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# Irish Field Education/Social Work Placement: The Making of Multi-Touch eBooks as a ‘Wrap Around’ Resource

*Marguerita McGovern*

## Abstract

Social Work placement can be the stimulating experience hoped for or the dreaded experience gained. Professional training values, whether these are influenced by globalization and/or indigenization are principled on the sharing of ideas and debates based on a multi-disciplinary integrated narrative approach. By presenting actual ‘lived experiences’ in the form of aural and video podcasts and linking these with research and theory, in our eBook Project, students, field supervisors and tutors were helped to explore for example, the use of language, supervision, reflective practice. This made the learning experience more modern, interesting and easily accessible for reviewing anytime anywhere. In practice placement, the understanding is not only what is learned but how it is learned. This Irish wraparound innovation regarding the inclusion of live recordings for teaching and learning brought together a shared focused and a thoughtful and inventive approach to the fundamental work related experience.

**Keywords:** E-learning, podcasts, social work, fieldwork practicum, practice teachers, tutors, social work students, fieldwork practice, fieldwork educators.

## 1. Introduction

A trainee sailor gets into a boat and the instructing Captain says “Away you go now. Take the boat out beyond the harbor and watch out for the rocks”. The trainee gathers up all the knowledge they have acquired from their course and steers the boat out. There is so much to think about, there is too much to remember. This is not a simulation or a role play, this is real. Beyond the water-break it looks like a storm is moving in, what next, what is the best course of action, who can I ask for help?

Moving into fluid placement from the shore of academic knowledge is like the first time the trainee sailor sets sail in a boat. It is real, it is immediate and it can be exhilarating or scary.

The area of Fieldwork placement as an integral part of social work training has been well documented in research literature over the past 10 years (see [1–6]). All agree it is an essential and worthwhile experience in addition to a learning platform for students. It is where theory to practice is most relevant and the contextualization of academic knowledge is progressed.

In the history of social work education, there has always been a practical as well as a theoretical component to education and training. In reality the lines around the ambitious principles of placement can become blurred due to inattention by universities, inadequate pre-placement training for students and practice teachers, as well as unrealistic expectations. Furthermore limited availability of placements and the 'mis-fit' of understanding on why placement sites and placement supervisors need to work in tandem with educational establishments disrupt securing the best professionally trained social workers of tomorrow.

### **1.1 Globalization and indigenization**

One of the greatest challenges within the concept of a global framework for social work is the inter-country, inter-cultural debate, involving interchanges and influences. The word indigenization in this context looks at taking research and empirical practice wisdom, re-positioning it and using it to form a scaffold for a developing profession. Growing professional identity in the context of economic policies, socio-cultural backgrounds and political regimes as in the studies of China [7–9] the Asian-Pacific [10] and Africa [11], fuels the debate on what is possible or impossible in changing environments.

In the developing world of social work education, much is written about modules, patterns and focus [12–14]. Indeed, we strive to have a better understanding of the social, cultural and environmental costs of a hyper-connected and layered world. This brings with it the need to offer academically robust social work education that encompasses important paradigms for practice. This is a framework rather than a constitution. Paradigms can 'ask questions, pose challenges and be adapted and developed for specific times, spaces and places' [15]. McGregor argues that for social work in the twenty-first century these paradigms need to challenge the dominant position of English/European-based texts and approaches. The aspiration is to develop more informed all-encompassing practices in addition to the best established texts while including specific and cultural knowledge [16, 17]. The aim is to look for a modern paradigm framework taking into consideration balance between a general frame of reference and one that is adaptable to the context of time, space and place [18].

It is interesting that much of the debate around indigenization comes from a West into East position and may or may not have to do with the perceived economic wealth of either region. However, in these changing times of limited resources all countries both rich and poor may have something to offer each other in the debate on establishing and using limited resources and the building of professionalism and education within the realm of social work.

The globalization of social work is seen as the process of International integration influenced by an interchange of world views. Social workers and social work courses around the world continually see local and wider world links within their training/educational courses, own work profiles and more specifically within their own practice case work. Economic situations, tribal and religious wars, health scares, and political regimes, can all contribute to unhealthy, unstable communities. The aim for a healthier society is to achieve sustainable, collaborative outcomes which, influenced by the skills of social work professionalism, creates a variety of multi-faceted, pragmatic solutions to highly complex problems, both individual and social [19, 20]. Further studies on global agendas and international social work are covered in Jones and Truell [21], Doel et al. [22] and Russell et al. [23]. British social work academic Lisa Dominelli also turns her attention to globalization and professional practices (see [24]) informing the more recent publication of 'Global social work in a Political context: Radical Perspectives' by Ferguson et al. [25]. For further

reading, Gray and Webb [26] critique world norms in social work suggesting that certain adopted approaches can undermine traditional expertise and working behaviors, these in turn then work against the proficiency of professional judgment.

Here we have our boat analogy again. We can move from narrow inlets to expansive seas. We can take the knowledge, values and skills we learn in one area and see how they transpose and develop in another area. Social work practice can begin as one entity and develop as another. It can be heavily influenced by specific influences, be that country or culture. In an Irish context this can be seen by the previously mentioned research work of Skehill [27, 28] and the more recent publication of 'Social Work in Ireland: Changes and Continuities' edited by Christy et al. [29]. This brings about a continuous debate on professional social work, oscillating between past, present and future desirable positions. These discourses on social work professional identity in a world context are at times framed as a West informing the East debate. It is suggested that the end point needs to be an open exchange of views taking in traditions, cultures, the role of policy makers, coupled with the desire for an efficient and effective professionally-run service for the vulnerable in society. This should be regardless of where that society is geographically located.

The International Federation of Social Work [30] began a process in 2004 to develop a clearer professional leadership in response to the evidence of worldwide low morale and loss of confidence felt by some social work practitioners. In particular the areas of education, social work practice and sustainable social development were investigated. This culminated in a policy statement titled 'Globalization and the Environment'. The statement makes practical suggestions about how social workers, in partnership with local people and communities, can work to promote the positives of global interaction and minimize harm [30]. The optimum vehicle for a social work service is a proficient individual and family social work delivery system, one that is sustainable and where workers are respected and recognized. Foucault [31] called this a 'power to govern' where in order for social work to exist there has to be a heightened knowledge where attributes are accorded to the social worker in having space and authority to arbitrate and manage within their domain.

