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Title: The Impact of the Arts in Social Work Education: A Systematic Review

Abstract:

Evidence on the effectiveness of arts-based approaches in professional education has been gathering momentum in the last decade embracing disciplines such as medicine, the allied professions, social work and social care. Key texts have emerged promoting the use of the arts in professional education and there have been some attempts to capture empirical evidence on its value. This paper reports on a systematic review of the current body of knowledge on the impact of the arts in social work education. We introduce the rationale for undertaking a systematic review and the methodology and approach used. We then discuss the three significant themes from our synthesis of the evidence reviewed. These were; positioning social work practice through linking micro and macro thinking; the cultivation of leadership beyond verbal reasoning and art as pedagogy. The findings are discussed in the context of what the arts can offer challenges in social work education.

Key words: Social work education; the arts; systematic review; co-production; arts-based pedagogies, micro and macro social work practice, leadership.

Introduction

Social work education is confronting unprecedented political and socio-economic challenges resulting from globalisation, dramatic demographic and cultural transformation combined with rapid technological advances (Reisch, 2013). Within an increasingly austere, market- and individually focused context, the way in which social work education prepares students has diverged considerably. Changes to the mission of universities, the nature of social work scholarship and the educational process itself (Bogo, 2013) have undermined the autonomy and creativity of the academy (Giroux, 2011). A more technical rational approach to the profession has highlighted the need for transformative or critical epistemologies in social work education using activist pedagogies (Preston and Aslett, 2014; Bogo, 2013; Narey, 2014). The search for novel approaches has led to increasing interests in the arts as a vehicle for facilitating social change with transformative potential, perhaps animating what is already there (Lippard and Dawson, 1997).

Simultaneously, arts-based approaches in professional education have been embraced by disciplines such as medicine, the allied professions (Ousager et al, 2010; Perry et al, 2010; Lake et al, 2015), social work and social care (Burgess and Laurance, 2007; Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2008) with several key texts emerging (Warne and McAndrew, 2010; Ross, 2011; Huss 2013, 2015). Special editions of social work journals have attempted to capture empirical and other evidence on its value (Hafford-Letchfield et al., 2012; Bartoli, 2013). Measuring their impact on learning and practice is varied and complex. Evaluative methodologies suited to understanding subtle and contextually diverse educational interventions have not really lent themselves to scientific and technicist measures (Lake,

2015). This review responds to this challenge by examining and evaluating what the current body of knowledge on the impact of the arts on social work education might look like. We discuss the rationale, methods and approach used in undertaking such a review. We then report on the findings from the review by commenting on the arts based interventions being used in social work education and the main themes identified. This is followed by a discussion on what can be concluded and recommended from the current evidence available.

Linking the arts with social work education

Social work epistemology has traditionally been founded on social science theoretical frameworks so that borrowing methods from the arts to enrich social work pedagogy, naturally builds on this interdisciplinary approach. Stimulation of intercultural dialogue may also address limitations in its own knowledge base (Pink, 2007). Crossing boundaries between the social sciences, arts and humanities in social work education may transgress traditional categories and lenses through which we view service users and carers and their 'issues'. The centrality of user and carer experiences in education is essential to democratic engagement (Needham and Carr, 2009). Foucault (1993) referred to the 'authoritative gaze' that objectifies users of public services and reinforces power relationships and the uncritical enforcement of oppressive social systems (Morley and Dunstan, 2013). Foucault himself used art works to illustrate the epochal shifts that were the subject of his thinking in the 1960's in relation to emergent social practices around categories such as sexuality and 'madness' (Foucault, 1986, 1988). As a set of practices, relationships around power, dominance and subordination lend themselves to engagement between social work-service users in 'artful ways' or through a more decisive 'artful turn' to examine their very nature (Sinding et al., 2014:188). Learning that encompasses the wider community; service users, carers, professionals, their organisations and networks can facilitate opportunities to foster holistic collaborations through co-production. Schubert and Gray (2015) suggest that 'artful practice' was historically used by community social work giving it a critical role in institutional and structural change through communication, advocacy and activism. However, increased individualism in social work has weakened this emancipatory potential leaving a gap now filled by community based arts organisations.

The use of the arts in social work education may have a number of impacts. These include attention to the process of engagement; its effect on acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes; how it facilitates the affective domain of learning and its value in supporting educators' use of pedagogy in learning and teaching. Further potential exists in the facilitation of wider opportunities for students and practitioners to foster different learning styles and varied ways of knowing and understanding in diverse contexts (Simons and Hicks, 2006). Learning methods which draw on formulaic attempts to manage the increasing complexity and uncertainty of social work practice depend upon linguistic or logical intelligences as opposed to any activist pedagogy (Preston and Aslett, 2014). Within the context of current limitations and challenges to the social work profession, Schubert and Gray (2015) suggest that a different interpretation through the arts could enhance the diagnostic, analytic and action capabilities of social work in collaboration with service users to find new ways of practising.

