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UKRAINIAN EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION A BLENDED PEDAGOGY MODEL

Abstract. Ukrainian social work faculty from Volodymyr Hnatyuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University worked with an American Fulbright Specialist in curriculum development as the faculty wanted a new perspective in teaching social work students. This study reports a social work generalist practice course using two pedagogies, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Team-Based Learning (TBL). The resulting course structure emphasized the Ukrainian faculty goals, in keeping with the Bologna Declaration and indicates the university's commitment to social work education. This study pre and post tested students' t-tests were conducted to measure practice knowledge, critical thinking, and professional conduct before the course and after the PBL-TBL blended pedagogy was utilized. There was a significant difference in the posttest scores for Practice Knowledge ($M=78.7$, $SD=5.4$) conditions $t(-9.4) = df 19$, $p = .000$. Similarly. Posttests scores for Critical Thinking ($M =83.6$, $SD 5.1$) conditions $t(-7.8) = df 19$; and, Professional Conduct ($M=82.$, $SD=7.3$) conditions; $t(-4.5)= df 19$, $p = .000$. These results suggest that the PBL-TBL model really does influence Ukrainian social work students increase in knowledge. Specifically, our results suggest that when PBL-TBL is utilized, social work knowledge, critical thinking, and professional conduct increases.

Keywords: International social work; Pedagogy; Problem-Based Learning; Team-Based Learning; generalist practice course.

Introduction

Ukrainian social work faculty from Volodymyr Hnatyuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University wanted a new perspective in teaching their social work students. The faculty won a Fulbright Grant and worked with an American Fulbright Specialist in curriculum development.

The Ukrainian social work educators' goals included offering a new perspective in instructing students and understanding curriculum with international standards. Volodymyr Hnatyuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University was among the first educational institutions of the Ukraine to implement the learning process of the Bologna Declaration. Thus, the faculty goals were in keeping with the Bologna Declaration and indicate the university's commitment to social work education. The Fulbright Specialist consulted with professors of the social work program regarding international social work education standards, and American social work profession pedagogies.

Specifically, this study reports on the demonstration a social work generalist practice course using two pedagogies, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Team-Based Learning (TBL). The pedagogies are successful used singularly. However, this practice course design employs both pedagogies simultaneously; consequently, research of student outcomes is significant. The blended pedagogy method brought a realistic Ukrainian family case into the classroom where students learned social work knowledge, thought through a Ukrainian family case, and demonstrated professional skills and ethics. The teaching experience with Ukrainian faculty increased their understanding of each the pedagogies singularity and employed together through demonstration and consultation.

Using PBL instruction style, students learned in the context of complex and realistic practice scenarios thus increasing their social work knowledge. The first step in the process had faculty and students current Ukrainian social issues to design of a PBL case, presenting students with a real-world challenge similar to one they might encounter as a Ukrainian social worker. The course design insures a new way of studying as students learn how to analyze clients' presenting problems, identify relevant facts and generate hypotheses; identify necessary knowledge for solving the problems, and make reasonable judgments about solving the problem. PBL improves critical thinking and work-related skills, and increases motivation to tackle familiar social problems, as the case will reflect regional issues.

Second, Team-Based Learning (TBL) is central to applying course content requiring students work in teams in a new way that focuses on students' critical thinking. The team method requires students to interact with other learners more intensely than other instructional strategies. The Fulbright Specialist had successfully designed TBL modules for American social work students to involve them in sequentially more complex group assignments thus improving learning. The distinction of TBL is students

make choices that require them to use their knowledge, then by repeating the knowledge and application several times within the course, or in consecutive modules (Sibley, 2008). Student teams in TBL courses develop a better sense of collegiality, the relevance of the material, learning how and when the content becomes useful in the realities social work practice.