There is an obvious challenge here within the debate of globalization and social work where the make-up, functions and designation of the term 'social worker' - and the duties performed - vary throughout the world. Researchers Bain and Evans [32] and Frost [33] pose the question 'Is there a European social work identity?' If we uphold and teach the values of self-realization and social determination then why would we want professional identity to be homogenized? The possible solution is to recognize the good parts, the best constituent elements of a model for identity and in addition recognize best local practice and couple this with agency support and endorsement. Indeed the research of Gray [9, 13] encapsulates the sensible approach of recognizing in social work education the elements of 'culture, economics, politics and social realities.' Interlacing these with the essential elements of fieldwork placement; professionally trained placement supervisors, a variety of placement sites, essential University support and a consideration of time, place and culture, may anticipate a more integrated outcome. This expects a Governmental policy and educational delivery partnership, together with professional organizations across borders and across countries to establish a profession and professional identity respected by all.

In the 2019 study by Rasell et al. of a two-year multiethnic social work program, with an approximate intake of 17 students per cohort, interconnected with five International Universities [23], the most interesting aspect of this research suggested that *'The 'international' acts as a frame of reference for studies rather than a particular body of knowledge and skills to be transmitted to students'* (p.14). In all, this seems a fair goal but its delivery may prove more challenging. The debate around

globalization and indigenization of social work courses transferred and transported across borders and countries will continue. The most important question is 'Will the social work course be Fit for Purpose?' Regardless of location, the answer to this question will determine and challenge the success of both the academic and practical elements of any further education.

## **1.2 The absolute central position of placement within social work training**

How many newly-designed social work courses start with deciding the academic subjects and modules necessary for the course and not a scoping exercise to see the variety and quality of possible statutory and voluntary placements? How many courses are led by academic insistence and not practice relevance? Within the current literature on placement education there appears to be a growing concern regarding placement learning opportunities [4], staff capacity and actual desk space [34]. The time may be coming for a rethink. Think of social work training as a doughnut (a circular bun with a hole in the middle) in order to acquire the specific skills required for interaction with individuals and families, courses may need to readjust their designs. Put the academic modules in the middle of the doughnut and the placement around the outside. Currently it would appear that most social work course designs are the other way round with the emphasis and importance on the bigger circumference given over to academic modules and the practice placement filling up the middle. This does not take away from the importance of all the integral subjects such as theory, vulnerable populations, social justice etc. but it will shift the thinking into a space that might be valued more, that is, the absolute role of teaching and learning on placement. It might also offer a catalyst for critically thinking about, for example, the subject of law as it is found in the practice learning setting. Further comments on this topic will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

## **2. The e-Book project**

To understand the fundamental importance of student placement within professional social work training, in 2015–2017 this author [35] decided to work with MSW students, practice teachers and tutors to design a 'wrap around' set of eBooks encompassing the most important aspects of teaching and learning on placement. This was to be a new multi-touch downloadable eBook experience, viewed as a series of seven eBooks which would present short videos and aural podcasts made by social work students, practice teachers, tutors, subject experts and pre-placement trainers. It would also suggest current academic subject references. Placement topics such as language, professional identity and placement expectations and beginnings were to be covered in the first eBook with assessment, supervision, feedback, home visiting, reflective practice, the failing student and placement endings all covered in subsequent eBooks. MSW students, practice teachers, tutors and pre-placement trainers were to have their say in a thoughtful, inventive approach to the fundamental fieldwork experience. It is suggested that at present, access to social work knowledge is juggled between text books, lecture-based teaching and limited digital resources. These new eBooks were to show a collective learning experience made by and for practice teachers, students and all stakeholders in fieldwork training. They would be used in conjunction with pre-placement training for the students and the in-service training for the practice teachers and Tutors. The resource would also be available online to all students throughout their 2 years MSW course for reference across both first and second year placement. It was hoped the

eBooks could shape and help the thinking process for fieldwork practice by making knowledge and discussion through video and aural podcasts, academic text and suggested references more accessible, mobile and downloadable anytime, anywhere.

## 2.1 The pedagogical reasoning for eBook education

The pedagogical basis for the eBooks encompassed not only that of creative teaching [36–38] but also the pedagogical importance of narrative enquiry [39, 40]. The uniqueness of the eBooks contributed to by the NUI Galway staff, students, practice teachers and tutors included in particular, the use of podcasting to produce content on specific topics such as language awareness, professional identity, cultural competence, feedback, reflective practice, the experience of failing and groupwork. The immediacy of the spoken word in sharing personal and professional opinions demonstrated the openness, validity and strength of the experiences by the contributors. The making of the eBooks at NUI Galway, gave a sense of Irish indigenous practice that now can be offered as a globally transferable resource. Dale [41] promotes this view of the benefits in education of podcasting and notes increased motivation among students in writing, improved fluency and enhanced listening skills. This is in addition to the students acquiring technical competencies and an increased awareness of the use of new media in social and professional settings, leading to reinforced learning. Indeed using podcasting as an adjunct to teaching and assessment methods in higher education has had some further exposure in the following research [42–48].

It is an important point that using this innovative curriculum design and engaging with virtual learning technologies, this may necessitate individual and group upskilling for both educators and students. This new and forward-thinking approach to academic knowledge delivery is further investigated in the studies of Cartney [49] and Waldman and Rafferty [50] who suggest that the relevance of podcasting (in particular lecture material) may have some benefit but that the broader context to forward social work education and personal contact with students must not be belittled or ignored. By using podcasting as a creative technology to forward student learning, the authors caution us not to hold the development of the personal contact with social work students to ransom against the rush to be technologically creative [50]. The application of technology to teaching is integrated with reliable and proven educational approaches [41, 51–53], these studies build on Laurillard's [54] book which suggests the approach of a 'Conversational Framework'. Here, teaching is seen as a fluid practice which *negotiates* knowledge as opposed to a static view of *imparting* knowledge. Didactic teaching is therefore moved and shifted into a modern integrated arena which values the sharing of ideas and issue debates. The argument here is not to see the debate as one thing or another i.e. podcasting versus didactic teaching, but to incorporate new technology methods into teaching therefore giving the recipients and the deliverer a more exciting and worthwhile experience.

