaining general conformity with western tenets in order to be published, while attempting to address inaccuracies and inappropriate assumptions in the western literature. These Majority World child development perspectives have not received the broad circulation in the west which they deserve. It is only more recently, through the work of individuals such as Ogbu (1991),

Nsamenang (1992), and Kagitcibasi (1996), that a more substantial Majority World critique of the child development literature has emerged within the Minority World.

Looking even more specifically at ECCD literature addressing the Majority World, only recently has the literature begun to call into question the hegemony of western education and program approaches in non-western settings (Pence, 1992, 1994; Penn, 1997; Woodhead, 1990, 1996), and to actively promote indigenously based initiations (Myers, 1992; Young, 1996). Indeed, many of the initiatives undertaken in the Majority World do indeed break new ground. Programmes such as the Hogares Communitaries de Bienestare in Colombia, Early Child Education in Kenya, mobile creches in India, Child to Child programme in many parts of the Majority World, the CAPMM approach by UNICEF, and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approaches are innovative by any standard and deserve much broader recognition than they have received to date. Their potential for stimulating creative change not only in the Majority World, but in the Minority World as well, is great.

Unfortunately, the forces restricting creativity and innovation in Majority World ECCD are also very great. Centralization and the desire for bureaucratic control within many Majority World (and Minority World) countries lead to top-down decisioning, bureaucratic inefficiencies and diversion of funds desperately needed for ECCD local levels. These bureaucratic forces, plus a reliance on training and education that reinforces a needs and deficits perspective, as opposed to an assets identification approach to communities, undermines many local initiatives. Collectively these forces, plus a Modernist paradigm of "Best Practices" and "universals" of development, mediate against strengths-focused, community-involving activities designed to hear the voices of children and families.

Those who wish to promote the development of ECCD in the Majority World, and wish to do so in culturally and socially appropriate ways, are caught, to some degree, on the horns of a dilemma. For the most part, ECCD lacks a powerful constituency in the Majority World (as it does in the Minority World as well). The opportunities to promote ECCD often emerge as "extensions" of other efforts deemed of greater importance, such as: The promotion of Basic Education, Health Care or Economic Development. Given the presence of these potential linkages, and for other more philosophical reasons, it is important that ECCD not be narrowly conceptualized narrowly as early childhood education. Rather, it is important that ECCD be understood as broadly ecological and holistic in nature. The work of Bob Myers in *The Twelve Who Survive*, along with his colleagues Judith Evans and Cassie Landers in the ECCD Consultative Group, in UNICEF's Education Cluster (most notably Dr. Cyril Dalais, 1992-97), and the relatively small set of NGOs who focus a significant share of their resources on young children are all united in promoting a holistic view of the child, and rightfully so.

However, while a holistic view is conceptually appropriate and can promote linkages across funders, governmental departments and across service organizations, the net impact of including so many diverse players and agendas can

be that the "whole child" is never assembled - we are left with disjointed bits of the child: the child's nutrition, the child's health, the girl child, the preparation for primary school child. In such an approach the whole child and childhood can be lost. The potential for "everybody's child" to become "nobody's child" is great indeed.

How then, against this backdrop of competing interests and ideologies, does one promote the holistic well-being of the whole child? One path that I felt deserved attention was the articulation and promotion of a more inclusionary approach to all facets of ECCD, from direct practice through programmes, research and policy development. Based largely on my own partnership experiences with First Nations' communities (Majority World or "developing societies" in their own right), the benefits of promoting an "open ecology" of inclusion has positive ripple effects that can be far more significant than the activity itself (in this case post-secondary ECCD training).

The experience of the First Nations Generative Curriculum is that when one begins to open the hard, resistant structures that are studded like stone islands across the smooth lake of a community, for example: schools, local administrations, training programmes, etc., and invite the broader community into the process while taking the activity itself out of its normal confines, the ripples of these atypical movements circulate out and set in motion other ripples, other currents, that can benefit the community in diverse and unintended ways. As we saw in the case of Tribal Council communities, such rousing to life through inclusionary practices can create opportunities and levels of involvement otherwise not possible.

Based on these earlier experiences, the intent of my 1 1/2 day contribution to the broader Institute, was to explore certain "tools", such as ecological frameworks, and certain reconceptualizations, such as modernist and post-modernist philosophy, as they can be applied to virtually any level of ECCD activity from front-line practice to policy development. The principle put forward was that inclusionary processes are far more powerful than exclusionary practices in stimulating broader community development. The challenge to the group was: how could you apply these ideas in your own area of practice be it at a front-line, instructional, programme, or policy level? The workshop structure introduced a basic framework focusing in particular on a socio-ecological perspective, and then proceeded to various small group activities including group skits intended to operationalize these concepts dramatically.

In undertaking the workshops I had in mind two other venues in which similar ideas had been presented: the first was with various Canadian First Nations' communities where the GCM Partnership team had been invited to speak with members of a Tribal Council considering use of the GCM approach; the second was in academic and professional conferences in North America and Europe. Reactions to these ideas in these two venues, as well as in the two Regional Institutes, was as follows.

