

Supporting Practice Educators

The Oxfordshire Model and beyond

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The Open
University

The 'Oxfordshire model'

- Oxford Brookes University; Ruskin University and The Open University
- Workshops 2 hours in length
- Formal didactic teaching
- Small experiential group exercises
- Case studies
- Question and answer session

How we're supporting struggling practice educators

Repeated change to placement requirements has been confusing for practice educators and supervisors

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By Liz Clarke, lecturer in social work at Oxford Brookes University

The role of a practice educator or supervisor is a crucial one. They are responsible for supporting, educating and assessing students on social work placements, and so act as the gatekeepers to the profession. They also play a major part in workforce development. At Oxford Brookes University, we found that some practice educators and supervisors were struggling with supporting students, and having difficulty with the annual changes in placement requirements.



Role of the Practice Educator

Challenges of being a Practice Educator

What Practice Educators have said

How might the Practice Educator Community be supported – the Oxford Model and beyond

“A placement is the site where learner, teacher, theory and practice confront each other warily across often misunderstood territory”

Shardlow and Scott (2005)

Role of the Practice Educator

“..the practice educator, in partnership with the awarding institution, is situated as important in the training and ‘gatekeeping’ for the social work profession”

(Bogo et al., 2002 and Miller and Koerin, 2001)

Practice Educator role

“Perhaps one of the most important messages for educators is the need to ensure that students gain direct experience of observing good professional practice and positive role models in order to facilitate their reflective learning and professional socialization”

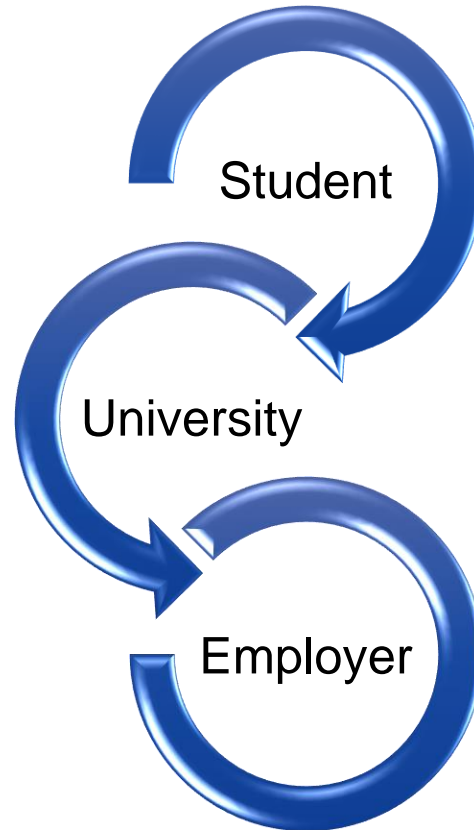
(Wilson, 2013 p.168)



Challenges of being a Practice Educator

“Effective teaching and assessment of social work student’s communication and culturally sensitive skills are essential...but also complex” (Thompsett, et al., 2017)

Challenges of being a Practice Educator



What are Practice Educators saying?

*“Recognition that the Practice Educator in their role
make theory come alive” (Domakin, 2013)*

What are Practice Educators saying?

Keep abreast of current knowledge and involvement in teaching (Clapton et al., 2008 and Domakin, 2013)

A closer working relationship with Universities e.g. collaborative research opportunities, practitioner seminars and community forums (Manthorpe et al., 2001)

“ A re-imaging of the traditional boundaries between placement, classroom, Practice Educator and Social Work academic” (Cooper, 2000)

Time allocated to discuss individual students (Domakin, 2013)

The support of the Practice Educator community

“One size does not fit all” (Waterhouse, et al.,
2011)

The support of the Practice Educator Community

Students

- ❑ Students to be engaged and motivated
- ❑ Student to keep going despite set backs and challenges
- ❑ Students to take responsibility for their own learning



Universities

- ❖ Create opportunities for dialogue between Practice Educators and academic staff about the function of different kinds of knowledge to conceptualise social work e.g. Manchester Metropolitan University MA programme (2014)
 - ❖ Design of a new programme that saw Practice Educators and academics collaborate
 - ❖ Joint teaching between academics and Practice Educators
 - ❖ Placement activities were designed supported by online materials in which students were asked to discuss particular topics in supervision



Employers

- Provision of mentoring and supervision to support the Practice Educator role
- Support group when overseeing a student
- Career pathway that is inclusive of the Practice Educator role
- Workload relief



Signature pedagogy of Social Work

“For social work the signature pedagogy is thought to be the placement (Wayne et al., 2010). Signature pedagogies reveal key information about the nature of professions and are a mechanism whereby complex learning, such the integration of theory and practice, can be simplified, internalised and taught to those new to the profession (Shulman, 2005)”

(Domakin, 2013)

THANK YOU



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