Gathering evidence on the impact of the arts on social work education

This systematic review arose from the authors' curiosity about what body of knowledge exists internationally on the use of the arts in social work education and its impact. Sinding et al's (2014) comprehensive review of the published writing about arts-informed social work noted that it is variegated and lends itself to a wide range of clustering or categorizing approaches. A challenge for social work educators engaged in curriculum design is how they lead on integrating the research process within pedagogical interventions to evaluate the process and outcomes more fully. In this real world research environment, the researcher is often the educator and therefore ethical and epistemological considerations are determined by their role and potential for in-situ reflexivity. Carpenter's (2011) knowledge review of social work education synthesised research capable of elucidating the nature of relationships between factors thought to influence outcomes at a programme level. Carpenter drew on Kirkpatrick's (1998) notion of a continuum of outcomes beginning with learners' reactions and modification of attitudes and perceptions, through to the acquisition of higher knowledge and skills, changes to individual behaviour and outcomes for the organisation and benefits to end users. His review considered the feasibility of different experimental or quasi-experimental designs in the evaluation of social work and social care education. Whilst Carpenter did not explore *process*, he stressed the importance of developing wider measures to evaluate social work education including capacity and capability, particularly highlighting the value of integrated involvement of learners and service users in any evaluation. By paying more attention to process, the arts may add to this continuum in social work education to not only support and provide learning opportunities, but offers a collective means of building an epistemology in which art provides the means of achieving an end goal.

Design of the systematic review - Developing a protocol

The review was based on a protocol (Rutter et al, 2010) stating the aims and process for answering the research question. The main review question aimed to explore the current empirical evidence on the impact of the arts in social work education. The review sought to identify what art-based pedagogies can offer to the learning and teaching of contemporary social work and identified the following objectives:

- To offer clarity in the definition of 'the arts' as applied in this review
- To examine any empirical studies able to provide evidence on the specific impact of the arts on social work education.
- To consider, identify and evaluate the different approaches to measuring impact for example: the impact on the learner of the process of engaging with arts, the impact on learners' acquisition of learning, knowledge and skills, and the impact educators in their delivery of learning and teaching in social work education.

Selection of Databases

Electronic archives with databases most relevant to social work (Rutter et al, 2010) in combination with those central to education and the arts were searched given the cross-disciplinary topic. These were: Social Care Online; SCOPUS; Education Research Complete;

Higher Education Empirical Research; British Library EThOS; Psych Articles; CINAHL; Psych Info; SocINDEX; Educational Research information centre (ERIC) and Open Grey. The Cochrane Library was included for any previous systematic reviews with nil result.

To ensure the precision of the search strategy (Taylor, 2003), the search terms used “ ” to group terms and * for the truncation of terms. Boolean (AND/OR/NOT) operators were used to link terms together to return literature that crossed the interdisciplinary boundaries between the arts and social work education. This provided a clear framework for maintaining the focus on social work education and to exclude studies conducted within the arts field that worked directly with service users. A pilot search was used to refine the final search terms after which a number of generic truncated terms were excluded that had produced large amounts of irrelevant studies e.g. Draw*, Leader*, Book*.

The search terms used were: Social Work AND Educat*OR Teach*OR Practice Teach*OR Learn*OR Assess*OR Curriculum OR Course OR Practice Learn*OR ‘Practice Placement’ OR Student* OR ‘CPD’ OR ‘Continuing Professional Development’ AND Art* OR Digit* OR Galler* OR Museum OR Exhibition OR Poetry OR Drama OR Film* OR Actor OR Creativ* OR Paint* OR Photo* OR Theatre OR Improvis* OR Novel OR Fiction OR Tapestry OR Quilt* OR Mim* OR ‘Story Tell*’ OR Potter* OR Ceramic* OR Circus.