## 2.2 How the e-Books were made

Information was elicited from students, practice teachers, tutors and other social work educators as to what they defined as the most important topics in the area of fieldwork placement. This was achieved with discussion groups in class and outside meetings with agency social workers. The participants on the NUI Galway Postgraduate Diploma in Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management course were also vocal in what they saw as important in the fieldwork relationship and development of the student's professional identity. Pre 2016 across a period of 2 years

(2013–2015) a number of excellent podcasts and short videos had already been made by MSW students, practice teachers and visiting experts and it was expected to use these as a starting resource and add to it with current short video and aural podcasts. Over a period of 2 years NUI Galway has benefited from the expertise of acclaimed in-house and visiting professionals. Professor Mark Doel as external examiner of the MSW program at NUI Galway (2012–2015) gave generously of his time in contributing to two of the eBooks (eBook 1 and eBook 6 [35, 55]). In particular, his short video on ‘Why is Groupwork Important?’ [55] allowed the viewer not only to visually recognize and connect with the author, but be impressed by the sincerity of his delivery and practical wisdom. Marian Bogo and Pamela Trevithick [56] are eminent authors in the fundamental principles of social work practice, thus giving depth and credence to their expressed opinions within the eBooks. Both came to Ireland in 2015 and spoke eloquently on the topics of feedback and current social work practice with advice for practice teachers. Australian academics Lynn McPherson [56] and published author Helen Cleak [57] engaged the listener in both the safety issues for placement and the universally important elements of how to ‘finish well’ the placement experience.

The experts continued with Professor Pat Dolan [35], a UNESCO Professor and Director of the Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway, sharing his considered opinion on the video podcast in eBook 1 [35] ‘What is Professional Identity?’. He suggests for the listener a global view and one which has multi setting and dimensional elements. In many ways *all* of the contributors to the eBooks were experts in the messages or opinions they imparted because it was their imparted wisdom, put into words, which they believed to be most relevant in relation to the various settings and topics. Other Irish Universities also contributed, University College Cork were represented by their BSW/MSW staff Mary Wilson and Deirdre Quirke [55]. In all, the contribution of NUI Galway Professor of Social Work Caroline McGregor [56] provided an expert overarching view of the foundational principles of social work, presented in an engaging, modern and technological way on the MSW program.

Ultimately, it was the author’s 11 years of professional experience with the NUI Galway Masters in Social Work program and her 35 years experience within the social work profession that consolidated all the information and eventually made the judgment on content. Attention is drawn to **Table 1**.

Book 1	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Language Professional identity Expectations and beginnings
Book 2	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Assessment Creative supervision Feedback
Book 3	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Home visiting—Urban and rural Cultural competence Virtual training
Book 4	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Reflective practice influenced by emotional intelligence
Book 5	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Failing forward
Book 6	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Imaginative groupwork
Book 7	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Finishing well

**Table 1.**  
*Titles and contents of each eBook.*

(The importance of social work theory was not discounted but due to the wealth of textbooks in this area, a decision was made not to include this topic in the current selection but possibly in the future).

### **2.3 Downloading requirements and distribution**

Initially all eBooks 1–7 were written in iBook Author and configured for MAC or iPad with iBooks 2 or later and iOS 5 or later, an iPhone with iOS 8.4 or later, or a MAC with OS  $\times$  10.9 or later.

Subsequently eBooks 2–7 can now also be downloaded as The PC/Android versions through Amazon Books and Kindle. These are common operating systems and not outside the general capability of downloadable eBooks. Copies of the eBooks 2–7 [55–60] were also uploaded onto the University's MSW PC computers and each person included in the making of the eBooks were presented with a personal USB containing all seven multi-touch eBooks. Work is continuing on the uploading of eBook 1 to PC/Android format. IBAN numbers were obtained through NUI Galway, and each University Library in the Republic of Ireland was offered the eBooks 2–7 as a free downloadable resource. Since 2017 The National University of Ireland, Galway Library's depository of academic research named ARAN/IRIS also welcomed the resource [61]. This made the eBooks technically free to both a National and International audience. (All free links to eBooks 2–7 appear in the References section of this Chapter).

### **2.4 The nuts and the bolts of making the multi-media sharing**

All multi-media for the eBooks was produced over a period of 2 years. Recording the audio podcasts mainly with a hand-held digital recorder proved to be the most reliable and immediate way to capture thoughts and ideas. Students used these in class, where, for example, in a post placement class they would divide into small groups and each group would make a podcast on their experience of 'supervision on placement'. With regard to the professionals, a number of practice teachers and tutors who were somewhat 'shy' of the video process choose to take away a digital recorder, record their piece on, for example 'Supporting the student on Placement' and return the digital recorder to the Practice Learning Coordinator.

Short videos and audio pieces heightened interest amid written research sections of the eBooks. What was the best way to produce the short videos? Would it be filming on an iPad, phone or in the Studio? Interestingly the iPad proved a superb mobile and immediate resource for gathering short videos. Students too enjoyed the freedom of being able to work on their short videos outside of class time when they had access to the class iPad (see student video in Book 6: Imaginative Groupwork [55], p. 9).

Video recording within the NUI Galway Film Studio made the process more formal. NUI Galway affords its staff and students access to a small recording studio where, with the help of a professional technician recordings can be made. This model of filming worked well for interviews with leading authors such as the renowned author Pamela Trevithick (See Page 16 eBook 2 Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Assessment, Creative Supervision, Feedback [56]).

The use of both the aural podcasts and short videos helped to engage all the stakeholders within the placement experience. It presented to the students an application of learned theories, skills and roles, encouraging reflection, co-working, appreciating relevant evaluation and restyling action which was peer and expert led. The fundamental principle was one of 'sharing'. The sharing of information and the sharing of wisdom for all of the stakeholders involved. Permission for sharing

all of the gathered material was collected and all participants in the eBook project appreciated that their podcasts and videos would be on general release once the eBooks were published.

## **2.5 Commonalities of each eBook**

Throughout each of the e-Books there were a number of commonalities.

- (a) Each opened with an introduction video made by the author (approx. 3 min).
- (b) Throughout the eBooks opinion pieces on specific topics were presented as short videos (approx. 3 min) and/or aural podcasts (approx. 3 min) by students, practice teachers or tutors connected with the National University of Ireland, Galway MSW program.
- (c) In order to have a ready-made discussion tool each e-Book finished with sections on: 'The University's Responsibility', 'New Approaches. New Thinking', 'Questions' and a relevant seven slide 'Power point/Keynote presentation'.

## **3. Social work education and social work placement**

At the National University of Ireland, Galway (situated on the West coast of Ireland) we are geographically placed to the left of Europe, to the left of England and to the right of the United States of America and Canada. We are a very long way from Russia, China, Australia and Africa. In the Republic of Ireland we have five universities and 1 college of technology offering Bachelor of Social Work (Full time 4 years) and Masters in Social Work (Full time 2 years) degrees. At NUI Galway, we currently offer an MSW program (Full time 2 years/25 students) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management (Part time 1 year/12 students). The placement opportunities of a block 14 weeks (500 hours) in each year of the MSW (making up a total of 1000 supervised hours) involves a variety of professional social work agency placements both statutory and voluntary, with students supervised on-site by a professional social worker (Practice Teacher). In other countries these supervisors may be called Fieldwork Supervisors/Field Educators/Fieldwork Assessors. In the majority of our fieldwork placements the role of the Practice Teacher is carried out by a qualified professionally registered social worker already working in the agency. Supervision is termed as both formal and informal. Formal supervision is required and contracted to take place each week of placement for 1 hour. This covers areas such as the student social worker's case work, group work, theory to practice, unpinning of the appropriate legislation, and discussion on human rights and reflective practice. Informal supervision can take place at any time and includes general discussions with the practice teacher and communications within the team and agency. Practice teachers having agreed to take a student are offered three in-service training days in social work practice teaching and supervision. All social work courses in Ireland are registered and delivered under guidelines produced by CORU the Irish government registration body for social work. Each professional course (BSW, MSW) is evaluated by CORU for re-registration every 5 years.

