

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE EDUCATION: CONTEMPORARY BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Prepared for NOPT



National Organisation of Practice Teaching

Introduction to Practice Educator Webinars

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NOPT



- NOPT is a national organisation for Practice Educators in England with its own Constitution and Code of Practice
- It has a committee of 11 members and 2 Co-Chairs from throughout the country to enable an understanding of practice education nationally.
- Its purpose is to promote good practice and maintain high standards in social work practice education within a framework of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice
- Membership is free. To join please email **admin@nopt.org**

What we do



- Work with other organisations to further develop practice education
- NOPT committee members collaborated with BASW on the review of the Professional Capabilities Framework and PEPS Refresh
- Currently collaborating on “Look after your Practice Educators” and QAPL Review.
- Working with NICE representing NOPT on their Social Work Engagement Advisory Group
- NOPT is represented on editorial board Journal of Practice Teaching
- NOPT continues to link with SCOPT

Annual Conference



- NOPT holds an annual Conference for Practice Educators to enjoy where they have opportunity to learn and share knowledge and experiences from colleagues in the PE community.
- Unfortunately, due to corona virus the conference had to be cancelled in 2020.
- **Conference planned for Tuesday 13th July 2021**
- **Venue: Sheffield Hallam University**
- **We hope to hold it face to face but otherwise virtually**

Practice Educator Webinars



- To fulfil a gap left by the cancelled conference NOPT has commissioned Siobhan Maclean to present three webinars for Practice Educators.
- In collaboration with Dr Prospera Tadam and Dr Jo Finch Siobhan has created three Practice Educator webinars particularly relevant in the current climate.
- We thank Siobhan, Prospera and Jo for their collaboration with NOPT in supporting Practice Educators with these webinars.
- We hope everyone finds them both productive and fun.

INTRODUCING THE TEAM



Siobhan Maclean



Dr Prospera Tedam



Dr Jo Finch

About me.....

- Prospera Tedam, over 15 years in HEI 's (Open University, University of Northampton, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge).
- Currently United Arab Emirates University in the UAE
- Hold the old Practice Teachers Award 2005
- Research interests around practice learning, equality and diversity in higher education, cultural competence, faith based abuse, critical race theory
- Hold a doctorate in professional practice – researched (The practice learning experiences of Black African students on social work programmes in England: A Critical Race Enquiry)
- Currently PE for a Scottish Univ student based in Dubai

Aims for the session

Demonstrate how PE's can use the MANDELA model as a tool for anti-oppressive practice

Reflect on strategies for enabling & sustaining anti-oppressive practice learning environments

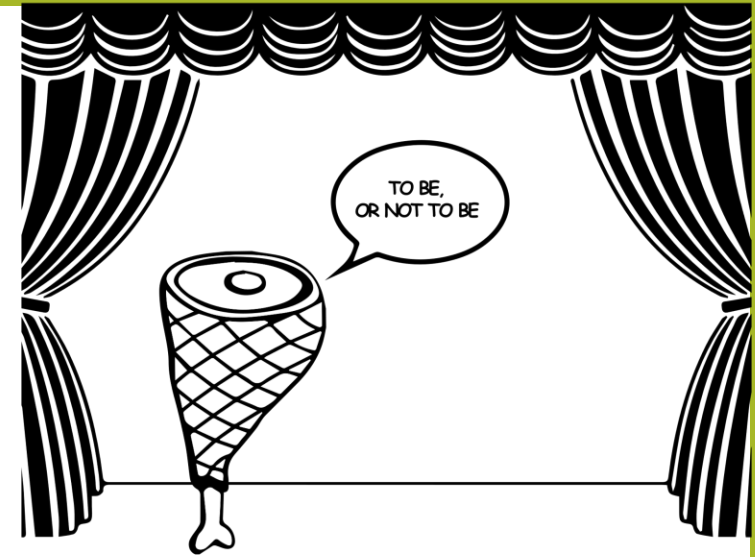
Consider the enablers and barriers to anti-oppressive practice education

Outline some contemporary concerns in practice learning

Introduction

- SW training is increasingly attracting diverse range of students, however this increase in diversity is not reflected in an increase in equity nor an increase in positive educational experiences (Fletcher et al, 2013).
- The profession of social work from its inception has purported to value diversity (notably the Global definition, values, principles and working practices).
- The SW workforce is made of people from different backgrounds and life experiences, ages, genders, sexualities, interests, ethnicities, races, abilities etc.
- There is a growing concern that SW's see these values as critical to work with service users and their families, however this does not always transfer into the area of practice education/learning.
- The reasons for this are varied and the session today will attempt to consider some of these.

