



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

4

Social Work Placement

**New Approaches.
New Thinking.**

Reflective Practice
influenced by Emotional
Intelligence

Marguerita McGovern

MULTI-TOUCH
BOOK

Social Work Placement

New Approaches.
New Thinking.

Reflective Practice influenced by Emotional
Intelligence

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Social Work Placement.

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REFLECTIVE PRACTICE INFLUENCED BY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)



While you were busy judging others... you left your closet door open and a lot of skeletons fell out. Oops!!!

How can we test if we are emotionally intelligent or reflective in our practice? Developed by Schutte *et al.* (1998) a 33 item scale 'assessed the appraisal and expression of emotion and the utilisation and regulation of emotion' (Schutte *et al.* 1998 in Grant *et al.* 2014 p. 167). More recently, Aukes *et al.* (2007) measured reflective ability, assessing self-reflection, empathetic reflection and reflective communication (in Grant *et al.* 2014, p. 880. See also Davis, 1983). With these tests the reasoning is to try and offer information as to where on a scale the tested individual appears and optimally how to enhance those test scores (Beland, 2007). Improved self reflection, empathy, communication and extending capacity with regard

to thinking habits, different perspectives and new ideas, can be attractive to the student who is prepared to disclose and reflect on their emotional states either within supervision or through reflective journals.

The Irish social work registration body, CORU states in Domain 4:1 that 'social workers must understand the role of reflective practice in relation to personal and professional development'. Being reflective is the act of recognising our influence in a situation, being tuned into our role and critically evaluating practice (Thompson, 2012; Thompson & Thompson, 2008; Norrie, 2012; Poorman, 2003. Fundamentally, reflecting on practice is paramount in order to learn from our practice. It comprises of three main components; self-awareness, reflection and critical thinking. Combined these elements enables students to generate a potential learning situation. Taking responsibility for ones own learning means looking out for both obvious and not so obvious opportunities. Most of us assume that we learn from experience but are not always aware of *what* we learn. **We basically need to learn how to learn from experience.** In an academic setting, this is evidenced by being able to access library books, use e-learning facilities, set up peer study groups and by taking responsibility for individual learning as one transfers learning from one module to the next. On placement, students may suppose that all learning is one-way, a teaching type dynamic where their supervisor provides the information

and they swallow up as much as possible. This is an incorrect supposition.

Dr. Carmel Halton is a Senior Lecturer and Director of the Master of Social Work & Director of Practice at University College Cork, Ireland. In this audio podcast Dr. Halton begins to set out the parameters of reflective practice and its place in fieldwork placement. You can view this podcast at https://youtu.be/A-pR_CK4d_8



In practice it is the realisation that it is not only the ‘what’ but the ‘how’ and ‘why’ that become important.

In a recent MSW class one student’s Portfolio entry under the section ‘Reflective Practice and Use of Self’ read:

“I have done a lot of work on reflection and the use of self in my cases, one of the cases I learnt a lot from was a single mother with two children. She was in a very difficult situation and had to leave her home, there were also child protection issues. She got very angry when I told her I had to refer it to child protection and her words to me were “you pretended to be my friend for the last few weeks, you got under my skin and now you do this to me” part of me agreed with her, I did build up a relationship with her and out of this relationship she told me things that led me to believe that there were child protection concerns. It was a difficult situation to be in, on one hand I was there as a support to her and her children but on the other I was reporting her to child protection. I had to do a lot of reflecting, was this really what had happened?”

In this Portfolio section this reflection offers a good opening discussion between practice teacher and student within Supervision. Here the practice teacher would be expected to ask “What do you think are the differences between a personal relationship and a professional relationship” and “Would you have done anything differently?” “How do you manage a care-control relationship?” and “Why did this lady feel that way?”

In life we reflect naturally, thinking about past events, people we have met, situations that have been critical. Professional reflective practice moves on from this platform where the reflection becomes not only *factual* but also assessed from an *emotional* and *process* perspective.

In summary reflective practice is an educational organisational consideration.

This chapter is written from the stance that reflective thought on practice is good and beneficial, the more thorny question is what it is exactly and how can it be measured?

To help understand what exactly reflective practice looks like the following are a number of sentence beginnings that the student, practice teacher or tutor can consider during any placement tripartite meeting or supervisory session:

It reminded me of....

I remember that....

I agreed with....because....

I was surprised how.....

I couldn't believe that.....

If I were to do it again... I would....

At the beginning I thought that..... now I think.....because.....

How could.....

I thought half way through the interview he would say.....

I wonder if.....

I wanted to.....

It made me change the way I thought because...

This made me feel.....

So now I think I'll.....

The power point presentation which accompanies this book will also offer suggestions on reflective practice putting reflective practice into context within the placement experience and offering questions for the Student, the Practice Teacher and the Tutor. Slide 5 of the 7 presented offers suggestions as to how you know when reflective practice is working.

