Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Teaching in Social Work

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/wtsw20

Interactive Learning for Impact: Game-Based Learning in Social Work Education

Diane Apeah-Kubi

To cite this article: Diane Apeah-Kubi (25 Feb 2025): Interactive Learning for Impact: Game-Based Learning in Social Work Education, Journal of Teaching in Social Work, DOI: 10.1080/08841233.2025.2469565

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2025.2469565

JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN SOCIAL WORK
https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2025.2469565

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Interactive Learning for Impact: Game-Based Learning in Social Work Education

Diane Apeah-Kubi

Department of Mental Health and Social Work, Middlesex University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This article will present a case study on how game-based learning (GBL) – a live quiz specifically, was used to support the teaching and learning in a social work practice educator program at a university in London. A GBL platform was used to create a live online quiz which was used as a tool to assess 50 trainee practice educators' (TPEs) knowledge of social work theories. This study employed a qualitative research design using a semi-structured focus group immediately at the end of the quiz, to gather feedback on the TPEs' experiences of using a live quiz as a formative assessment tool. It was found that the TPEs were not only encouraged to be more creative about how they supported their student's learning in the placement setting but became more interested in improving their own knowledge of social work theories which lead to a significant increase in the usage statistics for the program's virtual learning environment (VLE). Wider, initially unintended benefits to placement settings were also identified around the use of GBL in supervision and potentially with service users. The author makes the case that the concept of GBL could have an important place in social work practice education.

KEYWORDS

Quizzes; social work theory; game-based learning; practice education

Introduction

In England, practice educators are experienced social workers who have completed additional post-qualifying training allowing them to teach, supervise, and assess student social workers during their practice placements. A key aspect of the role is to assess students against the profession's practice standards – the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) (BASW, 2018). It should be noted that this framework only applies to social workers in England and not those working in the other nations of the United Kingdom (UK).

The training required to qualify as a practice educator can vary, although it generally comprises two modules at the masters level: Practice Education stage 1 and Practice Education stage 2, provided

CONTACT Diane Apeah-Kubi d.apeah-kubi@mdx.ac.uk Department of Mental Health and Social Work, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, London NW4 4BT, UK

over a year or two. The practice education course at the author's university in London, UK, has two intakes per year of approximately 20–25 trainee practice educators (TPEs). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the 2020–21 and 2021–22 year, the course had been switched from face-to-face delivery to live sessions all held virtually, although it has now moved to a blended model of face-to-face delivery and live online sessions.

Stage 2 of the program builds upon the core skills needed to be a practice educator, by focusing on developing the knowledge and skills of students required for practice as a newly qualified social worker. One of the teaching sessions focuses on how to support students to apply social work theory to their practice – bridging the academy and practicum "divide" has been a common debate within social work (Parker, 2007; Trevithick, 2000). It has been argued that the profession should adopt an anti-intellectualist stance, i.e., because social work courses focus too much on teaching about theories (Narey, 2014). It has also been said that too much of a pragmatic focus on the actual practice of social work can result in practitioners who are unable to think critically and who may (unknowingly) practice in an oppressive manner (Thompson & Stepney, 2017).

It is this debate that sets the backdrop for a full-day teaching session on the PE stage 2 module led by the author. Earlier in the program, the TPEs consider the debate from both sides and reflect upon what their own position is and why. Considering the role that practice educators have in linking the academy and practicum (Higgins, 2014), this is a topic that needs to be paid careful attention in a practice education program. Across the two cohorts of TPEs this paper relates to, many of the trainees stated that while they saw a place for applying theory to practice, they were not confident about how to help students in doing this. This was primarily because the TPEs' own recollection of social work theories had diminished as they had become immersed in practice in environments where oftentimes being explicit about the role of theory in the work is not encouraged. This is a phenomenon that was also found in research conducted by Sieminski and Seden (2011): in their work examining how tutors used learning materials to enable student social workers to link theory to practice during their placement, they found that a climate of fear in organizations meant that practice was driven by managerialism rather than theory.

It was this theme of a lack of confidence that prompted the author to consider how she could help the TPEs have a greater appreciation for what they knew about social work theories, but also how, in their roles, they could support students with their application of theory to practice. Additionally, the author wanted to explore an alternative tool that appeared to be effective, engaging, and encourage peer learning. Game-

based learning (GBL) – a live quiz specifically, was the tool that was used to do this.

Background literature

The author's preferred pedagogy is very much based on active learning. Misseyanni et al. (2018) write that active learning "... involves students doing things and reflecting on what they are doing. Active learning may involve problem based, visual based, collaborative, project based or game based learning" (p. 1).

Elsherbiny and Al Maamari (2020) note that the terms "game-based learning" (GBL) and "gamification" are often used interchangeably when, in fact, they are not the same. Gamification, the authors write, is "... often all-encompassing; the content of a teaching course is used to create an integrated game ..." and for it to be successful involves "... a large investment in the design and set-up of the gamified environment" (p. 316). GBL, on the other hand, does not require systematic implementation, can use a range of game applications and focuses more on enhancing the learning experience and on gaining skills and knowledge (Furdu et al., 2017).