ROLE PLAY



Messages from research

- Hussein et al (2008) reported that male students, students with disabilities and BME students had poorer progression rates on SW programmes than other groups
- Students from BME backgrounds reported less satisfaction with their practice learning experiences than other groups (Bartoli et al 2009)
- Male students and students from BME backgrounds are more likely to fail practice placements than any other group (Furness 2012).
- BME student participants identified that it was discriminatory behaviours and attitudes among practice assessors, other professionals, and service users that contributed to the differences between their experiences and those of their white peers (Bernard et al 2011)

Messages from research continued....

- Fairtlough et al (2013) Gay and Lesbian students experienced discrimination on SW programmes and on placements.
- Tedam (2014) reported the presence of racism on placements and that for one student of African heritage, her PE 'put the phone down' on her saying she didn't understand her accent.
- Yeung et al (2019) PEs spoke of the challenges they came across when they worked with students from 'BAME' backgrounds.
- Tedam (2021) found that suspended placements, differential treatment in relation to placements and remote learning were experienced by Black African social work students in her study.

Messages from research (international)

- **Canada**- Razack (2001) Poorer relationships between field supervisors and students of ethnic minority backgrounds resulted in difficulties on placement
- **Scotland** - Hillen et al (2013) - Poorer experiences and outcomes for BME students
- **Australia**- Harrison and Ip (2013) Poorer experiences reported by Aboriginal and minority social work students.
- **Australia**- Gair et al (2014)- Aboriginal students experiences of racism
- **Canada**- de Bie, et. al. (2020) who found that discrimination was sometimes framed as 'learning experiences' for diverse students.

Summary of Research

LGBT

Male

Younger

Black &
Minority

Disabled

So what?

- Pause for reflection



So what?

- The picture beginning to emerge from research in the UK and from abroad does not appear encouraging.
- This places current 'trainee' PE's and qualified PE's in an unenviable position of trying to change the status quo.
- We acknowledge that this does not represent the entirety of PE's but the findings should be given the credibility they deserve.

Contemporary Concerns

- A. George Floyd- Black Lives Matter
- B. Covid- 19 pandemic

What do these mean for Practice education?



Contemporary Issues

'Pandemic related practice learning issues

- ✓ Online/virtual placements – assessing and supporting students
- ✓ Measuring developmental milestones
- ✓ Digital poverty
- ✓ Differential treatment

Courageous conversations' are not oppressive

What is oppression?

- "The social act of placing *severe restrictions on an individual, group* or institution. Typically, these restrictions are placed *formally or covertly on oppressed groups* so that they may be *exploited and less able to compete* with other social groups.
- The oppressed *individual or group is devalued, exploited and deprived of privileges* by the individual or group which has more power" (my emphasis).