Reactions to "Reconceptualization" Presentations
A. Personal Reflections on Minority World Academic and Professional Audiences' Reactions
In Minority World academic and professional conferences it seemed there

was often a 3-way split in reactions to the discussion: Type A: those who enthusiastically supported the ideas, sometimes breaking out in applause for specific points; Type B: those who quite emphatically rejected the ideas, seeing in them the not so thin edge of the wedge that would cleave expert authority from its influence over practice; and a final third, Type C: who indicated neither strong reception or rejection. Typically in the academic/professional conferences, the Type A, "enthusiasts", are often individuals who have attempted to engage in community development or have worked with "grass roots" organizations; Type B, "the critics" are often members of the Academy whose careers rest on a foundation of authority and expert advice; Type C may be those who were insufficiently motivated to stay awake.

B. Personal Reflections on First Nations' Communities' Reactions

The experience with First Nations communities is usually quite different than the responses of those in the Academy. In those cases where I or our team has been invited to make a presentation, the community leaders have already "scoped us out." They know that we come from a mainstream institution, that I myself and the other liaison person are not aboriginal, but they are also aware that other aboriginal communities they've spoken to have indicated that this is a programme worth considering. The questions in these cases focus much more on operationalization: how does the program work, what will be expected of them and the community, what does the University get out of this?

The context we operate within in Canada with First Nations communities is one where aboriginal communities and cultures have been actively, in many cases, and benignly in some, destructed. Most government activities designed to "help" aboriginal communities have been assimilationist in philosophy working to undermine or minimize traditional beliefs, values, languages and practices. Most schooling has been western schooling; most religion, western religion; most employment, western oriented employment. Only in the last 5 to 10 years has the federal government and provincial governments moved to a policy of devolving authority for schooling, health care, social services and employment training to the communities - a few have these authorities now. In this environment there is a deep and profound distrust of the majority society and what it has done to Aboriginal Peoples' pride and traditions. At the same time, most communities feel they must not isolate their children from the western world. They believe that if their children are to be successful they must somehow find a way to walk in both worlds. It is a tremendous challenge.

Out of this context, those communities that have heard about our GCM program, usually by word of mouth from other communities (we haven't advertised), already have an opening level of trust - they've invited us in, not vice-versa. Typically there is little Type B response - experts are not seen to have served them well. There usually is a type A response, but it is subdued - time will tell if this may be a useful partnership. And there are virtually no Type C responses. In working with the communities, typically 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 years pass before the programme actually starts. The decision to commence the program typically depends on two things: a sufficient level of trust and a

sufficient level of funding. Maintaining that hard-won trust is the most important ingredient in the ultimate success of the Project. (Three First Nations Partnership Projects are completed and there are currently four underway. A documentation of all seven partnerships is under way in 1998 and 1999.)

C. Reflections on the African Institute

In Africa the Regional ECCD Institute/Summer School brought together 26 people from 11 countries. Virtually none of the inter-country participants knew each other and some of the intra-country participants were new to each other as well. I had met only 2 of the 26 participants in advance of the Institute. As noted earlier, I selected my 1 1/2 day workshop topic based on the belief that an enhanced inclusionary approach to ECCD would be of value in Africa as part of a broader community development and capacity-building process. With the African Institute my presentation followed the first day of official welcomes, orientation to the facility, and background to the Institutes, and the second day where each of the participants introduced her/himself, background, current activities and expectations for the next three weeks. On the 3rd day we began the presenter/facilitator component of the workshop commencing with my workshop on providing several "frameworks" for the following 2 1/2 weeks. My major objectives included:

(1) Introduction of an ecological understanding of ECCD and child development as nested within broader social structures and values;

(2) discussion of how ecologies are different across time and space;

(3) the presence of "multiple ecologies" within communities or countries;

(4) the need to introduce inclusionary processes as a means to bridging these multiple ecologies;

(5) the nature of the Modernist agenda as a largely exclusionary dynamic with a reliance on "One Best Way", while the presence of multiple beliefs suggests "Many Good Ways"; (6) Post-modernism as a more receptive philosophy in the presence of acknowledged diversity;

(7) role playing of inclusionary approaches in: programme, policy, and parent education contexts (used also as a means to observe group dynamics and individual's comfort with role play activities);

(8) presentation of the GCM as a case study of inclusionary practice in ECCD training/education with broader implications for community based ECCD.

Reactions to the inclusionary, post-modernist ideas put forward were somewhere between those experienced with Academic/Professional audiences (typically delivered as a 1 to 1 1/2 hour presentation) and the discussions with First Nations communities described earlier. The African audience itself was primarily professional in nature with individuals having a range of programme and policy responsibilities. The critique itself was not one that most had heard before. One participant commented at the break that this was a way of looking at programmes that she had not thought about before, and it helped her look at her work differently. A number of participants commented on how in some of the rural areas there is no idea about ECCD, and therefore there is an important role for "experts" to play in introducing ideas and options. In one of the role-plays/skits a village woman (participant) was adamant that she deserved to be at the table for discussion but that "these people" (government

officials, experts, etc.) would have to use simple words that she could understand.