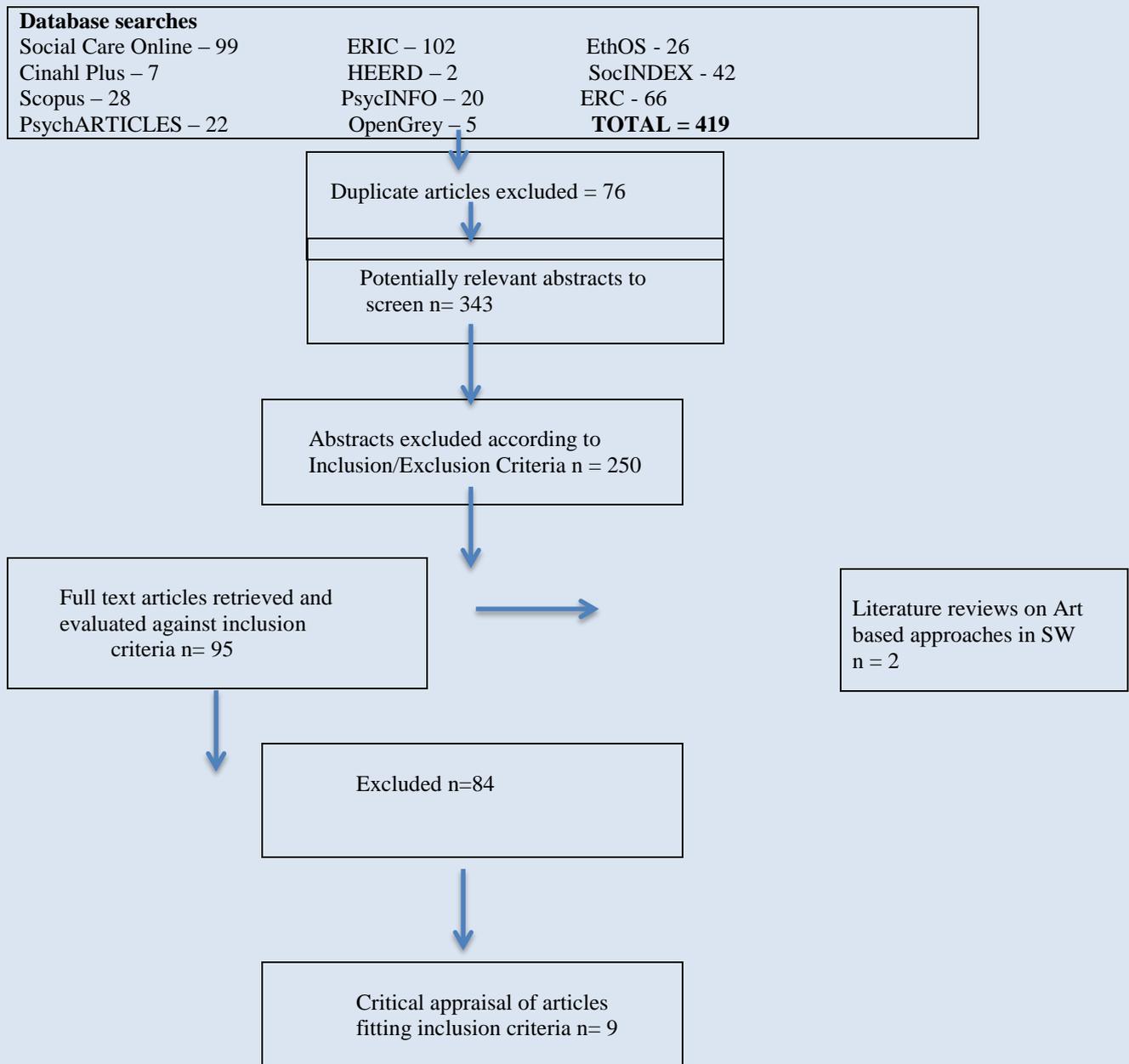
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion were developed after refining the search strategy in the pilot stage. The timeframe chosen was January 2003 to April 2015 coinciding with international recognition of the baseline degree level of academic level of studies required for social work. International studies were included but limited to those published in English.

We examined studies with social workers across both qualifying and post qualifying education and did not distinguish between learning taking place in the academy or practice settings. Interdisciplinary or interprofessional learning studies were included as long as social workers were involved. All studies selected for inclusion had to comprise of a clear evaluation of pedagogies that demonstrated the explicit impact of arts based methods in social work education. For example those studies using role play or simulation, whilst often described as a form of ‘drama’ were not included if no other reference was made to the value of artistic or arts based pedagogies in the evaluation.

Initial searches were undertaken by a research assistant supervised by the team who checked and verified the search findings at different stages including the screening of identified abstracts. Ninety-five full text studies including 2 reviews were downloaded. The complete search process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Chart showing search process



Review process

The critical appraisal skills programme (CASP) tool developed for screening and appraising qualitative research (www.casp-uk.net) was adapted to inform and develop a proforma for systematically assessing the quality of the studies, including those with quantitative and mixed methods designs. Each full text study (n=93) was initially read by one of three reviewers. Inter-rater reliability was achieved through re-reading, refining and re-evaluating each study by at least one other author. This resulted in 84 studies being discarded as not relevant to the research question because they did not contain an empirical or pre-designed formal evaluation. Following this process, 9 studies were confirmed as meeting the review inclusion criteria. Table 2 provides summative details of the final 9 included studies.

