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Touch, Click and be Informed: Making a series of multi-touch eBooks to support social work placement.

Abstract:

This innovative project set out to develop a series of seven 'wraparound' multi-touch electronic eBooks to support pre-placement training within a professional social work course. The aim and main focus concentrated on developing and presenting the wisdom of practice teachers, social work students and tutors in a multi media content, encompassing aural and visual podcasts. This was further enhanced by including expert topic based opinion, theory and supportive slide presentations. The concept of making the eBooks was to change the delivery of the fieldwork pre-placement module, refocusing it from a didactic lecture based delivery to a more modern technology enhanced relevant method of improving the pre-placement knowledge, skills and values of social work students.
 Key Words:
E-learning, podcasting, social work, fieldwork practicum, practice teachers,

Introduction and Project Outline:

The M.A. Social Work (MSW) at the National University of Ireland, Galway, is a two year Social Work Masters programme for twenty students leading to professional registration with CORU (statutory agency for the Irish registration of Health and Social Care Professionals).
A fourteen week placement is embedded within each year of the course.
From 2011 to 2015 students, practice teachers, tutors and experts made a number of three minute audio and video podcasts within pre-placement and in-service training

sessions facilitated by the Practice Learning Coordinator. Their shared knowledge, opinions and

wisdom supported the placement experience and covered such topics as; expectations on

starting placement; elements of good supervision; reflective practice within supervision,

professional identity and home visiting. The collective desire to share this resource and use it for

student and peer teaching and learning was the initial catalyst for making the eBook series.

Incorporating this new approach to teaching and learning took place within the twelve hours of

the Masters in Social Work designated pre-placement training. The eBooks were introduced

each week for six weeks in two hourly Friday sessions. Practice Teachers were also exposed to

the books during their three day, five hour, in-service training sessions at the University.

Informal evaluations were carried out with formal evaluation to follow.

Introduction to Creative Teaching and the Pedagogical Basis for eBooks

The term multi-media eBook used throughout this article refers to books which were not

printable paper copies but books which contained multi-media content and were downloadable

across all platforms. Producing an electronic resource downloadable on Apple MACs , iPads,

iPhones, PCs or Android devices to teach and support fieldwork placements, presents the view

of an innovative use of new technologies and creative approaches within the traditional

teaching and learning arena. Making downloadable eBooks which include current research, live

aural podcasts and short videos, demonstrates inventiveness in one aspect of producing a

supportive resource for pre- placement training. The immediacy of the spoken word in sharing

personal and professional opinions demonstrated the openness, validity and strength of the

experiences by the contributors. Dale (2007) promoted this view of the benefits in education of

podcasting. He emphasized the increased motivation among students in their writing, improved

fluency and enhancement of their listening skills when this experiential type of learning was

introduced. In addition, this research focused on collaborative learning, showing how the

students acquired technical competencies and had an increased awareness of the use of new

media to help understand social work in its professional setting (p. 49). Using podcasting as an

adjunct to teaching and assessment methods in higher education is evident in the research of

Jarvis and Dickie, 2010, Evans, 2008, Cambell, 2005, Chester *et al.* 2011, Lazzari, 2009; and

Rahimi & Asadollahi, 2011. With regard to specific subject areas a number of recent studies

have demonstrated the use of podcasting in Nursing (Strickland, Gray and Hill, 2012; Kemp,

Myers, Campbell and Pratt, 2010), Geography (Hill and Nelson, 2011) and Music and

Language education (Tam, 2012). Researchers have also presented evidence on how

podcasting can be used to supplement traditional learning approaches (Van Zanten, Somogyi

and Curro, 2012; O'Bannon, Lubke, Beard, and Britt, 2011; Mikkelson, and Devidson 2011).

In particular, with regard to social work, Tsang (2011) advises the use of modern technologies

in curriculum design and in developing further 'blended' learning approaches to enhance social

work education. The suggestion is made that a didactic approach is transformed by greater

collaborative and a shared learning environment (p. 378). It is an important point that in using

this innovative approach to delivery of a module within a curriculum design and engaging with

virtual learning technologies, individual and group up-skilling for both educator and student is

enhanced but a cautious note is sounded in not up-skilling to the detriment of avoiding

interpersonal relationship skill building (Cartney, 2013;Waldman and Rafferty, 2008).

Further investigation of general curriculum design research methods in education are more fully

explored by Kelly et. al. (2008) and McKenny and Reeves (2013). Here the topics of goals,

objectives, content, materials and resources, activities, teaching strategies, assessment, grouping,

time and space still need to achieve their purposeful objective in promoting the training of the social

work student. The fieldwork objectives of knowing, understanding and having performance ability

while being able to internalise values and ethics and relate theory to practice are still the

predominent keystones of training, regardless of the delivery method. Understandably using

podcasting as a medium to deliver knowledge content is only one aspect of devising alternative

module delivery for the Fieldwork pre-placement section within an entire social work course curriculum.