Fieldwork Placement is 50% of the overall assessment of the NUI Galway Masters in Social Work program. Pre-placement training is offered as a 12-hour module delivered by the Practice Learning Coordinator (College Fieldwork Coordinator) to ready the students for placement. In-service training is also offered to Practice Teachers (Fieldwork Supervisors) as a 3-day in-service training or Continuous Professional Training opportunity. Currently this takes place on 1 day immediately before the student goes on placement, 1 day within the middle of

placement and 1 day towards the end of the 14-week placement. This training is conducted within the University by the Practice Learning Coordinator. Additionally at NUI Galway we offer a 1 year Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management. Attendance is on a part-time basis for professionally qualified social workers currently employed in statutory and voluntary agencies. Social workers involved in this course must take a student on placement as part of the course.

Tutors are an integral part of the placement experience. At NUI Galway, tutors for the MSW program are both senior social work practitioners and academic staff. The role of the tutor as mentor is extremely important in the cycle of social work training. Carried into placement, the role of the tutor within the tri-partite meetings is crucial as supporter of the student and not assessor. Being able to listen to podcasts made by tutors and their ability to see their role became helpful to other tutors assessing the intricacies of the relationship and the skills needed to at times salvage ego and rebuild connections. At NUI Galway, each tutor is responsible for approximately four students and attend two meetings at the site of practice placement with the student and practice teacher. This is a pro-forma meeting and lasts 1 hour. Training each year is offered to Tutors on topics pertaining to their role and in general the link between students, the practice teacher, and the university. This level of preparedness for all stakeholders in the placement experience manages expectations, shares new knowledge and shows new practical learning methods. The optimum outcome is to lead the student and fieldwork supervisor into a more confident and focused learning environment where learning opportunities are available to teach and reflect on the needs of the student and Practice Teacher. Placement is therefore seen as a partnership, a shared learning and teaching experience, an integral part of social work professional training. The investment in building relationships and valuing the time, expertise and wisdom of practice teachers/fieldwork supervisors cannot be underestimated. The exposure of students to 'real time' pieces of work in a controlled class room setting before they go into placement, as well as the concerns and reflections shared by students build not just their confidence but as with all groups, that feeling of 'togetherness' which is important between students. The concept of collective preparedness for all stakeholders learning together leading towards a practical use of their knowledge is invaluable. As an introduction to the eBook series, eBook 1 and eBook 2 will be analyzed in more detail in the following sections.

#### **4. Book 1: 'social work placement: new approaches, new thinking. Language—professional identity—beginnings and expectations**

##### **4.1 Language**

'Let's start at the very beginning...'

The MSW students wanted to make 3 min podcasts on how they circumvented the ocean of communication in the boat of language. The podcasts chosen for the eBook reflected how some of the students learned about working in a multi-cultural environment. How some of them found the challenge of being of a different culture from their Irish co-workers and the value of learning and changing their use of language to be better understood and build better relationships. In one of the podcasts our first year MSW student Natalie is Austrian, she talks about having to pay particular attention to the tone of her speech and the inflections in her voice. Washington (MSW 1) is originally from Zimbabwe. He found he had to slow down his speech pattern, check with his clients/service users that he was being

understood and use his outgoing personality to help build relationships. Language gives us a picture, it helps us perceive our world and the world of those with whom we work and help. As stated in eBook 1 [35].

*“The goal is not to homogenise how social workers talk with clients/service users, but to raise awareness and understand that the way we use language can have a remarkable impact on outcomes and thinking mechanisms” (p. 13).*

Seanan is Irish and a second year MSW student. He made his podcast by reflecting on his work in England with a group of homeless men. His slow pattern of speech and informal use of language he found was not conducive to relationship building. With the help of his supervisor he changed his interaction to be one of more precise delivery, focused and with a more checked task-centered orientation. The result was that of better understanding between the two parties of the direct meaning and purpose of the interaction.

#### 4.2 Say what you mean—mean what you say

The theme of language rarely gets separate attention when we think about practice learning and placement but in fact, it is central and core to the elements of professional social work training.

“How are things with you?” the fieldwork supervisor asks.

“How are you getting on?” the tutor enquires.

“How are you finding your placement?” the College professor wants to know.

It is essential students are aware from the outset, before beginning placement that this use of language with little substance to the question will result in limited substance to the answer and confusion for both professional and student. Language is seldom neutral. We make choices when we use language, the intentions and the subsequent effects those choices have on individuals are important to assess. How we react and interact with each other is regulated by our use of language in conveying multiple messages. Language is our vehicle to communicate or miscommunicate. Value judgments about language can quickly become judgments about people. Can indigenous people be mocked for their use of language? Can those who have limited skill around words and meanings be disregarded and ignored? Social work students need to consider tone, symbols and signals. It is not only in *what* is said but in *how* it is being said that needs a ‘sit up and take notice’ position.

The engagement of multi-cultural groups in this discussion adds a further dimension. As is discussed in eBook 1 [35].

