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Integrated Seminar SWK 499

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Competency 5: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice.

Competency 5 delineates that social workers should understand that human rights, social justice, social welfare, and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. It is paramount to the profession that we understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of implementing this knowledge within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels as we actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings.

- *In what ways have I accomplished this competency/practice behavior?*

I accomplished this competency by watching a video presentation and participating in a facilitated discussion on history, race, and power, within diverse communities in my Foundations Social Justice class. I conducted research that highlighted the systematic factors that contributed to the disparities, and health care policy that prohibits the B.M.E community from receiving health care and proper treatment for mental health treatment. This competency was accomplished in my research class, by observing and analyzing Dr. Moon's research on the impact of Clubhouse Exercise programs and their impact on the psychosocial factors of persons with serious mental issues (SMI). His research addressed the health-related quality of life of persons with SMI, the effect or non-effect of physical activity on their health self-efficacy and self-esteem, and health motivation. We looked at the policies and procedures that affect immigration laws and border crossing in the USA during my Social policy and welfare class.

- *How has my thinking changed over time?*

My thinking has changed over time because I understand that to make a change, I must become familiar with and competent in research. I also learned that researchers could influence policymakers through knowledge mobilisation and have a great impact on reformation.

- *What are the practice behaviors that indicate my competency in this area?*

I identify social policy at the local, state, and federal levels that impact the well-being, service delivery, and access to social services. This was accomplished in my social justice class as I researched the disparities in health care among Black, minority, and ethnic communities. I identified what interventions can be done on the Micro, Mezzo, and Macro levels. I also accomplished this competency by critical thinking to analyze, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice during my Research foundation class by conducting a study 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 answers the research questions, What percentage of incarcerated juveniles have a diagnosable mental illness, and what type of mental illness do they suffer from?

- *What curriculum content areas (social policy, practice, etc.) relate to 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 and conducted quantitative and qualitative research as evidence-based research to inform practice. I also did a paper on the disparities in the healthcare system that affected Black, Brown, and minority populations more disproportionately than other races.

*What learning experiences helped me to accomplish this competency?*

I joined a Racial Justice Taskforce and conducted a survey and research that asked two questions. First, what are the student perceptions of racism, implicit bias, and other forms of discrimination [which indicate racial injustice] within the MSW/BSW programs at Alliance University Second, what are the MSW/BSW programs' areas of strengths and areas of improvement related to student perceptions of racism, implicit bias, and other forms of discrimination which indicate racial justice. Conducting this research allowed the Social Work program to make changes to the curriculum like adding textbooks and courses that included persons of color's perspectives and experiences.

- 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 can identify in my learning experience consist of not having much exposure to a more diverse client population. My goals for continued personal and professional growth are to focus on behavior, social development, and cultural and economic institutions and how these items impact the lives of my clients. That although they live in neighborhoods that are at a disadvantage they have the power to bring about the changes they want and they do not have to become a product of their disadvantaged community. I hope to be able to encourage and empower my clients to become positive change-makers in their communities.

Integration

- What national, state, and local social welfare policies influence decisions and quality of life for your client population? Also consider agency policies and informal agency norms. Pick two of these to analyze in detail.

The two policies that directly affect my client are tuition aid and housing affordability.

My clients come from families that are living paycheck to paycheck, and to pay for school they must show that they are below the poverty threshold. The problem with that is most families make more than the allotted threshold but still cannot afford to pay the high tuition rates. For example, the threshold to receive HEOP for a two-family household must make 32,227 or less. This is not always possible. Although a two-family household can make more money they are still living in poverty and now they are disqualified from receiving the necessary tuition aid to receive a quality education. The cost of living is higher than most of our client's paychecks. While they are in college, they have roofs over their heads. Many of our clients lived in shelters and experience housing insecurity. Living on campus is a burden that is lifted for a while but, once they graduate they are faced with the dilemma of finding affordable housing.

- How do these policies constrain or limit choices? (Of client? Of service provider?)

These policies put a constraint on our clients because at times they may have to drop out of college to provide for their families or pick up extra jobs or hours which cause them to fail classes and ultimately lose their grant to stay in school.

- What are the consequences of these policies for practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro level? (List all three levels and use examples when appropriate.)

The consequences of these issues are real and can be detrimental to the individual and families but to their cities, and states which will affect the overall wealth and health of the nation.

Institutional Stigmas: institutional level stigma can be seen in laws, policies, and institutional practices that discriminate against, or shame individuals living in poverty. Institutional stigma is that which arises from the process of claiming benefits.

Social Stigmas: Social stigma includes public attitudes toward poverty and welfare and the feeling that other people judge claiming benefits to be shameful

Personal Stigmas: Personal stigma occurs when individuals internalize the various forms of stigma and discrimination that they experience or perceive from others and internalized the feeling that claiming benefits is shameful.