Dynamic & Effective Practices in Field Education

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April 2012

Overview

- What we know “works” in field education
- The challenges

The Context of Field Instruction

- Agency
- University Social Work Program
- Team
- Staff members
- Field Instructor
- Community
- Field Liaison
- Clients
- Groups
- Student

Components of Field Education

- Education Support
- Gatekeeping Competency Assessment
- Link to Agency
- Link to School

Field Education: Signature Pedagogy of Social Work

- Student and alumni – most important component
  - Socialize to profession: thinking, performing, acting with integrity
  - Integrate theory and practice
  - Greater sense of the complexity and diversity in practice

Educating for Competence

- Content
  - the “3 main things” you would emphasize
- Process
Social Work Practice Competence

**ORGANIZATION CONTEXT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Self-regulation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions, reflection self-awareness,</td>
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</table>

**Complex Practice Behavior**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Judgment</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Generic and specialist Theoretical and empirical</td>
<td>Assumptions, critical thinking, decision making</td>
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**PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT – VALUES**

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The Process of Field Education

- How do students learn in field?
- What do field instructors do to promote that learning?
- What can students do to promote their own learning?

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The Knowledge Base

- Experience
- Theory
- Research

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From Your Own Experience

- As a student
- Practice models
- As a supervisor of staff
- As a field instructor
- Through observing others
- What are some of your key educational beliefs and practices – your field education pedagogy or teaching model – practice wisdom

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Learning and Teaching Processes

- Across studies: moderately high to high satisfaction when...
  - Positive socio-emotional context
  - Many opportunities to practice
  - Observe practitioners and de-brief
  - Reflective discussions to link all domains of competence
  - Students are observed and receive feedback

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Socio-emotional Context: Relationship
Why so important?

- Adult learning theory
  - Self-concept, feelings about self
- Self-efficacy
  - Anxiety when facing new and complex practice issues
  - Helpful guidance and positive feedback leads to feeling empowered
  - Higher confidence and satisfaction

Emotions, neuroscience, and the brain

- Learning is optimized through:
  - Relaxed attention – lessens stress & anxiety
  - Emotions drive attention and memory
  - Positive emotions aid thinking and remembering

Learner States

Learner
- Anxiety – flight, fight, freeze, fragment
- Experiences with diversity and difference
- Stage of student development
  - Limited bank of practice experiences
  - Limited reservoir of skills
- Need support

The relationship as context and mediator of organization stressors and client complexity

AND....

- Optimum anxiety fuels learning
- Balance high support, high expectations and risk/challenge

Relationship

Field instructor – student dyad was perceived of as high quality when:
- Available, interested, and supportive
- Meetings – regular, frequent, duration
- Balance between structure and autonomy
- Emotional support and balanced feedback

Relationship

Power dynamics – contracting and ongoing clarification
- purpose and role
- elicit student’s perceptions about relationship and educational activities
- discuss mutual obligations and expectations about:
  - the authority of the field instructor, evaluation, giving and receiving feedback, resolving conflict/disagreement.
Key Learning–Teaching Processes

Opportunities to Practice
Experiential learning
- Concrete experience
- Reflective observation
- Abstract conceptualization
- Active experimentation

Opportunities to Practice
- More practice associated with
  - higher self-evaluation of skills they practiced
  - higher overall evaluation of their field performance
  - students’ greater satisfaction with placement
  - higher ratings of their performance by their field instructors*
- 10,000 hours of practice** to assimilate what needs to be known, to gain mastery


Neuro–science
- Action strengthens new and existing neural connections
- New knowledge needs to:
  - Make sense
  - Be relevant
  - Build on existing knowledge
- Learner needs to ‘construct’ new knowledge for self
- Need MANY opportunities to practice and learn

Learning–Teaching/Supervisory Processes

Practice
Feedback
Observation
Reflective Discussion
**OBSERVATION**

- Apprenticeship – learning through observing and doing
- Social learning theory – modeling
- Communities of practice – learn ‘know–how’ through observing

**Observation**

- Observe others
- Co–working
- Being observed
  - Behind one way mirror
  - Video or audio segments and review
- Student anxiety
  - Private and public practice
  - Role induction

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**Observation**

- How can you have a reflective dialogue about something you have not seen?
- How can you give feedback on skills if you have not seen the skills in action?

**What is discussed in an interview with clients?**

- *Do practitioners speak with clients about topics that were not related to the issues under attention?*
- *Do practitioners make self–disclosures unrelated to the issues under attention?*

**CHAT**

(Martino 2009)

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**What was discussed**

- Common experiences including personal information
- Opinions not related to client’s therapy issues
- Current events or news
- Study found practitioners initiate discussions with their clients that are not relevant to treatment.