Reflective Practice - Critical Reflective Practice - Critical Thinking

Various terms are used to promote the concept of the 'understanding of self' in professional training: *Critical Reflection* suggested by Gardner (2006) is a model based on constructive tradition where the person's construction of reality is central

and those choosing to use this model of critical reflection see it as one based on assumptions, theories, knowledge, values, human behaviour and social responsibility. Fook, 2013; Schön, 1983 and Fook & Gardner, 2007 move the discussion forward with *Reflective Practice* from one of 'positivism' where an instrumental problem construct is solved through the application of scientific theory and techniques. The reviewer User Pathways in a review written for Donald Schön's (1987) seminal text '*Educating the Reflective Practitioner*' suggests that "Schön defines what methods a professional must take to reach a level where skill becomes a habit and artistry results". Schön's (1987) popular twin approach of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action base their principles on the technical rationality stance where it is presupposed that the problem has already been classified and/or where the agreed solution is fixed and clear. Schön (1987) and Argyris & Schön (1974) have not been without their detractors and Jane Greenwood's interesting comments with regard to their model in relation to nursing student's criticise their 'protective and safe' use of the model as being unhelpful in 'messy, indeterminate, real practice situations' (Greenwood, 1993 p.1187). The instructive 2014 Youtube video on '*Critical Reflective Thinking & Writing: Social Work*' by Ray Jones from the University of Plymouth, England, suggests critical reflective thinking is an 'active' method, rather than the more traditional methods of learning which are seen as 'passive'. For Jones, critical reflective thinking encompasses questioning, analysing, reasoning, reflecting and evaluating. This he suggests makes learning more active and develops the understanding of the topic thus resulting in better competence and higher confidence for the learner. He goes on to suggest two areas within this model (1) Questioning others Claims, as in; how, why, what if, according to whose justification? and (2) Justifying our own Claims; "I did this because..." "This approach reflects the theory of...". In achieving these two constructs Jones believes that the critically reflective thinker can integrate theory into their knowledge, skills and value base. If the practitioner can integrate the descriptive, the analytical and the evaluation of the event or situation then a more logical, holistic and progressive argument can be made for the chosen intervention.

To some extent reflection for the social work student begins some time before they get to placement. The engaged learner will have reflected on why they have wanted this career long before they have filled out the application form. Asking themselves questions such as "Why do I want to do social work? What interests me about social work?" "What skills do I have that might be useful?" "What type of people do I like working with?" On gaining entry to the social work course this reflection can change to "How is the best way I can learn?" "What influences my value base?". Going onto placement and coming to terms with the concept of 'critical reflection' students have the capability to ask "Why does this case upset me?" "How can I transfer what I did well in this interaction, onto further work that I have to do?". "How much do I need my supervisor to validate my perceptions?" The continuum of reflective practice continues throughout the duration of the course and long after graduation. The employed social worker will develop with possibly more complex reflections in areas such as organisational influences, human rights issues and reflections on self care.

How can practice teachers help students become more reflective?

Video Title: MSW Practice Teacher and Tutor Catherine Sherlock shares her views on how she helps students become reflective. <https://youtu.be/e6XghCwHW5M>



Rolfe's (2001) minimal model of reflective practice presented by Dr Philip Dawson from the University of Monash, Melbourne, Australia in his 2012 You-Tube lecture 'Reflective Practice,' offers a genuine basic starting point for practice teacher, student and tutor.

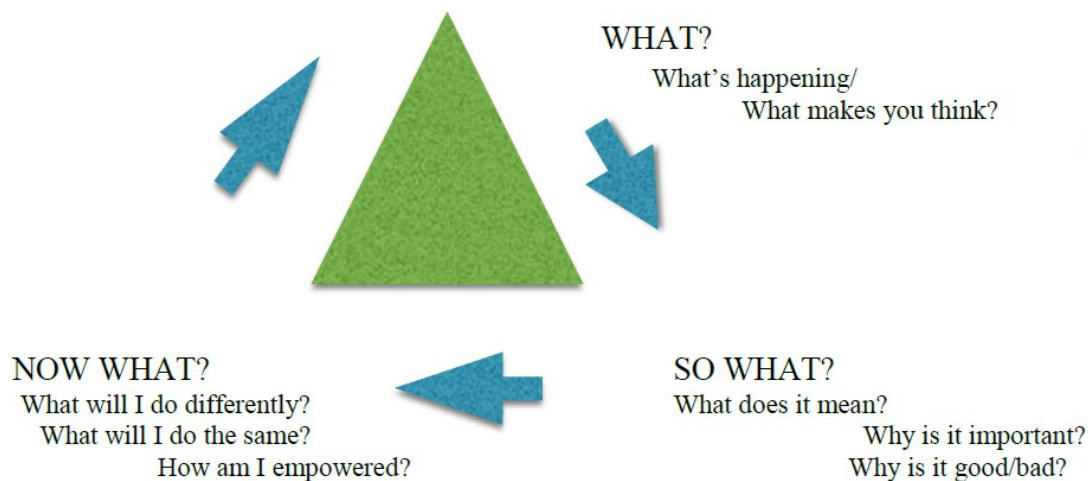


Diagram adapted from Rolfe's (2001) Minimal Model of Reflective Practice.

