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LEVERAGING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF FIELDWORK LEARNING PLANS

Abstract:

Multidisciplinary fieldwork in the professions can benefit from learning plans that leverage what a student needs to know and what placements can offer. Building on the research of the creative potential of learning plans in fieldwork by Leitmann and Palmer (Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning, 2013) this presentation addresses the enrichment of fieldwork learning through the more effective development and use of student learning plans.

Our research focused firstly on analysis of complexity in students' learning plans. Complexity refers to the depth to which students identify and make connections between knowledge, skills and values to be developed on placement. We innovated a framework to gauge the complexity of criteria in student learning plans. In this instance they were of final fourth year Bachelor of Social Work students but can apply to most disciplines.

Field education exposes students to a wide range of learning possibilities. It is central to tertiary and vocational education as it is through such supervised professional practice that classroom based learning is brought alive in the triumvirate between university, agency / supervisor and student.

Learning plans focus on the professional development of the student and the evidence on which assessment of the students' fieldwork is to be based. As Hodgson et al, (2006/07) assert, learning plans are more than merely an articulation of a list of tasks and activities undertaken on placement and need to address abstract dimensions of students' knowledge, skills and values to be developed. More abstract dimensions require logical and conceptual clarity on the part of the learner and supervisor so as to provide overall direction for the placement (Leitmann and Palmer 2013 p.33).

As academic researchers we deepen thinking and develop greater rigour around the concept of 'complexity' in learning plans. To do this we refer to two articles identified in our literature review (Rogers and Langevin, 2000; Hodgson and Walford, 2007) and additionally incorporated Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning with literature located in the critical reflective practice tradition (Fook, 1999; Ghaye and Lillyman, 2000; Taylor and White, 2000; White, Fook and Gardiner, 2006). This paper presents the findings of our research on the creative potential of student learning plans.

Keywords:

Fieldwork; Learning plans; Fieldwork placements; students' learning plans; academic research; social work

JEL Classification: I00, I23, I20