

Proposal for a Paper Presentation

Effects of Supervised Field Experience on Students' Social Concern and Awareness

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Abstract:

1. Introduction

Social concern and awareness is defined as the mental representation of oneself and of another person. It is composed of an awareness of the *self* and of the *other* (Sheldon, 1996).

Democracy is maximized when the people are more politically informed or socially aware (Carpini & Keeter, 1996. as cited in Saavedra, 2016). Social awareness, or the ability to comprehend and respond to the needs of others, is said to be a factor in emotional intelligence. It includes empathy, organizational awareness, and the ability to serve others.

Today's society has been criticized to be more isolated and individualist. People seem to have less empathy. Therefore, there is a need for an education that increases the social concern and awareness of students (Connely, n. d.). How do we increase young people's social concern and awareness?

It is in this light that the Human Ecology 198 (HUME 198) course, the supervised field experience course for the Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology (BSHE), sets the culminating integrative course in their last semester as undergraduate students. The aim of HUME 198 is to immerse higher education students in the realities of disenfranchised communities in order to develop and increase their social concern and awareness (College of Human Ecology, 2000).

2. Theoretical framework/literature review

According to Zhou (2010), there are four levels of field-based learning: Field visit, Laboratory training, Field practicum, and Research during practicum (as cited in Chen & Fortune, 2017). These four levels of learning affect the following characteristics of students: motivation, planning, exploring, reviewing, reflecting, and applying. According to field practicum students, the activities that have the most impact on them are: Socialization and recreation groups, Activities with more than 15 attendees, Interviews and case management, Informal talks with clients or the community members, Interviewing for research projects, Working independently on a project, and Attending network meetings (Chen & Fortune, 2017).

How do students, with the help of the teachers, manage to merge the self, knowledge, and experience during field practicum? This integration is governed by three key themes. First is identifying the tensions in the office or the community where the student was placed. The student needs to establish his own professional identity. He will encounter dynamics in the workplace that he may not have experienced before. Second is transitional awareness across mind, emotion, and body awareness. The student must be mindful of what is happening to him and his surroundings while he is transitioning from the classroom to the office or the community. The last theme is called transformative responses. The student must learn to access personal and professional resources (Marlowe, Appleton, Chinnery, & Van Stratum, 2015).

On the other hand, using quantitative methods, Knight (2017) found that, although most practicum students find that they were prepared for the field practicum placement, many of them articulated that the actual opportunity where they could practice their knowledge about group work and facilitation were limited (Knight, 2017). Some students complain that field practicum placements lack sufficient learning experiences and that the supervisor is either inadequate or unavailable. Some field instructors were said to be unprepared and did not thoughtfully plan appropriate learning experiences nor deliver timely explanations and advice beneficial to the practicumers (Deal, Hopkins, Fisher, & Hartin, 2007).

3. Methods/analysis

This study followed the pre-test post-test design. Twenty-four HUME 198 students participated in the study. They answered the Social Awareness Inventory (SAI) before and after the HUME 198 course. The SAI is developed by Sheldon (1996) to measure people's social awareness in eight social-perceptual styles. At the end of the semester, the same students took part in a focus group discussion (FGD) to discuss the highlights of their fieldwork experience.

T-test was used to identify significant differences in the social awareness score of the students before and after their fieldwork experience. Lastly, the FGD results were analyzed through thematic analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Results of the paired t-test showed that there is a significant difference between how the students view their own experiences before and after the supervised field experience. This means that the students' self-awareness about their own experiences significantly increased. Another significant difference was observed between how the students view their own appearance before and after the supervised field experience. This means that the students' self-awareness about their own appearances significantly decreased. However, there was no significant difference on how the students view other people.

In addition, the results showed that the important themes focused on by the students were: (1) Development of life skills and technical competencies, (2) Development of interpersonal skills, and (3) Engagement in social realities and real-world experiences. First, it was found that Fundamental life skills and technical competencies were very important to the students. They realized that the supervised fieldwork is an opportunity for them to learn and to test out skills related to self-management and project management. Second, they also talked about having difficulties with their interpersonal skills. They mentioned that they had difficulties with socializing, verbal, and nonverbal communication. Finally, they mentioned the topic increasing awareness about social situation, gaining experience in development work, formulating appropriate solutions to community problems, integration of learnings from school, etc.

5. Conclusions and contributions to theory and practice

The results of this study was used to identify more relevant themes and appropriate approaches to increasing social concern and awareness among higher education learners. It assisted in designing youth-focused and student-centered methodologies of the pedagogy of fieldwork supervision.

Recommendations and implications to social learning education that could serve as guide in the planning and the advancement of a more relevant training strategies for young people. It will assist in measuring how effective these institutions are in integrating youth to the society in terms of equal access to higher learning and to lifelong learning.

Keywords: Social concern and awareness, Fieldwork supervision, Higher education

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