Changing the learning landscape
Are we ready yet? - Social work students perceptions

A Mixed Methods Approach

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WELCOME
Why this study and why now?

• Reflexivity/ Reflection / What's in a word?

• Building on previous research
  Parker and Bradley (2010): Voice of the student?
  Frost (2013): International perspective

• Social work education reviews
  30 skills days as part of overall 200 days practice learning experience - integration

• Changing landscape of Social Work
  Professional Regulatory Body requirements
  Professional Capabilities Framework and beyond?
  Role of Knowledge Skills Statement / Teaching Partnerships
What was the research about?

• I was interested to see how social work students perceive they become ready for the workplace during their three year undergraduate course.

• I was interested in the storied experiences of the emotional and affective responses of social work students prior to, and following, placement experiences in a highly regulated professional social care context.

• The study involved two Higher Education Institutions sites in England and was conducted from September 2013 until June 2016.

• Mixed methods study: 74 participants completed the pre-and post test questionnaire prior and post placement experience one. 8 participants involved with semi-structured interviews (narrative account of their learning and pictorial drawings)

• The work provides a unique contribution in that to date little is known from the perspective of students themselves, about how they perceive they become ready for the workplace
Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design
(Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2014)

**Quantitative strand:**
Pre and post-test surveys’ to identify and assess factors impacting upon participants' readiness for practice post placement learning experience 1 on both sites.

**Qualitative strand:**
Using semi-structured interviews including the use of creative approaches in qualitative research to determine models of learning and interpret how participants perceive their readiness for practice journey

**Comparison:**
Use of a triangulation protocol to identify where data converges and diverges (Merge results)

**Interpretation:**
Generation of a coherent, explanatory framework by highlighting the multi-faceted nature and representation of participants' readiness for practice experiences for better understanding.
## Sampling size for pre- and post- test surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Site One</th>
<th>Site Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Population</strong></td>
<td>N = 87 students’ (2013/2014 intake)</td>
<td>N = 50 students’ (2013/2014 intake)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: N = 137 students’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre – and Post - Test survey</strong></td>
<td>n=43 participants completed and compared both test (49% response rate)</td>
<td>n=31 participant completed and compared both test (62% response rate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total completed Pre-Post surveys:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N =74 (54% response rate)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow up semi-structured interview consent</strong></td>
<td>Yes n = 13</td>
<td>Yes n = 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No n = 17</td>
<td>No n = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maybe n = 13</td>
<td>Maybe n = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>Four participants</td>
<td>Four participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal and organisational factors impacting upon readiness for practice
# Students’ confidence and competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre Test N=74</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post Test N=74</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mostly prepared</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>Mostly prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcultural communication</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills (written and verbally)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task centred practice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge on safeguarding children, families and adults</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision and reflection (professional development - knowledge and resilience)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprofessional skills and being professional (working with other professionals and team working)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and interventions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles, boundaries, consent, confidentiality and working with others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution focus intervention</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a rapport</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational interviewing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing risk and personal safety</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office skills (writing letters, case notes, assessment reports)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying, probing and challenging skills (working with conflict)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment skills, risk assessment skills (gathering information)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skills and knowledge unprepared for from both data sets at post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills and Processes unprepared for:</th>
<th>Both Sites N 74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Reports</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with conflict</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the emotional part of the role</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record keeping</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factor Analysis (Challenges and tension)

- Curriculum design - where, what, when over three years?
- Partnership working (Practitioners in the field and employers)
- Pedagogical problems - module based of a own module?
- Employability agenda vs academic rigour
- Timetabling...
- System for Monitoring mandatory attendance (Skills Passport)
- Theatrical Simulation Activity Sets - Use of actors, service users during role play
- Inter-disciplinary working - Court Room Skills (Law students)
- Enthusiastic facilitators
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS
Focus Group - Participants Drawings
Meet Michael:
Meet Helen:
Meet Sarah:

Critical tools

Placement → 2nd Uni

Critical Reflection:

Module heavy, lots more pressure: academic

Stairs
Meet Kate:
Meet Hayley:

Yes, I can do this.

Confident.

Experiences

1st placement.

Readiness for future.

Experiences

Final placement.

Employment:

P-time / full-time

Anxious

Can I do this?

Fear of unknown

Family life

Cultural Language

Linguistic

Student-focused

Socially engaged

Higher learning

Resilience

Learning more

Stairs
Meet Salma:
Meet Rosie:
Meet Lucy:

- Excited about seeing other sides of the world
- Practice educator
- Supportive
- Improved mental health

Start with...
What did they say?

Themes from the 8 interviews
Integrated findings

The professional, academic, learner attributes and placement experiences that actively encourage students to learn and acknowledge complexity and challenges of the role, the organisation they are placed within which allows for curiosity and connectedness.

The University, student experiences is a wrap around effort. It supports individual resilience and capabilities where possible. It encourages learners to develop and maintain learning from and with each others. Learners develop their social-emotional and professional skills. This is done within a supportive network and learning culture. It promotes independence, compassion, empowerment and critical reflection.

The wider cultural environment the student learn within, is active and positive underpinned with real-world application to social work practice. It can promote independence, critical thinkers and collaborative practice.

Readiness for practice model – A student perspective (working title)
9 Corner stones for readiness for practice

- Curriculum support
- Wider HEI Organisation support
- Pastoral support
- Individual attributes and worldview
- Individual ways of learning
- Individual health and wellbeing
- Placement environment
- Classroom environment
- Wider community environment
Personal qualities identified by participants about becoming ready and resilient

- Determination
- Seeing the bigger picture
- Patience
- Calmness
- Positivity
- Motivation
- Reflection
- Confidence
- Empathy
- Being strong
- Purposeful
- Adaptive
How can practice educators support this learning? - Rethinking the learning experience

FIGURE ONE: COMPONENTS OF A SOCIAL THEORY OF LEARNING: AN INITIAL INVENTORY. SOURCE: ETIENNE WENGER.
Recommendations for practice

• Further work exploring the student perspective/voice
• Case studies development / inform and support practice education workshops.
• The power of creative work could be shared with relevant social work education and research communities
• Social work recruitment and admissions procedure
• scaffolding support into the induction of social work students into their placement experience, would facilitate a smoother transition into practice.
• Review skills days component
• Inform social work educational policy and practice via conference presentations and within journal publications.
Reflections and Questions
References


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