Quizzes are becoming increasingly used in education (Nguyen & McDaniel, 2015), but Davis et al. (2009) note there has been discourse around games in the classroom since at least the 1980s. In fact, the relationship between learning and play is longstanding and predates the digital era, considering the work of cognitive psychologists Jean Piaget (1973) and Lev Vygotsky (1978) who proposed that play is crucial in cognitive development from birth through to adulthood.

Davis et al. (2009) firstly cite Haun (1985) who reported several benefits of using games in the classroom, including teaching students alternative techniques to studying and motivating students to learn instead of simply memorizing. Participating in games makes learning a personal and direct experience which aligns with the influential work of Kolb (1984) and his notion of experiential learning. Linked to Kolb's work is Piaget's (1973) concept of constructivism, which suggests that learners actively construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and interactions. Quizzes are a tool through which this idea can be applied, i.e., quizzes allow learners to build new knowledge upon their existing cognitive frameworks. Additionally, educators are free to act as facilitators, guiding learners to explore ideas and draw conclusions themselves rather than through a didactic manner. The social element of a live quiz supports Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (1978), which emphasizes the role of peers or guided support from a more knowledgeable other in learners achieving an understanding beyond their individual capabilities.

In the context of social work education, Elsherbiny and Al Maamari (2020) in their study with 48 social work students, conducted a quantitative, quasi-experimental study which aimed to examine GBL's effectiveness in enhancing student learning. The findings suggested that GBL had a positive effect on the experimental group as, evidenced by their improved academic performance when their teaching was integrated with GBL smartphone applications, compared to that of the control group. Similar results were found by Kirzner et al. (2021) who evaluated the use of online quizzes to reinforce learning on research methods in face-to-face classes with 36 social work students, via a mixed methods survey-based design. The students completed online quizzes at the end of each class session as part of the study, using an online GBL platform like Quizizz, called "Kahoot!." The researchers discovered that most students found the quizzes enjoyable and helpful with their learning and retention.

Research on GBL quizzes in social work education is limited (Elsherbiny & Al Maamari, 2020), and only relatively recently conducted, with the earliest relevant research that could be identified published in by Quinn (2010). In Quinn's study, 126 undergraduate social work students responded to a survey regarding their experiences of using a student response system (or clicker) in one of their modules. The system was an electronic device with a keypad which allowed students to respond to questions integrated into the lecture slides. The responses would be displayed on the main screen in the classroom almost immediately. Quinn found that students felt that the clickers supported them to participate more. It also seemed that displaying the overall class responses to questions was helpful in facilitating class discussion.

Additional reporting on GBL and social work comes in the form of a teaching note by Lichtenwalter and Baker (2010), focusing on how the block-stacking game Jenga was adapted to facilitate learning about oppression and structural inequality. The study was done with a group of 12 to 25 mainly White, middle-class undergraduate social work students. The players (students) engaged with the game under different rules, representing varying levels of privilege and disadvantage. Lichtenwalter and Baker (2010) concluded that the activity provided a creative and impactful way for social work educators to discuss complex topics like oppression, privilege, and social justice.

More specific research on the use of quizzes within pre- and post-qualifying social work education within a UK context appears not to have been examined, with most of the existing studies on the use of the tool seemingly focusing on other applied professions, such as nursing and healthcare. A review of the use of quizzes in medical education showed that quizzes could enhance the active participation of students by promoting healthy competition and discussion between peers and improving student learning, comprehension, and retention (Dengri et al., 2021). Henning et al. (2019) conducted a study

evaluating the impact of "feedback quizzes" on the experiences and academic performance of undergraduate pharmacy students at a university in Australia. The researchers found that quizzes, whether formative or summative, administered in-class or outside class, can enhance learning and performance.

Tan et al. (2017) authored a review of 26 papers to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of "serious games" [games designed for education and training] in nursing education, assessing their educational outcomes, game design, and implementation strategies. The authors found that serious games could help to improve knowledge retention, critical thinking, and engagement among nursing students. Similar findings were discovered in a systematic review by Gentry et al. (2019), who examined 30 studies including randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and cluster RCTs, on serious gaming and gamification education in health professions. The review found that serious gaming is at least as effective as traditional learning methods and, in many cases, more effective for improving knowledge, skills, and satisfaction. However, the researchers acknowledged that the evidence-base is mostly of low quality, indicating a need for more rigorous research.

The limited research in GBL in social work education provides an opportunity for further study to explore how it can be effectively integrated into social work curricula to enhance student engagement and attainment, and perhaps how it may help to nurture practical skills. It is hoped that the current study will give valuable insights and contribute to the development of innovative teaching methods in social work education within the UK and similar territories.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using a semi-structured focus group immediately at the end of the quiz, to gather feedback on the TPEs' experiences of using a live quiz as a formative assessment tool. The sample size consisted of two cohorts of approximately 80% female TPEs totaling 50 participants across the 2021–22 and 2022–23 academic years using purposive sampling. No specific data regarding the ethnic backgrounds of the trainees were specifically gathered as part of the study unfortunately, although via the researcher's observations and knowledge of the trainees based on discussion she had with them, it can be said that they appeared to come from various heritages, including White European (including the UK), Black African, Black Caribbean, and South Asian, with most trainees falling into the first three groups.