Table 2: Details of the studies included

<p>Hafford-Letchfield T and Harper W (2013) State of the Arts: Using Literary Works to Explore and Learn about Theories and Models of Leadership. <i>Social Work Education: The International Journal</i> 33(2): 209-223. Country: UK Arts Method: Literature Research Design: 38 post qualified students from health and social work completed written self-evaluations and a PERFORM team assessment of their presentation Focus: How arts-based methods assisted their understanding of leadership theory and transfer of systemic concepts to practice.</p>
<p>Hafford-Letchfield T, Couchman, C, Webster M and Avery P (2010) A Drama Project about Older People's Intimacy and Sexuality. <i>Educational Gerontology</i> 36(7): 604-621. Country: UK Arts Method: Drama Research Design: 8 students, 1 practice educator, 2 actors, 1 director. Analysed data from blog entries, facilitator notes, written feedback, evaluations and focus groups. Focus: Explore the experience, outcomes for student learning and impact on practice.</p>
<p>Huss E, Sarid O and Cwikel J (2010) Using Art as a Self-Regulating Tool in a War Situation: A Model for Social Workers. <i>Health and Social Work</i> 35 (3): 201- 209 Country: Israel Arts Method: Drawing Research Design: 22 female qualified practicing social workers. Analysed drawings using phenomenological content analysis, art diagnostic theories, and coping and resilience theories with written explanations, group transcript and discussion. Focus: Examine the use of drawing as a way for social workers to engage in self-reflection on signs of stress, bolster resilience and cope with reactions to a crisis situation such as war.</p>
<p>Kaufman R, Huss E and Segal-Engelchin D (2011). Social Work Students' Changing Perceptions of Social Problems After a Year of Community Intervention. <i>Social Work Education</i> 30(8): 911-931. Country: Israel Arts Method: Individual drawing and group collage Research Design: 15 social work students. Phenomenological explanation, recorded and transcribed each students own interpretation of the artwork before and after course and 15 written reflective summaries at the end. A typology of theories of poverty was also applied to the data. Focus: Understand the emotional and cognitive processes of students training to intervene with social problems.</p>
<p>Leonard K, Hafford-Letchfield T and Couchman W. (2013). We're All Going Bali': Utilising Gamelan as an Educational Resource for Leadership and Teamwork in Post-Qualifying Education in Health and Social Care. <i>British Journal of Social Work</i> 43(1): 173-190. Country: UK Arts Method: Music Research Design: Two groups of social work and nursing practice educators, service users, managers and tutors. Thematic analysis of group share of expectations, video of session, post event focus group and questionnaires. Focus: Use of Gamelan and impact on own development and what it has to offer others in Health and Social Care.</p>
<p>McPherson J and Cheatham LP (2015) One Million Bones: Measuring the Effect of Human Rights Participation in the Social Work Classroom. <i>Journal of Social Work Education</i> 51(1): 47-57. Country: USA Arts Method: Sculpture Research Design: Undergraduate social work students. Two validated scales HRX and HRE given to the participation group n = 24, and a comparison group n= 20. Focus: Do social work students who participate in a BSW macro practice focussed class on One Million Bones increase their human rights exposure (HRX) and human rights engagement (HRE) over the semester? Do the students have higher HRX and HRE at the end of the semester than similar students who have not participated?</p>
<p>Phillips C. and Bellinger A (2010). Feeling the Cut: Exploring the Use of Photography in Social Work Education. <i>Qualitative Social Work</i> 10(1): 86-105. Country: UK Arts Method: Photographs Research Design: 2 university social work lecturers. Contemporary visual methodology textured by presentation of segments of their conversations with one another Focus: Examination of photographic works on the subject of asylum seeking and their potential for teaching relationality and difference within social work education.</p>
<p>Pomeroy E, Parrish DE, Bost J, Cowlagi G, Cook P and Stepura K (2011). Educating Students About Interpersonal Violence: Comparing Two Methods. <i>Journal of Social Work Education</i> 47(3): 525-544. Country: US Arts Method: Peer Theatre Research Design: 63 undergraduate social work students used a mixed methods design. Pre Questionnaire and pre and post intervention focus group. Focus: To assess the comparative impact of an improvisational peer theatre program when compared to traditional peer education and no education on social work students' deep seated beliefs regarding interpersonal violence.</p>
<p>Turner LM (2012). Encouraging Professional Growth among Social Work Students through Literature Assignments: Narrative Literature's Capacity to Inspire Professional Growth and Empathy. <i>British Journal of Social Work</i> 43(5): 853-871. Country: Australia Arts Method: Literature Research Design: 23 second year BSW students provided on line responses to questions as part of a discussion group and reflect on other posts. Themes were identified. Focus: To examine the impact of a work of fiction where the main character lived a markedly different life to the student.</p>

Data analysis

In accordance with the broader literature review discussed earlier, it was anticipated that the majority of studies reviewed were likely to be based on qualitative design (Sinding, 2014; Kaufman 2011). Seven of the included studies were qualitative. Studies deploying quasi-experimental design and pre and post-tests on the impact of the arts on social work education utilising quantitative or mixed methodologies were also likely. Two of the included studies reflected these designs. There has been debate as to the worthiness or relevance of a systematic review containing a synthesis of predominantly qualitative data (Gough, 2007). Crisp (2015) on the other hand, notes the general dearth of systematic reviews in social work. The integration and valuing of a wide variety of data into a cohesive overview using a defined protocol and systematic approach can convey new perspectives not provided by a traditional literature review. However, according to Thomas and Harden (2008) there is a challenge in maintaining the sense and context of the original research while also providing a further synthesis, which can be informed by a review.

