Wisdom and skills in social work education.

Promoting critical relational social work through ethnographic practice

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Abstract

Taking the development of social work education in the UK as an example of some of the ways in which educational policy and practice is developing globally, techniques of resisting an increasingly technical-rational and instrumental focus are introduced. After a short historical excursus into changes in social work education and practice, two innovative models drawn from the authors' research are explored. The paper suggests that a sensitive and critical approach to international field placements and the deployment of ethnographic practices allows social work students to develop a reflexive and critical approach to social work practice that privileges the relational and humane rather than impersonal, homogenising and stultifying systems.

Keywords

Education – field placements – ethnography – practice wisdom

Introduction

This paper explores international field placements and ethnographic methods in social work education with a focus on developing relational social work wisdom. The term «wisdom» is chosen alongside skills because the latter is suggestive of instrumentalism whilst wisdom conjures the human, the experiential and the relational – it is more «human» (see Krill, 1990). The paper describes the development of social work education in the early twenty-first century in the United Kingdom (UK), especially England. This focus was chosen because, historically, Britain has been a site of exportation and reproduction of welfare administration and social work. It is also important to draw attention to the current trends of convergence and prescription in social work education, practice and organisation across the world and, allied to that, the potential for mistakes to be made.

Subsequently, we will illustrate the potential of international field placements and ethnographic practice that enhance the relational paradigm and social justice element of social work whilst immersing the student within human worlds. The ideas will be brought together, for social work educators, under a banner of «pedagogy for pleasure», which promotes agency as a powerful technology of resistance and potential change within normative organisational structures; travelling in concord with engaged ethnographic practice and relational approaches to social work.

Background and context

The UK context for social work education and fieldwork learning is one of increased restriction and regulation. Since 2003, when social work education was raised to a minimum degree qualifying level, Government department policy makers have introduced greater prescription into the curriculum and into pedagogic matters. Education was devolved to the four UK nations, with some differences recognised in each. However, whilst change has permeated the development and delivery of social work education throughout its history from the introduction of more standardised training in the 1970s, the process of change and prescription has continued apace, linked to concerns of professionalisation understood from a New Public Management perspective. Some employer groups suggested, even before the first cohort of students taking the 2003 programme in England had graduated, that student social workers were being failed by universities (see Evaluation of Social Work Degree Qualification in England Team, 2008). It was said that they were not being prepared appropriately to work within the pressured context of contemporary social work – something that was also changing from a person-centred, social justice and rights based phenomenon to a social regulation and protective function (Parker, 2017). An independent evaluation was more equivocal but did implicate some universities in not delivering education of the «right» quality (Evaluation of Social Work Degree Qualification in England Team, 2008).

These moves channelled social work education into a more instrumental route that fed employer needs rather than necessarily educating students to think critically, to challenge and to learn, or indeed to put the service user first as a human being. Social work education shifted towards a prescriptive if not prescribed curriculum that prevented universities from offering many of their specialist courses that made each of them different at that time. One rationale for this was to ensure that tragedies such as high profile deaths of children – Victoria Climbié and prior to that Jasmine Beckford and Maria Colwell (Department of Health and Social Security, 1974; Blom-Cooper, 1985; Laming, 2003) – were not repeated. A laudable aim but one which considered social work through the lens of state-sponsored or local authority services ignoring the wide community based, third sector campaigning and enabling organisations that make up what may be considered

as social work, and to an extent relegating much of adult social work to second place. Nor did it recognise the complexity of such tragic events nor the responsibility of social actors other than social workers or various professional organisations within these contexts. In respect of adult social work, mental health assessment and adult protection or safeguarding remained integral but the former was opened to other professions to train and the latter was conducted within a multidisciplinary context (see Department of Health, 2000, the Mental Health Act 2007 and Care Act 2014). This took place within a new context of mandatory registration with the professional body – at the time the General Social Care Council (GSCC) (see s.61 Care Standards Act 2000).