One cohort played the quiz during a live online session (2021–22 year), while the other cohort played during face-to-face (on-campus) delivery. Semi-structured focus groups allowed for the researcher to follow a predefined set of questions to guide the discussion while maintaining the flexibility to allow the

conversation to flow naturally and explore emerging themes (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

A topic guide was created using the quiz report as a starting point, e.g.: "From completing the quiz and reviewing your score, what are your reflections on your knowledge of social work theory?" Other questions focused on the TPEs thoughts on the effectiveness of the quiz as a formative assessment tool, their engagement level, and any challenges encountered.

The researcher adopted an inductive approach to understand how the TPEs perceived and interacted with the quiz without imposing any assumptions about their effectiveness or impact. Shaw and Gould (2002) write that the cultivation of openness is a strong feature of the inductive approach. By doing this, the researcher allowed for themes to naturally emerge from the data. It was intended that the findings might inform a broader consideration of effective assessment tools in social work education and contribute to theory-building on how assessments impact professional development.

The aims of the study were therefore broad:

(1) Explore TPEs' perceptions of a live quiz as a tool for assessing their learning;
(2) Explore how live quizzes impact TPEs' engagement with the learning material;
(3) Contribute to the knowledge base on effective assessment practices in social work education.

Discussions were audio-recorded using online software with trainees' consent and the researcher took her own notes. Pseudonyms were assigned to the TPEs during the transcription process, i.e., those TPEs in the on-campus group were assigned "OCTPE," and those in the virtual delivery group, "VTPE," and then a number. The TPEs' feedback in the course evaluation forms (where they referred to the quiz) submitted at the end of the course (12 altogether across both groups), and the transcribed in-class discussions were analyzed using the Braun and Clarke (2006) method of thematic analysis. This process involved the author familiarizing herself with the data by re-reading the content to gain a deep understanding of the material, with interesting elements of data relevant to the research aims identified and given a code. Codes were collated and grouped into potential themes based on similarities. The themes were then reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the codes assigned, and finally the themes were named as per those in the Findings and Discussion section of this paper.

As part of the course evaluation paperwork, a consent form was included which clarified to the trainees how some/all of their feedback may be used. TPEs were assured that they could withdraw consent for their data to be used without penalty. Data as to the trainees' age, ethnic, and socio-economic

background were not collected. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the researcher's university ethics panel.

Quizizz website

"Quizizz" is an online GBL platform that promotes learning in a very engaging way. It hosts quizzes that operate as a live quiz show with music and attractive graphics. It is not unique as a teaching and learning tool – online platforms such as the well-known "Kahoot!" is one of the most popular online GBL platforms with more than 10 billion non-unique participants in more than 200 countries and regions (Kahoot!, online, 2024). Similar to Kahoot!, Quizizz uses a combination of participant responses, video and audiovisual aids to promote higher levels of engagement and learning. However, unlike Kahoot!, Quizizz [as of 2024] allows more than 10 participants in a quiz at the same time without a paid-for subscription. Other advantages of Quizizz over Kahoot! or other quiz platforms such as Quizlet are that Quizizz provides valuable data-driven insights that can significantly enhance the teaching and learning process. It provides detailed reports on student performance at both the individual and class levels. It also offers a variety of customizable quiz formats, including different question types (e.g., multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, video-based questions) which support inclusivity in the classroom.

The author used Quizizz to prepare eight multiple-choice questions based on various social work theories. TPEs were required to use the information presented to confirm the theory being described. Quizizz allows participants to play anonymously or not. The author opted to use the anonymous feature to allow each trainee to participate freely without concern about their performance being made known to the others. It also brought some humor to the task as the anonymous feature meant that participant names were randomly generated, resulting in names such as "Cinnamon Crusoe" and "Rhubarb Dolores."

A question can have two to four answers where one or more can be correct. There is a time limit for students to answer the question, a choice of whether participants can earn points or not for a question, and an image or YouTube video can be added to a question for additional illustration. Participants are required to use an internet-enabled device to access the quiz. Once the quiz is ready to be played, a unique code is allocated to it and participants can be directed to the Quizizz website where they enter the code to join the quiz. There is no need for participants to register for an account beforehand (although registration is required to create a quiz).

The "Host" - in this case the author, starts the quiz from their administrator screen. As each participant joins, the participation number shown on the "Host" screen increases and once the required number has been reached, the host starts the quiz. The questions are shown on the host's

main screen, i.e., the screen in the classroom or, if the session is being held virtually, the main/sharing screen. The participants' own device – usually a secondary device, becomes their "buzzer," i.e., the way in which they select what they think is the correct answer. As each question is completed, a leader board is shown on the main screen allowing participants to see how their answers are changing their ranking, adding to the sense of fun and competition. An overall leaderboard is shown at the end, and the host has access to a report showing how each question was answered thereby giving quick feedback as to areas of strength and weakness.

It is this report that formed the basis of the post-quiz discussions held, in keeping with the idea that reflection on an experiential learning activity potentially facilitates the integration of experiences and knowledge (Jordi, 2011), something the TPEs should be looking to encourage in their own students. Additional comments were gleaned from the end of course evaluation forms wherein 12 trainees from the virtual delivery group commented specifically on the quiz, as did 9 from the on-campus delivery group.