Unlike quantitative systematic reviews where meta-analysis follows an agreed statistical method; there are a range of possible methods for synthesising qualitative studies. Aveyard (2011) identifies two. Firstly meta-ethnography which focuses on interpreting the findings rather than summarising them and secondly through meta-study which attends to the methodology and the findings. This review used Thomas and Harden's (2008:1) thematic synthesis approach where a thematic analysis is applied to develop emerging overarching 'descriptive themes' and 'the generation of analytical themes' in relation to the research question. Thomas and Harden (2008:3) suggest that going 'beyond' the primary studies is a critical component of synthesis, and is what distinguishes it from the types of summaries of findings that typify traditional literature reviews. This metasynthesis provides integration that is more than the sum of parts, in that, novel interpretations of findings may be discovered. Findings in qualitative research from individual papers can be further complicated by the variation in reporting styles. Indeed, in the 9 studies identified for inclusion in this review it was noted that the findings were not always distinct from the data upon which they were based (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002). However, the strengths in this approach meant that the findings of each study could be successfully combined into a whole by listing themes which accounted and described what the authors of each study claimed as being successful in relation to the impact of the arts in social work education. Analysing each paper in this way gave rise to three broad themes. The remainder of this paper discusses these themes.

Findings

The selection of studies depended on the appropriateness and the robustness of the research design. All of the included studies described an explicit evaluation design but it was noted that not all of them referenced or detailed the underpinning research methodology. Only one study (Leonard et al, 2013) detailed a clear theoretical framework underpinning its evaluation design (Pawson and Tilly, 2000). From the nine included studies one had a mixed methods design (Pomeroy, 2011) and one a quantitative design using validated scales (McPherson, 2015). These were both from the USA. The remaining seven were qualitative studies. Six of these identified student participants' experiences as the main unit of analysis and one used auto-ethnography. The qualitative studies were conducted in Israel (2), UK (4) and Australia

(1). The specific art interventions engaged with during learning included drawing (2), sculpture (1), photographs (1), literature (2), music (1) and drama (2). A weakness was noted in the way in which not all of the studies explicitly addressed or gained ethical approval for the evaluation (see Table 2 for further detail on each study).

Theme 1– Positioning practice through linking micro and macro thinking

Seven of the nine studies explicitly focussed on the exploration and development of links between social work practice at the micro level such as psychological, individualistic and familial perspectives with macro level practice perspectives. These consisted of the understanding of social structures, power, oppression, social justice and social issues and implications for the workers well-being. A range of small scale research methods were utilised reflecting the different current political and social contexts of the countries in which the studies took place. They consisted of three community action initiatives, a co-productive intergenerational drama project and a virtual online literature group using narrative to promote professional growth. Five of these were targeted at social work students on qualifying programmes. The remaining two studies focussed on qualified social workers. These examined social workers coping mechanisms in circumstances involving political conflict (in Israel) and relationships with dominant discourses on ‘race’ (in the UK).

McPherson & Cheatham (2015:47) researched how social work students in the USA develop competency in human rights and advocacy. Their ‘macro practice class’ involved Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students taking part in a community arts action initiative entitled ‘One Million Bones’, where they raised money and support for prevention and survivors of genocide and mass violence. Students organised and sculpted human bones out of clay with members of the community, who together then contributed to a large sculpture installation. Pre and post project validated scales were used to identify differences in their learning when compared with those who did not participate in the class. The findings suggested that exposure to and engagement with human rights was increased when engaging with the arts.

Again in the USA, Pomeroy et al (2011:140:525) identified the use of peer theatre as an intervention in a campus initiative to address interpersonal violence. Peer theatre was included in the social curriculum for qualifying social work degree students. Focus groups pre and post engagement enabled a comparison of the different types of learning achieved between peer theatre or traditional didactic lectures. They demonstrated that both interventions indicated ‘greater knowledge and healthier attitudes towards IPV (Interpersonal violence) but that students who engaged in peer theatre, through the provision of ‘community service experience’ led them to have ‘better ability to integrate their knowledge with real-life situations and to practically apply this knowledge’.

The third example is Kaufman et al (2011:926) who explored food insecurity in Israel using drawings completed by social work students. They analysed the ‘emotional and cognitive processes of students’ at the beginning and end of a one year social work project involving community research and action. Kaufman et al identified a ‘clear shift towards understanding food insecurity as a socially constructed, complex or modular and interactive problem within

overall poverty and risk factors'. They used the insights generated through the method to encourage participants to go on to develop practice solutions.

