TOWARD PARTNERSHIP
BUILDING CONDITIONS OF MUTUAL RECIPROCITY

PETER MATTHEWSON & CRAIG TUNNICLIFFE
Fieldwork in Social Work Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

- Social work qualification required by Social Workers Registration Board, bachelors degree
  - has been minimum 3 year, recently changed to 4 year
  - Requires minimum of 120 days fieldwork practice
- At Unitec this has been two 60 day placements
  - has been in second and third years in 3 year degree
  - moving to third and fourth years in 4 year degree
Significant diversity in field

- Statutory social work
  - Child Youth and Family: child protection and youth justice
  - Probation, Corrections
- Health, DHBs
  - General health
  - Mental health
  - Older persons
- Social policy development and analysis
- Local body community liaison / development
- Non Government Social Services
- Community development
- Radical advocacy and activism
Field education

Field education has been described as the “signature pedagogy” of social work (CSWE, cited in Peterson, 2010)

It is unlike other areas of education

A “critical interface” Chilvers (2011)
...the point at which educators and practitioners, academic institutions and social service agencies must collaborate towards a common goal”
The relationships... The process(es) The potential of partnership

Field Educator Quality

On site Practitioner (Field educator)

• Institute
• The Program Fieldwork coordinator

Placement Organisation Host agency

Student experience

Learning experience

Pedagogies Learning outcomes

Placement Quality
Field education liaison/ coordinator role

“The faculty-field liaison provides the single most important linkage between the class and the field” (Jenkins and Shefor, cited in Peterson, 2010)

A history of fieldwork coordination being a secondary administrative rather than academic role

Current risks:
- the neoliberalisation of education
- a focus on research productivity (Wayne et al., 2006; van Heugten, 2011)
- field education programmes are often constructed as expensive and resource-intensive
- vulnerable to under-resourcing and cuts implemented by economic managers (Morley & Dunstan, 2013)
- equals less staff with more students
- essential relationship building is lost

The relationships...
The process(es)
The potential of partnership

On site Practitioner
(Field educator)

Institute
The Program Fieldwork coordinator

Placement Organisation
Host agency

Pedagogies Learning outcomes

Field Educator Quality

Placement Quality

Student experience

Learning experience

her than

resource

managers

Fig. 1: The relationships between student, on-site practitioner, field educator quality, and pedagogies learning outcomes.
Our Context at Unitec

• Fieldwork coordinated by a team of four academic staff members
• All teach social work and community development theory, social policy and law and cultural courses as well as fieldwork coordination
• Bringing these dimensions together in overall degree programme
• Supported by part time “administrator” (who is central to developing and maintain relationships)
Outcomes, assessment and competency

• Assessment processes nationally have been examined, for example, Hay & O'Donoghue (2009)
  • Diversity of approach
  • A range of approaches to field education, including different learning outcomes and assessment methods.
  • Consistency of focus
  • Including on values, knowledge and skills
• More recently some alignment between schools has developed with the SWRB Competencies assessment as policy
At Unitec: the way we were

- Adhoc attempts at relationship building with organisations, dependent on staff personal contacts, and driven by needs of immediate placement student cohort
- Low investment in continued relationships
- Learning Outcomes dictated by academic institution
- Achievement of Learning Outcomes becomes major focus, and source of stress for students, at expense of engaging with richness of field learning experience
- Top down model of assessment dictated by academic institute
- Student required to complete voluminous written portfolio at end of placement
- Field educators expected to read and comment, however at that time placement over, and significant time demand on field educators
- Marking up to a month after end of placement
- Time and space disconnect between academic institute, students and field educators in assessment processes
A context of change
The Challenge

How we can create a truly partnered and collaborative way of engaging with communities of practice and of assessing the placement experience?
Changes from 2014: overall coordination

- Appointment of a dedicated administrator (relationship coordinator)
- Construction of a "living" data base
  - Detailing locations, emails etc.
  - “Type" of placement, organizational requirements and processes
  - Their student expectations
  - Also capture previous students who were placed at the organisation
- Changes to the student facing process
  - Greater communication
  - Focus on fields of practice
Mid Placement Review Visit: Formative Assessment

- Under the old model we had visited the students on placement near the beginning, to sign up the Placement Contract, and again towards the end of the placement.
- A mid placement review was generally conducted by email.
- We have this year decided that it is a better use of our travel time to visit at the mid placement point:
  - get a better sense of how the student is doing, what they have achieved
  - whether they are on track to achieve the Learning Outcomes
  - Identify any students who are at risk of not passing
  - Plans can be put in place to address any concerns
Changes from 2014: Assessment

