Heightening Experience in Case Management

by Jennifer Abrams

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| **Research Question**  **How can industry tools and role play heighten experiential learning of case management  processes in social service work?**     Case Management is a process that has some standard features but varies in sectors and agencies. What is common are the key processes (intake, assessment, monitoring and case notes). What is also common in practice is the use of database software for all these processes.   For many years, students have had the opportunity to see samples of forms and processes and practice in small groups. There are a few limitations to this. The first is that the paper process has predominantly given way to form filling in software. We currently do not have a system to mimic this software. Secondly, when students are in small cohorts, they know each other well and the role plays can lose some sense of discovery or curiosity.  I would like to investigate the application of an industry standard tool in practice and assessment.  I would like to investigate creating role play opportunities between 1st and 2nd year where the 1st year students are the clients for role play. This would include making this participation part of assessment/learning in a 1st year course.  Has this been done in another post secondary institution?  Do students feel more confident entering the field?  Are placement hosts and employers seeing our students as prepared for the field? |
| **Identify challenge/outcome related to learning  that is related to your question.**  The challenge will be showing increased learning. Course learning outcomes remain the same and there may not be any difference in grades as students can excel by using the current method of instruction. What will be important to capture is the sense of field readiness and skill acquisitions that matches practice.  Ethical concerns involve any risk to students in the completion of role plays. Even fictional client profiles can be triggering. Further, students need to be coached in the limits of role play in the context of student’s tasks. For example, intake meetings are not therapy sessions and this avenue should not be opened. |
| **Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote student learning on the outcome you identified.**  The Current approach to teaching Case management is the provision of sample forms for completion. There is an overview of the process and then practice in groups. One group member will role play the client for the interaction and the paperwork is submitted for assessment.  The modification is to have guests for role play (1st year students) to improve the reality of the interaction as the student is not known.  The second modification involves Loyalist College creating or accessing (purchasing) a case management database consistent with field practice. Students would be registered as staff and be able to work in the software (registering clients, placing them in programs, complete intake and treatment planning, case noting and so on). Faculty can monitor the documentation as ‘supervisors’.  With the change to industry practice and the proliferation of databases for Case Management it is hoped that this would offer a heightened experiential learning opportunity. |
| **Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.**  Assess the learning with the current design.  Skill 1 - Case Management Paperwork  Skill 2 - Case Management Client interaction.  (\* - This may need to be narrowed to only one of these skills for clarity and design).   Current students in the course can be surveyed about their confidence with these skills upon completion of the course. These students will be on placement and can compare to practices in their placement agencies.  Recent graduates who are employed as case managers can be surveyed to assess if the skills taught match the skills needed.  Employers and placement hosts can be surveyed about the overall competency students bring to placement.  This would generate a baseline. The same surveys can be used after implementation of an increased experiential model to assess for difference. |
| **How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?**  Internally at Loyalist, this would work across programs in Human Services (Social Service Worker, Child and Youth Care, Developmental Services Worker, Early Childhood Education, Community Justice Services)  To other SSW and Social Work Programs. To other colleges.  I could present at a conference. This includes and internal faculty showcase or other external educational conferences.  To database operators about opportunities for teaching / learning software. Partnerships? Testing? |

Adapted from: C. J. Stanny, E. M. El-Sheikh, & H-M. Chung (2009) ***Getting Started with a SoTL Project***

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