There are a number of tools available which can lead the student forward in their reflection both in the academic setting and the practice setting; reflective journals, process recordings, critical incident examples, mind maps, ethical dilemmas and narrative studies. All these are vehicles in trying to help the student come towards a better understanding of themselves, their work and the service offered to individuals and families. Comparable to assessing age appropriate information in family work, the intensity of being able to be reflective should grow with the level of placement and training. Practice teachers are responsible in supervision to encourage this growth.

The Psycho-social model of ‘*Enabling Reflection in Social Work*’ designed by Stan Houston (2015) of the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, extends the understanding of reflective practice and draws attention to the central element of the psycho-biographical surrounded by relationships, culture, organisational elements and politics/economy with an over arching power dynamic consideration. Houston, 2015 wants the reflective practitioner to explore how the reflection applies to the reflector and how it applies to their work. He sees this model as offering a decrease on bias, a change in any oppressive practice, a heightening of empathy and a development of insights into risk and need. He attests that when reflection is discussed within supervision it can strengthen the practice teacher/student relationship and equally importantly promote good governance and best practice.

The core element of reflective practice is honesty. It is not unusual to hear students say “We can fake reflective practice. All we have to do is use some of those buzz words that are always being used!”. Indeed, any form of dishonesty in learning or practice calls into question student values and their commitment to human rights - the cornerstone of fieldwork experience. The following extract is taken from an MSW Yr. 2 student’s Portfolio under the section ‘Reflective Practice and Use of Self’. This student reflects on her own personal circumstances and the placement days ahead.

*On the 10th May 2014 I gave birth to a little girl named ****. A few weeks before starting the field work placement I became very self-aware about the time I had left with **** and I began to feel very anxious and apprehensive about leaving her. At the time I remember feeling very guilty and there was a sense of selfishness about returning to the field work placement so soon after her birth. In preparation for the placement I tried to push these thoughts and feelings into the back of my mind and concentrate on getting to know the agency I was going to be gaining experience in. On the first day of placement I met with the multi-disciplinary team and gained understanding about the agency profile of their services. At the end of the first day I was requested by my placement teacher to write a reflective piece around my thoughts and feelings of the placement so far. In this piece I wrote:*

‘This morning I was very anxious about leaving the baby and it was very hard for me to come to placement today. Today I learnt about the agency

profile and their services and I feel that there could be some emotional intensity around the placement due to my own situation. Specifically in cases where there is a developmental delay. The fact that I have just had my own child and am a parent to two other children makes me more conscious around what is considered normal developmental milestones for children. This is even more prominent for me today as I am aware that I have a new baby at home that needs me to be with her to support her to reach these milestones and not being there with her makes me feel very guilty and self-centred. How can I support others when there is a small baby at home that needs me the most?! I have found this day to be very emotionally challenging and I question whether I can fully commit to the placement and the families I will come into contact with given the emotional state that I find myself in'.

*In considering this reflection, it became apparent to me that I had internalised the societal expectations around motherhood and this had contributed to me feeling guilty about leaving my baby at such a young age. In Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) it is acknowledged that mothers play a substantial role in shaping a child's social and emotional development and therefore it is vital that a mother is physically accessible to her child in the first few years of their life. In attending the field work placement I considered myself to be inaccessible to **** which I felt could be at the detriment of her development. I felt that there was an expectation to stay at home to care for the baby and these feelings were accentuated when some friends and family members did not agree with me going back to study so soon. The notion of a mother's place being at home is recognised by the Irish constitution (1937) under Article 41.2.2 which states that a woman's natural sphere is within the home and therefore the state shall endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties within the home.*

According to Bowlby (1969) the central theme of attachment theory is that mothers who are available and responsive to their child's needs establish a sense of security in their children which results in the child knowing that the caregiver is dependable and thus creates a secure base for them to explore the world. The work of Bowlby (1969) stressed that children who experienced maternal deprivation before the age of five years were more likely to experience psychological distress that would have a detrimental impact on their wellbeing and future outcomes. I was understandably harbouring some fears around the emotional connection and attachment to my baby.

In internalising this theory I conceptualised that in some way mothers may be responsible for their child's developmental delay. In the context of the agency, I wondered if the unconscious connection between my own feelings and the lived experiences of the service users could impact on my working relationships with families and in particular, mothers who have a child with a developmental delay. In critically deconstructing this further, I identified

that if I did not address my feelings early on in the placement, it could have resulted in me counter-transferring my own feelings of guilt onto the mothers of the service-users. As Poorman (2003) points out countertransference includes both conscious and unconscious feelings of the helper towards his or her client which can have a negative impact on the helping relationship. In the therapeutic relationship it is vital that a social work practitioner is able to reflect on their own lived experiences to ensure that they are not projecting their own emotional responses on to the service user (Howe, 2008). The attempt to suppress my own emotions and disengage from my feelings could have impacted on the quality of the casework relationship (Thompson, 2012). This may have resulted in me unintentionally engaging in oppressive and discriminatory practice. Therefore, in progressing towards professional development it was important for me to address the feelings I was suppressing and use this reflectiveness in a positive way.