Hafford-Letchfield et al (2010:604) drew on a range of arts based methods to evaluate an example of intergenerational learning using co-production. Drama was the main vehicle used to bring an older people's drama group and undergraduate social work students together, to 'explore intimacy and sexuality in later life'. The evaluation found the combination of drama and discussion enabled participants to explicitly connect age-based discrimination with stereotypes, taboos and assumed heterogeneity of older people. Analysis of the small-scale qualitative data concluded that students reported positive changes in their practice and were able to recognise stereotypical societal attitudes to sexuality that could be reproduced in social work assessment and interventions.

Turning to more individual approaches to using the arts to link micro and macro thinking in social work, Turner (2012) examined the impact on BSW students in Australia of reading fictional or biographical literature that they selected themselves. These were used to reflect on experiences that were different to their own life. Through content analysis of a question and answer blog, the authors were able to identify how this approach enabled students to explore human emotion and the presence of empathy and identified the impact of oppression and the characters strengths. The authors concluded however, that raising students' awareness of discrimination, poverty, indigenous culture and exploitation were dependent on the choices of literature and noted that areas such as age and sexual orientation were not adequately addressed.

Huss et al (2010:201) used drawing to examine the development of coping strategies for social workers in war situations in Israel. Their findings indicated that the generation of a single image enabled participants to identify stressors following which they were encouraged to adapt their drawing to 'gain a sense of self control over diffuse sources of anxiety'. The evaluation identified that the arts can be used to enhance the skills needed to work in an emergency war situation where time for supervision and reflection were limited. The act of drawing promoted personal and professional resilience by making links between these and the structural macro context of practice.

Finally, social work lecturers, Phillips and Bellinger (2010:102) drew on auto-ethnography and cultural theory to explore their own learning through the arts and its subsequent impact on their teaching practice. Their account of a visit to an art gallery and subsequent educational activities enabled them to explore the impact of asylum seeking processes in the UK. Through a series of reflective dialogues they identified dominant discourses on 'race' which including 'othering' and humanizing. They argued from the impact on their experiences that examination and reflection on 'privilege' and 'social relations' by academics and practitioners can enhance how students and practitioners 'respond to their own and others' vulnerability' in social work.

In summary, the examples given illustrated how engagement with the arts facilitated a paradigm shift in knowledge and attitudes and skills which could be applied to social work

practice. Each example provided an environment where an arts focus facilitated sustained activities that required the learner to engage in active learning both individually and as part of a group, either face to face or virtually. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2014:198) have described this as a process of disruption – one that involves ‘getting it out’. This may be one way in which art works, through the provision of a political vehicle for transforming troubles by healing, solving, reframing, politicising, advocating and mobilising. Reflecting on Kirkpatrick’s (1998) continuum of outcomes these studies attempted to identify impact on the attitudes of the learners. The findings claimed to demonstrate acquisition of some higher level knowledge and skills relevant to practice such as human rights, resilience in crisis situations such as war, food poverty, social inequalities and interpersonal violence. How the impact of the learning is tested in the long term was not evidenced in any of the studies.

Theme 2 – Cultivating leadership beyond verbal reasoning

This theme addressed the role of the arts in aspects of partnership working and co-creation of learning. Engagement with the arts enabled transgression beyond verbal reasoning or rationality in participants learning styles. Three of the nine studies using literature, drama and music highlighted the significance of leadership principles in their evaluation. The findings from these studies talked to issues of power, discrimination and equality in learning and identified the value of co-production and leadership by and with service users. In the two studies by Hafford-Letchfield and Harper (2013) and Leonard et al (2013) there was an interprofessional context involving social workers both learning alongside health and other care professionals or undertaking the same activity separately. Two of the studies involved service users both in the learning activities and the evaluation.

The study by Hafford-Letchfield and Harper (2013) drew upon well-known literary works, which presented moral or ethical dilemmas and the learning activities were designed to facilitate students’ consideration of their emotional reactions to characters facing difficult decisions as portrayed within those works. The innovative use of narratives from literature sources enabled students to more effectively transfer concepts of leadership theory to their own practice. Students self-reporting and team completion of the PERFORM assessment framework (Blanchard, 1983) demonstrated the testing of their own leadership and followership capacity.