Social Work Education Challenges

The nature of professions included the importance of a specialized body of knowledge. Becker (1993) described human capital as an individual's abilities and the specialized information he or she has obtained in the course of training or education that result in economic value. The question of the "knowledge problem" in social work education was replete in the literature (Author, 2009, 2013). That is, how specialized is the knowledge of social work education; more importantly, how effective is social work education?

Wiggins and McTighe (2012) used the term "backward design" to describe a method of course preparation that provides students with knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge in decision-making. Educators are no longer expected to retain the subject expertise studied. Instead, the role of the teacher becomes that of expert pedagogue: an expert in the processes of learning and teaching and in supporting learners as active constructors of knowledge. The teacher's role is in the collaborative process itself.

Most social work students, including Ukrainian students, need professional knowledge and skills that may not develop well through didactic education alone. As in practice, social work educators ask open and reflective questions, challenging our students' explanations, and insisting on demonstration of practice competencies. The question for educators is how we engage students in a high-quality social work education resulting well-prepared, successful professionals (Wermeling, 2013). How can we bring the social work profession to life in the classroom? The important social work knowledge and skills present exciting innovative opportunities for teaching and learning. Innovation is an approach to teaching and learning resulting in an enhanced, even transformative, educational experience. By design, an innovative course or educational experience engages and challenges students. Innovation raises social work students' level of understanding and a lasting change in their perception of an issue or topic (Stewart, 2009).

The Ukrainian faculty's challenge, as with most social work educators, was how to cultivate knowledge building, critical thinking in practice, and professional conduct with both objectivity and realism. Thus, the faculty decided on student-centered pedagogies that included teaching and learning that results in behavioral outcomes so that students graduate with the requisite knowledge and the ability to demonstrate professional social work practice skills. In the following model, the blending of pedagogies are vital to a student-centered learning environment that helps students

build both deep subject matter knowledge and skills, while allowing students to do social work in the classroom.

In Ukraine, the blended pedagogies model introduced by the Fulbright Specialist were Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Team-Based Learning (TBL). While the conceptual framework below does not claim to be comprehensive, it does emphasize a range of factors that extensive prior research has linked to teaching practices and deep student learning. The result is a course design and learning objectives in which students demonstrate social work practice behaviors.

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a student-centered pedagogy in which students learn about a subject in the context of complex and realistic problem. PBL objectives are to help students develop knowledge, critical thinking skills, self-directed learning, and effective collaboration (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Students work in groups to identify what new information may lead them to solving the problem. The role of the instructor is facilitator, modeling of the problem-solving process, and monitoring student learning. PBL improves critical thinking skills in the interpersonal and cognitive domains, but also more general work-related skills, important for success in professional practice (Schmidt, Vermeulen, & van der Molen, 2006). Pearson, Wong, Ho, and Wong (2007) studied Problem-Based Learning outcomes with Master of Social Work students. The study utilized The Problem Based Skills Learning Inventory, which measures problem-solving, interpersonal and group skills, self-directed learning skills, self-assessment, and knowledge building. The research also utilized the Competence and Aptitude in Social Work Scale that includes knowledge, social awareness, communication skills, leadership, and self-concept. The results indicated that for most students there were significant gains over the course of the academic year in most areas (Pearson, Wong, Ho, and Wong, 2007).

Traditionally, teachers introduce students to content through lecture and texts, followed by exams. PBL, in contrast, is more inductive (Barrett, 2010). That is, students learn the content as they try to address a problem, here a realistic Ukrainian social work case, promoting knowledge and critical thinking skills. Barrett (2010) found that students had mainly positive experiences, gaining learning and interpersonal skills central to mental health nursing. Students increasingly gained confidence and increasing controlled their learning process. A PBL problem, written at Bloom's analysis, synthesis, or evaluation levels, is consistent with practice behaviors. Thus, this model begins with a Ukrainian PBL case, presenting students with a real-world challenge like one they might encounter as a generalist social worker. Therefore, the design of generalist course model insured that students learn how to analyze client problems, identify relevant facts and generate hypotheses; identify necessary

knowledge for solving the problems and make reasonable judgments about solving the problem.

