

Site-based Internship Experiences: From Research to Implementation and Community Collaboration

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Abstract : Site based field internship learning (SBL) is an educational approach within a Master's of Social Work (MSW) university field placement department that promotes a more streamlined approach to the integration of theory and evidence based practices for social work students. The SBL model is founded on research in the field, consideration of current work force needs, United States national trends of MSW graduate skill and knowledge deficits, educational trends in students pursuing a master's degree in social work, and current social problems that require unique problem solving skills. This study explores the use of site-based learning in a hybrid social work program. In this setting, site based learning pairs online education courses and social work field education to create training opportunities for social work students within their own community and cultural context. Students engage in coursework in an online setting with both synchronous and asynchronous features that facilitate development of core competencies for MSW students. Through the SBL model, students are then partnered with faculty in a virtual course room and a university vetted site within their community. The study explores how this model of learning creates community partnerships, through which students engage in a learning loop to develop social work skills, while preparing students to address current community, social, and global issues with the engagement of technology. The goal of SBL is to more effectively equip social work students for practice according to current workforce demands, provide access to education and care to populations who have limited access, and create self-sustainable partnerships. Further, the model helps students learn integration of evidence based practices and helps instructors more effectively teach integration of ethics into practice. The study found that the SBL model increases the influence and professional relevance of the social work profession, and ultimately facilitates stronger approaches to integrating theory into practice. Current implementation of the practice in the United States will be presented in the study. Additionally, future research conceptualization of SBL models will be presented, in order to collaborate on advancing best approaches of translating theory into practice, according to the current needs of the profession and needs of social work students.

Keywords : collaboration, fieldwork, research, site-based learning, technology

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