Personal journeys across regulatory tramlines: Dilemmas of professional learning in social work

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PIVOT

Professional **I**dentity and **V**alues **O**rganisation **T**ool

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PIVOT : what's it all about?

Reflection
- enhanced structured process or 'tool' to capture and organise self-generated personal constructs

Professional Identity
- charting reflexive awareness of self, others, and what is important

Values
- not external codes but personally and professionally derived

Learner-centred
- self created focus of enquiry into practice and learning aims

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Pursuing the personal: some emerging themes from phase 1 dialogues

1. Shift from non-qualified worker to professional qualified: Different transitions
- Status - staff to student
- Self – family patterns and learning baggage
- 'traditional' Graduate to reflective PBPL

2. Achievement of learning and qualifications later in life

3. Knowing 'self' and the 'right time' to study

4. NVQ assessment v professional learning

5. Importance of workplace support for learner role

6. Reflective help to generate own learning aims & needs

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Being a learner

"…he is not a learner. He's just not. He's been in the same job all his life…" (about a partner)

I think at the moment I'm open to learning…happy to be collecting knowledge…getting some books down…being a studier…"
(desperate to see herself as a "studier")

" I missed out. I had to run the home when my mum was ill and look after my sisters. It wasn't until I was a teenager I started going to school and it was too late. Anyway I wasn't expected to learn…to run a home…they all still come to me for help" (at age 46 and wanting "time for self" but not knowing "how to learn")

"I just get scared. I don't know what I is… I just don't feel I can do it" (about learning). "I need to know where I'm going."

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NVQ assessment v professional learning

" well, it [previous training] was quite heavy…. It was very different from what I expected. It was more a case of not learn – I didn't feel that the NVQ was actually learning, it was actually just producing evidence that you know – and I felt that the degree is more about learning…. Expecting you to have that experience…. because I think they actually ask you to think about things – e.g. they give you a situation and ask you 'how would you relate to this?' The OU stuff has actually taught me stuff I've never heard of…. Some of it actually understanding what is going on with the service users".

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Achieving qualifications later in life: Knowing 'self' and the 'right time' to study

In the background I came from… there were six children in my family, working class people… you were expected to get a job, you weren't encouraged to go out and go to college and things like that… you were expected to get a wage… to look after children. So, for me, to become a Nursery Nurse was like a major thing. But even to get on that. I got told by one of the tutors, you were on the borderline, so that was like, phew, a big confidence drop. They don't realise, I suppose, all those years ago, that's what happened.

But now, just to sit there with all these people and you could tell they are people with like so many life skills and so many qualifications, even in the tutorial, there were so many other people that are studiers, to be with them, that was one of my scary things as well.

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PIVOT : theory & methods

- Constructivist perspectives upon teaching and learning through Personal Construct Psychology

- Learner elicits their own personal constructs within a chosen network of professional relationships

- Constructs are progressively refined through 'value laddering'

- Constructs are systematically grounded and scored as learning aims

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Personal construct psychology

• A PCP methodology accesses participants' views of themselves, how they make sense of their worlds and, therefore, how they make sense of elements of the defined research focus.

•This approach offered opportunities to gain entrée into the nature of the language used and qualitative inferences to be drawn about the rationalities underpinning the participants' approaches to professional learning.

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Elements and constructs

Elements of an enquiry

Supplied and participant chosen

Self: past, now and future & others within research context

Construct elicitation: Reflection through contrasts

What have two elements got in common but not shared by the third?

What's the opposite of that?

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Constructs to Ladders: Gazing towards the core

Laddering: theory of implications

Staged process of focused self-enquiry:

why is this important to you?

Because…

Leading towards 'core' constructs with most 'value', most implications for change or challenge

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Learning aims: Grounding & scaling

•Applying identified constructs of learning

•Grounding them within learning environment or practice placement

•'visioning' what the desired outcome looks like

•Positioning self now and future within a scale

–Concrete steps of 'how to get there'

Capturing the personal: phase 2 constructs and self-generated learning

Sample construct:

beyond a line, too involved <<< >>> Being boundaried

Sample scale:

Caring, but realistic boundaries

1_____**10**

Over indulging in caring;

danger of wanting everything to be OK

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Try to capture any 'core values' that underlay and further explain the importance of this for you…
This is about respect for others. It is about integrity and honesty. It touches my values spiritually and how I feel about promoting empowerment and equality.
It is difficult to do this if I am stepping out of my role …and what is its opposite?

4. Is there a, more fundamental, value that further explains why this is important to you?

This value is important to me because…. **Private life is essential**
…and what is its opposite?

3. Can you reflect upon this more and explain why this is an important value to you?

This end of the construct is important to me be cause…. **To be unaware of professional boundaries risks the safety of service user, my self and colleagues. It is important to be conscientious.**
Causing pain and distress …and what is its opposite?

2. Please explain - why is this important to you?

Aware of professional boundaries	In appropriate behaviour / attitude
1. Most valued end here	the other end here

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PIVOT : Dilemmas of professional learning

- **Personal meaning v Professional labels**

- **Practice creativity v Imposed procedures**

- **Promote individual learner interests through reflexivity and whole-life learning**

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PIVOT : student feedback quotes

- We do work on reflection but PIVOT took a long time and made me go through the process – it stretched my thinking and concentrated my mind

- Helped me get beyond glib labels to the process of values creation

- It validated my own perspectives on other workers – we compare ourselves with others and this was an opportunity to be clear about where I am in relation to others; good and poor

- This was personally meaningful as I had to really work to create what was important to me and then to pick out 2 or 3 REALLY KEY aspects of my practice, e.g., *boundaries & coping under pressure*

- Having the time and space for the PIVOT exercises and a dialogue with my programme tutor was very special

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