Developing the eBook series engaged the students, practice teachers and tutors and gave them a platform to express their opinions on a range of topics. They felt they had a vested interest in the fieldwork training and that their opinions were valued. In eBook 1 for example, Podcast 1 is made by a practice teacher expressing her opinion on what she expects from a student coming on placement. Also in this eBook three MSW Yr. 2 students discuss in a short video their expectations of going on second year placement and how this differed from their first year experience. The research of Florida (2002, 2005) suggests a new breed of student, one who can link creativity, be technological innovative and enjoy economic prosperity. Creativity by definition is therefore seen as a process of 'everyday creativity' involving personal growth and problem solving skills as opposed to the more commonly understood 'artistic' creative skills. The desired outcome is therefore more student led and involvement in personal and cognition learning, resulting in higher academic achievement. (Rinkevich, 2011 p. 219 ; Ivcevic, 2010). These research studies further suggest that the onus of responsibility is on the educational establishment to harness and drive this creativity into the future, realigning curriculum and promoting a modern and engaging workforce. Gibson (2010) suggests the implications of creative teaching for making this seamless transformation. He proffers that there is a growing awareness in understanding creative teaching technologies to enhance the self as a practitioner and can be applied in professional work inside and outside of the classroom by engaging respectfully and mutually with others. Recognising the link between course work and professional self the research of Gelman & Tosone (2006), Hallett & Faria (2006) and Lambert (2013) further make this intrinsic connection between academia and new technologies.

The application of technology to teaching is a forward thinking utility, integrated with reliable and proven educational approaches (Dale, 2007; Dale & Povey, 2008; Ballantyne, 2008; Thomas & Marks, 2014). These studies are built on the work of Laurillard (2002) who suggests a 'Conversational Framework' (p. 6). 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 based on a narrative approach. In making her video podcast on what is was like on her first home visit, in eBook 2 'Home Visiting Urban and Rural' the MSW Year 1 student podcasts on the skills she felt she needed and the emotions she experienced. This video is not just about imparting knowledge but it invites the listener (e.g. the social work student in training) to think about the overall story, the skills they may mirror, the emotional environment they might need to attend to and the overall evaluation of the experience.

The pedagogical basis for the multi-touch eBooks encompassed not only that of creative teaching (Gibson, 2010; Florida, 2002, 2005) and the various researchers mentioned previously, but also the pedagogical importance of narrative enquiry (Ozyildirim, 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It was in the podcast, for example, of a tutor titled 'What makes a good social worker?' that draws the listener into the tutor's personal experience, their personal story (Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Book 4 Reflective Practice Influenced by Emotional Intelligence https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/social-work-placement-new/id1102515648?mt=13).

Furthermore in the video of the Principal Social Worker telling her story of what professional identity means (Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Book 1 Language, Professional Identity, Beginnings and Expectations https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/social-work-placement-new/id1102290962?mt=13 the students were helped to appreciate and learn from the immediacy of the information presented as the Principal Social Worker shared her reflections on the subject over a forty year career.

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 & 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

The eBook Series and Design:

The overall title and individual titles of the eBooks grew out of the accumulation of topic specific podcasts gathered over four years. The designated title 'Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking chosen by the Practice Learning Coordinator, encapsulated a fresh contemporary perspective on placement, marrying topic based academic research with podcasting resources. The overall objective was to create an engaging, attractive teaching and learning resource for all related groups attached to the fieldwork experience (students, practice teachers, tutors and pre-placement trainers).

Each eBook in the series covered a key area of social work placement, given the choice of multi-media material gathered and the time frame of five months to produce the eBooks, priority was given to certain specific areas.

A sample design for each eBook opening with a short video podcast from an expert in the topic area and was followed by current research interspersed with student, practice teacher and/or tutor podcasts. Towards the end of each eBook a section on 'The University's Responsibility' and a section on 'New Approaches. New Thinking' presented the current views of the main author. In order to enhance and assist training the eBooks all finished with a six slide power point presentation predicated on the book's subject title. It was envisaged that these Powerpoint presentations could be used for revision or within a pre-placement training schedule.