Findings and discussion

Theme 1: positive perceptions of the live quiz and its ability to assess their learning

Feedback from the trainees about the quiz was widely positive and illustrated that the trainees valued it as a method of evaluating their knowledge. The quiz was an excellent "ice breaker" to begin rich conversations about the TPEs' knowledge of social work theories. Across both cohorts, using data from the post-quiz discussions and course feedback forms, most trainees found the quiz enjoyable. Many were surprised that they knew more than they thought they did, and for others, it confirmed their view that they needed to "go back to the books" - they had become motivated to update their knowledge. One of the TPEs from the group who experienced the PE course virtually commented on their module evaluation form: *"I really enjoyed the quiz! It was fun and encouraged me to look at the theories summary table we were given so I could be more informed with my student,"* (VTPE 12). Another said, *"It's given me some ideas about using it in work"* (OCTPE7). OCTPE 2, a participant in the on-campus delivery group, when asked what they would have wanted more of during the program, said: *"More quizzes! They were a fun way of testing our knowledge and good [sic] that it's all anonymous."*

While the author could not see or hear the trainees as the quiz was played during the virtual delivery of the program, in the discussion group held after the quiz, the TPEs frequently described the quiz as "fun," "engaging," and "interactive." Comments in the discussion included: *"It was a way of testing*

our knowledge like you would in an exam but it wasn't an exam which was good. We could relax" (VTPE 6). VTPE 4 said: *"Yeah I agree, it wasn't something that raised anxiety levels."*

The author's observations of the group during the on-campus delivery triangulated the feedback obtained from the virtual cohort that the activity was enjoyable. The on-campus trainees all appeared enthusiastic with many smiles on their faces, an eagerness to see what the correct answer was, and cheers (with some occasional groans) when the answer was revealed.

The author's observations and the end of quiz report lead the author to propose that the trainees found participating in GBL was helpful in assessing their learning, in line with one of the aims of this study. It also significantly improved engagement with the learning materials. Every TPE in the virtual setting participated in the activity, something that can be hard to achieve consistently and at a high level when teaching online. One hundred percent quiz participation was also achieved with the on-campus cohort. The quiz allowed for all TPEs to participate and under the cover of anonymity, something that came up in the focus group discussions across both cohorts: *"It was good that we didn't use our real names as I would have been embarrassed if everyone knew I hadn't done well. It took the pressure off"* (VTPE 3). Another TPE commented: *"I liked that it was anonymous, it would have been good if we could get our own results to takeaway so we could take time to see what we need to improve on"* (OCTPE5). This appears to support the Plass et al. (2015) notion of "graceful failure" – having a safe space to fail without major consequences.

The feedback discussions featured questions about why the answer to question X was "solution focused approach" rather than "motivational interviewing" for instance and, as might be expected of a lecturer wanting to challenge her learners, the question was put back to the group for others to answer. This peer teaching approach allows for the more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978) to explain the answer and allows those who are unsure to hopefully understand and feel more confident to re-articulate that in discussions they would have with their own student if they were to ask a similar question.

The end-of-quiz performance statistics showed that 67% of the virtual cohort and 59% of the face-to-face cohort got half or more of the questions correct. It was clear that, as the author suspected before the quiz, the trainees did know more than they thought. The activity itself, as well as the subsequent discussions, support the author's view that the activity was a useful tool to assess learning. The statistics report provided detailed information on learner performance on individual questions, allowing the author to understand which questions the TPEs struggled with the most, which helped to identify any trends around topics that needed additional review in class. Studies by Stowell and

Bennett (2010) and Zainuddin et al. (2020) indicate that when they are used regularly, quizzes can help encourage continuous study, leading to better performance on summative assessments.

There were some gaps in the TPEs' knowledge and so in anticipation of that the author produced a quick reference social work theories document. The document summarized the key social work theories that the TPEs could access after the session via the program's virtual learning environment (VLE). Upon reviewing the VLE usage statistics, the author discovered that, on average, 58% of the TPEs across both cohorts had logged-in to the VLE at the point the quiz was delivered – a typical rate for the course. One week after the quiz, that figure had risen to 81% on average, with the biggest "spike" in log-ins within a two-day window after the quiz, a phenomenon that had not occurred previously.

Prior to the quiz, the most "popular" document on the VLE had been accessed on average by 15 different users across both cohorts. However, after the quiz, and indeed by the end of the program, the quick reference social work theories document had become the most accessed file on the VLE, being downloaded by 22 different TPEs on average across both groups. It appears that the trainees were encouraged to use the document to refresh their knowledge and as a source for further research as the author had hoped. During the discussion groups, the TPEs were appreciative of the learning experience and many said they were keen to use the quick reference guide in supervision with their students.

The group discussions were helpful in supporting the trainees to begin to critically reflect on their relationship with social work theories, and on their ability to influence student learning. Walker and Gant (2021) write that "critical reflection allows practitioners to develop learning from experiences and events that can then be used to strengthen professional practice" (p. 310). This also provides an opportunity for the trainees to broadly go through Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, moving through concrete experience (the quiz), reflective observation (post-quiz discussions), abstract conceptualization (ideas generated based on learning from the quiz), and active experimentation (implementing the ideas/learning). By integrating Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle into GBL, the researcher has attempted to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes active participation, critical thinking, and continuous improvement.