The case narrative relates to the social work profession, drawing the student into the profession. Not all the information needed is given in the problem, resulting in students doing research, discovering new material, and arriving at judgments and decisions based on the information learned. Traditionally, a PBL problem may have more than one acceptable answer based on the assumptions students make and does not emphasize a real solution to the problem, rather, reasonable solutions based on application of knowledge and skills deemed necessary to address the issue.

However, in the social work profession, there are right and wrong answers in assessing and intervening on behalf of clients. Physical abuse is not neglect; depression is not anxiety; and sexual abuse is not a simple boundary issue (Donahue, 2000). Thus, this model's case problem is a complex narrative of a multi-problem family drawn from the practice experience. A critical distinction of the narrative in the case is not a social history. The case reflects signs and symptoms of specific client problems, similar to narratives we might hear at intake. The instructor's questions help students to become reflective about their learning, and the processes employed in the social work profession.

One of the aims of PBL is the development of self-directed learning in which individuals take the initiative (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Similarly, Ukrainian students were encouraged to take responsibility for their group, with support from the instructor. Advocates of PBL claim it enhances content knowledge while simultaneously fostering the development of communication, problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-directed learning skills (Barrett, 2010). Yet for social workers, collaboration, consultation, and teamwork are crucial. To enhance professional collaboration, and emulate social work practice, a second pedagogy was incorporated, Team-Based Learning (Gillespie, 2012; Abdelkhalek, Hussein, Gibbs, & Hamdy, 2010).

Team-Based Learning

Team-Based Learning (TBL) employs a necessarily different knowledge acquisition and application to the course model. TBL perhaps relies on small group interaction more deeply than other instructional strategies in postsecondary education for three reasons (Michaelsen, & Sweet, 2011). First, in TBL group work is central to applying course content. Second, the preponderance of class time utilizes group work. Third, courses engage in successively more complex group assignments to improve learning and promote student teams. As with Problem-Based Learning, Team-Based Learning (TBL) converts social work generalist knowledge through problem solving, application of knowledge, while developing interpersonal skills (Parmelee, & Michaelsen, 2010; Gillespie, 2012).

Similar to other pedagogies, TBL students individually learn the course content, and then discuss it with their peers and the instructor (Bonwell, 1991). The distinction of TBL is students make choices that require them to use their knowledge, and by repeating the knowledge and application several times within the course. Thus, students in TBL courses develop a better sense of the relevance of the material, learning how and when the content might become useful in the real world (Gillespie, 2012).

The combination of a complex PBL case and student teams result in detailed scenarios useful in three ways (Abdelkhalek, Hussein, Gibbs, & Hamdy, 2010). First, the required practices behaviors help organize the course into modules. Second, focusing on practice scenarios enable the use of class time to build students' applied knowledge instead of inert content. Third, the details of the practice scenarios help determine the criteria for the assessments of students' grades. Therefore, the student teams mirror realistic social work practice that the multi-problem Ukrainian case may require (Gillespie, 2012; O'Neill, & Wyness, 2005). This methodology provides a generalist road map for social work with diverse populations, various problems, and different sized systems.

The first TBL module focused on a Ukrainian family case founded on current social issues. Second, Ukrainian social work faculty designed an ethics module to underscore professional behavior. The module included review of previous program content, generalization to the case, and quiz. The quiz was first taken individually by each student and then taken again within the student team, thus raising students' critical thinking and understanding of ethical professional behavior.

The most fundamental aspect of PBL-TBL blended pedagogies is designing team assignments that promote both learning and team development (Parmelee, & Michaelsen, 2010). The use of PBL-TBL pedagogies in the model ensures team assignments generate a high level of student interaction regarding the case narrative. Four student teams used generalist course concepts to make decisions that involve a complex set of Ukrainian family social issues. Assignments assisted teams to assess client strengths and limitations; develop mutually agreed-upon intervention goals and objectives; and select appropriate, realistic intervention strategies available in Ukraine.