How to access the eBooks was discussed at the beginning of the MSW course and during all in-service practice teacher training sessions and tutor meetings. Students, practice teachers, tutors and those attending in-service practice teacher training accessed the eBooks in three ways:

1. The eBooks were uploaded to the twenty computers in the designated MSW teaching room for general access.

2. The eBooks were uploaded onto individual memory sticks and given to practice teachers.

3. Instruction on how to download the eBooks from the iTunes Store and Amazon were made available.

How the e-Books were made:

Firstly, it was important to illicit information from students, practice teachers, tutors and other social work educators as to their definition of the most important topics in the area of fieldwork practice. This was achieved with discussion groups in class and outside meetings with social workers in various settings. The participants on the NUIGalway Postgraduate Diploma in Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management course were also vocal in what they saw as most important in the fieldwork relationship and development of the student's professional training. Across a period of two years a number of excellent podcasts and short videos were made by MSW students, practice teachers and visiting experts and it was expected to use these as a starting resource. Overall it was the author's eleven years professional experience with the NUIGalway Masters in Social Work programme and her thirty-five years experience within the social work profession that consolidated the information and eventually made the judgment on content. (Table 1)

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. File sizes were considered with regard to download duration. The final file sizes appear in the table below.   **Table 2**

Book 1	1.89GB
Book 2	1.02GB
Book 3	1.80GB
Book 4	287.3MB
Book 5	981.9MB
Book 6	1.91GB
Book 7	326.9MB

Downloading Requirements and Distribution:

It was important for the eBooks to be easily accessible, in that accessing them was not beyond the capabilities of students with elementary computer skills. The technological pathway outline to the eBooks follows: The eBooks 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 x 10.9 or later. The PC versions of the eBooks were downloadable through Amazon Books with the recommended Google Chrome e-reader 'Readium' or Adobe Digital Editions. These are common operating systems and not outside the general capability of the downloadable book reader. Copies of the eBooks were also uploaded onto the University's PC system and each contributor to the making of the books was presented with a personal USB containing all seven multi-touch books. **I**BAN numbers were obtained through NUIGalway and each University Library in the Republic of Ireland were given the ePub book files as a resource. It was important to acknowledge all these subsequent considerations; that eBooks over 2GB take longer to download, that the eBooks needed to be on both large recognizable platforms for Apple devices and PC systems and that lastly podcasts were mostly restricted to three minutes duration mainly to focus the listeners' attention.

Commonalities of each eBook

Each e-Book opened with an introduction video made by the author (approx. 3mins). Throughout the eBooks specific topics were presented as short videos (approx. 3mins) and/or aural podcasts (approx. 3mins) by students, practice teachers or tutors. Each e-book ended with a number of commonalities: 'The University's Responsibility', 'New Approaches. New Thinking'. 'Questions' and a topic related six slide Power point presentation.

The Multi-Media Podcast:

All recordings took place over a two year period from 2013-2015 using digital recorders (hand held), video iPad segments or short videos taken at NUIGalway's recording studio on campus.

All of this multi-media gathering was designed to be non-invasive and immediate in the way it captured knowledge, experience, thoughts and ideas from the students, practice teachers, tutors and topic experts.

The use of both the aural podcasts and short videos helped the students engage with a different approach to learning skills and roles, appreciating experience, encouraging reflection, co-working, acknowledging 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 involved. It also encompassed the idea that the sharing would be of value to others in the future; to other social work students and all those connected with placement. There was also the consideration that the experiences of this group of people may not be so different from an international or multi-disciplinary perspective and that these eBooks might in some part, inform practice outside the island of Ireland and the training of related professions in fieldwork education.

The Art of Sharing Knowledge and Experience :

On fieldwork placement, social work students learn the practices and identity of a profession. 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 experiences can act as a catalyst for change. Many courses may vary in their wider content and requirements for registration but the context of taught core principles in social work education are shared by CORU, HCPC, ASWB and AASW. The experience of looking at a short video of a student talking about what it was like to fail her placement (See Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Book 5 Failing Forward. Page 10 https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/social-work-placement-new/id1102594299?mt=13) or a practice teacher's podcast on what students should expect on placement in a hospital setting (See Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Book 3 Home Visiting, Power, The Virtual World of Training, Cultural Competence. Page 16 https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/social-work-placement-new/id1102483522?mt=13) is

suggested as being more powerful and of greater learning value, than reading chapters in printed fieldwork training books. The suggestion being made in this article is that combining appropriate research text and the immediacy of the words used by students, practice teachers, tutors and experts is a new, interesting and innovative way forward for social work education.

Assessment on the practice placement is predicated on a set core principles whether these are described as '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'. The strength of the spoken word in the aural and video recordings captures practice teacher's wisdom of fieldwork on topics such as reflection, cultural competence, professional identity and groupwork. Carried into placement, the role of the Tutor within the tri-partite meetings is as the supporter and mentor of the student. Recording their views and opinions, the tutors in their recordings wanted to put forward how they saw the intricacies and value of the Tutor/Student/Practice Teacher/University relationship.