In relation to the research study's aim to investigate how a live quiz impacted TPEs' engagement with the learning material, it was evident that there was a significant positive impact in this regard. Interestingly, some of the TPEs were able to see the benefit of the quiz in other contexts as the next theme discusses.

Theme 2: making links to other areas of practice learning/education

A comment from one TPE led to the quiz potentially not only impacting within the cohort of PEs but also within the PEs' various placement settings in ways in which the author had not envisaged. The original aim of implementing GBL was to get the TPEs to think about what they knew about theory in a lighthearted way. However, when one trainee in the online 2021–22 cohort asked if she could have a copy of the quiz to do with her own student, it initiated another discussion thread with various ideas being put forward as to how the theories quiz, and quizzes more broadly, could be used in placement and in supervision. This was an unintended consequence of the quiz on the author's part, but one that was pleasing to hear, especially as the idea was generated organically by one of the trainees. The TPE commented that she could see the value in completing the activity with her student and using the results from the quiz to help her [the TPE] pinpoint where she should direct her efforts in improving the student's knowledge.

The group discussions were fruitful in terms of the ideas they generated for use in unintended ways by the author. It was clear that, as per McInroy (2021), allowing the trainees to think reflexively about how they might use ICT [information and communication/s technology] in their practice is a useful activity.

The author shared with the trainees that the quiz can be structured to be played individually with no time restriction on each question – a "homework" task, for example, that could be discussed later in a supervision session. This encouraged the TPEs to think about how they could be more creative in supervision, ensuring different tools were used to enhance students' learning and development, which would hopefully lead to higher-quality practice and better outcomes for service users. One TPE said: *"It got me thinking about how else I could use this to help assess my student's learning . . ."* (OCTPE1). Another said: *"I can see the value in looking at different ways of teaching your student something"* (OCTPE13). A colleague in the online cohort commented: *"I think students would like something like this to support their learning. They could do a quiz near the start* [of placement] *and then again later down the line to hopefully see their own progression"* (VTPE7).

One thread of the on-campus cohort discussion was on how quizzes may be used with several students, i.e., in a group supervision scenario. Some of the TPEs would, in the future, work with more than one student at a time as is the custom in particular models of pre-qualifying training where several student social workers are placed in a setting in a "unit model" overseen by one practice educator. *"Yeah . . . this could be something that works with a group of students where you wanna get a sense quickly of their knowledge or belief on something without anyone feeling embarrassed"* (OCTPE8), one TPE said.

> "I see what you mean," said OCTPE11, "You could do it [a quiz] after they've finished their induction to check what they learnt".

In considering the final aim of this study which was to contribute to the knowledge base on effective assessment practices in social work education, the feedback from the trainees suggests quizzes offer several benefits, one being the opportunity for immediate feedback and self-assessment. One of the reasons the author chose a live quiz as opposed to a "pen and paper" method was knowing the quiz would provide dynamic and immediate feedback that could be used to inform the direction of the rest of the teaching session (and beyond possibly). Enders et al. (2021) write that providing detailed, structured feedback for both correct and incorrect quiz responses can be beneficial to students. The immediacy of the feedback can promote self-awareness regarding knowledge gaps, which is particularly valuable in social work, where accurate knowledge and self-reflection are essential for ethical and safe practice. Assessing the TPEs' feedback in this study, the author would suggest that when designed to be interactive and relevant, quizzes can stimulate student engagement, making learning more active and motivating.

Theme 3: ability to use technology as part of social work practice

Linked to the previous theme of the trainees' building links to other areas of practice, were points around their confidence in using a platform like Quizizz as part of their practice. Feedback across both groups suggested that many of the trainees had had previous experience of participating in live quizzes, for example with family and friends during gatherings such as over the festive season. A few trainees, though, commented that they had never thought about using a quiz or technology as part of their practice. Some trainees felt they could create a quiz themselves that could be used with a student/s; and one trainee even considered how it might be used with service users: *"I've done this kind of quiz before and I've always enjoyed it. I never thought about using it as part of my role/as part of work. It could be really useful"* (VCTPE4). VCTPE5 commented: *"I'll play around with this and see how I could use this with some of the young people I work with."* Another TPE said: *"I'm going to use it with my student"* (VCTPE7).

While some trainees were confident about using the platform, others felt they did not have the technical ability to do so, i.e., their digital literacy level was low (Pentaris et al., 2021). OCTPE10 shared: *I can see how this could be useful but I wouldn't be able to do this myself, I'd need help. I dunno about these techy things."* Another TPE said: *"It was easy to take part [in the quiz] but I'd need my kids to help me create my own quiz and I wouldn't want to bother them"* (OCTPE1). One trainee in the virtual delivery group echoed the

sentiment with others agreeing that they did not have the skills to use Quizizz or a similar application to support their practice.