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**Learning–Teaching/Supervisory Processes**

- Practice
- Feedback
- Observation
- Reflective Discussion
Why Reflective Discussions

Experiential learning
- Concrete experience
- Reflective observation
- Abstract conceptualization
- Active experimentation

Schon – Reflective practicum – engage with experienced practitioners in real-world activities to learn to think, reflect, and know-in-action
- About surfacing (your) implicit knowledge
- Learning to ‘think like a social worker’
- Cultural context – attitudes toward learning based on worldview and experiences; examine assumptions.

Organization Life and Learning Culture
- Life in service organizations produces a ‘crowded’ life – continually occupied and engaged, no time to stand back and think.
- Expertise is enhanced when there is reflection:
  - time for attention to mulling over experience, with others – supervision and peer discussion – and learn from it.
- Distracted involvement does not allow for the integration of experience.

(Munroe, 2011).

Reflective Discussion

Use the Competence Model to examine the various components

Social Work Practice Competence

ORGANIZATION CONTEXT

Skills

Self-regulation
Emotions, reflection
self-awareness,

Complex Practice Behavior

Knowledge
Generic and specialist
Theoretical and
empirical

Judgment
Assumptions, critical
thinking, decision
making

PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT – VALUES

Cognitions and Emotions

In an iterative and inter-related manner
- Link reflections to a knowledge base through articulation–explanation and conceptualization (ITP)
  - Link to course concepts
  - Evidence–based approaches
  - Promote generalization and transfer to other practice situations
Cognitions and Emotions

› Review and discuss
  ◦ Use of self
    ➢ our inner life impacts our practice
    ➢ promote mindfulness, attunement, affect regulation, and response
    ➢ promote self-awareness and insight
    ➢ boundaries respected.

Planning and Intervention

› Actions and interactions are carried out
  ➢ through complex practice behaviors
  ➢ offered through the effective use of skills
  ➢ in the context of a professional relationship
  ➢ in the context of an agency program.

Feedback

› Social learning theory and research on learning
› During an observation: prompting, suggestions, coaching
› After an observation:
  ➢ Immediacy, close in time
  ➢ Collaborative – student or worker self-assessment
  ➢ Based on practice data observed
  ➢ Balance positive and negative
› Objectionable styles: Demeaning or harsh

(Abbott & Lye, 1998; Forteau & Abramson, 1992; Freeman, 1985)

Learning–Teaching/Supervisory Processes

Feedback

Balance between next steps with client and student learning

◦ Review client goals and progress

◦ Discuss student’s learning goals
  ◦ Specific knowledge, skills, attitudes regarding practice

◦ Link to student’s overall learning, performance, and competence
  ◦ build toward mid-term/formative evaluation

Objectionable styles: Demeaning or harsh

(Abbott & Lye, 1998; Forteau & Abramson, 1992; Freeman, 1985)
Feedback

- Next steps:
  - Conceptualization of situation
  - Collaborative brainstorming alternatives
  - Coaching, skill training, role play, modeling

- Builds toward summative evaluation

Evaluation of Student Learning

- Practice data – observed, frequently, multiple raters
- Tools
  - Specify student performance behaviors
  - Application of theory to practice – also cognitive and emotional processing leading to choice of interventions
  - At what level of competence

Evaluation of Student Learning

- Who evaluates
  - Context of intense relationship and response
  - Values collide – support, empower, strengths/judgment, critical

- The need for multiple approaches to assessment of competence – e.g. OSCE

Summary: Key Ingredients

- Student – field instructor relationship
- Opportunities to practice
- Observation of practice
- Reflective discussion and review
- Feedback

Challenges and Creative Responses

Challenges

- TIME – to observe students, to reflect, and to ‘teach’
- To articulate implicit and tacit knowledge
- To stay current with new models and research findings
- Organizational context
  - Value of education, central education coordination, for social work or inter-professional
  - Role and purpose of social work
- Assessment–evaluation of student’s practice
What Field Instructors Need

- Organizational Involvement
  - Learning culture
  - Team involvement
  - Welcome students into the agency
    - Pride in what we can teach
    - Value students' 'fresh' views, stimulate learning through asking questions

- Professional Development
  - Content and practice expertise
  - As a field instructor

The Field Instructor and the Organizations

- For the school:
  - Identify what students come with, gaps, and needs
  - Assist in curriculum development and assessment

- For the agency:
  - Potential to link with university partners for:
    - Knowledge building for practice
    - Knowledge transfer and dissemination
    - Advocacy, program and policy change.

Selected References


Website

Competency for Professional Practice
http://www.socialwork.utoronto.ca/research/initiatives/competency.htm

Knowledge building – studies, articles, presentations
Knowledge dissemination – fact sheets, assessment and evaluation tools.

Selected References