*‘The engagement of Agency referred individuals and families from multi-cultural groupings, where English may not be the ‘first language’ of choice can at times have repercussions around feelings of possible isolation within the family and society as a whole. [62–66] Across the social work services there may be a growing inability to assess the importance of language as it forms a bridge between what is said and what is understood. It is also important to assess how much the individual or family sees their language reinforcing their cultural and ethical identity or the possibility of this cultural identity becoming a barrier to engaging help. This is an important consideration in cross-cultural social work and exceptionally important for the practice teacher and social work student to empathize with and try and understand [67, 68]. Pomeroy and Nonaka [69] consider the extensive challenges to American social workers given their client base which in many instances is multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-cultural. In their study ‘Language and Social Work: Are we communicating effectively?’ The possible ways forward suggested are: to raise*

*awareness of cultural diversity; to engage the help of client family members around translation; to work up the case fully before handing it over; to find pro-bono translators and remembering that technology (translation software) can be your friend, to use Skype communication and possibly encourage social work students to learn a new foreign language. [69] Some of these suggestions are relevant, some debatable. An interesting question is, should social work students be given the opportunity to study a second language and are there communities where the social work service could or should be offered in the predominant language of that community? See also Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking (Book 3) where a practice teacher talks about bi-lingual home visiting in a rural setting" [58].*

Dilmitis et al. [70] in their research article 'Language identity and HIV: Why do we keep talking about the responsible and responsive use of language?' shows us the relationship that language can have to people and additionally that language can have to identity. On placement social work students have a job to assess their interactions with individuals and families and how their use of language connects or disconnects to their making or breaking of relationships. Interestingly language is not static. Here in Ireland we have moved from words like 'handicapped', 'itinerant' and 'delinquent' to the much more acceptable identity words of 'disabled', 'traveler' and 'offender'. Are there words in your culture which you can suggest need changing, have changed? Words that describe a minority group, a type of condition, a behavior? How can you correct these words in your own vocabulary? Why should you correct these words? Here's the answer: Stigma. Be courageous, move the language forward. If you stigmatize a person or group value judgments will follow and you cannot guarantee that the understanding you have behind your own use of language in any given situation is the same as the next person's. Here is how to simply begin: on placement at your next case conference say 'This family etc.....' instead of 'This case etc.....' or 'These service users....' This change very simply resets the brain and resets the language.

### 4.3 Professional identity

The second section of eBook 1 looked at Professional Identity. This can be a difficult concept for students to understand and equally difficult at times for fieldwork supervisors to explain.

The eBook asked the questions "What does 'professionalism' in social work look like?" The question is, how is it possible to teach professionalism to students who possibly have never stood in a social work office? At times it is the reverse question that presents a clearer answer "What does bad professionalism look like? How might that show itself in social work practice? For this section of eBook 1 a recent graduate recorded a podcast on how she saw professional identity. She talked about 'organizational culture', being confident with power, responsibility and being aware of surrounding influences. She felt that professional identity changes as one moves from being a student on placement into being a paid social worker in an agency and she invites the listener to consider "What is being asked of you as a professional in a specific role in this specific agency? How will you do that job and what of your own self values and traits will you bring to the work?" Interestingly this leads on to the debate suggested in Weiss-Gal and Welbourne's [71] research advocating that 'power in professionalism has two patterns, one of which is (a) inside the person allowing them to have control and the ability to recognize the influences they can bring to their profession and (b) where power is seen as influenced by outside factors. Social workers, in this respect are able to influence others, consolidating a public perception that acknowledges social workers role in furthering shared

social aims (p. 293). In working with this eBook chapter the MSW students were asked to consider the Weiss-Gal and Welbourne [71] study, surveying social work in 10 countries producing eight commonalities of social work professionalism. It is worthwhile mentioning these: 'Public recognition; monopoly over types of work, professional autonomy; knowledge base; professional education; professional organization; codified ethical standards and prestige and remuneration of social work' (pp. 284-289).

As discussed in eBook 1, Section 2, Page 28, Levy et al. [72] explore professional identity as a 'complex factor [...] which involves internalisation of the group's values and norms as part of the individual's own behaviour and self-concept' (p. 744). In taking on a profession we take what is inside ourselves and bring it outside and in bringing it outside ourselves, we leave it open to interpretation and sway by many other influences. Using this eBook to teach Fieldwork supervisors the question was asked 'Does embracing a professional identity dilute ones own morals, values and/or ethics or are these outside of a professional identity? The following research was suggested for further study. Lam et al. [73] highlight the challenges of how student social workers must juxtaposition their own beliefs and values i.e. their personal persona, with their 'professional persona'. Connected with the MSW at NUI Galway, Ireland we have the UNESCO chair for Children and Families, Professor Pat Dolan. His insightful short video (4mins) helped the students to construct a framework for professional identity which was built on name, values, and place. In the whole eBook 1 [35] this was one of the most popular videos for its application and knowledge.

It is generally accepted that social work students want to learn how to be professionals [24, 74–76]. On placement they can do this by mirroring good professional practice and within supervision reflecting on the elements of what makes a skilled, proficient, capable and ethical worker. The inter-sharing of hearing and watching how others have managed their roles through the aural podcasts and videos became a powerful medium for learning and making links. Connecting up this dialog and sharing it while teaching students, practice teachers and tutors helps the introduction of the concept that a professional identity can be a life-long process and also a valuable career goal.

#### **4.4 Placement beginnings and expectations**

This was an important section to include in the eBook 1. It was a natural progression for students, fieldwork supervisors and tutors to look at the imminent move into placement once language and professional identity had been explored. Beginning with one of Europe's leading writers on social work, Mark Doel presented a more creative and metaphorical way of looking at placement. Mark's video and his 'Social Work Land Map' (recreated in the eBook) introduced 'the crossroads of cultural competence', 'the bridge of experience', 'the forests of assessment and paperwork'. Using this as a pre-placement teaching tool the MSW students especially enjoyed making their own 'Land Map of Placement' adding particular Irish phenomena such as 'the road to nowhere' and 'the sweet green grass of achievement'. \*Following on from this, the included display of colorful mind maps and work on sticky notes gave all concerned the opportunity to express, not only how they saw placement and its connections, but the reflection of 'Who I am and What I bring' concentrating minds on introducing the 'use of self,' placement expectations and consideration of the different environment ahead portraying their own experience of beginning placement and their expectations.

The MSW student videos and group podcasts throughout this section were made by students post-placement. There is always the notion in students that 'everyone else is coping well except me' and for fieldwork supervisors and tutors that 'others

are doing this job much better than me'. These myths would appear to have been dispelled after listening to the honest reports of what practice teachers expected of students on placement, what students themselves encountered and how being prepared and discussing expectations reduced anxiety levels. The immediacy of the word with regard to these multi-media pieces led students to explore research in connected areas. Lynne McPherson came to NUI Galway as a Research fellow in 2016, directly after her published work on 'Safety as a Fifth Dimension of Supervision: Stories from the front line' [77]. Lynne's video presented her thoughts on feeling safe within supervision, recognizing stress and trauma and linking possible neurological elements connected with stress and trauma into the practice learning dynamic between fieldwork supervisor and student. Students can find themselves in high risk and low safety situations while on placement and this video signposted the way to recognize the importance of a safety dimension. It is suggested by the eBook author that regardless of placement site and agency setting, the discussion on safety must begin within the course teaching, flow into pre-placement training and continue out into the placement experience. There should be no one stakeholder responsible for the subject matter of safety. The suggestion in this eBook section outlines that it is too important a topic to leave to one person but that a collective commitment to this subject is required.