Concerns with the appropriateness of social work education continued to be expressed by employers driven by performance indicators and targets under New Public Management, and with Government departments listening more intently, no doubt, because of the expense of paying students bursaries to study and paying placement agencies for fieldwork placements (Curtis et al., 2012). Changes to the degree designed to tighten the standardisation of education were introduced in 2009. Whilst universities and professional bodies were grappling with these changes the politicised release of the inquiry report into the tragic death of another youngster, Peter Connelly (Baby P) (Jones, 2014; Shoesmith, 2016), allowed the Government of the time to attack universities and social work education alongside demanding changes in practice (Balls, 2008; Social Work Task Force, 2009; Jones, 2014).

The politically-driven media furore resulted in the setting up of a Social Work Reform Board that examined student selection, education, practice learning; partnerships with practice (meaning local authorities in the main); practice, performance and continuing development amongst other matters (Social Work Reform Board, 2010, 2012; Jones, 2014). This presented an opportunity for social workers to reassess and redefine their strengths and importance to contemporary society, to use the evidence of good practice, difference and innovation to take centre stage (however those controversial and contested concepts are understood). Unfortunately, the outcome resulted in yet more prescription and reform for social work education and for practice (Higgins & Goodyer, 2015; Higgins, 2016).

A significant outcome of the reforms was to see learning in social work as a life-long or career-long process that moved through tiers of breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and application, starting with enrolment on an education programme. This was known as the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), a nine-domain overview of what were considered to represent the central characteristics of UK social work (BASW, 2015, Higgins, 2016). Whilst built around the capability approach (see Sen 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) it is predominantly descriptive of contemporary social work and draws on facets described nationally and internationally, but it does not fully address the exigencies of practice, which was what employer reformers and the government purportedly wanted. Rather, the PCF enjoins the professionalising convergences in social work education and practice; something that instrumentalises and depersonalises.

The reform process did not finish at that point and reviews of children's social work and adult social work were completed in 2014 (Narey, 2014; Croisdale-Appleby, 2014). These have been supplemented by fast track education routes into social work practice (Step-Up to Social Work and Frontline in respect of child and family social work; Think First in respect of mental health work, EASSW, 2014; Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018) despite the protestations of the academy and others that no firm evidence has been presented to make these changes. Social work education now requires students to meet key professional standards (Standards of Proficiency) set by the professional body, the Health Professions Council (HCPC, 2012) and under consultation for revision in 2016 (HCPC, 2016). This is important, understandable and reflects the importance of the job and the calibre of degree level learning. However, the standards also tend to homogenise and replicate neoliberal concerns of performance measurement, targets and outputs or productivity as well as an attempt to enhance the quality of the work. The reforms have also led to the development of core subject areas in qualifying social work education that create a discourse outlining what social work means and what it is. The increasing focus on protection or «safeguarding» and the legislative, regulatory aspects of social work are privileged whilst the campaigning, political, social justice and relational elements are minimised however much lip-service is paid to them.

The changes towards a restricted understanding of social work practice was continued in debates surrounding the Children and Social Work Bill 2015 and through the introduction of Knowledge and Skills statements in adult and children and families social work (Department for Education, 2014; Department of Health, 2015). Although the final Act, passed in 2017, was less radical in content, there remain on-going implications for social work education, and its continued location within the university system is challenged with moves towards an apprenticeship (http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/Apprenticeships/Apprenticeships.aspx).

Field education, the practicum or placement learning has been a central part of social work education in many countries for many decades. This is the case in the UK. However, the processes involved in learning through and in practice are still not well developed (Parker, 2006; 2010). Despite this successive reforms have made taken-for-granted pronouncements on field education and its make-up. Currently in England there are 30 skills days, which are designed to address the kind of skills needed in contemporary practice. These days the skills element offer universities and their practice partners a degree of freedom in designing, developing and delivering these days. These may be interwoven throughout the degree rather than delivered in a single block. However, before engaging in practice directly students must satisfy programmes of their fitness for learning in practice settings and then undertake a total of 170 further days of field education split between two practica with different service user groups and with one experience in statutory settings undertaking statutory social work. This subtly yet clearly insists on a particular definition of social work as a statutory service, as part of the State's organisational systems for the

regulation of social and family life; social work is functional and functionary and students are being educated into maintaining the practices of this system in a taken-for-granted manner (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The PCF does allow students to challenge this growing definition but the systems are clearly in favour of the instrumental and functional bureaucracy of social life and not concerned with the fluid, personal and relational aspects of life, the pursuit of social justice and well-being despite social justice being explicitly included within its domains. The context in which social work education and learning has developed in the UK has become increasingly insular, instrumental and prescribed. However, this does not mean that innovative and challenging approaches cannot be employed. Indeed, it perhaps demands a passionate, rather than dispassionate, response that is critical of, challenges and «troubles» education with a view to educating thinking, critical and analytic people who are able to negotiate a difficult political and social world to work best alongside the people who use their services. This remains a core responsibility of social work educators.