It was noted by the chief executive of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) following the launch of a project to improve practitioners' digital skills that there was "a lot of anxiety" around the use of technology within the sector (cited by Haynes, 2019). The digital knowledge and skills of the UK workforce have been found to be problematic at the pre- and post-qualifying social work levels (Pentaris et al., 2021). This also appears to be a problem in the American context as Bullock and Colvin (2015) note.

The TPEs' discussions around use of technology have led the author to consider the importance of post-qualifying social work courses supporting and developing the ICT skills of staff so they can keep up with the fast-changing environment that they operate in.

Based on the author's experience of working with post-qualified social workers and other staff across several London-based local authorities, it is now common, since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, for social workers (and students) to have a blended model of work – working from home for some of the time each week/month. Practice educators therefore must be creative about how they execute the teaching and assessing elements of their role. More tools are needed for their "toolkit" and these tools need to be flexible for use in, and effective for, the blended working environment.

Opportunities to integrate technology into social work courses as a teaching tool and for learners to gain "hands on" experience of technology, that in the case of TPEs at least, could be used in practice learning, could see improvements to the noted digital skills deficit.

Ethical and pedagogical considerations

Pentaris et al. (2021) explain that digital poverty refers to (lack of) access to electronic equipment. Taylor-Beswick (2021) notes that the pandemic has intensified the digital divide between the haves and have-nots. The "cost-of-living crisis" in the UK which has seen the energy price cap rise by 54% in April 2022 (with another rise since then), inflation at 11.1% in October 2022, with the figure dropping to a still-high rate of 6.8% in July 2023 (Harari et al., 2023), is likely to push the divide even wider. People will have difficult decisions to make about how much internet data they can afford (if they can afford it at all). Taylor-Beswick (2021) writes that the profession needs to consider how it can examine and address the new and unfamiliar social injustices caused by digital technologies. Social work employers and practitioners will need to be sensitive and responsive to the digital poverty and literacy status of their staff and the service users in their community, adapting practices accordingly.

It is acknowledged that in the challenging financial times we are facing in the UK, it should not be assumed that everyone owns a smartphone, and if they do, they may not have adequate data allowance to participate in online activities. Educators will need to take these matters into account when planning to implement an internet-based quiz in their teaching. The author has not so far encountered learners who do not have a mobile phone or who have no or limited internet access, however should this be found, learners would be directed to connect to the university's free Wi-Fi network, or to do the quiz activity in pairs or small groups - creating a "team against team" atmosphere and an opportunity for enhanced group discussions which can enhance critical thinking skills as learners evaluate and challenge each other's ideas.

Implementing GBL in educational settings can bring numerous benefits, but it also presents some pedagogical challenges, two of which will now be briefly described. Firstly, developing and implementing high-quality educational games can take significant time and effort (financial resources too if GBL is to be used to its full capabilities). Educators may lack the necessary skills to create effective games, which may mean that what is produced is not appropriate for the intended learning and/or assessment outcomes, something Jääskä & Aaltonen (2022) also described in their work regarding teachers' experiences of using GBL in higher education. Training and support in this area, perhaps from the university's teaching enhancement or e-learning team or similar, would be essential to effectively integrate GBL into teaching practices. This includes understanding how to use the games, how to facilitate learning through games, and how to assess learner progress.

Another challenge is overcoming notions about the value of games in education. Universities are generally known as places where traditional methods of teaching take place – lectures primarily, albeit their prominence is waning (Marshall, 2019). Some educators and indeed learners may view GBL as less serious or effective compared to traditional methods. Ashton and Stone (2021) note that it "should not be assumed that students will be happy to carry out an [active learning] activity without a clear rationale for to doing so' (p. 7). Changing these perceptions requires an approach involving collaboration among educators, academic practice developers, and researchers to create and implement effective GBL. Financial investments would likely also be required from institutions to maximize the impact of GBL – purchasing the full features of a platform, for example, and/or investing in internet-enabled devices so the digital poverty scenario aforementioned can be combatted.

Despite the challenges, the author would suggest that strong attention be given to overcoming these hurdles as GBL appears to offer several worthwhile benefits including providing valuable opportunities to increase learner engagement and providing quick, targeted feedback. This feedback can help to identify areas where learners need additional support and where teaching methods may need to be adjusted, thereby leading to more learner-focused

teaching which, it would be hoped, would result in improved educational outcomes.

Future considerations

One future development with the implementation of quizzes in the practice educator course is to have the TPEs create their own quiz/e-teaching activity. This ideally would be done in carefully matched pairs or small groups to encourage creative collaboration which supports professional development (Hobbs & Coiro, 2016). Activities would then be swapped with other pairs or groups to try out and comment on before being used with students. The activities could contribute to a "bank" of activities that all trainees could have open access to, benefitting not just the group of TPEs, but future groups of trainees and student social workers as well.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the end-of-course evaluation did not specifically ask the TPEs to provide feedback on their participation in, and use of the quiz in either their PE course, practice, or more generally in the placement setting, therefore, not all trainees fed-back on this. Some trainees across both groups did not contribute in the focus group style discussions either after the quiz. This was more of an issue with the virtual delivery cohort (nine non-participants) than with the on-campus cohort where all but five students contributed. This was perhaps the case as it is often easier to "hide" in a large group online. These drawbacks mean the feedback from the TPEs was not as comprehensive as it could have been. For future delivery, it is planned that the TPEs would complete a pre-course questionnaire to give a baseline as to their knowledge on topics related to practice education including social work theories. The end-of-course evaluation form also now includes questions on the quiz, and on the TPEs self-assessed knowledge post-course delivery.