The Study Methodology

Sample

A convenience sample was social work students enrolled in Volodymyr Hnatyuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University. In total, we obtained a sample 20 students with complete pre and posttests for a response rate of 100%.

Measures

Two measures study the Ukrainian students' accomplishments in practice knowledge, critical thinking, and professional conduct. The survey contained two

sections; first a Social Work Entry Practice Knowledge scale derived from ten accreditation competency standards, and the Social Work Self-Efficacy Scale. In total, there were 123 total items exploring generalist social work practice and social work competence, respectively. Both sections used the same stem, “How confident are you that you can...” followed by the item.

The second section was the Social Work Self-Efficacy Scale (SWSE) (Holden, Meenaghan, Anastas, & Metrey, 2002) to assess BSW students’ confidence concerning professional generalist practice. The Cronbach’s alphas reliability of the SWSE total scale and subscales ranged from .86 to .97. There were 52 generalist social work practice questions and participants were asked to rate their confidence on an eleven point scale, 0 = cannot do at all; 50 = moderately certain can do; 100 = certain can do. The SWSE includes items regarding professional conduct, knowledge, and critical thinking.

The final scale was a Social Work Entry Survey (SWES) comprised of perceptions of confidence performing tasks based on the ten social work competencies derived from the Council on Social Work Education standards. For construct validity, the items themselves were structured to reflect the core elements of proficiencies CSWE describes that would be common in Ukraine as well, including items regarding professional identity, ethics, and practice skills such as assessment and intervention. The competence section included 66 items on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, cannot do at all, to 5, certainly can do. The SWES total scale Cronbach alpha reliability was .97, but given the small sample, size is reported only to indicate some internal consistency.

Composite Variables

Variables were created to explore categories of concepts within both the self-efficacy and entry survey, and combined scales concepts. Three composite variables were created to measure general concepts for both pretests and posttests: Practice Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Professional Conduct. This purpose of this study was not measurement validation, but we still wanted to show evidence that the items do share appropriate levels of internal consistency.

Findings

The sample was female (100%) and had reported none had any class that used team-based learning (100%) nor course with problem-based learning (100%).

Differences in Pretest and Posttest Scores

Paired-samples t-tests examined differences between pretest and posttest scores. Paired sample t-tests were conducted to measure practice knowledge, critical thinking, and professional conduct before the course and after the PBL-TBL blended pedagogy

was utilized. The student pretest scores were for Practice Knowledge (M =60.4, SD 9.6); Critical Thinking (M =69.3, SD = 7.7), and Professional Conduct (M=71.8, SD =7.7). There was a significant difference in the posttest scores for Practice Knowledge (M=78.7, SD=5.4) conditions $t(-9.4) = df 19, p = .000$. Similarly. Posttests scores for Critical Thinking (M =83.6, SD 5.1) conditions $t(-7.8) = df 19$; and, Professional Conduct (M=82., SD=7.3) conditions; $t(-4.5)= df 19, p = .000$. These results suggest that the PBL-TBL model really does have an effect on Ukrainian social work students increase in knowledge. Specifically, our results suggest that when PBL-TBL is utilized, social work knowledge, critical thinking, and professional conduct increases.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, the sample is very small indicating that we will only be able to detect large effect sizes. Future studies should increase the total number of participants in order to detect more subtle changes than presented here. Next, the sampling only took place at one Ukrainian university, in one course, meaning that the findings for this study will be difficult to generalize to the larger population of international social work students. A larger sample developed from multiple locations and over the span of the full social work curriculum would help with generalizability. Next, the survey was conceptually based on the CSWE competencies as Ukrainian's develop, which directly allow us to inquire about perceptions of those competencies, but a standardized valid and reliable scale on social work competencies would improve this study, particularly specific to the country studied.

