Literature Review

Impact of post qualifying learning on practice

The following is an introductory paper which considers four topic areas relevant to the impact of post qualifying learning on practice: continuous professional development, integration of learning for practice, critiques and experience of the PQ framework and assessing competence in practice. For each topic core themes are identified and brief comments are offered on a small sample of the literature. This indicates areas for further work.

- **Continuous Professional Development**

Possible themes: comparisons between professions; renewed interest in CPD as part of "recruitment and retention strategies"; methods developed to promote CPD.

DTZ Pieda Consulting (2002) *Social Work and other Professional Training and CPD: Comparative Analysis,* Social Work Services Inspectorate, Scottish Executive.

This mapping study had three objectives:

- to map the professional training and CPD for social workers
- to map the professional qualifying training and CPD for a set of comparator professions
- to compare social work training with the comparator professions.

The selected other professions were: general nursing, probation (England), physiotherapy, occupational therapy, medicine, teaching and chartered accountancy.

Coleman, H et al (2002) Using Portfolios to stimulate critical thinking in social work education, *Social Work Education* vol. 21, no. 5*.*

Portfolios conceived as a vehicle to promote critical thinking in social work and have a particular use in charting the career progression of social workers. Portfolios are defined as "compendiums of purposively selected student work assigned to enhance learning and show how outcomes are being met" (p 585). The paper discusses two uses of portfolios: teaching

and evaluation. The core argument is that the process of producing a portfolio – requiring examination of learning and the selection and justification of evidence – is similar to that required for critical thinking. "Portfolios move learning closer to the student" (p 586). This essentially is a theoretical argument for the use of portfolios with no empirical data presented in relation to use or effectiveness.

- **Integration of Learning for Practice**

Possible themes: critique of "academic/practice divide"; development of roles and responsibilities e.g. practice teacher; methods for promoting integration (need to apply to PQ specifically).

Clapton, G; Cree, V (2004) *Literature Review: Integration of Learning for Practice,* Learning for Effective and Ethical Practice Project, Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (SIESWE).

The main findings from the literature review are as follows:

- The term 'integration of learning' is widely used across many disciplines, yet is discussed surprisingly little in social work literature. A useful definition is provided by Gibbons and Gray (2002): '…integrated learning means integration of theory and practice, the individual and social, art and science, field and classroom'.

- There is little consensus as to how this might be best achieved in practice. Attempts to integrate learning have so far focused on (1) the field i.e. through practice learning; (2) the classroom e.g. through problem-based learning initiatives; and (3) the bringing together of field and classroom in a 'wrap-around' model, as exemplified by the University of Washington.

- It is this 'third way' which is identified by the literature review authors as providing the most potentially useful and creative way forward for bridging the gap between theory and practice, classroom and field.

Watson, D; West, J (2003) The role of the tutor in social work education: building an emancipatory tutorial relationship. *Social Work Education,* vol. 22, no. 2.

This article locates the role of the tutor within the empowering model of social work practice. Using a framework from Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) the authors identify five stages of students' overall experience of their social work course and future professional development. A key tool is the use of Personal Learning audits. What is useful from a PQ perspective is taking the notion of a tutorial partnership into post-qualifying development. This partnership needs to be negotiated around student, tutor and agency concerns. It is possible that initially PQ students need to "re-visit" the earlier stages of development before moving on to consolidation of learning, and increased professional confidence.

Watson, F et al (2002) *Integrating Theory and Practice in Social Work*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

This essentially is a study guide specifically aimed at social work students. It focuses on formal assessments which are designed to assist and demonstrate the integration of theory and practice. Chapter 9 (Reflecting, Analysing and Evaluating Practice) is of possible relevance to PQ students, particularly in re-visiting possibilities and pitfalls in reflective/evaluative writing.

- **PQ Framework: Critiques and Experience**

Possible themes: providers reflecting on experience; small scale studies reporting on impact of PQ on CPD and on practice;

Brown, K; Keen, S (2004) Post-Qualifying Awards in Social Work (Part 1): Necessary Evil or Panacea?, Social Work Education vol. 23 no. 1.