How do we understand social work and social work education in a global milieu?

If, as we have suggested, the situation in the UK, and England especially, is problematic we need to define how we are using the concept of social work and social work education here in order to explore innovative and relational methods. Whilst the concept and practice of social work is contested (Midgely, 1981; Hutchings & Taylor, 2007; Hugman, 2010) and its social-historical-political construction leads to different morphologies and practices across the world, there has been excellent work undertaken by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work to reach agreement on a global definition (IFSW/IASSW, 2014). This has led to the development of non-binding, yet important, global educational standards for social work (IASSW/IFSW, 2012). This is something of a «double-edged sword», however; it has both potential benefits and potential drawbacks. It provides a set of standards that social work educators in all countries can aspire to and can campaign to achieve within their universities, professional bodies and policy-making bodies. It also has the potential to homogenise social work education around global isomorphs that may privilege certain countries more than others. Therefore, a critical eye has to be kept on the meanings that these standards create within each country and educational establishment, and within social work organisations. The standards should not be applied without question. However, if we approach these standards reflexively and critically, questioning them rather than simply complying, we can avoid their coercive and normative power. The capacity to do so has been included within the revised definition that recognises local differences (IFSW, 2014). When we distil all key points in the definitions, the focus on human well-

being and social justice, combining the social, interpersonal and intrapsychic elements of being human in the contemporary world becomes clear.

The rest of this paper considers two innovative methods in social work education and offers suggestions concerning how these may be used as a means of offsetting and troubling the increasingly rigid and technical-rational approaches promoted by governments and policy makers. These approaches exploit a neoliberal trend towards normativity and homogenisation – or isomorphic convergence – in educational practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Parker et al., 2014). This neo-Weberian concept of institutional analysis aligns with on Bourdieu's concept of fields as places of contest in which coercive, mimetic and normative authorities vie for ascendancy through becoming taken-for-granted (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In social work education, coercive and regulatory systems lead to normative expectations and a desire to demonstrate a meeting of assumed standards and norms, further confirming the unquestioned «rightness» of the political intervention in education that we reviewed earlier. However, whilst these structural elements are described the place of agency as a force for resistance and change is also in evidence. The educational innovations considered here challenge those assumptions by introducing a central human and relational element, which is posited as the core of social work practice.

Towards innovation in social work education and field placements

The innovations considered in this paper are linked together in the concept of «pedagogy as pleasure»; teaching with enthusiasm, passion, interest and commitment. It is this interlinking that is central in promoting relational social work which aims to recapture the spirit and passion of social work as a human-focused and social rights based set of activities and politico-moral positionings that operate through fostering relationships and dialogue. A set of innovations that respects the humanity of the social worker alongside those with whom social workers practise.

International placements

International field placements sit within higher education's broader drive across the world to «globalise» its activities and to develop students into internationally competent and mobile citizens. In social work field placements social, relational and well-being benefits accrue for students, international partners/co-producers and those who use social work services. Student social workers in Britain have been able to undertake part of their field education in a different country for many years. Take-up has often been restricted by language competence but has been increasingly prevented by the insularity

and prescription of many university programmes since 2003 onwards. However, these opportunities offer a great deal in respect of the experience of difference, diversity and personal challenge in moving out of one's comfort zones. We report here on some of the work undertaken under a British Council Grant (PMI 2 Connect) (2008-11), which funded UK student mobility for field education experience in Malaysia and which led to annual placement opportunities.

The growing influence of the contested concept of globalisation in higher education has run alongside the economic, social-migratory and conflict-induced shifts across world populations. Universities are expected to respond to the need for developing globally aware, competent and mobile graduates (Caruana, 2007). This is no less the case in social work education. Whilst student field education in the UK has been subject to extraordinary pressures the impact has led towards the development of international field placements, for which there appears to be a relatively high and increasing student demand across the world (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2012; Gilin & Young, 2009; Razack, 2009).