- Abandoned huge written portfolio
- Retained two much smaller written pieces:
  1. Assignment linking organisation accountability structures and processes to professional association Code of Ethics, completed 4 weeks into placement
  2. Essay on theories and models in practice completed a week after they finish
New Major Assessment: Structured Conversation

Structured conversation involving student, field educator and institute coordinator:

• Assesses cultural competence, practice skills and application of ethics
• There is a "interview schedule", but stressed this is a guide to a conversation, not an oral examination
• Process takes between an hour and 90 minutes
• More valid to practice learning in field
• Facilitates meaningful contribution to assessment by organisation field educator who has been working with and observing student for 60 days
• More appropriate to cultures which value oral rather than written communication
Changes from 2014: Journey Thus Far

• Change in focus
• Coates and McKay (1995) argue that “the educational program needs to mirror, as much as possible, the practice and ideology which is espoused.
• the importance of congruency with social practice values and approaches, including
  • community based solutions
  • working with (as equals)
  • bottom up approaches
  • a democratisation of process, from the beginning of a process to any outcome.
  • those who are directly involved in strategies actively participate in all levels of decision making
  • a devolution of power
• the goal was creating a context were partnerships and partnered ways of working were more likely to emerge
What is partnership

The essence of partnership is sharing. It is marked by respect for one another, role divisions, rights to information, accountability, competence, and value accorded to individual input. In short, each partner is seen as having something to contribute, power is shared, decisions are made jointly and roles are not only respected but are also backed by legal and moral rights.

(Tunnard, 1991, as cited in Jackson & Morris, 1994)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coexistence</th>
<th>Networking</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You know about each other but don’t need to come together</td>
<td>Informal discussions</td>
<td>A lower level of collaboration is implied</td>
<td>Trust is based on negotiated and agreed actions</td>
<td>No ongoing or formal commitment to each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No direct relationships with other agencies</td>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>No formal collective agreement on visions or tasks</td>
<td>An agreed set of principles for working together</td>
<td>No dependency or need to collaborate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dependency or need to collaborate.</td>
<td>No formal collective agreement on visions or tasks</td>
<td>Lower level of cooperation implied</td>
<td>Has shared decision making</td>
<td>Involves trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower level of cooperation implied</td>
<td>Acknowledgement of common interests, issues, and agendas</td>
<td>Means giving up some things (like power and control)</td>
<td>Establishing and maintaining relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not involve shared decision making</td>
<td>May involve helping another organisation to achieve its project or task</td>
<td>Provides an opportunity to add value to others as well as yourself</td>
<td>About knowing and understanding who’s doing what.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing and maintaining relationships</td>
<td>May involve (MOU)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnership

- Involves hearts, minds, passion
- Works from an agreed base of shared values, eg trust, honesty, openness etc
- Sharing:
  - Risks and rewards
  - Resources
  - Accountability
  - Visions and ideas
  - Decision making

- About shared power but not a 50/50 notion of equality
- About the way things are done rather than the evenness of power, control and resources
- Resourcing and contributions involve equitable rather than equal contributions; they may be in kind as well as monetary
Coexistence  Networking  Cooperation  Collaboration  Partnership

- Shared goals, power, resources, risks, successes, accountabilities
Creating space for partnership

- What have we done already
  - Enhanced communication
  - Better utilisation of digital technology
  - Shared power
  - Shifted assessment into an integrated model
    - Shared assessment, with embedded formative assessment processes
    - Created a context where students can truly engage with the mahi of the organisation
  - Increased Reciprocity
    - Networking opportunities,
    - Professional development opportunities, professional development events attended by field educators together with students
    - Currently in the process of developing an SWRB registration module (to be offered to field educators)
Towards a more collaborative future partnership

- Currently Placement Learning Outcomes dictated by academic institute, prescriptive, as approved by institute structures, NZQA
- How well do they reflect the practice world?
- Challenge for greater flexibility to reflect diverse practice contexts
- Organisations and field educators collaborating in developing outcomes
- Currently scoping a collaborative learning outcome generation focus group
And even bigger questions . . .

- How well are we integrating the insights and needs of practice into our academic teaching
- Theory and skills courses teaching specific models, vary between institutes
- May not necessarily fit easily into diverse organisations
- What is needed in practice fields may not be taught in academic courses
- Children's Commissioner concern that social work graduates not equipped to work in Child Youth and Family
- Generic social work programmes can not teach requirements of one specific agency, however do need to respond to field