Hafford-Letchfield et al (2010:615) applied an ‘empty studio’ model which was filled with exploratory and improvisatory activities to explore sexuality and intimacy in later life. A high volume of digital learning resources was co-produced and ‘the direct leadership of older people with RUDE facilitated more active, engaged learning in a more collaborative way, through increased participation and empowerment’. Close encounters between social work students and older people in a creative setting cultivated relationship-based learning. A sense of goodwill was observed between the participants that highlighted the importance of professionals building relationships with the community to promote inclusion. The fun and informality generated through the learning activities helped to open up new territories in exploring vulnerabilities around a taboo topic. The use of artistic devices again helped to bridge uncertainties, risk and vulnerabilities which might have been crossed for the first time

by participants and were potentially emotionally exposing. The leadership of older people in the project enabled ageism to be challenged particularly as students had relatively infrequent contact with older people. Hafford-Letchfield et al captured and analysed a range of data from blog entries and focus groups and concluded that the nature of the arts-based activities facilitated older people to better assert their own interests on the topic with the effect of achieving a 'humbling of the profession or academic position' (2010:618).

Leonard et al (2013) engaged a Gamelan facilitator to support experiential learning involving music. Whilst this activity provoked anxiety commonly associated with new experiences, it also provided a safe teaching and learning environment to reflect on some of the complexities of uncertainty faced in everyday leadership practice. This activity was replicated twice, once for nurse educators and once for social work leaders and educators. A range of data was analysed including recorded pre and post 'participant group shares' on both expectations and experiences of the activity and through analysis of written post activity evaluations. The main themes identified highlighted the value of the participatory and sociable nature of Gamelan and from the emotions experienced associated with new learning experiences. These impacted on participants day-to-day taken for granted assumption of power associated with their ascribed roles. Service user participants commented on the value of losing their 'service user' labels by engaging with an activity where there was a more level playing field. The opportunity to take up distributed leadership roles necessary in order to co-produce the music in the face of uncertainty gave rise to feel good factors, equal knowledge transfer and exchange.

In summary the studies by Leonard et al (2013) and Hafford-Letchfield and Harper (2013) were directly concerned with leadership development and discourses on leadership. By taking a closer look at morality and the role of followership often neglected in leadership development, team work was enhanced by using both literary works and Gamelan music. Participants were forced to move beyond rhetorical concepts of leadership to challenge and transform their understanding and practice. They recognised the importance of developing informal networks and alliances which foster quality partnerships in leadership practice. Both Leonard et al (2013) and Hafford-Letchfield et al (2010) referred to the bonding and presence of warm, friendly social relations that emerged between learners not often referred to in education. Both studies identified the impact of using drama and music in shifting power dynamics and achieving 'deeper learning'. This was attributed to the disruption of dominant and 'habitual perceptions' of leadership and each other's prescribed and expected roles (see Sinding et al 2014:194). Service users in both studies identified aspects of 'recovery' and surprise in being able to tolerate uncertainty in the face of a new experience. Teachers took risks through sharing power in their own direct participation and being open to the unknown/unexpected. This in turn created a climate in which the feelings and attitudes of the learner were valued. These senses of 'levelling' and participatory styles of leadership were seen to alleviate institutional dependency, a feature of managerialist discourse which is difficult to transcend. These studies however relied mostly on participant self-report and learners' reactions (Kirkpatrick, 1998) where learner's insights combined with some

demonstration of skills and changes to individual behaviour was evidenced from the evaluation of the learning episode.

Theme three – Art as pedagogy and pedagogy as art

The previous two themes from the evaluation of the nine included studies focused on evidence on the impact of the arts on learning outcomes (Kirkpatrick, 1998). This theme analyses the specific *processes* underpinning the designs of the studies and how effective they were in assessing the impact of the arts in delivering social work education. Savin-Baden and Wimpenny (2014) stress the importance of positioning arts-related research philosophically to establish its rigour. They trace the interaction of the arts and social sciences, and the influence of post-modernism across both, as a means of exploring human interaction and experience. Their useful typology from ‘arts-enquiring pedagogy’ to ‘arts-related evaluation’ (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny, 2014:5) describes a range in which arts are used as the method or intervention, through to the use of arts to represent the findings. They go on to identify the respective theoretical influence for each. The epistemological bases informing the specific arts-based methods used, and possible contradiction with the basis of the social sciences, was not acknowledged however in some of the included studies in this review.

Phillips and Bellinger, (2010) paid detailed attention to theoretical knowledge addressing how language and thus social practices are measured by the language and terminology used in social work. They focused on asylum seekers and on examination of their own position of privilege as educators. In the two studies from Israel; (Huss et al, 2010; Kaufman et al, 2011), art, specifically drawing, is used as a method to explore the contribution of emotion and cognition to social work interventions and to build coping mechanisms such as resilience. The remaining seven studies however, used the arts as a form of pedagogical intervention which formed the main subject of their subsequent evaluation. Pomeroy et al, (2011) and McPherson et al (2015) went further by deploying comparative methods in their evaluation to explore how effective the arts were as a form of pedagogy over more traditional teaching approaches. Couchman et al (2014) identified the different ways in which social work educators adopt the arts which may involve a spectrum of seeing or making art with students through to direct engagement with communities using the arts. These choices often expressed the theoretical orientations of the educator. Examples of these were evident in the studies included in the review and could be placed on a continuum of micro to macro interventions.

