Professionalization and Managing Quality in Social Care Education

A study of a social care education in the mid-west of Ireland

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Context

HSCP Act (2005)
Health & Social Care Professionals Council (CORU) (2010)

Allied implications for the quality of social care education programmes
Rationale

Experience & anecdotal evidence
Research Question

To what extent is practice placement a useful learning approach in preparing a social care student for frontline practice?
Research Objectives

1. To investigate the purpose of practice placement across the spectrum of health and social care professions, identifying significant characteristics of the learning approach

2. To highlight the key competencies and skills required by students during the practice placement experience
3. To examine the role of the key stakeholders in relation to supporting the student throughout the experience of practice placement, discussing common themes.

4. To explore students perspectives of the experience of practice placement in relation to adequate supervision, engagement in evaluation of practice placement and preparedness for frontline practice.
Emerging Themes – Literature Review

• **Purpose of Practice Placement**
  (Kennedy & Gallagher 1997; Ryan 2009; Lalor & Share 2013; Camino et al 1982; Edgecombe et al 2013; Fortune et al 2001; Furness & Gilligan 2004; Bogo 2015; Reed 2009; Bogo 2015; Wayne et al 2010; DIT 2017; Rubery and Urwin 2012)

• **Skills & Competencies Required by Students**
  Al Hamdan et al (2014); Bogo (2015); Furness & Gilligan (2014); Howard & Lyons (2014)
Emerging Themes – Literature Review

• Role of Supervisor
  CORU (2017a); CORU (2017b); Morris (2007); Shardlow (1996); Wayne et al (2010)

• Challenges Stakeholders Experienced
  Jervis & Tilki (2011); Pollard (2008); Wayne et al (2010)
Methodology

Mixed methods complementarity approach (Hammersley 1996; Deacon et al 1998; Bryman 2012).

Quantitative – Questionnaires (Gehringer 2010; Agarwel 2009; Kazi and Khalid 2012; Bork & Francis 1985; Croasmun and Ostrom 2011)

Qualitative methods – Interviews (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2009; Mikénè & Valavičienè 2013)
Sample

2 Sample Sets

1\textsuperscript{st} set – 6 social care professionals - 50% female – 50% male

2\textsuperscript{nd} set – Social Care 4\textsuperscript{th} years – 119 - 80% female – 20% male – 73% (61) response rate
Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis  (Fugard & Potts 2015; Bryman 2006; Braun & Clarke 2006; Guest et al 2012)

Data Triangulation  (Bryman 2006; Thurmond 2001)

Used the objectives and research question as a framework
Findings & Discussion
Research Objective 1

To investigate the purpose of practice placement across the spectrum of health and social care professions, identifying significant characteristics of the learning approach.
Purpose of Practice Placement

Research suggested that the key purpose of practice placement is to ensure students are fit for practice, this is achieved by embedding an understanding of social care work whilst engaging in the task of connecting theory to practice

(Kennedy & Gallagher 1997; Ryan 2009; Lalor & Share 2013; Camino et al 1982; Edgecombe et al 2013; Fortune et al 2001; Furness & Gilligan 2004; Bogo 2015; Reed 2009; Bogo 2015; Wayne et al 2010; DIT 2017; Rubery and Urwin 2012)
Understanding of social care work

Findings from sample set 1 – social care professionals

“generally good”

“some students were prepared for the ideal world scenario in social care which is rarely evident on their placement nor is it evident in the workplace”
Connecting Theory to Practice

Sample set 1 – 50% of respondents did not place significance in the task of connecting theory to practice.

Sample set 2 - Approx. 40% of students did not recognise situations where they could link theory to practice.

“challenge inherent in it is to draw the theory out and draw the practice closer”
Research Objective 2

To highlight the **key competencies and skills** required by students during the practice placement experience
Developing Skills & Competencies

62% of students reported that they were supported in developing key social care skills and competencies.

Supervisors reported that their emphasis was to develop interpersonal social care skills such as communication, boundaries, initiative and empathy.
Research Objective 3

To examine the role of the key stakeholders in relation to supporting the student throughout the experience of practice placement, discussing common themes.
Role of Supervisor

- Development of core skills & competencies
- Connecting theory to practice
- Assess & Evaluate performance of student
Assessment of Student

50% of supervisors stated they felt pressure and/or a moral obligation to pass a student that had struggled throughout the practice placement

- Student was young and had time to learn
- Felt it “was the right thing to do”
- Student met the “minimum standards”
Assessment of Student

Jervis & Tilki (2011) found that supervisors were reluctant to fail students when performance was borderline and it was early in their training believing the student had time to improve.

“Because they’re very young and you hope for some of them as it’s their first experience you will have helped and guided them along the way”
Research Objective 4

To explore **students perspectives of the experience of practice placement** in relation to adequate supervision, engagement in evaluation of practice placement and preparedness for frontline practice.
Student Experiences – Adequate Supervision

Students were asked how would they rate the supervision they received:

Scaled from Very Good > Good > Mediocre > Very Bad

2nd years positive response from 82% of the students

3rd years positive response from 85% of the students
Student Experiences – Engagement in Evaluation of practice Placement

Students were asked how useful they found the tripartite professional meeting

2nd years
33% very useful,
49% of some use
18% of no use

3rd years
48% very useful
34% of some use
18% of no use.
Student Experiences – Engagement in Evaluation of practice Placement

Debriefing Day

Finding were very similar for both 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} year experiences – approx. 50\% of students expressed that the day was useful
Student Experiences – Preparedness for Frontline Practice

After completing both placement blocks how ready for you feel to begin frontline social care practice? Scaled type answer:
Ready & confident > Ready but tentative > Not ready > I do not see myself working in social care
32% - Ready & Confident
52% - Ready but tentative
10% - Not ready
6% - do not want to work in social care
Conclusion

To what extent is practice placement a useful learning approach in preparing a social care student for frontline practice?
Recommendations

• Further research

• Robust assessment framework and policy development would be recommended in relation to the assessment and evaluation of the student performance on placement
Recommendations

• Revisiting learning goals of placement between all stakeholders – collaborative, inclusive, supportive of current legislation and guidelines

• Audit current assessment and evaluation methods
Thank You

Questions?

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Bibliography


Bryman, A. (2006), “Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research: How is it Done?” Qualitative Research, 6: 97-113


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