Over a period of two years NUIGalway has benefited from the expertise of acclaimed in-house and visiting social work experts in their field. Professor Mark Doel (Doel, 2016, 2012, 2013) as external examiner of the MSW programme at NUIGalway (2012-2015) shared his knowledge on groupwork and beginning placement by contributing to two of the eBooks (eBook 1 and eBook 6). Marian Bogo (Bogo, 2015; Bogo *et al.* 2006; Bogo *et al.* 2002) and Pamela Threvitick (Trevithick, 2015, 2005) also gave valued opinion and direction on feedback and supervision within eBook 2. Within NUIGalway Professor Pat Dolan (Dolan & Frost, 2017; Dolan & Brady, 2012; Dolan & Canavan, 2006) UNESCO Professor and Director of the Child and Family Research Centre at NUIGalway shared his considered opinion in eBook 1 on 'What is Professional Identity'. His expert opinion suggests a global view of professional identity and one which has multi setting and dimensional elements. In addition Professor of Social Work at NUIGalway, Caroline McGregor (Devaney & McGregor, 2016; McGregor, 2015, 2014) and

Director of the MA Social Work programme, supported and contributed her expert opinion on assessment to the content of the eBook 2.

Discussion and Conclusion

This project provided a preliminary, but promising insight into the making of eBooks by social work students, practice teachers and tutors in an effort to support the placement experience. By presenting aural and video podcasts as a useful teaching strategy and in conjunction with shared expertise and research, it is suggested that a more extensive awareness of knowledge, skills and values can be experienced. Current evaluations are underway and further evidence of the hypothesis that the making of these eBooks enhances and improves pre-placement training is ongoing. Embarking on this eBook project came with its own set of challenges both in the technological knowledge and delivery of the end product. It is worth noting that the limitations of technical knowledge regarding design, digital file sizes and downloadable speeds, by the author and podcast participants, was offset by excellent IT support and it is interesting that for some, the resulting outcome was that podcasting became a new lifelong skill. There was in all of this modern capture of experiences, the concern that students, practice teachers and tutors might ignore the other more standardized printed texts on social work practice placements. Library resources in the form of on-line access or paper copies of social work texts relevant to practice placement are integral to a social work course, not withstanding this view, teaching and learning methods advance and MSW/Nuigalway course participants, along with the practice teachers and tutors were encouraged to include all book resources and the digital multi-touch eBooks in their over arching learning resources.

The overall making of the eBooks, the investment in time and design, has been offset by positive feedback where the creative elements of the eBooks were recognised as reinforcing and directing the learning process. Is there a future and relevance in helping students and other social work professionals make eBooks such as those discussed in this article? The experience here is that students quickly became highly attuned to learning in a more blended

unanticipated, untraditional way. In making the podcasts and videos for the eBooks one practice teacher during an informal evaluation session shared the following comment 'I enjoyed making the podcast so much and learned something new about myself when I had to actually say out loud on the podcast my reasoning behind a decision I made to fail a student' (R1). Deeper levels of self reflection and a positive appreciation of the potential of using multi media as a learning tool, were developed and as a consequence of making the multi media pieces one student remarked, 'I was surprised how much I was learning without really knowing it!' (R2). To date other Universities in Ireland have engaged in positive feedback and used the eBooks to enhance their pre-placement training. The overarching aim was to ignite interest and participation, that the practice teachers, students, tutors and the pre-placement trainers would embrace the peer lead concept and support the project. In its entirety this has been achieved. Building a depository of spoken word experiences, wisdom and academic research has provided to be a well of wisdom and a forum to inform, advise and motivate our social workers of tomorrow. (3484)

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Links to the electronic books in iTunes:

Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking	LINK ADDRESS
BOOK 1: Language - Professional Identity - Beginnings & Expectations	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so new/id1102290962?mt=13
BOOK 2: Assessment - Creative Supervision & Feedback	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so

Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking	LINK ADDRESS
	new/id1102332276?mt=13
BOOK 3: Home Visiting Urban & Rural - The Virtual World of Training - Cultural Competence	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so new/id1102483522?mt=13
BOOK 4: Reflective Practice Influenced by Emotional Intelligence	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so new/id1102515648?mt=13
BOOK 5: Failing Forward	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so new/id1102594299?mt=13
BOOK 6: Imaginative Groupwork	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so new/id1103053048?mt=13
BOOK 7: Endings - Finishing Well	https://itunes.apple.com/ie/book/so new/id1102611798?mt=13

Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking	LINK ADDRESS
	new/id1102332276?mt=13