Sinding et al (2014:188) articulate such a continuum of interventions in which art triggers one of many possible activities, and is ‘just another way’ to enhance a social work intervention. At the other end of the continuum they suggest that art is seen as a significant determinant in offering a different approach from traditional social work practice: claiming ‘something distinct’. Further, Sinding et al (2014:190) identify three metaphors to describe how the arts may impact in social work which we found useful for providing a focus in how to evaluate the impact of the arts in social work education. Firstly in ‘getting stuff out’ where the arts provide a vehicle to address individual and socially messy, problematic emotions and experiences. This type of process was evident in two studies of our review studies (see

Hafford-Letchfield and Harper, 2013; Huss et al, 2010). Secondly the arts as a method for empathising and understanding others experiences (see review studies Kaufman et al, 2011; McPherson et al, 2015; Turner, 2012). Thirdly, as a gateway to challenging ingrained ways of understanding the world as exemplified in four studies in this review. Firstly, Hafford-Letchfield et al, (2010) and Leonard et al, (2013) involved direct work alongside service users and utilised the drama and music to challenge the inherent power dynamics between service users and professionals. Secondly Phillips and Bellinger, (2010) and Pomeroy et al, (2011) challenged institutionalised beliefs about asylum seekers and interpersonal violence through the mediums of photographs and peer theatre.

Conclusions and recommendations

This review has contributed to the debate about what constitutes effective evidence on the impact of the arts in social work education. The application of research findings in applied contexts such as social work education needs to be supported with assessment of its quality, fitness for purpose and relevance in answering different or empirical questions about what works in learning and teaching (Gough, 2007). The account of the systematic review given here highlights the challenges in weighing up evidence to answer a collective question about the impact of the arts in social work education, particularly given the diversity of methods, approaches and evaluations in the small-scale individual studies examined. The findings or evidence gleaned from the included studies were only partly effective in trying to measure aspects such as learners experiences, the acquisition of higher knowledge and skills, the potential for deeper learning, behaviour change and impact on the organisation and service users as a result of engaging with the arts (see Kirkpatrick, 1998; Carpenter, 2011). No conclusions can be drawn as to whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods would provide more robust designs and evaluation of the impact of arts-based interventions on social work. Nonetheless the importance of identifying the research question, aims and objectives and relevant methodologies were confirmed. The use of comparative studies and pre and post learning episode evaluations would perhaps help to clarify ‘what works’ and document what we know about using the arts in social work education. We have however been able to identify three useful themes from those who undertook an evaluation on the impact which offer educators possible direction for future design and delivery of education using the arts.

Looking for explanatory models of arts-based learning from other disciplines, such as in the arts and humanities itself (Huss, 2013) may be one way in which to underpin creative evaluative methodologies. The emergent discipline of visual studies (Schirato and Webb, 2004) demonstrates this by fruitfully bringing together concepts and methods from the humanities and social sciences. Coming from a visual research methods perspective, Pink (2007) asserts that the social sciences can only gain from approaches in the humanities and that models of affective learning from different disciplines provide a good source of developing new and effective methods for research and evaluation in social work education. These may perhaps bring us closer to understanding why arts-based approaches are effective and the challenge is in how to engage with multiple sources of evidence. The studies reviewed here have contributed to some theoretical perspectives on what the arts have to offer

in our understanding of social structures, relationships, and other cognitive and emotive aspects of our selves. What is more certain is that social work needs creative methods to find creative solutions as well as globalisation of methods to adapt to local circumstances.

There were limitations to the review. Firstly, as reviewers making significant contributions to this agenda, we have tried to make our process as explicit and transparent as possible to reduce any bias and assumptions. Secondly, the overall quality of the studies included were insufficiently rigorous either individually or collectively to draw any reliable conclusions. One might ask if this leads us to recommend scientific methods of discovery, trial and error, observation and description, comparison and contrast and evaluation to prove otherwise in this area. Not according to McNiff (1998) and Phillips et al (2012) who assert that bringing of arts-based activities into the curriculum and research agenda is concerned with challenging the dominance of scientific thinking as seen in the current emphasis on evidence based practice. The arts can be used as pedagogical tools and approaches to mirror the values of the profession as well as to measure aspects of learning such as affect – an important ingredient for achieving person centred practice. Furthermore, despite significant advances, the measured impact of service user involvement and interprofessional learning in social work education remains limited and the evidence here points to the advantages of integrating the arts to explore these important issues in a myriad of ways. The outcome from this review highlights important messages to consider for designing and measuring the impact of the use of the arts in social work education. This is at a time when the profession recognises the need to move away from more technicist and instrumental approaches towards reinforcing person-centred approaches to care and support in the context of sometimes rigid or bureaucratic organisational environments.

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