#### **4.5 Students living with a disability and placement**

Encouraging students from minority and marginalized populations is a commitment for a number of social work courses worldwide. With regard to disability, here the question is asked 'Is the picture one of the 'disabled student' or the 'enabled student'? Is it a question of ability or disability? The raising of this agenda ties in with this eBook's earlier section looking at language and the importance of its use and meaning. If social work principles and ethics are upheld then for the student living with a disability mental or physical that should mean equal opportunities where possible on placement, equal access and equal belief in ability and self-esteem. Notwithstanding there may be additional challenges for this student in the areas of transport, mobility, cost, stress, family, health or ill health, image etc. What is of paramount importance is open and honest discussion with a base line of 'reasonableness' for all concerned, concentrating on a strengths-based approach and not a weakness identification. Within this eBook section there are direct examples from past placements of how these conversations between student, practice teacher and tutor might begin.

#### **4.6 New approaches—new thinking**

As mentioned previously all of the eBooks finished with the author's reflection on what might be useful going forward. For the first eBook, 'Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Language - Professional Identity - Beginnings and Expectations', the overall message was that of connectivity. Regardless of what part you played in the production of placement there was a beginning point at which you could start to understand the delivery of language and the development of your understanding of communication. How you would envisage building a professional identity and what obstacles, like anxiety, you might have to surmount to achieve success. Not every student learns at the same pace, consideration should be given to the responsibility of the University in supporting all relationships within social work placements. Placement is not a 'creche' situation where individuals are 'dropped in' and 'picked up' by the university or college at the end of the duration of placement. Each member of the placement process should feel as if they have a stake in the outcome of the interaction, they should feel valued and that their contribution

is worthwhile. A clear indication of how this can work is through feedback. It is presumed that there is a flow of feedback during placement between student and fieldwork supervisor, between tutor and student, supervisor and tutor, and university fieldwork coordinator. External examiners on social work courses bring a wealth of knowledge from other experiences of social work and social work education and an exchange of ideas regarding the placement position within the course, the viability of sites, placement connected training, and future developments can all be shared.

eBook 1 [35] finishes with a six slide presentation on 'Keys to Practice Teaching' it is a starting point for fieldwork supervisors to consider the principles by which they wish to teach the student. The understanding of the principles, how they can be identified and how they can be taught: Talking, Seeing, Doing, Reflecting - these are paramount keys to establishing the beginning of best ethical practice regardless of country, site or service and go beyond expectations into the realm of absolutes for learning how to be a professional social worker.

## **5. Multi-disciplinary courses sharing of experiences within the university**

The eBook Project on 'Social Work Education: New Approaches. New Thinking' pointed to aspects of trans-disciplinary consultation in order to maximize and fully understand a number of the important elements of placement training. Social work educators, social work students and social workers in the services and community should not think and work in isolation. Social work education has always involved the sharing of ideas with regard to researching and curriculum design as was evident in the studies of Tanemura-Morelli et al., Bronstein, and Finlay et al. [78–80].

In practice, social workers have embraced the integrative models to bring together a number of disciplinary theoretical positions considered in the studies of Oliver and Peck; Cheung, Held et al. [81–83], but in the making of the eBooks it was the inter-disciplinary discussions on 'Language and the area of 'Assessment' and 'Supervision' that were the most productive.

The academic and placement coordinators for both the Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy undergraduate degrees share the same building at NUI Galway. This leads to a relaxed communication atmosphere between the disciplines. Both course professionals were interested in the makeup of the eBooks. In particular the Speech Therapy lecturers were generous with their knowledge around 'language' research but also interested to discuss how this focus on language for therapeutic intervention on placement might be of value to their students during their own speech therapy placements. With regard to the Occupational Therapy staff, they had, in the recent past, some difficulty around assessment and in particular the complexity of some 'fail' grades for students on placement. They were therefore most interested to discuss the making of eBooks 2 and 5 [56, 59] in particular looking at the concept of 'Failing Forward'.

Although both these disciplines have student placements which are of shorter duration (usually 6–10 weeks), some of the fundamental issues such as 'assessment tools that are fit for purpose' and 'supporting the student and supervisor in a failed placement scenario' were of initial relevant collaborative interest.

## **6. Practice teachers sharing**

Practice teaching is predicated on sets of core principles whether these are called 'Key stages', 'Domains' or 'Competencies'. Every practice teacher carries the

responsibility of ensuring that their student has reached the required standards and is 'fit for practice' and 'fit to practice'. In order to present the practice wisdom of fieldwork professionals using podcasts and short videos the eBooks set out to capture and share these experiences [84].

In a most direct and engaging way one of the video podcasts in this eBook shows the practice teacher/fieldwork supervisor talking directly to the social work student in a section taken from their first day together on placement and the expectations around supervision. Both student and practice teacher are inviting the listener to experience 'first hand' how they interact [85]. This podcast is a particularly good teaching tool due to the fact that the practice teacher's mobile phone rings in the middle of the session and in stopping the video here in teaching sessions, there is always the question asked 'What should happen next?'

In the Republic of Ireland practice teachers are not mandated by their agencies to offer placements to students and this goes across both the statutory and voluntary fields of social work. The practice teachers who came along to record their experiences for the eBooks, both on video and aurally, came out of generosity and also reciprocity. In general there is a healthy relationship between practice teachers and the university here in the West of Ireland. This has taken many years on all sides, of building relationships and understanding the ebb and flow of agency adjustments, personnel change, government policies and University requirements.

## **6.1 eBook (2) social work placement: new approaches. New thinking.**

### **Assessment - creative supervision - feedback**

The key to good assessment is consistency, transparency and appropriateness.

Basically students are required to use and process knowledge gained in an effective, efficient and accountable way. The evidence and assessment of NUI Galway's students' work on placement is produced within a portfolio and submitted to the University as coursework at the end of placement. Practice teachers for their part submit a signed pro-forma report of their assessment of the student's learning and practice over the course of a placement (PER Performance Evaluation Report).

Accurate assessment is important in particular if there are any procedures needed.

around difficulties, failures or appeals [59] It is also important that those carrying out the assessment are trained and understand their role in the development of the student. Assessment can be seen as a creative tool used by a collective. This collective includes the University, the professional registration body, the practice teacher, the student and the supporting tutor.