One of the reasons behind this appears to rest in the belief that international place-ments provide a very useful opportunity to develop cross-cultural competence (Panos et al., 2004; Parker et al., 2014; Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2012). However, there are some drawbacks including the need to prepare students well for their cross-cultural experi-ences, especially to guard against possible harm to local people through «damaging practice» and for mitigating potential risks to the student (Hugman, 2010, p.118). The latter requires adequate debriefing of students to reflect on, make sense of and contextualise their experiences (Wehbi, 2009). There is also a potentially unquestioned aspect of field education transfer in which students from high income countries of the Global North are placed in low or middle-income countries that have often experienced a colonial past (Razack, 2009; Pawar et al., 2004). Furthermore these are nations where English is likely to be widely spoken, therefore making no demands on students' linguistic competence.

Post-colonial theory is important in understanding such exchanges. In an earlier work we describe how Midgely's (1981) work on cultural imperialism in social work is used by Razack (2009) to critique the concept of universal social work values. Such values have often derived from accepted Western paradigms, «and therefore in turn are inextricably linked to a questionable socio-historical legacy» (Parker et al., 2012, p. 148). Therefore, social work students must reflect on their motivations for study and explore their own «superior positioning» towards the country of practice (Wehbi, 2009; Razack, 2009, p.12). Lough (2009, p. 475) indicates that if international practica are to be positively «transforma-tive» experiences for students and those countries in which the learning takes place and «lead to respect for diversity and a strong commitment to social justice», there needs to be a focus on roles, reflection, support for learning and reciprocity.

Developing the emphasis on learning for culturally appropriate and transformative practice, in 2008, Bournemouth University (BU), in collaboration with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), received funds from a British

Council PM1 2 Connect research programme promoting student mobility. Three successive cohorts of 10 BU social work students were placed in social work/welfare settings in Malaysia for a field placement of between 20–30 days.

The shortened period allowed us to ensure that UK requirements were already fulfilled in practica in the UK so the focus of these days could shift to intercultural learning and developing cultural awareness. The central aim of this collaborative research and exchange was not only to provide students with an international placement experience or to enhance the reputation of participating universities through publications, but also, to explore students' learning when placed in unfamiliar cultural settings. Students kept an anonymous daily log of events, thoughts and emotional states, and wrote one critical incident analysis of a selected key event or circumstance. These were analysed by the principal investigators using a thematic analysis where data was subject to coding strategies at multiple levels of complexity by the principal researchers at BU (Baba et al., 2011; Ashencaen Crabtree, 2012; 2015; Parker et al., 2012; 2014).

Rigorous selection of students and placement planning was deemed to be of paramount importance, as it was assumed that the Malaysian placement experience would be significantly challenging to students in both predictable and unforeseen ways. Students had to be motivated, adaptable, demonstrate good academic and interpersonal skills and have successfully completed their practicum experiences in the UK. Students were placed in NGOs where English was spoken and consisted of community-based mental health services, children's residential settings, services for physical and learning disabilities in adults and children, and an HIV/AIDS agency offering an outreach needle exchange programme. Students were matched to their placements according to their preferences and learning needs using similar protocols to those used to secure UK placements at BU (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2012; 2014).

Parker et al. (2012) employed the concept of liminality as an analytical framework to explore the process students move through during an international field placement. A profound and multiple dislocation experienced by students in unfamiliar cultural contexts characterised their liminal state.

Sometimes students were disabled by the received knowledge and assumptions that did not translate into the new setting but a passage through complex and challenging terrain provided them with a questioning and critical sense of diversity, power and the dangers of assumed hegemonies (Parker et al., 2014). This added to their understanding of the importance of relationships and context for positive social work as shown in CC's quotation below:

> A little girl wanted to hug me for a long time today. It appeared she drew great comfort from this and her tiny body that started off as very tense seemed to relax... I couldn't help but notice how very thin she was and felt a rasping in her chest. I felt powerless to do anything (and worried of doing) more harm than good. For example, as a Westerner, part of me would love to take this child home with me for a few weeks to

feed her, clothe her, bathe her and get the medical care that she needs. But this would be so damaging on her return, as she would then have to cope with knowing how different things would be.

