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How do social work students perceive their fieldwork supervision experiences?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree
of
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New Zealand.

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Abstract

Mā te whakaatu, ka mohio

Mā te mōhio, ka mārama

Mā te mārama, ka mātau

Mā te mātau, ka ora

Through discussion comes understanding

Through understanding comes light

Through light comes wisdom

Through wisdom comes wellbeing

Fieldwork practice is a vital component of social work education. Positive fieldwork supervision, based on principles of adult learning is vital to the integration of theory and practice during the fieldwork experience. A student's experiences of fieldwork supervision can shape the value they place on future supervision, thus it is essential that fieldwork supervision is experienced positively. This research focuses on the understandings seven social work students formed about their fieldwork supervision experiences. This study explores what these experiences might mean for those involved in fieldwork supervision in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This study is qualitative, utilising a phenomenological approach. Data was gathered from semi-structured interviews, and an inductive approach was used for thematic explication. Eight key findings were identified which revealed three themes which signalled the importance of; knowledge, skill, and relationship.

The findings endorse current literature about the place of fieldwork supervision in student learning, and the value of knowledge, skill and relationship in supervision. They also underscore the need for further research into cultural supervision, including the need for a review of how cultural supervision is understood and resourced in fieldwork education in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. The study also reinforces the need for contributions to the literature on fieldwork supervision, particularly exploring the student perspective. On the basis of this research six main implications are identified. This research identifies six key implications from this study, the first concerns the transferability of the findings, four concern the preparation of key stakeholders in fieldwork (namely students, fieldwork

educators, external supervisors and fieldwork coordinators), and the fifth concerns the cultural supervision and Kaupapa Māori supervision needs of all social work students in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Thus, like the opening whakataukī above suggests, it is hoped that discussion on which this study is founded provides light, understanding, and ultimately wellbeing for all those involved in and impacted by fieldwork supervision.

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