In the past the method by which assessment has taken place has had its foundation mainly in a competency-based examination model (CBE). A number of researchers and in particular Eraut [86] have argued that in the areas of judgment and reflection CBE is not particularly fit for purpose because of the complicated value-based nature of casework [87] and the modern approach would appear to be in the appraisal of meta competencies [88, 89]. For assessment at all stages it is important for students not just to understand their development of a particular skill or competency but its application, impact, and outcome in a variety of social work settings. In order to inform the MSW students at NUI Galway how and why they were being assessed the Professor of Social Work, Caroline McGregor recorded a 3 min video to open this eBook 2 [90]. The students could appreciate, having viewed the video, the basis by which they would be assessed on placement and the reason behind the assessment. In the eBook it was decided to include a table of the assessment areas (domains) and the role for the student over Placement 1 and Placement 2. A limited example of this Table (4 domains are given as an example

out of a total of 6) is included in this chapter. Interestingly, these general domains, because they are mandated by the official registration board, are also used by speech therapy, occupational therapy and social care students on placement with application to their own professional work models (see [www.coru.ie](http://www.coru.ie)).

6.2 Assessment criteria across the 2 years of MSW placements

The table and its contents show a limited example of assessment across the two placements from NUI Galway’s MSW program. In setting out the table all stakeholders in the placement can see the assessment model and how the areas of assessment can be achieved. The example given is for only four of the areas by which NUI Galway MSW students are assessed out of a total of six domains. The additional assessed areas not mentioned here due to space considerations are ‘Professional and Personal Development’ and ‘Effective Communication’. The six domains are predetermined by CORU (the Irish social work and related therapies professional registration body).

From **Table 2**, it is evident that there is immense scope around which to base the assessment process and the delivery of supervision. The goal is to build up capacity and understanding in the student, increasing their responsibility for the student’s own learning with the help and direction of the fieldwork supervisor.

CORU ASSESSMENT DOMAINS (2012)	Application to Student Practice: Short Example:	What it means:	Role for the student. Example: MSW Yr. 1 Placement	Role for the student. Example: MSW Year 2 Placement
PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	PRACTICE WITHIN THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL BOUNDARIES OF THEIR PROFESSION TO THE HIGHEST STANDARD	Best interest of service users, respect, rights, dignity and autonomy contribute to policy and practice, implications of duty of care for service users and professionals, code of conduct, ethics.	Observing and shadowing. Information and relationship building. Setting of learning needs and goals. Supervision contracting. Understanding report writing and any 'screen' technology reporting.	Carrying forward learning from Pl. 1 plus greater confidence in self and ability regarding case analysis, interviewing and report writing. More defined learning needs and ability to be more independent in thinking. Cases should grow in complexity.
INTERPERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SERVICE USERS AND THEIR RELATIVES/SUPPORTERS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS	Capacity building and sustaining relationships both individually and team based, engaging service communities and other professionals.	Recognising all systems supporting or not supporting service users. Being able to make assessments/care plans and being assertive in their delivery and evaluation. Understanding a multi - disciplinary approach. Using the applied agency technology correctly. Recognising possible language or communication difficulties.	Further understanding of the social work professional role and other stakeholders in the service users case. Ethics and reflective practice building within supervision. Groupwork leadership role taken on where possible.
CORU ASSESSMENT DOMAINS (2012)	Application to Student Practice: Short Example:	What it means:	Role for the student. Example: MSW Yr. 1 Placement	Role for the student. Example: MSW Year 2 Placement
PROVISION OF QUALITY SERVICES	BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY AND ASSESS SERVICE USERS' NEEDS.USING RESEARCH, REASONING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS TO DETERMINE APPROPRIATE CASE ACTION.	Be up to date in knowledge and procedures around agency and practice policy.	Implementing knowledge and skills from academic classes to practice based learning. Closely monitoring one's time management skills.	Confidence in professional judgements. Greater ability in discernment of theory to practice knowledge
KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS	BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND, EXPLAIN AND APPLY GENERIC SKILLS AND METHODS APPROPRIATE TO DELIVERING A RANGE OF SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS TO MEET DIFFERENT NEEEDS WITHIN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS.	Issues and trends which influence social work practice inquiries, investigations, reports etc. Develop a rights based approach to practice. Understand the role of interpersonal exchanges in identifying, releasing and appropriately managing the expression of emotions, enhanced by an understanding of the importance of self-awareness. Understanding organisational systems and their impact on service user care. Importance of Risk assessment and risk management.	Prioritising and managing work in the safe environs of the placement agency. Demonstration of assessment, planning and intervention is by an evidence informed practice in accordance with legislation, protocols and guidelines.	Building on P. 1 . Also the student begins to understand the need to adjust/adapt their practice as needed to take account of new development in knowledge and skills. Recognising trends in public and social policy.

Table 2.  
The role of the social work student in MSW Yr. 1 and 2 in relation to the CORU assessment domains.

(Acknowledgement in the joint drawing up of this table is given to the Fieldwork Coordinator for the BSW/MSW course at University College Cork).

### **6.3 Supervision on placement: ‘the beat of good supervision is within the heart of good placement’ (eBook 2. Page 36)**

Attendance on placement for NUI Galway MSW students is a block 14 week experience in each of the 2 course years [56]. Students on returning from placement were excited to share their placement supervision experiences and be creative in their delivery. In the podcasts they made, Group 1 decided to reinvent (the television program the X Factor (a program that looks for a ‘special quality’ in a person that makes them unique) and record their experiences in this mode [91]. When teaching students this podcast is played along with a previous podcast in eBook 1 Page 69 [35] which was made by a group of Year 2 MSW students having completed their placement [92].

Of particular interest in this recording is the student who felt he did not learn enough from the opportunities he was given on placement and upon reflection regrets this behavior. For pre-placement training these podcasts have been invaluable. Current students express great interest in listening to how their peers have negotiated the challenges of supervision on placement. Additionally practice teachers and students can see a model of the components of supervision ([56], pp. 20-29).

The main message within this eBook 2 was to identify that field practice is an emotionally intense experience for students – both in discovering their own emotions and recognizing the emotions of the service users due to difficulties in the areas of poverty, housing, education, culture, disability etc. These feelings of helplessness can at times be overwhelming to all parties. The importance of supervision is to take these experiences and with the help of the practice wisdom of the supervisor uncover the layers of assistance, facilitation and support coupled with solid theory, law and social justice perspectives that can be offered.

### **6.4 Evaluating the practice placement experience: how do you know it is working?**

... or not working as the case may be? The usual procedure with regard to students’ evaluation of placement at NUI Galway is to divide into small groups and let the students talk about their placement experiences, possibly under the headings of ‘What worked?’ ‘What didn’t work?’, or to take a whole class and ask for volunteers to share what they learned on placement or their role in the agency. At NUI Galway the students are asked to draw ‘Road Maps’ [93]. Moreover the practice teachers during an in-service training session are also asked to draw ‘Road Maps’ [94] ([56], pp. 32, 33).