Finally, no specific data regarding the ethnic backgrounds of the trainees were specifically gathered as part of the study, nor was information on the trainees' age range collected. The author acknowledges that different age groups and ethnic backgrounds might have unique responses to GBL therefore the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all students. Future cohorts will be requested to indicate their age range and ethnic background.

The above amendments, with the continued use of the focus groups, will help to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the quiz's effectiveness. The author recognizes that having comprehensive data is essential for informed decision-making by institutions looking to implement GBL.

Conclusion

The author would suggest that live quizzes can reflect and support core social work values for example, by promoting self-awareness and encouraging a positive learning environment. This directly relates to key aspects of social work practice as set out in frameworks and standards such as the PCF, the overarching framework of social work education and professional development in England. For example, the PCF requires that social workers "... apply anti-oppressive principles in practice ..." (domain 3), "... apply relevant knowledge from social work practice and research ..." (domain 5), and "... contribute to the development of organisations and services" (domain 8) (BASW, 2018).

The use of a live quiz in the teaching of TPEs saw clear positive effects on participation levels, motivation, and the generation of creative ideas among the two groups who participated in it. These benefits, plus the quiz's adaptability and ability to assess learners in a way that minimizes anxiety, mean that it could be a useful and efficient tool to assess knowledge in a more person-centered way. The quiz opened initially unintended discussion threads around how quizzes may be used in the placement setting and in practice more generally. This suggests that there may be an opportunity for practice educators to use quizzes to contribute to the learning and development of a team which, in turn, impacts on the wider organization and, of course, service users.

If teaching staff can produce social work practice educators who have experienced the benefits of creativity and innovation in teaching and assessment, it is reasonable to hope that some of those benefits would also be experienced by the student social workers the educators supervise. Rawles (2021) notes that practice educators' pedagogical approach plays a crucial role in influencing a positive learning environment.

By integrating quizzes as part of a broader assessment strategy within the classroom and beyond, a more holistic approach to learning in social work education can be created, combining knowledge, reflection, and real-time assessment – ultimately contributing to the preparation of competent, self-aware, and reflective social work practitioners.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

Ashton, S., & Stone, R. (2021). *An A-Z of creative teaching in higher education*. SAGE Publications.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

British Association of Social Workers. (2018). *Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)*. [online]: https://basw.co.uk/training-cpd/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf

British Association of Social Workers. (2020). Digital capabilities statement. [online]: https://www.basw.co.uk/digital-capabilities-statement-social-workers

Bullock, A. N., & Colvin, A. D. (2015). Communication technology integration into social work practice. *Advances in Social Work*, *16*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.18060/18259

Davis, T. M., Shepherd, B., & Zwiefelhofer, T. (2009). Reviewing for exams: Do crossword puzzles help in the success of student learning? *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, *9*(3), 4–10.

Dengri, C., Gill, A., Chopra, J., Dengri, C., Koritala, T., Khedr, A., Korsapati, A. R., Adhikari, R., Jain, S., Zec, S., Chand, M., Kashyap, R., Pattan, V., Khan, S. A., & Jain, N. K. (2021). A review of the quiz, as a new dimension in medical education. *Cureus*, *13*(10), e18854. https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.18854

Elsherbiny, M. M. K., & Al Maamari, R. H. (2020). Game-based learning through mobile phone apps: Effectively enhancing learning for social work students. *Social Work Education*, *40*(3), 315–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1737665

Enders, C. K., Enders, C., & Enders, C. (2021). Online quizzes with closed questions in formal assessment. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, *20*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475725720971205

Furdu, I., Tomozei, C., & Köse, U. (2017). Pros and cons gamification and gaming in classroom. *BRAIN: Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, *8*(2), 56–62.

Gentry, S. V., Gauthier, A., L'Estrade Ehrstrom, B., Wortley, D., Lilienthal, A., Car, L. T., & Car, J. (2019). Serious gaming and gamification education in health professions: Systematic review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *21*(3), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.2196/12994

Harari, D., Francis-Devine, B., Bolton, P., & Keep, M. (2023). *Rising cost of living in the UK*. House of Commons Library. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9428/CBP-9428.pdf.

Haun, M. W. (1985). Parliamentary puzzles as a teaching methodology cited. In T. M. Davis, B. Shepherd, & T. Zwiefelhofer (Eds). (2009) 'Reviewing for exams: Do crossword puzzles help in the success of student learning?',The Journal of Effective Teaching, 9(3), 4–10.

