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Integrated Seminar SWK 499

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Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice.

Competency 4 calls for social workers to understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing the science of social work and in evaluating their practice.

According to the NASW, research in social work helps us:

- Assess the needs and resources of people in their environments.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of social work services in meeting people's needs.
- Advance professional education in light of changing contexts for practice.

1. *In what ways have I accomplished these competency/practice behaviors?*

I accomplished this competency by reading and conducting research about different marginalized populations and learning about theories that can help oppressed and marginalized populations in my SWK 324 foundation of Social Justice class. I highlighted the documented inequalities for the Black, Minority, and Ethnic community in the US concerning mental health care. I also discussed two theories that could be used as a tool to address the disparities within the healthcare system that disproportionately affects the B.M.E community. The theories used were Conflict theory and system theory. The theories help me understand the conflict and inequality between persons, ideas, groups, social classes, communities, and larger social structures.

2. *How has my thinking changed over time?*

My thinking has positively changed over time. I have a better understanding of the psychodynamics of human behavior presenting problems for clients. To find appropriate intervention strategies for our clients. My clients were different and faced diverse challenges, so the first step in intervention would be a search to determine the specific problem we need to address.

3. What are the practice behaviors that indicate my competency in this area?

The practice behavior that indicates my competency in this area was conducting two literature reviews to identify evidence-based practice to identify and rectify the presenting issues in my Social Justice class. I also did my research to explore if proper mental health screening and diagnosis can be used as a determining factor in lowering or preventing the incarceration of Juveniles. The study answered my research questions, what percentage of incarcerated juveniles have a diagnosable mental illness, and what type of mental illness do they suffer from?

4. What curriculum content areas (social policy, practice, etc.) relate to successfully completing this competency?

The curriculum content allowed me to become competent in this area and consisted of reading professional journal articles that relate to disenfranchised populations and discussing theories and strategies that can be implemented to bring change to the presenting problems. I Learned to use practice experiences to inform scientific inquiry to put together my research proposals. I did article reviews to do quantitative and qualitative research as evidence-based research to inform practice.

5. What learning experiences helped me to accomplish this competency

The learning experiences that helped me to accomplish this competency were gaining the understanding and learning how to research, understanding why ethical research is needed and necessary in research methods and learning the competency through the social work curriculum.

6. What “gaps” can I identify in my learning experience? What will I do about these “gaps”? (In your Professional Growth Plan, identify goals for continued personal and professional growth and discuss how you plan to reach these goals).

The gaps that I have identified in my learning experience would be not having the opportunity to interview and work with the population I did my research on. I read articles and did the literature review on the pipeline to prison and recidivism in incarceration among BME (Black, Minority, and Ethnic) groups but never had the privilege of hearing their accounts of their stories. I would like to visit and work in centers that rehabilitate adolescents who have been in the system, to be a support and hope in their lives. I am currently working with the center for racial reconciliation and we are planning to promote racial justice by hosting a symposium where we have key speakers that share vital information on how to help the disenfranchised. I also plan on attending another Clergy against violence meeting to learn about what is being done in our communities as part of my professional growth plans.

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- What kinds of research questions have you developed as a result of your experiences working with clients? In other words, what would you like to know more about?

Working with students who are at risk of failing out of college has been an eye-opening experience. I recognized that when a person is not performing well in school, there are external factors that can be attributed to the student's demise. Some of the questions that I have developed

while working with that population are: What percentage of students have diagnosable learning disabilities? Are these students receiving additional help with their academic struggles?

Do proper screening and diagnoses help students succeed or does it further stigmatize and isolate the student from succeeding? I would like to learn how to help students who are at an academic disadvantage graduate with their degrees. I hope to empower them to keep achieving their goals that at times seem impossible.

- In what ways did you use both qualitative and quantitative research methods or findings in your field setting?

Using quantitative research helped me to understand the correlation between the hypotheses and the data that was collected. The quantitative allowed me to see that the if the measures that were in place to help students helped with retention and graduation rates. Whereas qualitative research gave me the ability to understand the how and why through the use of interviews and observation.

- Provide examples of how you used research evidence to inform your practice.

I used my research to inform my practice by using theories that have been proven to empower my strengths. For example, advisers are encouraged and will continue to approach advisement from a strength-based perspective to promote holistic academic success. We provide worship and have study hall time so students can complete assignments. We implemented check-in with students to get a better understanding of the student lives that are not related to school so we could make the proper referrals. Also using encourage students to develop their strengths, talents, and abilities by having creative spaces for them to showcase their talent.