Whether it is termed as reflective practice, critical reflective practice, critical thinking or critical reflection, contemplating on ones' experiences can be a positive, fulfilling and self affirming experience rather than one approached with trepidation; nudging students out of their comfort zones and extending their capacity for an expression of self evaluation. It is finding a balance in that expression that is important (Yip, 2006). Keeping reflective practice short, shared, structured proactively looking up studies or research, asking fellow workers what is their opinion, discussions with other students will achieve the goal of **moving the learning forward**. Reflective practice is about sharing, talking and coping both personally and professionally in whatever capacity and this is different for each individual.

Jacqui is a Tutor to a number of NUI Galway MSW students. In the following podcast she asks the question "What makes a good social worker, with particular relevance to reflective practice?"



Podcast Title: MSW tutor considers "What makes a good social worker?" (Particular relevance is given to reflective practice). Click this link to listen <https://youtu.be/E8FaleGnU48>

The skeptics of reflective practice may see it as being self indulgent, a rationalising out our flaws or the establishment of a narcissistic approach to professional

learning. This could be substantiated by the social work registration boards some of whom appear to now require a competency and knowledge based approach to teaching and learning rather than an integrated reflexivity approach (Ixer, 1999, Clift *et al.* 1990). It is also interesting to gather students' critique on their reflective placement journeys (Wong *et al.* 2007). The optimum approach it would seem, is to move reflective practice into being connected more towards a holistic experience (Scott & Usher, 1996; Bleakley, 1999) thus valuing the belief that knowledge is based on experience (Gould & Tayler, 1996; Sheppard & Ryan, 2003). In so doing we then value the ideological based knowledge as much as the academic based knowledge in practice placement training, both requiring equal attention. Indeed reflective practice is hugely valuable but the view may be that it needs to be achieved within a set of critical conceptual and evidence based parameters (Béres *et al.* 2011 and Askland *et al.* 2009). It is interesting to examine the basic theoretical framework that influences the reflection, for example, feminism and extending the view as Holden (2012) suggests in using an ethical and sensitive *spiritual* framework when critically reflecting on ones practice. Moreover, what source of knowledge is shaping the assumptions in reflection; is it behavioural, psycho-social, radical social work etc?

As mentioned, moving towards a holistic based practice, one which values reflection as a central axis, is crucial, but there are some who find this approach difficult. One million people have viewed the Youtube video made by Qualiasoup (2009) on 'Reflective Practice'. One of their most interesting suggestions is what stops us being reflective? They propose the following:

1. Arrogance
2. Lack of respect for reason
3. Unwillingness to listen
4. Intellectual laziness
5. Lack of respect for evidence
6. Being visually mono-tone

They suggest that behind the task of reflecting should be evidence of the ability to refine our thought processes and the ability to reason and assume, regardless of bias. This reasoning should be built on sound, consistent logic not on emotions or social pressures. They proffer that truth of factual claims is not determined by emotions that accompany them or that they are believed by all social groups.

At the end of any debate students always want to know how any given approach will enhance their progress towards graduation. What then, are the connections between achieving a reflectively intelligent practice and students grades? Morrison (2007) estimates that examining the work of social work students leads him to believe that students who achieve the highest grades for their dissertations were the students who had achieved a connection and 'congruence of professional, academic and personal mindfulness' (p. 245), the suggestion being that effective relocation required emotional intelligence and an explicit application of it within academic reflection and writing. Other research links reflection, emotional intelligence and other areas such as; self esteem and academic achievement (Jenaabadi, 2014; Morrison, 2007); economic benefits and heightening of social capital (Goyal &

Akhilesh, 2007) and interpersonal communication skills (Petrovici & Dobrescu, 2014).

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Amy Morgan in an on-line review of ‘*The Emotionally Intelligent Social Worker*’ (Howe, 2008) states “Clear and accessible, this book just makes sense it covers the academic grounding about emotions and the part they do and should play in everyday social work” she also says, “It is helpful to emphasis the role of reflective supervision as opposed to no supervision or just time spent on management accountability” (p. 52).

