

THE ENGLISH MODEL OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: A CHALLENGE FOR SOUTH AFRICA?

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Available at:

<http://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=YUORtfMAAAAJ&hl=en>

INTRODUCTION

- Service user involvement in social work education is increasing rapidly in a number of countries worldwide;
- Is seen as a tool for democracy, empowerment, accountability and organisational, economic, social and political engagement and participation;
- Fit within the SA social development paradigm;
- Not common to social work education in SA.

INTRODUCTION...

- Appropriateness of the involvement of service users within the context of the South African social work education?
- England's HEIs have involved service users in all aspects of social work education since 2002.

Aim

- ..to juxtapose service user involvement practices in England and South Africa;
- ...to promote local debate on a contemporary global topic:
 - defining service users;
 - describing service user involvement in social work education in England;
 - interpreting the relevant South African context;
 - examining the congruency of country practices.

DEFINING SERVICE USERS

- The notion of "service user involvement" refer to those people who were or still are receiving social welfare services and are involved in some or all parts of social work education.

SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

- All institutions in England offering qualifying programmes in social work must meet the requirements set by the Department of Health and involve service users in all aspects of their course delivery.

SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN ENGLAND...

- Involvement of service users in social work education was welcomed by all stakeholders...

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

- Terms that are used in official documents:
 - clients
 - client systems
 - consumers of social services
 - beneficiaries
 - target groups
 - members of the community engaged in social development programmes

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT...

- Social Service Professions Act, No 110 of 1978
 - “...only social workers may function as supervisors during education, training and development of student social workers”.
- The context of South African social work education does not foster service user involvement in the same way than is understood in the English context, specifically due to the statutory requirements for qualified social workers to teach.

EXAMINATION OF CONGRUENCY OF PRACTICES IN ENGLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

- Bearing in mind the difficulties to involve the most marginalised recipients of services successfully, the challenge for service user involvement in social work education is even greater in a South African context.
- ...raises issues of civic participation.
- ...professional and ethical responsibilities differ between the two countries

EXAMINATION OF CONGRUENCY OF PRACTICES IN ENGLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA...

- geographical differences
- funding issues

EXAMINATION OF CONGRUENCY OF PRACTICES IN ENGLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA...

- In the South African context, it would probably take much more to adopt requirements of service user involvement in education than just pointing out the congruency with principles of democracy, empowerment, accountability and economic, social and political engagement and participation.

CONCLUSION

- The appropriateness of service user involvement in all contexts is debatable.
- The involvement of service users as a requirement for HEIs to award a professional social work qualification without extensive debate and reflection would be ill-considered in the South African context.

...CONCLUSION

- With an increasing number of countries worldwide drawing on service user involvement as a matter of principle in good practice in social work education, the statutory framework, policies and practices of social work education in South Africa could be challenged in future.