Discussion

In general, and at minimum, students benefit in three areas (Stewart, 2009). First, students learn how to apply social work knowledge. The students demonstrate the ability to use concepts and to identify and analyze variables that can influence social work's overall effectiveness. Therefore, students demonstrate competence. Second, students identify problems and opportunities in organizational contexts and make specific recommendations, supported by theory, to improve the client situation. The model's implementation of problem-solving activities helps students with a commitment to quality in social work practice. Finally, student collaboration as a member of a team facilitates initiative in identifying and solving problems. Student leadership facilitates the pursuit of opportunities for learning and improvement within their team.

There is incredible benefit to faculty within this model. The Social work students seem to be increasingly averse to traditional lecture-based instruction (Stewart, 2009). By contrast, this model prompts students to engage in the learning process that transforms practice with excitement that is rewarding for both them and the instructor. Instructors seldom must worry about students not being in class or failing to prepare

(Miller, 2012). They are members of a professional team, interacting much more like colleagues. The instructor role is transformed to student learning, not teaching content. The model provides more time to listen and observe than making formal lectures, so that the more personally rewarding relationships develop with students who collaborate with the instructor in a rich, rigorous educational process.

The implication for social work education is how it supports the work of the profession's members. It is possible that the Council on Social Work Education's emphasis on competencies, practice behaviors, and field experience as the signature pedagogy will improve social work education, and subsequently these findings. Social work is a difficult profession, often requiring graduates to make life and death decisions. Clearly, social work education requires the advancement of learning, and current knowledge and skills. If social work education attempts to meet the demand of well-prepared graduates, time must be devoted to sound knowledge and real-life preparation through field experiences (Author, 2013). Without field experiences, social work knowledge is lifeless data and theories. Future studies may reflect that the shift to signature pedagogy is well advised. What may be required is examining social work education relative to the kind of further research that should be accomplished.

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УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ДОСВІД ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ: ЗМІШАНА МОДЕЛЬ НАВЧАННЯ

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Анотація. Кафедра соціальної педагогіки та соціальної роботи Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка співпрацювала з професором Університету Північного Кентуккі, стипендіатом програми ім. Фулбрайта у процесі розробки освітніх програм з підготовки майбутніх соціальних працівників. Е пов'язано з тим, що кафедра прагнула нової перспективи у навчанні студентів за спеціальністю 231 «Соціальна робота». У цьому дослідженні повідомляється про практичний курс із соціальної роботи, в контексті викладання якого застосовано два підходи до організації навчального процесу: проблемне навчання (PBL) та командне навчання (TBL). Напрацьована структура курсу відображає цілі кафедри соціальної педагогіки та соціальної роботи, відповідає вимогам Болонської декларації та наголошує на важливості підготовки майбутніх соціальних працівників відповідно до місії університету.

Експеримент, проведений в рамках дослідження, передбачав до- та після-тестування студентів з курсу та застосування t-тесту задля вимірювання практичних знань, критичного мислення та професійної спрямованість курсу до та після застосування змішаної моделі PBL-TBL. Результати засвідчили, що була суттєва різниця в оцінках практичних знань студентів після застосування змішаної моделі ($M = 78,7, SD = 5,4$) умови $t(-9,4) = df 19, p = .000$; збільшився рівень розвитку критичного мислення ($M = 83,6, SD 5,1$) умови $t(-7,8) = df 19$; та професійна спрямованість ($M = 82., SD = 7,3$); $t(-4,5) = df 19, p = .000$.) у студентів після застосування змішаної моделі. Ці результати свідчать про те, що модель PBL-TBL дійсно працюють та впливають на збільшення знань українських студентів із соціальної роботи. Зокрема, наші результати показують, що при використанні PBL-TBL знання про соціальну роботу, рівень критичне мислення та професійна спрямованість студентів зростають.

Ключові слова: міжнародна соціальна робота; педагогіка; проблемне навчання; командне навчання; курс загальної практики.