Emotional awareness is a key part of personal development that requires us to identify how we are feeling and understand why we are feeling that way (Bruce, 2013). Awareness comes from a key neurological function and it is interesting to view this in the light of one of our multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Given that the brain is an integrated unit and that emotions help us to make effective decisions it is an interesting phenomena for social work that one can have, or students can be taught, to recognise and improve their emotional intelligence (Nelis *et al.* (2009), Grant *et al.* (2014). The emotional intelligent reflective practitioner recognises the range of influences on a person’s behaviour, actions, feelings, including personal, inter-personal, environmental and structural. Emotionally intelligent reflective practice is also an approach that has questions about values, human rights and equality to the fore. Taken from an adaption of Schön’s (1983) work and extended by Ingram (2013) the following chart offers a link between reflective practice and emotional intelligence. It presents the underlying concept that if good reflective practice is founded on practical self-awareness and self-awareness is one of the foundations of emotional intelligence then the two can integrate easily.

Expert’ Practitioner Model 1	‘Reflective’ practitioner Model 2	‘Emotionally intelligent’ practitioner Model 3
I am presumed to know and must do so regardless of my own uncertainty	I am presumed to know but I am not the only one with the relevant knowledge. My uncertainty may be a source of learning for me and for others.	I am presumed to know, but I am able to acknowledge how uncertainty makes me feel. This in turn allows me to regulate my responses and be able to pick up on emotional cues from the client.
Keep my distance from the client; hold onto expert	Seek out connections with	Seek out connections with

role. Give the client a sense of my expertise, but convey a feeling of warmth and sympathy as a 'sweetener'.	client's thoughts and feelings. Allow the client to develop respect from my knowledge from its evidence in our working relationship.	clients' thoughts and feelings and understand what these are and how they could be used within the relationship. Work towards an open, honest and collaborative relationship.
Look for deference and status in the client's response to my professional persona	Look for sense of freedom and for a real connection with client. A professional 'facade' is no longer a necessity.	Look for a relationship which allows for emotions to be recognised and explored. This will create a professional identity which is not a 'facade' but one based on empathy and genuineness.

(Adapted from Schön, 1983 in Ingram, 2013 p. 300)

The integration of reflection and emotional intelligence, raises awareness in some students as they go through their fieldwork training as seen here in this extract taken from an MSW Year 2 student portfolio.

"In my previous placement when I experienced resistance; I felt shocked and unnerved which may have acted as a barrier to my coincidence and professional identity. Prior to placement I considered emotional intelligence as a concept, now I see it as a skill, indispensable to my future practice. The purposeful expression of feelings recognises the importance of clients feeling enabled them to talk about their feelings openly and not having them submerged or oppressed. My self-awareness and emotional intelligence played a huge part in my ability to sensitively 'tune into' the effect I was having on one of the individuals Miss Y whom I was working with (and also the effect the Child and Family Agency had on Miss Y). Being 'tuned into' this individual's body language and being sensitive to her demeanour and the effect I was having on her, enabled me to control our emotional environment and to react to her resistance in a firm but calm manner. Previous to this placement I would have been over-burdened by Miss Y's expression of negative feelings. Through reflection, I feel like, Howe (2008 p. 7) that I have become more emotionally intelligent, noticing that emotions are paramount to the helping process".

In asking students to invest in relationships with service users we are, asking them to look into their own emotional life cycle. Landy (2005) suggests emotional intelligence emerges as a way of explaining differences in behaviour not readily explained by traditional methods of usual academic intelligence or personality. He denounced the idea that the main dependent variable should be personality and favoured instead the idea of emotional intelligence being guided by the variable of leadership, satisfaction or disposition. Historically, the first to enquire into

emotional intelligence as a construct was E.L.Thordike in *Harper's Magazine* (1920). Thordike proposed a different additional form of intelligence outside those that had previously been defined within the normal parameters of intelligence and this he called 'social intelligence'. Thorndike proposed three types of intelligence; abstract, mechanical and social, the latter having cognitive and behavioural elements. (Matthews *et al.*, 2002). Regardless of which dominant variable is chosen, further explanation shows emotional intelligence as the ability to understand one's own and others' internal states, motives and behaviours and to act towards them optimally on the basis of that information (Mayer & Salovey, 1993 p. 435).

Munro (2011) in emphasising the tie between the rational and the emotional, highlighted the centrality of the social work relationship and acknowledged the importance of workers being able to identify their own emotional responses and those of service users in achieving positive relationships. This cemented the view that historically, relations and emotions have always been fundamental in social work (for example in psycho-dynamic social work) and cannot be crudely separated. But why is it important to define what and how and why one's emotions interrupt the interaction in case or group work? Hennessy (2011) suggests that if the social worker does separate off one's emotions from practice, then they are essentially separating the relationship with the service user from the practice. The following chart looks at trying to 'unpick' a student's confusion and an attempt is made to lead the student towards better understanding of their emotions, prevalent in an interaction. The hypothesis is that if the student can understand the breadth and the depth of their emotions, they will be able to carry this understanding forward into their work in the hope of better understanding of themselves, the interaction and/or the outcome. The situational/emotion chart displayed can be used during supervision by a practice teacher in an attempt to help the student clarify and improve their emotional intelligence in being able to better comprehend the actual feelings and behaviour that has taken place. The range of emotions in any interaction may be multiple for students and not all students will identically develop an understanding or competence with regard to their emotional interactions (Hen & Goroshit, 2011). In order for both student and practice teacher to clarify *what* emotions or group of emotions are present, it is interesting to chart them across a spectrum The Emotion Annotation and Representation Language classifications (EARL) (2006) proposed by the Human-Machine Interaction Network on Emotion (HUMAINE) have been used for the following example).

