



Session 2:

Social work education and training in and beyond the pandemic

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**The social service workforce in
and beyond the pandemic**
A global conversation on adaptation, innovation and the fight
for social justice



Partnerships **PLUS**



Social Work Education and Training In & Beyond the Pandemic

GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS CONFERENCE 15/09/21



Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic and the terms '*social distancing,*' '*lockdown,*' and '*quarantine*' had global meaning'

(McLaughlin, Scholar & Teater, 2020, p. 975)



The impact

- ✓ On education (the process)
- ✓ On educators (the people)
- ✓ On social work/social services students and learners (process and people)
- On service users/clients
- Communities



University /Campus/ Onsite Education

- ❑ Access difficulties by students who did not have quiet/unused spaces at home.
- ❑ Students with families (esp children) who started to be home schooled
- ❑ Library and other resources were difficult to access. E-books were limited at some sites and students felt their learning was disadvantaged.
- ❑ Digital and other forms of poverty-access to laptops/computers, software etc
- ❑ Feelings of isolation and absence of 'traditional' peer group support, especially for students from minority groups.
- ❑ Service user contributions to social work education was halted in some UK institutions.



Practice Learning/Field Education

- Delays threatened students progress and attainment for those in their final year.
- Heightened inequality in relation to availability and allocation of practice learning opportunities (Tedam, 2021)
- Uncertainty about assessment strategies, quality of supervision and access to service users/clients.
- Virtual/online placements- students reported feeling anxious about confidentiality while working from home.
- One *adaptation* approach from N.Ireland- withdrew final year students from placement and recruited them into the social work/social services workforce.



Beyond the Pandemic

- Online learning /space/time
- Creativity in Practice and University learning
- Formation of different types of peer/collegial support
- Accessible training and support (Webinars, online events etc)
- Brought into sharp focus the inequalities that exist and increased learning and awareness of the impact.
- Learners & academics have discovered 'hidden' talents, skills and interests.



References

- Mclaughlin,H., Scholar,H., & Teater,B., (2020) Social work education in a global pandemic: strategies, reflections, and challenges, Social Work Education, 39:8, 975-982, DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2020.1834545
- Tedam, P. (2021) 'We just don't matter': Articulating the experiences of Black African Social Work Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic in England. In (ed) Turner, D. 'Social Work and Covid-19. Lessons for Education and Practice'. St Albans, Critical Publishing
- <https://www.qub.ac.uk/coronavirus/impact-society/social-work-students-qualify-early-to-join-the-frontline/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIQhehTW3Pg> Queens Univ, Belfast student speaks about working full time in place of field education



Session 2:

Questions for Break out Rooms

1. In what ways do you think online/virtual placements/field education will impact qualified practice?
2. From an employer perspective, what additional training (if any) would you offer to new social service practitioners who join your organization during the pandemic?
3. How do you think the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities for various groups in social work/social services education and training?

