

*Bridging social work professional
education and community work through
co-learning and participation in Parenting
Programmes*

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Overview

Challenges for social work and social work education and the de-radicalising of practice

Introduction to Families and Schools Together (FAST), and evidence based Parenting Project

Report of interim findings from a pilot project that placed Social Work students as community partners in FAST

Implications for promoting co-productive approaches using transformative pedagogies in social work education

Social Work and Social Justice

- **Shifting context for social work and its social justice orientation** (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2014)
 - paradigm of bureau-technical rationalism
 - reform and standardisation of social work education

“I am not suggesting that the role of disadvantage and inequality in exacerbating poor parenting and child neglect or abuse should not be discussed at university. But it is vital that social work education for those working with children is not dominated by theories of non-oppressive practice, empowerment and partnership”. (Narey, 2014)

- **Achieving integration of practice at micro and macro level**
- **The impact on curricula on students interest in social activism and research findings on social work pedagogies** (Kaufman et al, 2012)

Social work with children and families

- Messages from serious case reviews and return to relationship based practice (Munro, 2011)
- Principles of co-production and empowering enabling practice (Needham and Carr, 2009)



Co-production (SCIE, 2013)

- define people who use services as assets with skills
- break down the barriers between people who use services and professionals
- build on people's existing capabilities
- include reciprocity (where people get something back for having done something for others) and mutuality (people working together to achieve their shared interests)
- work with peer and personal support networks alongside professional networks
- facilitate services through change rather than just providing

What is the FAST Programme?

- Universal evidence based parenting programme
- Whole family approach
- Collaborative team – school partners, parent partners and community partners
- 8 weekly sessions for families
- First cycle of programme is evaluated through pre and post questionnaires; parents and teachers
- After the weekly sessions end parents lead a monthly community group FASTWORKS
- Chilwell Croft:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPPbFpOR7QI>
- SC NI Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyCCuls226Q>

Community Partners in FAST Teams

Community partners can be professionals such as: social workers, health, mental health, drug and alcohol workers or non professional who live in the area.

It is a recommendation of the programme that at least one team member is a social worker.



FAST in the UK

	Children Reached	Families Reached
Region		
North of England	4163	2064
South of England	4047	2080
Wales	1477	751
Scotland	1541	919
N Ireland	1702	995
Total	12930	6809

Bridging the gap – Project Outline

- 17 students in 6 schools
- 2 day team training
- Project aims to be completed.....
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Aligned with Community Project Module

- Theories about ‘communities’ and range of project work
- Skills of inquiry, synthesis into nature of social problems
- Assessed by portfolio illustrating theories to practice



Project Evaluation

- Funded by in-house small grant
- Ethical issues



Action research design capturing data from:

- Online surveys before and after placement
- Focus group with students mid-placement
- Students digital diaries at week 1, 5 and 8
- Telephone interviews with the hosting HUB members
- Analysis of students critical commentaries and reflections within their summative portfolios

Interim Finding: Theme 1

Negotiating professional identity

- Building Trust
- Articulating social work values

“ I really didn’t even think about how parents would view us, that was a surprise to me. The general topics we talked about were what goes on at home, and they just wanted to get advice from each other about what happens at home and how to deal with it” .

“Parents started telling you things when they get to know you – and loosened up. They even told us, when we hear about social workers we think they are taking our kids and looking at how we parent our kids. We had to really explain their reasons for being there, we were learning too”

Interim Findings: Theme 2

The levelling effect of participation and taking part

“Speaking to parents – found that a bit awkward, but over a few weeks, sort of got the hang of it. Yes so it was learning how to speak to the parent and not tell them what to do. I will probably take that into my placement, not belittle them or not make them think they have not done their job properly”

“Cos it was outside London, I thought oh my gosh are they going to have a bad impression of us, I was worried they might not like us, them being all white”.

Interim Findings – Theme 3



The impact of professional power relations

- **Negotiating conflict and being assertive**
- **Recognising institutionalisation**

“Had to do certain things in a certain way – it was a bit of a power struggle. As a social worker I felt like a bad guy but in the end we had to find a common way to work with the parents, so that was really good”

“Going back to the power issue, for me and the parents, I tried to give them the power by saying I was here to learn and this was helpful to share”

“Some of the staff wanted to tick that they have done it when they haven’t and I couldn’t agree to that, I had to say something. What we learned, did not take place. I became the naughty student”.

Interim Findings: Theme 4

Recognising reciprocal knowledge and learning in situ

- Adopting a social approach using humanity and respect
- Informed understanding to promote problem solving

“In week 6, one of the parents didn’t come back, said that their kids had started to play up since they started to come to FAST. I’ve got theories about that.”

“I learned something about my own parenting, when he’s playing up, trying something different, taking time in reading a book”

“Special play – was really good to connect, we learned about that in Sarah's module, taking the lead from the child. That made sense”

“We had lots of differences in the parents, all the diversity and the sharing and I really liked that part of it”

Issues and Problems

- Logistics and timing
- Testing student motivation and tenacity
- Suitability issues
- Partnership working
- Building bridges with professionals towards common goals
- Transforming pedagogies



Summary and where to next?

- Working directly with parents and their children provided a rich source of experience to inform students of the reality of parents and children's lives. They were able to give examples where they put themselves in the families shoes to explore new ways of thinking.

Social Work and Social Justice

“ To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created” .

Paulo Freire on Conscientization

Q&A

References

- More information about FAST can be found on the Middlesex University Website
http://www.mdx.ac.uk/research/health_education/nursing/projects/fast.aspx
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- Needham, C. and Carr, S. (2009) 'Co-production: an Emerging Evidence Base for Adult Social Care Transformation'. *Research Briefing no 31*. London, Social Care Institute for Excellence.

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Thank you