SITUATION	NEGITIVE	NEGATIVE & FORCEFUL	NEGATIVE & NOT IN CONTROL	NEGATIVE & PASSIVE
St: "When I went into the house they immediately started shouting at				

<p>me. I didn't know what to think, I didn't know what to do. Now when I look back on that home visit I feel so negative. I don't know really how i feel..”</p>				
<p>PT:So you're saying you feel negative, is that negativity towards yourself, the service users, the agency, the College or possibly myself as your P.T. for giving you that case? Let's have a look at this negativity and see where it is most real. Starting with yourself, in the first column is this what you understand as negativity or is it something else? Which of the</p>	<p>DOUBT ENVY FRUSTRATION GUILT SHAME</p>	<p>ANGER ANNOYANCE CONTEMPT DISGUST IRRITATION</p>	<p>ANXIETY EMBITTERMENT FEAR HELPLESSNESS POWERLESSNESS WORRY</p>	<p>BOREDOM DISPAIR DISAPPOINTMENT HURT SADNESS</p>

columns best describes the emotions you felt?				
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Using this spectrum the student and practice teacher can consider the emotion with regard to the service user, the agency, the college, the practice teacher. In this example the student discussed that with regard to the family, her emotion was closest to ‘Negative and Not in Control’. During supervision with the Practice Teacher the reasons for this are considered. The verbal and non-verbal attributes are analysed and the optimum emotional learning will inform the student about themselves and others. This process of examination is close to the Process Recording tool (See Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Book1) and used within supervision for teaching and learning purposes. Not all dissections of emotional encounters are negative. The accepting and acknowledgement of positive emotions of joy, trust, surprise and anticipation are equally relevant. Using the EARL categorisation again the following chart offers an example.

POSITIVE THOUGHTS	POSITIVE & LIVELY	POSITIVE & CARING	QUIETLY POSITIVE
COURAGE HOPE PRIDE SATISFACTION TRUST	AMUSEMENT DELIGHT ELATION EXCITEMENT HAPPINESS JOY PLEASURE	AFFECTION EMPATHY FRIENDLINESS LOVE	CALMNESS CONTENTMENT RELAXATION RELIEF SERENITY

The student in supervision shares the following experience, “I went on a home visit to Mrs. T’s house today. We talked about her recovery from her heroin use. I know she as a long way still to go but I came away feeling happy and really positive both for her and for me because I felt I had been able, over the last few months, to help and support her recovery”. For a second year Masters in Social Work student, this should not be a difficult exercise to try and pinpoint what actual type of emotionally positive feelings she was having. The point of this exercise is for the student to see that there is a difference in professional practice from portraying ‘Positive Lively’ or ‘Positive Caring’ to exhibiting the approach of ‘Positive Thoughts’ or ‘Quietly Positive’. Understanding and validating both their own and the service users emotions will result in better learning and important for the student to see where they need to express or contain and separate their own emotions in a working environment. These are simple examples of how within a supervisory session exploration can occur to do with the emotional intelligence of the student. This exploration can also be used in counterbalance by asking the student to look at the emotional elements of a case from the service users perspective.

VALUING THE CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Chung (2010) understood that ‘Social work engages the emotions deeply.’ (p. 43). and recognised that with social work education and training, students can feel anxious, fearful and at times become ‘paralysed by fear’ in the worry of making the wrong decisions (p. 41). It is understandable that students may experience emotional changes as they go through placement and find their goals and needs met or ignored. This can be regardless or in spite of their academic intellectual capacity. Have brainy people then, got high emotional intelligence? These interesting questions are partially answered in the research of Cote & Miners, 2006 and O’Boyle *et al.*, 2011. ‘Emotional Intelligence, Cognitive Intelligence and Job performance’ Cote and Miners (2006) show that cognitive and emotional intelligence come together and that emotional intelligence compensates for the effect of low I.Q. on task performance. Encouragingly in the last ten years there have been a number of papers researching connections and areas of emotional intelligence; Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Matthews *et al.*, 2004; Codier *et al.*, 2010; Spector, 2005). Throughout the research the basic argument appears to be that there is lack of empirical evidence to make grandiose claims for emotional intelligence as a central construct of varying intelligences. Interestingly, Antonakis *et al.* (2009) and Ashkanasy & Daus (2005) have stimulated the debate regarding the role of emotional intelligence and find more to differ about than agree on, in such areas as; construct, assertions and future development. Antonakis *et al.* (2009) state that emotional intelligence is broken down into; the ability to perceive emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand emotions and to manage emotions in-self and others. Antonakis *et al.* (2009) link emotional intelligence with leadership, declaring the capacity of emotional intelligence ‘a curse’, arguing that what makes good leaders is not high emotional intelligence but high I.Q. They believed that being overly sensitive depends on personality and state that although meta-analysis show that agreeability is unrelated to leadership, they feel it is related to emotional intelligence. In Ashkanasy & Daus’ (2005) article titled ‘*Rumours of the death of emotional intelligence in organisational behaviour are vastly exaggerated*’ they suggest that those who are ‘cursed with emotion’ are actually *better* at managing their outcomes *because* they are more perceptive. The authors agree that more research is needed and further studies into interpretations and emotional intelligence leading constructs are necessary. This echoes the advice of Mayer who believes that any research on emotional intelligence should proceed with caution (Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Mayer *et al.*, 1997).