This paper focuses on the generic Part 1 (PQ1) of the post-qualifying award. In England, completion of PQ1 is a pre-requisite to undertaking Part 2 of the award. The paper is based on a study conducted between April 2001 and September 2001 in Wessex (Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight) of a PQ programme based at Bournemouth University and organised in partnership with seven local authorities and the voluntary sector. The study involved interviews with 35 candidates and 9 training managers. Candidates were required to submit a portfolio containing 4 pieces of work: CV, critical career review, case study (two case studies for newly qualified workers) and two third party testimonials. Achievement rates were high (89% on first submission; 99% following resubmission). The main positive impact of PQ1 "was that it helped over three-quarters of *all* candidates start, develop or confirm the importance of critically reflecting on their career and practice" (p 87). Portfolio deferral was linked to lack of workshop attendance and lack of support from line managers

and training officers. Most candidates with deferred portfolios were not positive about their PQ experience. The study found a clear link between the development by an agency of a "learning culture" (reflected by the integration of PQ with the agency's Human Resources Strategy) and number of its candidates on the programme.

Postle, K et al Continuing professional development after qualification – partnerships, pitfalls and potential, *Social Work Education,* Vol 21, No. 2.

This paper explores the development and delivery of a year-long post-qualifying course run collaboratively between West Sussex Social and Caring Services and University College Chichester primarily from the perspective of candidates. The views of candidates are presented by two candidates but drawn from discussion with two-thirds (20 candidates) of one cohort. A number of tensions are identified which impacted on the programme, including lack of support of the programme by agency managers. This leads the authors to state: "For continuing professional development to be fully effective there needs to be a cultural shift within employing organisations from concentration on operational imperatives to a stance which perceives the learning organisation as a collective enterprise focusing on quality outcomes" (p 160). A further tension is between "genericism" and "specialism". The overall conclusion to the paper is that, despite the underlying tensions, "the course has been generally successful in building on and further establishing foundations for continuing professional development" (p 167).

- **Assessing competence in practice**

Possible themes: Development of assessment of competence; critiques of this approach; reflective practitioner and "reflection-in-action".

Ashworth, PD; Saxton, J (1990) On 'Competence', *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* 14, 2, Summer, 1990.

The authors argue that 'competence' is the embodiment of a mechanistic, technically orientated way of thinking. It is therefore normally inappropriate to the description of human action or as a basis of human-orientated training programmes. This article essentially was a reaction against the "VQ" movement, but offers some convincing arguments for the need for a 'holistic' rather than 'atomistic' approach to education (in this case, teacher training, but arguably, applicable to social work education).

Bright, B (1996) Reflecting on "Reflective Practice", *Studies in the Education of Adults,* Vol.28.No2, October,1996.

This article provides a critique of the uncritical and superficial adoption of the concept of "reflective practice". The exposition of "reflective practice" is seen as a skilled and complex process. Bright criticises the "prescription approach" to reflection and argues for a more interrogative approach to the reflective process.

Collin, Audrey (1996) Re-thinking the relationship between theory and practice: practitioners as map-readers, map-makers – or jazz players?, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* Vol 24, No 1, 1996.

Collin emphasises the use of "improvisation" in the context of "practice theory". The conceptual map of the practitioner needs to redrawn in the face of changing demands and situations. Applying the argument to PQ level programmes, these should assist practitioners to revisit the "conceptual maps" of their qualifying, but then enable them to improvise within practice on the basis of new knowledge and skills.

Eraut, M (1995) Schon Shock: a case for reframing reflection-in-action? Teachers and Training: theory and practice, Vol 1, No 1,1995.

This paper suggests that Schon's important notion of "reflection-in-action" needs to be redefined. Eraut argues that most of Schon's examples are concerned with reflection *on* action or reflection *for* action. "Reflection-in-action "is seen as a rapid, intuitive process. What Schon describes as "reflection-in-action" for Eraut is more deliberative reflection out of this action. It is this latter activity around which reflection on PQ programmes is based.

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