International placements were likely to enhance social work students' marketability as globally aware and mobile graduates and follow-up interviews have since confirmed this. Whilst these educational opportunities are developed and managed at an organizational level the learning as individualized by each student, was reflected upon and internalized as part of future learning.

Ethnography as practice/participatory approaches

The research method of ethnography represents a useful approach to social work practice given its search for engaged, immersed understandings of cultures, and its potential for the co-production of daily practices through the construction of a «communitas», a state of liminality created by the interaction of social worker/researcher with service users/cultures which connects with the experiences of students undertaking international placements (Turner, 1967; Parker et al., 2012; Balestrery, 2016).

In our work with the indigenous people of Tasik Chini, Malaysia we employed an ethnographic approach to seek to understand and illuminate the situation and experiences of those people (Atkinson, 2015). In doing so we recognised that our ethnography was also a form of social work practice in seeking voice, well-being and social justice (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). The potential for using ethnography as a method of social work education seemed clear and this was explored at the 2016 Joint Social Work Education and Research Conference (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2016; Parker, 2017).

Traditionally, ethnography seeks to make cultures known through the thick description of the everyday practices, relationships and social organisations of peoples (Geertz, 1973; Atkinson, 2015). Conducting ethnography involves researchers entering into the lives of people, experiencing their lives and questioning the meanings of that culture. Our ethnography was condensed in time and critical or engaged in that it acknowledged our social and political positioning and was informed by a value base of social justice.

Restricting the time spent in the field raises a number of issues that also pertain to social work practice. Wolcott (2008) argues that ethnography can never be rapid but it can use time efficiently. It is this to which we have aspired in our own research. A critical or engaged ethnography integrates traditional exploration, observation and description of the voices of communities and relationships with «technologies of praxis' (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2016), meaning that a political and emancipatory form of research is explicitly undertaken (Scheper-Hughes, 2009; Clarke, 2010; Clair, 2012; Kennedy, 2013). Engaged ethnographies pursue wide understandings, however, and do not simply assume authenticity (Sanford & Angel-Anjani, 2006). They acknowledge the socio-political

positioning of the researchers, the people and context. Again, this is something that is central to social work.

So, it appears that there are many similarities between ethnographic research and social work. Ethnographies, like social work, can never be value neutral. It is crucial to acknowledge one's positionality and the contextual power relations in which the work is conducted. Ethnography, again like social work, is reflexive when done well and the focus on reflexivity in practice could be developed for the benefit of all and as a means of promoting social work's commitment to social justice and values. This proposition requires that we have some understanding of what social work comprises as we have discussed earlier. This may change and may be contested but we need to justify why we practice in the ways we do and to acknowledge the agendas on which we premise our work.

Ethnography mimics social work practice on a number of levels: including negotiating a mandate for the work «what right have I to intervene?»; working with structural, organisation and interpersonal issues and the interrelationship of agency and structure; considering power relations resulting from questions of mandate and context and one's own positions reflexively. There is also further similarity concerning the potential for bias in the portrayal of those with whom one works, or researches, and the importance of determining whose voice is being heard.

Social work's character is revealed in its social location and its engagement with structural processes of disadvantage as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal concerns. Ethnographies deal with cultures; the beliefs and practices of humans within their ecological contexts. Deep immersion into the cultural systems and worlds of those with whom one is working is important to generating authentic appreciation of people's lives. This method of learning allows social workers to take a more pragmatic approach to ethics and to understand how social work ethics and values may need to adapt with context rather than be applied rigidly.

A situation ethics drawn from Fletcher's (1966) thesis in which the social work values and precepts are followed in general but may be bent to fit the needs identified at the time displays a real world ethical model that fits the ever-changing and messy contexts in which individuals live. It also demands social work wisdom, which takes both agency and structure into account. Social work wisdom seeks to understand how the wider setting has an impact on the local context and the intra- and interpersonal concerns of individuals.

It is important in social work to tailor practice to the individual situation whilst the procedural, instrumentalism demanded by New Public Management approaches to social work will not allow this but attempts to impose a «one-size-fits-all» view (Parker, 2017). This does not serve people who use social work services; following the rules as far as one can but moulding them for singular applicability does (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2016). Such an approach engages a critical perspective recognising the reciprocal influences of structure and agency and aiming to co-create solutions to structural problems through relationships.