In linking emotional intelligence and reflectivity Landy (2005) explores the subject, stresses that the few incremental validity studies conducted on emotional intelligence (both in employment and educational settings) have demonstrated that emotional intelligence adds little or nothing to the explanation or prediction of some common outcomes (most notably academic and work success). Noting that it is the difficulty in predicting behaviour that is the problem and if we cannot perfectly explain behaviour we need more predictors that actually improve prediction. Landy (2005) suggests that the few incremental studies that compare and contrast emotional intelligence with other potential predictors do not provide much encouragement that emotional intelligence will improve prediction. A number of these points have been further evidenced within the studies of Van Rooy

& Viswesvaran, 2004; Barchard, 2003; and Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

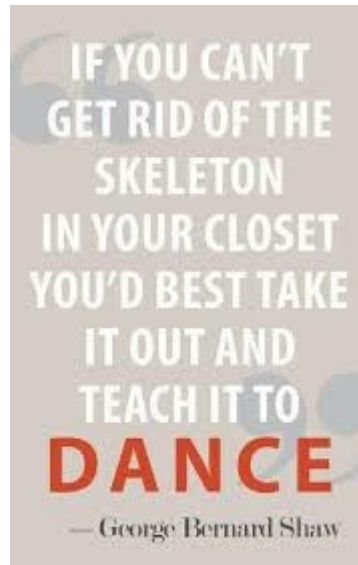
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL WORK: AN INTERESTING PARTNERSHIP?

As with power, emotional intelligence is something we all have to a degree, we can assert it and we can use it to regulate behaviour. We can also recognise it in others. Howe (2008) says that 'relationships can only be conducted with skill and compassion if the social worker is emotionally intelligent' (p. 181). The aspiration in social work is to make active, open, constructive and valued relationships with service users. Assuming that the basic premise is that emotions form a functioning part of our existence then estimating how good we are in connecting with those emotions or recognising emotional levels in others, can be challenging. A number of Ingram's studies have looked at emotional intelligence in both formal and informal forums and have linked emotional intelligence with social work practice (Ingram, 2013, 2015). Ingram (2013) estimated that his social work students were looking more at their practice from an evidence based perspective and not from a holistic stance. For instance he suggested that **students often see emotions as something outside of practice, not integral to practice**. The suggestion is made that emotions within supervision need to be valued and shared, for example, in asking the question "How did you act on that emotion?". "What emotions did you experience but didn't share?" It is important that emotional intelligence offers a learning process that should lead to *action* and not just be examined for its retrospective process (Fook & Gardner, 2007).

Students need to feel they have permission to discuss their emotions as they inform reflective practice within supervision. There is also the element of language and how to develop a comfortable and exchangeable language around emotions. Emotional cues can be developed into emotional realities where specific words are given meaning in relation to an event. Hammond *et al.* (2002) present a guide for the use of specific language around feelings and emotions which can jump start a discussion in supervision. What is interesting is how students feel during their interactive casework, how they use their emotions and how they manage their feelings. Ingram (2013) says social work students go from practice to outcome and the expanse in the middle takes in emotional intelligence (emotion identification, management, understanding and tuning in). Accordingly, in a world of increasingly procedural and managerialistic social work, Ingram (2013) wants to change the challenging and possibly threatening recognition of emotions within placement to a more empowering and collaborative construct thus resulting in the student social worker feeling more valued and worthwhile.

Is there a problem in not recognising the position emotions play in our reflective practice? Not paying attention to how emotions affect ourselves and our work can result in unclear evaluation of situations and processes resulting in inadequate case management and/or personal crisis for the worker. Furthermore, for the mature social worker, casework can become robotic and routine. For the social work

student it can appear prosaic and procedural. In breaking away from this possibility and moving towards an approach of recognising and discussing our level of emotional intelligence (within the framework of reflective practice), we reclaim the basic worker/client relationship (Ingram, 2013). If we therefore accept that emotions play a significant role in social work practice both for the social worker and service user then it is essential of us to explore, use and evaluate this concept to make us better workers.



