Module 4 – Overall Concept of Intellectual Standards

The elements of reasoning to be most effective need to be accompanied by intellectual standards. These standards apply some methods of measurement to compare and assess the quality of an element of reasoning that is being considered. For example, the gateway” standard of clarity is a preferred starting point because it will open the door to the element to be explored, in a manner that is clear to the recipients. An example might be, “What can be done specifically to measurably improve the Independent Living Program for children in foster care, to produce tangible improved outcomes for children who are part of that program?” This question would lead to defining the specifics of what is to be measured and how it is to be measured, a time frame to be used, comparison of what “standards” were previously used and clearly showing the improvement between the prior outcomes of the program to the current outcomes using the improved, more specific criteria.

Accuracy is another standard that would be essential because without accuracy, for example, the effort might not even be worthwhile to pursuing. I will continue to use my previous example about the program for foster care. Without accuracy, why would anyone possibly want to make changes to the existing program? It might be better, safer, and less expensive to maintain the status quo.

Precision could go hand in hand with accuracy, in providing the necessary details to implement change and get the buy in from those that are necessary to accept and hopefully become willing partners to the potential change.

Relevance is kind of a common sense, logical standard. If ideas, information and concepts are not related to the programs goals and vision, then what good are they in relation to the end result? They would most likely hinder the project and make it appear less than credible, muddying the waters and making the desired outcomes confusing.

The standard of depth would drill down to the existing and necessary interrelationships inherent in this type of program, for it to be successful. For example, the collaboration between various social service programs and providers. Looking at the particular needs of the individuals for example, there would be preparation for interviewing for a job. Mock job interviews and resume preparation would be a necessity, and the program might ask for help from the State Labor Department. Learning skills that one needs to be self sufficient such as basic cooking and cleaning. A program such as Easter Seals might be utilized. Mentoring programs could be very useful. Mentors could be matched with the children and their particular interests and skills. Mentors could ultimately be a liaison between the child, the program and the community. These are just a few examples but there are many more possibilities.

The standard of breadth would encompass a broad-minded perspective taking into consideration multiple viewpoints. An example might be addressing the specific needs and issues encountered by bi-sexual, gay, trans individuals, and other individuals in the minority. This of course would also include individuals of a different race or culture. Each of the other standards would specifically address those individual needs, looking at the diversity of individuals in the program.

The standard of logic would tie in with the standard of relevance. Do the individual components of this program make sense as a whole? Do they create a cohesiveness that will enhance the desired outcomes? Does the journey of getting from point A to point B make sense? Does the path logically flow from one point to another?

The standard of significance is one that in this situation, I would put near the top of the list because of the implications, if this important program is not improved and stressed. I think that a very clear vision and mission statement would be the guiding light, elucidating the significance of a program such as this. The impact on the future of our children and their children should not be overlooked. Their role in society will be critical and needs to be addressed early and thoroughly.

The standard of fairness is of overall importance. This standard should always be kept in mind. We need to do our best to be free of bias that will serve all individuals well, not only the children in the program.

In closing, all of these standards applied to the elements of reasoning would hopefully come full circle in representing the program as a cohesive whole. Encompassing purpose, question at issue, information, interpretation and inference, concepts, assumptions, implications and consequences and point of view. This approach is an excellent way to ensure the best possible outcome in any endeavors, be they big, small, personal or involving many others!