Haynes, L. (2019). *Social work sector must embrace technology or risk being 'left behind', says BASW chief* [online]. https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2019/06/06/social-work-sector-must-embrace-technology-risk-left-behind-says-basw-chief/#:~:text=Initiative%20to%20improve%20social%20workers,new%20set%20of%20digital%20capabilities&text=Social%20workers%20must%20become%20more,Workers%20(BASW)%20has%20warned

Henning, J., Ballen, C., Molina, S., & Cotner, S. (2019). Hidden Identities shape student perceptions of active learning environments. *Frontiers in Education*, *4*. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00129

Higgins, M. (2014). Can practice educators be a 'bridge' between the academy and the practicum? *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, *12*(3), 62–78. https://doi.org/10.1921/jpts.v12i3.294

Hobbs, R., & Coiro, J. (2016). Everyone learns from everyone: Collaborative and interdisciplinary professional development in digital literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *59*(6), 623–629. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.502

Jääskä, E., & Aaltonen, K. (2022). Teachers' experiences of using game-based learning methods in project management higher education. *Project Leadership and Society*, *3*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.plas.2022.100041

Jordi, R. (2011). Reframing the concept of reflection: Consciousness, experiential learning, and reflective learning practices. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *61*(2), 181–197. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713610380439

Kirzner, R. S., Alter, T., & Hughes, C. A. (2021). Online quiz as exit ticket: Using technology to reinforce learning in face to face classes. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, *41*(2), 151–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2021.1898521

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks.

Lichtenwalter, S., & Baker, P. (2010). Teaching note: Teaching about oppression through jenga: a game-based learning example for social work educators. *Journal of Social Work Education*, *46*(2), 305–313. https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2010.200800080

Marshall, S. (2019). *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: Enhancing academic practice* (4th ed.). Routledge.

McInroy, L. B. (2021). Teaching technology competencies: A social work practice with technology course. *Journal of Social Work Education*, *57*(3), 545–556. https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1671272

Misseyanni, A., Miltiadis, D., Lytras, P. P., & Marouli, C. (2018). *Active learning strategies in higher education: Teaching for leadership, innovation and creativity*. Emerald Publishing.

Narey, M. (2014). *Making the education of social workers consistently effective, report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers*. Secretary of State for Education [Online]. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287756/Making_the_education_of_social_workers_consistently_effective.pdf

Nguyen, K., & McDaniel, M. A. (2015). Using quizzing to assist student learning in the classroom: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Teaching of Psychology*, *42*(1), 87–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628314562685

Parker, J. (2007). Developing effective practice learning for tomorrow's social workers. *Social Work Education*, *26*(8), 763–779. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470601140476

Pentaris, P., Raja, M., Hanna, S., & Oresanya, A. (2021). *Social work education and training in England in 2020-21. Social work England*. https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/media/4098/social-work-education-and-training-in-england-in-2020-21-report_accessible.pdf

Piaget, J. (1973). *To understand is to invent: The future of education*. Grossman.

Plass, J. L., Homer, B. D., & Kinzer, C. K. (2015). Foundations of game-based learning. *Educational Psychologist*, *50*(4), 258–283. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2015.1122533

Quinn, A. (2010). An exploratory study of opinions on clickers and class participation from students of human behavior in the social environment. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *20*(6), 721–731. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911351003749102

Rawles, J. (2021). How social work students develop the skill of professional judgement: Implications for practice educators. *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, *17*(3), 10–30. https://doi.org/10.1921/jpts.v17i3.1445

Shaw, I., & Gould, N. (Eds.). (2002). *Qualitative research in social work*. SAGE Publications Limited.

Sieminski, S., & Seden, J. (2011). An exploration of how some tutors use learning materials to enable student social workers to link theory to practice while learning in the workplace. *Social Work Education*, *30*(7), 797–810. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2010.512658

Stowell, J. R., & Bennett, D. (2010). Effects of online testing on student exam performance and test anxiety. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, *42*(2), 161–171. https://doi.org/10.2190/EC.42.2.b

Tan, A. J. Q., Lau, C. C. S., & Liaw, S. Y. (2017). *Serious games in nursing education: An integrative review. 2017 9th international conference on virtual worlds and games for serious applications (VS-Games)* (pp. 187–188). https://doi.org/10.1109/VS-GAMES.2017.8056599

Taylor-Beswick, A. M. L. (2021). D. Turner (Ed.), *Social work, technologies and covid-19*, *Social work, technologies and covid-19* (pp. 7–14). Critical Publishing.

Taylor-Beswick, A. M. L. (2022). Digitalizing social work education: preparing students to engage with twenty-first century practice need. *Social Work Education*, *42*(1), 44–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2022.2049225

Taylor-Beswick, A. M. L. (2021). Social work, technologies and covid-19. In D. Turner (Ed.), *Social work and covid-19 lessons for education and practice*. Critical Publishing.

Thompson, N., & Stepney, P. (Eds.). (2017). *Social work theory and methods: The essentials*. Routledge.

Trevithick, P. (2000). *Social work skills: A practice handbook*. Open University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Walker, J., & Gant, V. (2021). Social work students sharing practice learning experiences: critical reflection as process and method. *Practice*, *33*(4), 309–327. https://doi.org/10.1080/09503153.2021.1902973

Zainuddin, Z., Shujahat, M., Haruna, H., & Kai Wah Chu, S. (2020). The role of gamified e-quizzes on student learning and engagement: An interactive gamification solution for a formative assessment system. *Computers & Education*, *145*, 145–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103729