The acronym *AESThETICS* captures the spirit of and ethnographic social work as a means of education:

- *A*ctivism forms the bedrock of critical ethnographic social work
- *E*thics are central and contextual
- *S*ocial justice is at its core
- *Th*eorising helps to understand
- *E*mpowering is a means of sharing power and minimising imbalances
- *T*raining and education are necessary for all
- *I*nclusion is at its core
- *C*riticality drives its curiosity
- *S*upport implies mutual collegiality as social workers

Encompassing these characteristics, this model of ethnographic social work helps deal with the messy and complicated realities of contemporary practice and education and provides a useful mnemonic to guide ethnographic social work practice. It allows social work educators to act as irritants to power, society's «troublesome priests» who challenge and ask awkward questions of themselves, society and others.

Whilst ethnography offers much as a method of developing innovative learning in practice there are drawbacks to be aware some of which we became aware of during our research (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2016). We were asked to offer training to social and community work students and faculty on participatory methods in anticipation of work they were undertaking with indigenous peoples.

The workshop seemed helpful and we were assured that attendees had understood the principles behind the practice. However, the work of faculty and students was not undertaken in a participatory manner, but traditional mapping as completed which alienated further the people. Ethnographic methods, in research and in social work, must be underpinned by a commitment to inclusion and democratising the process (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2016).

Innovating together: Pedagogy as pleasure

There are many forms of innovation, which act at the borderlands between agency and structure. Educational innovation for relational social work, as we have described through international field placements and ethnography, can be considered under a banner of «pedagogy for pleasure» – pleasure of learning; pleasure of teaching; pleasure of developing wisdom and insight – where the inter-relational becomes a focal point for learning through engagement.

The culture of slow, or the slow movement that began with food outlets reacting against the rise of the fast food industry demands that we consider what this meant for all

of us socially and spiritually. It is something that is creeping slowly in to higher education, offering much to commend it in resisting the demands of an output and performance driven culture in favour of one that privileges thinking, deep engagement and a joy of the process of learning, curiosity and discovery for itself rather than for instrumental ends, and therefore links with our cross-cultural and ethnographic approaches.

Higher education, social work education included, has moved towards constant evaluation, the ubiquitous pursuit of «world class excellence» that lies only at the end of a rainbow, and targets for student numbers, teaching scores and research «outputs», the latter no longer being referred to as publications or scholarship which have been de-centred in favour of an impersonal and technical «newspeak» (see Orwell, 1949).

One of the reasons for this change towards commodification and marketisation in higher education culture globally is the rising number of students undertaking degree-level study, another being the perceived social and economic benefits that may accrue from the delivery of mass higher education. However, the effect of this for staff and for students is a more pressured, demanding and constantly measured environment.

In their recent book *The Slow Professor*, Berg & Seeger (2016) advocate adopting an approach that highlights enjoyment of the educational journey, a «pedagogy of pleasure». This involves stepping back and engaging with, immersing oneself within and enjoying the subject of one's teaching which itself links with ethnographic approaches to social work. The research cited indicates that students engage more and rate more highly teaching that is passionate and enthusiastic, delivered by educators who enjoy their subject and recognises that intelligence is embodied and related to one's emotions.

The concept of the «slow professor» acknowledges that overwork and rushing «doesn't help students... learn, it ruins our health and causes us to have colourful break-downs – but the most important reason is that it ultimately make us hate students» (O'Reilley cited in Berg & Seeber, p. 40).

Embracing a «pedagogy for pleasure» approach to teaching and learning in social work represents a form of protest and resistance not only to the corporate university but to the de-centring of human in contemporary life; it seeks to foster humanity in the process of curiosity and discovery. It develops through relationship between educator and subject, educator and student, student and subject to construct a context and environment in which learning can be maximised and enjoyed. Indeed, it could be adopted as a model for social work education that values those engaged in it, and act as a coordinating concept for relational social work education. To quote Berg & Seeber (2016, p. 51): «...my ideal pedagogy strives to defend "the local, specific and particular" against (the flattening effects of) speed».

Modelling the passion and enthusiasm through pedagogy offers students a meta-model of social work that has the potential to be translated into practice settings challenging the timescales imposed on human relational activity towards constructive change. It is rebellious, radical and disruptive, but this is part of social work's remit.