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THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. Discussing a possible connection between the application of rational technical knowledge, practice wisdom and emotional intelligence. These aspects are applicable across all taught social work subjects and not just the pre-placement training for students, practice teachers and tutors.
2. Although the assessment of individual learning styles is on the wane and current researchers tend to favour the idea of individuals having an amalgam of features which make up individual learning styles, the optimum is to help students develop learning styles that encourage them to reflect and recognise and develop emotional intelligence in their interaction with learning theories and methods as well as practice.
3. Look at the social work class, value its diversity. Continue to contribute to the development of guidance for critical reflective practice taking on board the range of students and perspectives.
4. Bring the discussion to the practice teachers and tutors in helping to demonstrate and model emotional intelligence during in-service training sessions.

5. The question is not ‘What is reflective thought?’ but as Ixer (1999) suggests the question is rather ‘What can reflective thought do?’ (p. 523)

NEW APPROACHES. NEW THINKING:

The role of emotions is at the core of literature regarding relationship-based practice. As social worker educators, social work practitioners and social work trainees, reflective practice influenced by emotions, sits comfortably with a conscious and proactive awareness that the recognition of emotions within the social work relationship is pivotal.

The significance of the position of reflective practice (included in all the main social work teaching texts) can often become routine and monotonous. Students can learn to manipulate and practice teachers and tutors can often bypass the difficult questions and joined-up thinking necessary in exploring the subject. **Reflective Practice is not separate in its importance from other paradigms such as human rights thinking or cultural awareness practice.** It is therefore essential that it is not only seen as an integral part of placement training but should also be given the respect and space it requires within the design of the whole social work curriculum. The language of reflection is equally central to learning and teaching within mental health modules, disability modules, the law etc. **How all concerned think and act on their emotions, attitudes and delivery will reflect their values and performance.** There is a strong argument for the promotion and fostering of ways in which to evidence how and in what way staff can model ‘best practice’, how they integrate core principles into every aspect of training and how they can recognise and bring forward an emotionally respectful reflective and evaluative pattern of working. The influence of emotional intelligence brings an added dimension to the mix. This is an ethical life-tool and as such can be viewed in a positive way, it is the life blood of practice and from a managerial perspective, research has shown that it can lead to better staff relations and staff retention. What happens if you are not reflective? If you are not reflective then you are doing a disservice to the service user and to yourself as the worker, you are also not using one of the triggers for self care that is vital for good mental health. If you are an educator and you are not reflective and emotionally aware in your work, then achieving positive relationships can become illusive. Practice Teachers within their role with the student can use the tools of role play, video podcasting, process recording, the EARL classifications etc., to explore and assess the pressure points of student’s practice. Reflective practice is not a tick box system and should not be seen as such by all concerned. It is more an aquarium of species, some big, some small, some good, some not so good, all swimming around in the one big pool. Going into the uncomfortable or being able to identify the comfortable, becomes the skill in itself.

QUESTIONS:

How can recognition of emotions help in practice?

In what way can better emotional intelligence help form relationships?

How can emotional intelligence linked with reflective practice enhance the ability to understand and address social inequality?

Slides on Reflection:
Reflective Practice or
Critical Thinking OR
CRITICAL REFLECTION

The INFORMED ME or RESEARCH ON
MYSELF

Critical talking or
Critical procrastination

Critical emergency or
Critical respite

Critical Action or
Critical inertia

Learning How To Learn

Student:



What did I do? Have I seen that before? - **Identify** incident/event/situation
What choices/strategies did I make or use? Maybe if I... - **Review** options
Why did I make that choice/have that approach? This is a bit like....
Is it value based/theory based? - **Theory** indicators
How do I think my interview/home visit went? - **Evaluation**
What will I keep or change for the next time? - **Change**

Practice Teacher



- What is **missing** in this situation?
- What **knowledge** is your reflection based on?
- Tell me three ways you might **approach** this differently?
- What **theory** evidence for your thinking do you have?
- Let's look at your use of **language** here...
- Where is the **power** dynamic in this example?

Tutor



- Reflect on one organisational element of the Agency which has impacted on you in placement?
- Name one positive part of yourself that you can use in helping others to make a change?
- Fake it or Hate it? Do you think reflective practice works for you?

Think about
being!

Empowered and Encouraged

Justified and Engaged

Knowing that it's more than just questions

Connected with self and others

Common language/framework understanding the principle of professional social work

You know its working when you feel:

1. Clearer and Better Understood
2. The Delivery of your service is more effective and improved
3. You can Justify and articulate why you took that action or said those words
4. You can find Meaning in the change.



Empowered and
Encouraged

Justified and Engaged

Knowing that it's more
than questions!

Connected with
self and others

Common language/framework
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professional social work

MOVEMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING

AWAY FROM:

- Fast conclusions
- Perplexity
- Slowness to question
- Blindness towards practice wisdom
- Recognition of the intransigence of authority or agency
- The bind of tradition or culture

TOWARDS:

- Thinking clearer and proportionally
- Creativity of ideas
- Acceptance of personal responsibility
- Professional identity

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