Most of those present seemed comforted to hear that the inclusionary approach, as we define it, is based on a "both, and" belief rather than on "either, or". In other words, the professionals were not required to abandon their training and ideas regarding appropriate care practices, but that these ideas "and others" (e.g.. from the community), all needed to be present. This, most felt, was acceptable with some participants leaning towards the professional knowledge base as "most" appropriate, others more towards the community. As in the Minority World presentation, the more closely associated one was with the academic/instructional/or policy development side, the more comfortable she/he was with exclusionary practices; the more grass-roots/community development, involved the more supportive of inclusionary practices. (As in First Nations communities, virtually none of the participants were Type C-disinterested.) A number of participants noted the problem of trying to work on an inclusionary basis within systems that are largely exclusionary. An example provided was that of an INGO seeking a partner on a project and abruptly moving on to another region when the response from the local group was "we'll take this idea to the community and see what they think, then we'll let you know." Another noted that some governmental structures see consultation with communities as being unprofessional.

One of the questions I had going into the Institute was the degree to which Western education, values, and practices were seen as being problematic because of their limited sensitivity to local and cultural differences. With Canadian First Nations communities, distrust of these systems, born out of years of oppression and destruction, can translate into an easy and rapid acceptance of "counter" or "other" approaches. In the Africa Institute, this willingness to "cast-off" from Minority World approaches was much more reticent. Again the idea of "both, and" was much more acceptable for most than "either, or".

Overall, the reaction in Africa to these ideas was uniquely different than the other two situations. Perhaps because the delivery was a workshop more than a "presentation", there was a strong sense from the participants of actively engaging in "how can I apply this?", "how might these ideas impact on the way I have been working?". With First Nations communities there is a stronger sense of "wait and see", or "we'll know about it when we try it out." In the African Institute there was a stronger sense of a "planning pick-up" or "I'm going to try some of these ideas with...."

In short, receptivity and engagement with the ideas seemed high in Africa. There is a professional and academic reluctance to go too far too fast, but there is little negative reaction either, or a sense that the established structures and procedures must be protected at any cost.

Personal Reflections on the SE Asia Insititute and Reactions
In S.E. Asia 30 people came together from 11 countries for a two week Institute. The 1 1/2 day presentation in this case took place at the beginning of the second week rather than early in the first week as had been the case in Africa. The objectives were essentially the same as in Africa.

Reflecting on the SE Asia experience, it seemed as though the modernist, exclusionary approach is relatively well established within the academic and more elite training/education structures of the region. To a certain degree it appears there is competition among some of these Institutions for dominate influence in the region, however the presence and availability of those academic/dominate Institutions is largely in the urban areas. In the more rural areas, and in the countries that have less developed economies, the influence of INGO's is much greater and many of those initiatives have adopted a more inclusionary and community development approach in their ECCD work. The response to the presentation among those working in less developed areas was a combination of support for the approach and an element of surprise that this message was coming from an "academic/expert". One of the participants noted to me the following day that her colleague, who did not speak English very well, wanted to check with her to see if she had understood the message of "listen to the community" accurately. The colleague confirmed she had indeed understood the message correctly. The exercises, including a role-play skit on the second day, indicated that virtually all of the participants did understand the message of the presentation and were very animated in acting out both inclusionary and exclusionary scenes.

While I expected a more "western-type" academic response of challenge and consternation from the "academic group" within SE Asia, the responses proved to be more those of curiosity and explanatory questioning, rather than rejection, or the pointed questioning sometimes found in the western presentations. Indeed, *my* discomfort with how the points might be received by the more academic units appeared to be greater than it was for them! Further discussions with those whom I felt might take exception to the remarks led me to believe that *most* groups within SE Asia ECCD see themselves as culturally and community sensitive even when the programme appears to have a largely western base. To some degrees such programmes seem to be saying they are simply mirroring an already established westernizing process, not leading it in that direction. While most of the academic groups present were comfortable with posing a challenge to western dominance in ECCD, it was less clear that they saw their own positions or programmes as similarly "challengeable". This question of establishing hegemony at regional and/or country levels represents an interesting area for future research.

Conclusion

The activities described above are very much "in progress". The majority of academically based ECCD work in both the Minority and Majority Worlds is at present dominated by a modernist paradigm of universals and "best" practices and programmes. While there is much to recommend many of the approaches put forward, and they must be included as part of a dialogue regarding good and useful practices, if they are promoted as *the* way, rather than *a* way, they could do significant damage to related efforts to promote community involvement and community development as well as further reduce the pool of human diversity upon which humanity depends for successful adaptations in the future.

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