By taking such an approach as social work educators, we are able to promote the human-relational potential of ethnographic practice and critical self-reflexivity on international and cross-cultural field placements.

Discussion

Field education is accepted as central to student learning in social work often without question. It is the place in which student social workers can demonstrate their learning, hone their skills and act as beginning social workers. The evidence base for field education and learning is growing but is still limited but seems to revolve around interpersonal issues of relationship, dialogue and planning, and intrapersonal qualities of commitment and resilience (Parker, 2010, 2017). These traits are, themselves, testimony to developing «wisdom» as well as instrumental knowledge (Parker, 2017; Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018). Relationship is acknowledged as central to a positive learning experience for social work students (Parker, 2010). This is mediated by cultural and local context and by standardised requirements in any setting. However, a learning relationship that has a critical focus to challenge existing and unquestioned and to co-construct knowledge and practice is likely to problematise the process and promote the conditions for praxis. If undertaken in a relational context of «pedagogy for pleasure», an enjoyment and enthusiasm for the learning process, this will have profound implications.

Educational approaches that are participatory, inclusive and action-focused seem to address some of the concerns of skills and competency-based approaches alongside challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions of standardisation and regulation but accepting standards when these promote human well-being and social justice akin to Fletcher's situation ethics.

They offer the potential to recapture social work education and place it, therefore, within the context of relationships and the pursuit of social justice and well-being. Being concerned with relationship these innovations also require respect for the humanity of the educator and the social worker as well as the student and, ultimately, the well-being of those people who use social work services. It is a reflexive and dynamic activity in which praxis is to the fore (Friere, 1972), and acknowledges that experiential knowledge develops in a tacit way. As we noted earlier:

> Practice wisdom refers to the collated experiences and interpretations that develop over time from engaging with, reflecting on and testing out hypotheses and methods of practising. These are important in social work, which deals with complex and messy human situations and cannot be bound into rigid frameworks. (Parker, 2017, p. 224)

To develop such an approach requires a relational approach to test out and draw upon collective wisdom and to listen to the other, whether or not that is the educator, student or, indeed, the service user.

As such it is overtly political and leads us back to the famous adage of second wave feminism «the personal is political» (Hanisch, 2006). Its moral or principled relativity (Hardwick & Worsley, 2010) is redolent of the «situation ethics» promoted by Fletcher (1966) and something we need to consider within a complex and messy human context. It suggests that principles are important but they are not straight-jackets and deviation may represent better practice in certain contexts. This requires the development of practice wisdom and the intuitive, tacit knowledge that derives from reflexive experience of life and practice – something that can begin during qualifying education. The wisdom to accept willingly and to work with difference and ambiguity derives from supportive supervisory relationships, enthusiasm for the learning process, a reciprocal «pedagogy of pleasure» that aims to promote structural change and encourage agentic resolve.

Innovations often run the risk of becoming the assumed, unquestioned practices of tomorrow, however, and, at times, represent those isomorphs, which others take on board without deeper analysis. Maintaining a reflexive approach within one's practice, questioning organisation, policy and taken-for-granted direction is crucial for continually recreating democratic, meaningful practices that are inclusive and representative of people within a moral context of social work relationships and performance. It also honours the wisdom that comes from experience that has been deeply reflected upon, tested and honed.

The concept of liminality is useful to ensuring the continuation of this questioning approach because it illustrates the journey undertaken by students and educators and the importance of constructive relationships between the two. Students become «other» in their journey, moving from one state to another engaging in the games of learning. However, this is not an unconscious rebirthing game but one that requires the engagement of all involved in guiding, critically questioning and deconstructing practices and assumptions at many levels – student, educator, practitioner, organisation. Emphasising the human element of this relationship for learning and recognising that enthusiasm, passion and commitment are central creates a forum for learning that privileges the person and relegates the organisational, the bureaucratic and the impersonal. It is this kind of education practice that is crucial to retaining the human in social work practice. It honours wisdom and fosters the humility necessary for practice wisdom in the context of hurt and distress. A pedagogy of pleasure creates, through mutual enthusiasm and (com)passion, in tomorrow's practitioners a deep desire to engage in relationships with those people with whom they work.

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