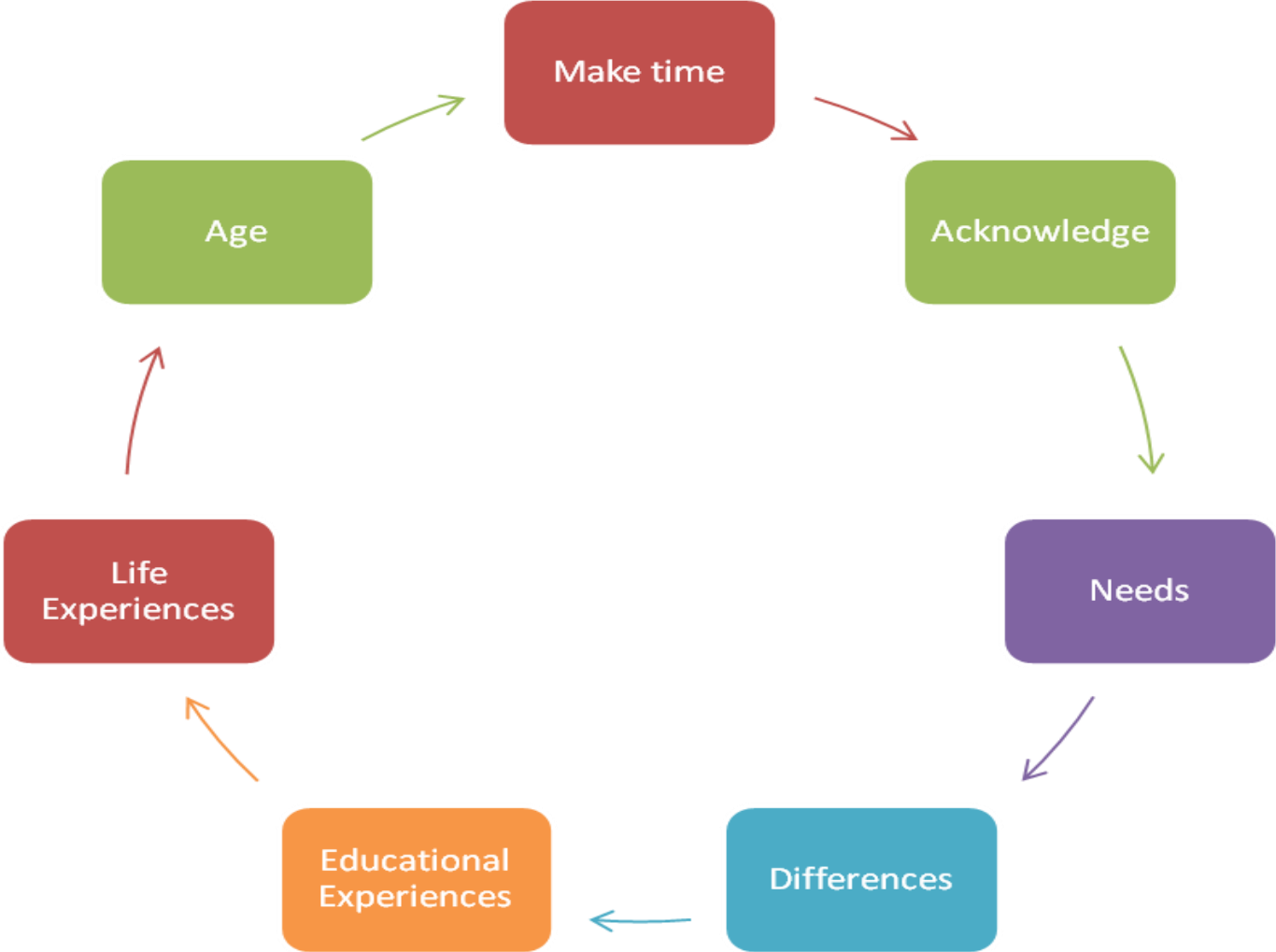
(Barker, 2003, p306-307)

The MANDELA model of practice learning

Background

- Depressing state of affairs in relation to BME attainment on SW programmes.
- From research evidence about the experiences of BME students on social work (particularly in practice learning)
- Interest not in just talking about it, but in the spirit of the profession- to do something about it.
- Hypothesised that a lack of familiarity with the 'other' was contributing to the poorer outcomes for BME students studying social work.
- Developed peer reviewed and published in 2012.

The model



The acronym

- ✓ **M**ake **t**ime (How much time do you have? How much time does your student need? Pace, timing, **where do you make that time in light of covid- online, phone etc**)
- ✓ **A**cknowledge **N**eeds (Personal, team, organisational, learning, **covid related needs, BLM ?**)
- ✓ **D**ifferences (Gender, disability, social class, race, sexuality, faith, religion, power etc)
- ✓ **E**ducational Experiences (previous, current, type, size, goals, aspirations, value of education, any ongoing Univ work, **changes due to the pandemic**)
- ✓ **L**ife Experiences (ill health, wealth, poverty, bereavement, war, relocation, **covid**)
- ✓ **A**ge (Direct or indirect questioning, does age matter, what are the implications?)

Theoretical underpinnings

- Relationship based practice*
- Critical theories
- Strengths based practice
- Person centred practice
- Ecological systems theory

Mandela & relationship based practice

- SW is practiced within a network of human relationships.
- Human relationships should be at the heart of all good social work practice
- These relationships can be within groups, individuals and communities.
- SW-SU relationships should be built on trust and respect

MANDELA & relationship based practice

- 'Supervision is more than a professional activity; it is also a personal relationship requiring a great deal of investment or time, knowledge, skill and commitment (Everett et al 2011)
- Students much more likely to accept a 'fail' outcome from a PE they had a good relationship with, than from one they did not (Lefevre 2005)
- "There is a great power imbalance between a student and a PE, and it is important to correct your student as you go along, rather than leaving it to the last minute" (Tedam thesis)
- "If the working relationship is poor, then as a student, you have no voice" (Tedam thesis)

