

Multiple voices in external supervision: Reframing perceptions and upholding priorities



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Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Acknowledgment of Country

At James Cook University we acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we operate our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future. JCU is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to the University and society.

*I would like to acknowledge and pay my respect to the **Wulgurukaba** and **Bindal people** on whose land I work and live.*

Presentation Overview

- Background
 - Research, context and methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
- Questions
- References

Research Question

‘What are the experiences of all key stakeholders in field education with external supervision?’

Aim of Research

- to review and explore what is known about supervision for social work students on placements,
- to ascertain the experience of students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison persons in social work field education with external supervision,
- to explore, in particular, the four-way relationship of external supervisor, internal supervisor, student and liaison person,
- to investigate what external field education brings to field education and
- to develop a model, framework or principles of practice of field education with external supervision.

Why was I interested in this topic?

- Field education traditionally apprentice model
- Context:
 - Thinking changed
 - Changing environment
 - Practice context
 - Number of students and degrees
- New thinking? Placement with external supervision?

Summary of Literature Review

- The place and purpose of field education in social work education
- Current contexts of social work practice and education
- Field Education: Learning, processes and relationships
- Social work field education with external supervision

Social work field education with external supervision

- Response to a crisis driven environment (Maynard, Mertz & Fortune, 2015)
- Concerns:
 - student satisfaction, student identity and learning (Cleak & Smith, 2012),
 - competencies (McLaughlin, et al., 2014),
 - students ability to observe social workers (Plath, 2003),
 - power imbalances between supervisors;
 - the complexity of the triad relationship (Henderson, 2010).
- Good planning and cooperation processes (Maynard, et al. 2015; McLaughlin, et al., 2014; Scholar, et al., 2012;).

Social work and the field have much to gain from a better understanding of the experiences of key players in placements with external supervision

Methodology

- Qualitative research to explore the experiences
- 32 participants:
 - Students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison people
 - Multiple roles
- Phenomenology and Social Constructivism

- Data-analysis inductive (Janesick 1994)
- 1. Data analysis of each group of participants
- 2. Analysis of data as a whole
- Staying open minded, curious and alert (Merriam, 2009; Vagle, 2014)!

Findings

- Key stakeholder Groups: The experiences of participants in placements with external supervision

The experiences of participants in placements with external supervision

Students (Zuchowski, 2013)

- Field education itself is a struggle
- Supervision: safety, quality and access

To me the external supervision is a really safe space, a 100%, where I can really pull it apart, and really... go for it, I suppose... whereas it is a lot more contained, I feel a lot more contained within the organisational context. Laura

Getting different ideas from supervisors

*I felt I had to make the decision, it was being left to me ... I was like caught in the middle of a war.
Samantha*

- Ideal placement

The experiences of participants in placements with external supervision

Task supervisors (Zuchowski, 2014b)

- Rewards and responsibilities
- Getting students job ready
 - Supervision

I just plant little seeds ... asking them what they think and they have to walk out and think well when I see [name of external supervisor], this is what I am going to explain to him. Loretta

- Role clarification and relationships
- Strong vs no relationships with external supervisor

Um? I guess at the check-in points it's... maybe not so much actually. (laughs). It's more, do you have any problems? Are we on the right track? Are you happy with what's been learnt?... not so much my feedback on what, how they are doing, whether I think they are learning or whatever. Monica

The experiences of participants in placements with external supervision

External supervisors (Zuchowski, 2014a, Zuchowski, 2014c)

- Positive experience
- Relationships, connections, role clarification
 - Understanding context

I am sometimes allocated a placement that I haven't had a student in before,...it's quite tricky, because it might not be until the first meeting that I actually get to look inside the agency ... So you are essentially supervising without context until it dribbles in with little bits of information directly from the student. Iona

- Building professional social work practice

What you are attempting to do is to give, you want that person to develop as bold professionally and personally, so that they can be ...an effective practitioner. Matthew

The experiences of participants in placements with external supervision

Liaison people (Zuchowski, 2015)

- Bringing the university to the placement
- Ideal placement considers student learning experience
- Liaison work satisfying, but placements with external supervision more work for them
- Accessing external supervisor concerns

The pragmatism of regional, the process of finding placement and ...the quality of the people we have to use sometimes....we aren't necessary able to be picky, and therefore the importance of liaison to help student unravel what sometimes is quite appalling practice, without turning against the person. Mary

Multiple voices

- Each participant group foregrounded particular aspects;
 - Experience
 - completing placement itself
 - their own input
 - gaining understanding of the context
 - bringing to the university to the placement
 - Opportunities of placements
 - supervision external to organisation
 - beneficial for organisation and themselves
 - professional growth
 - challenge to support them appropriately
- ➔ Discovery of gaps and nuances beyond familiar viewpoints

Discussion

- Potential of placements with external supervision
 - Valuable learning experiences
 - Value add
 - Supervision
 - Identification of unsafe placements
- Inherent challenges of placements with external supervision include:
 - Fit between supervisor, organisation and student
 - Establishing context
 - Disjointed relationships
- The extra support needed:
 - Clarification of roles
 - Collaboration and relationships
 - Accessing various viewpoints

 ideal placement is around student learning and people working together to achieve best outcomes.

Conclusion

.....emerging field education models need to be more than responses to difficult times

.... they need to be planned appropriately, with student learning and growth at their centre

... and need to be supported well through a collaboration of the university, the field and the student.

Thank you for your time and interest

Are there any Questions or Comments?

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