The experiences of placement are worth sharing either as a joint creative task with practice teachers and students together or in peer group sessions of practice teachers and students separately. To this end students are also required at NUI Galway to fill out a Practice Teacher Evaluation form where they can give feedback to the practice teacher post placement regarding their experience of his/her practice teaching approach. For their part practice teachers are additionally encouraged to discuss their placement experience with their own work supervisors or line managers. There is a knock-on benefit in this for the agency, as the positive experiences of staff taking students may encourage organizations towards the potential for good quality assurance of service delivery, greater abilities to manage risk and possibly higher retention of more fulfilled staff.

## 7. Conclusion

The consideration of globalization and indigenization within social work education leads us to one question: What constitutes best practice for social work education and training? The answer to this question is embedded in two words: 'relationship' and 'response'. It is a relationship between the theory and practice, incorporating connections encouraged within social work services and it is the response of social work courses to make their teaching relevant, applied and creative to focus on skills, values and knowledge.

For this chapter the aim was to show in the context of world globalization and indigenization how NUI Galway made a contribution to their MSW social work placement training in being able to design, implement and deliver a set of seven multi-media on-line social work practice eBooks. These would, in theory 'wrap around' the placement from pre to post experience. Research is ongoing but so far anecdotal evidence shows that the project has been successful on a number of levels. In launching any creative project there had to be a plan. The Aims and Objectives for this e-Book project were multi-facilitated:

1. To creatively, by the use of multimedia approaches *engage* MSW students, fieldwork supervisors, tutors and those teaching pre-placement training.
2. To encourage experts to *share* their knowledge and wisdom.
3. To *build* a community of practice teachers (fieldwork supervisors) where they felt invested in the process experience to help practice teachers feel valued and be part of social work training for the future.
4. To *establish* a Postgraduate training course for practice teachers which would offer further continual professional development for those involved and placement opportunities for the NUI Galway MSW students.

For students it has resulted in being more familiar with work practices and greater confidence in their ability to circumnavigate what lies ahead in placement. This is evidenced in the relevance and accessibility of the information in the videos and podcasts as well as the up to date research. For Practice Teachers/Fieldwork Supervisors in their in-service training, it has again raised confidence in their own ability and also to understand what students are being taught pre-placement. The podcasts made by Practice Teachers and subject experts have proven invaluable in discussion and in signposting the way forward. For those teaching pre-placement training the eBooks were an invaluable starting point. The short 6slide presentations at the end of each eBook were used to open up a number of the pre-placement training classes.

Tackling the dearth of social work placements in some countries is well recorded [95–98]. This author would contend that social work students need social work placements. There is recognition in some countries that difficulties around acquiring and sustaining social work placements present serious challenges [96–98]. With the eBooks NUI Galway placement stakeholders told their stories and shared their wisdom.

There has to be a connectedness between place, academic and practice learning/training and it is important to weigh these concepts equally. Theory comes to life in practice and it is through practical experience and evidence gathering that our knowledge and theories flourish. All this with due regard to environment and resources. Giving placement equal status thus recognizing the reciprocal

and co-dependent relationship between theory and practice along with following through on that commitment takes courage. Giving Practice Placement Coordinators a seat at every table and on every committee where social work training and education is discussed is vitally important. There is a copious amount of work required to plan, execute and support placements long before a student enters the work related arena. Understanding the expectations of students and equally the expectations of practice teachers/field supervisors and their agency protocols is vitally important. The principle involved is to lead all parties towards a general understanding of purpose and intent.

Agencies must be honest in what they have to offer social work students on placement. If the work involved is 'community orientated work' then identify it as such, if the work is going to be mainly administration [9] agencies must make this clear in the beginning. The contention would be that if on graduation students are going into social work jobs, especially statutory social work in areas such as child protection, mental health, and probation, then they need social work placements in social work teams, offices and Justice Departments. It is a consideration that the use of 'defined' social work competencies and skills on a 'community work' orientated placement may not be appropriately matched to a statutory job in a child protection and welfare agency.

In his research Hughes [99] suggests that it is important that new models of placement do not compromise the quality of the learning. This is a sensible agreeable view. Possibly it needs to go further in suggesting that models and especially new models of placement should be 'fit for purpose' or 'fit for work'. Are we getting to a point where social work job advertisements might say 'evidence of placement within professional social work agency desirable'? If so by spreading out what constitutes an acceptable social work placement are we diluting social work placement training by throwing it into a catch all/any agency will do arena? Further research is needed and Registration bodies (where they exist) need to set watertight requirements for standards of social work education. Given the demands on professional social workers, core placement training is of utmost importance given the challenges and complexities in the field.

Social work students *need* to know they are wanted on placement and will obtain whatever opportunities are available to learn and showcase their talents. Practice teachers and agencies *need* to be engaged with colleges and universities in a planning process long before the student arrives. Placement agencies *need* a reciprocal arrangement with higher education establishments. Universities *need* to have a 'What can we do for you?' approach to the agencies. Can we offer you Continuing Professional Development in the form of in-service training days? Can we come to your team meeting and talk about the option to be involved in social work student education? Can we offer you reduced admission rate to some of our postgraduate courses? Can we talk with the Management team of the Agency to put our argument forward regarding why it would enhance this agency to be involved in social work education? 'Why not come in and run your development day or team meeting here at the University?'

Obviously, practice placements can be a limited resource; there is always the understanding and empathy towards social work agencies that are too busy, too stressed, in cramped conditions and those where there is no history of taking students. If it is not possible to start at the bottom and work up, then start at the top and work down. At NUI Galway we have tackled the difficulties of acquiring placements through a multitude of approaches. Careful building of relationships over the years and acceptability of situations frequently led to 'If you can't take a student this year, maybe next year. We'll keep in touch. Let us know if there is anything we can do to help'. Expert planning, \*inclusive relationships, extended practice teacher

training, student comprehension of expectations and supervision models are crucial to the work of acquiring, supporting and maintaining placements. There is no panacea but it is a great challenge.

All stakeholders in placement are involved in building and assuming professional identities and roles. How they see this experience and how they best decide to explore and navigate the private, professional and ideal self, can be peer shared and act as a catalyst for others throughout the placement training experience.

The boat once steered by the trainee is coming back to shore. There is no guarantee what tomorrow will bring but reciprocity, inclusiveness and creative approaches will help bring us the educated enlightened social workers of tomorrow.

## **Author details**

Marguerita McGovern

School of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

\*Address all correspondence to: [marguerita.mcGovern@nuigalway.ie](mailto:marguerita.mcGovern@nuigalway.ie)

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