MANDELA & PCF

- **RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING** - Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic wellbeing
- **DIVERSITY & EQUALITIES** - Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice
- **PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP** - Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management
- **KNOWLEDGE** - Apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory. Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

PE Values (BASW 2019)

- ✓ Accept and respect student's and other learner's circumstances and understand how these impact on the learning and assessment process. Practice educators and supervisors should recognise and build on student's and other learner's strengths and consider individual learning styles and a range of assessment methods (including those preferred by the student).
- ✓ Advise students and other learners of their rights and actively challenge oppression and discrimination which may be experienced by the student or other learners.

PE values

- Manage professional/personal boundaries, their use of authority and power within the assessment relationship and recognise and act upon the implications for their assessment of practice.
- Assess in a manner that does not stigmatise or disadvantage individuals and ensures equality of opportunity. Show applied knowledge and understanding of the significance of lived experience, poverty, racism, ill health, disability, gender, social class and sexual orientation in managing the assessment process and recognise and work to prevent and counter unjustifiable discrimination and disadvantage in all aspects of the assessment process.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/peps-for-social-work.pdf>

Embedding anti-oppressive considerations in the practice learning process

Consider where discrimination/oppression could occur in these processes.

- Placement matching
- Profile/CV's to potential PE's
- PE's response
- Initial meeting with the student (pre-placement)
- Placement planning meeting
- Induction & first few days
- Supervision/Ongoing involvement
- Direct observation(s)
- Overview of written work
- Giving feedback
- Grade/outcome of placement meeting/decision
- Final PE report
- End of placement

Barriers to Anti-oppressive practice learning

- ✓ Organisational culture which frustrates fair practice
- ✓ Delay, avoid or delegate resolving issues or concerns
- ✓ When conflict is managed well and resolved, relationships deepen and strengthen; conversely when conflict is not handled well the relationships may falter and sour

Enabling an anti-oppressive practice learning environment

- An ally will be one who is critically self-reflective and continuously looking for ways to relate favourably with people from varying backgrounds and social locations.
- 'Talk to us', find out what we have to say
- Silence is complicit'
- Over-exposed and underprotected
- Key to successfully supporting students and enabling them to develop their professional identity is investing time in building and developing a secure, open and honest relationship (Dore, 2019).

Conclusion

- In the wake of global insecurities and fear, it is even more critical that social work engages with agendas that are collaborative, inclusive and respectful of diversity.
- PE's serve as 'role models' to their students and also as 'gate-keepers' to the profession.
- The session today is not an attempt to encourage PE's and practitioners to sign off students whose practices are dangerous or detrimental to well-being of service users and other vulnerable people.
- Instead the session has aimed at highlighting how 'easy' it is to talk about ADP/AOP and ARP while forgetting that these are key ingredients in the PE-student relationship.
- Minimal learning occurs when student energy goes into 'maintaining professionalism whilst ... navigat[ing] persistent acts of oppression' in field placements (Tedam, 2015, p. 139).

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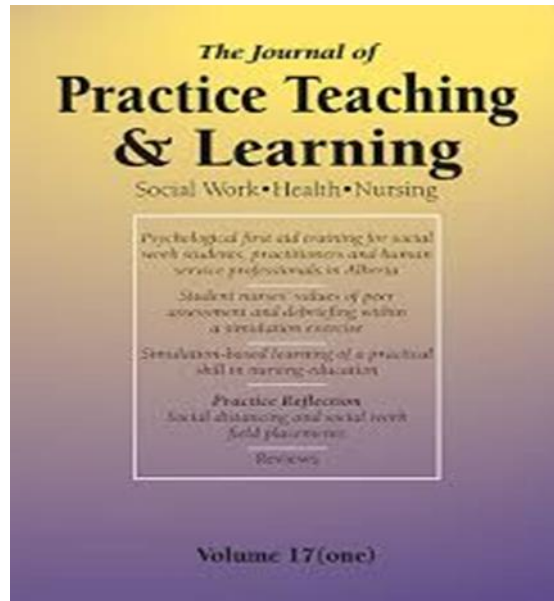
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Video resources

- <https://www.ccinform.co.uk/learning-tools/videos-oppressive-and-anti-oppressive-practice-education/>

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