EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

In this article we discuss the nature of service user involvement in Higher Education (HE) social work programmes in both England and Slovenia. This discussion is based on our experiences of supporting such programmes alongside evidence derived from the literature. Firstly, we present a discussion of the effective development of service user involvement in the respective HEIs in our two countries. Secondly, we explore how the involvement of experts-by-experience in HEIs benefits the learning of social work students. Thirdly, we investigate how the emergence of Covid-19 has influenced the delivery of social work education and the involvement of service users in our respective social work programmes. We conclude by noting that our social work programmes have been forced to adapt to the needs of students in an online community and have embraced inclusive education. As a result of this, we suggest that the needs of experts-by-experience should inform the development of social work education and that they should be consulted on how they choose to be involved in educational practice.

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SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND SLOVENIA: INTRODUCTION

It is important for the authentic voice of people who have direct experiences of using social care, either as users of services themselves or as carers, to be heard at the centre of social work training and education. The process of listening to lived experience enables practitioners to develop individualised person-centred practice (Wilson et al., 2009.) and to validate the knowledge derived from expertise-by-experience[3]. Knowledge emanating from expertise-by-experience is founded on personal lived experience, as is knowledge derived from caring; it is of a very different nature to the knowledge based on educational or professional evidence and must be valued for its uniqueness.

Thus, to acknowledge the significance of experiential knowledge, there have been many attempts to involve experts-by-experience in both qualifying and post-qualifying social work education programmes across Europe and beyond in the last two decades (Gutman and Ramon, 2016.; Urek 2017.; Cabiati and Raineri, 2016., Videmšek, 2021.). This has led to efforts to co-create knowledge and learning because experts-by-experience form part of a group that historically has not occupied a role in formal knowledge production. Co-creation requires acknowledgement of the wisdom and knowledge of people with personal experience and the need to involve them in all aspects of social work. Rose (2009.) states that there can be no production of 'universal knowledge', but only the development of particular knowledge generated from different standpoints that produce 'different truths.' Thus, the inclusion of experiential knowledge in social work challenges the issues of power related to questions about the types of knowledge perceived as valid; it reshapes the relationship between participants in this interaction and leads to the creation of new knowledge that i based on experience. The involvement of experts-by-experience in teaching can take many forms; however, not all academic staff and students value experts' knowledge as equal to other sources of knowledge (Beresford and Croft 2004).

The *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training* recommend the involvement of experts-by-experience in both social work practice and education. The Paradigm of the Social Work Profession, paragraph 4.2.4, underlines the need to 'respect the right and interest of service users and their participation in all aspe-

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3   An expert-by-experience is someone who has experienced difficulties such as mental ill-health, learning or physical disabilities, or has been a child or young person looked after by state provided care, who, because of these experiences, has used health or social care services now or in the past (McLaughlin, 2009). Expert knowledge can also be acquired from caring for a person with a disability or health issue; this is often referred to as expertise-by-caring (Hughes, 2019).

cts of providing programmes and services'; moreover, the Standards that pertain to curriculum development, in paragraph 3.3, require the involvement of service users in the planning and delivery of programmes (Global standards, 2014.). Additionally, involvement is a key requirement in social work education in England and is mandated by the social work regulator (SWE, 2020.a, 2020.b); however, it is not currently a requirement in Slovenia (Videmšek, 2021.).

In this article we explore the context of user involvement in social work education in both England and Slovenia. The two authors have previously highlighted the involvement of mental health service users in the delivery of mental health research (Videmšek and Fox, 2018.) in both the UK and Slovenia, and the increasing participation of service users in the development and delivery of social work education (Zaviršek and Videmšek, 2009., Fox and Videmšek, 2021., Fox, 2020; Videmšek 2021.). Firstly, we present a discussion of the effective development of service user involvement in the social work programmes in the respective HEIs in our two countries. Secondly, we explore how the involvement of experts-by-experience in HEIs benefits the learning of social work students. Thirdly, we investigate how the emergence of Covid-19 has influenced the delivery of social work education and the involvement of service users in our respective social work programmes.

The involvement of experts-by-experience in social work education

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was a growing movement to involve those who used social services and their carers in the design, delivery, and evaluation of social work research and education (Thompson 2002., Zaviršek and Videmšek, 2009., Videmšek, 2017., Rose, 2009.). This followed the emerging service user movement in the last decades of the 20th century which gave rise to the development of the social model of disability (Finkelstein, 1990.) and the recovery model in mental health (Deegan, 1993.), alongside politically liberating practices such as the Gay Pride movement which emerged across Europe. Reflecting this transformative social context, the involvement of experts-by-experience has become an important aspect of social work education (Cabiati and Raineri 2016.), gaining traction in the UK over the last two decades (Anghel and Ramon, 2009.; Fox, 2020.; Unwin, Rooney and Cole2018.; Duffy and Hayes, 2012.). Videmšek (2021.) has noted that the rest of Europe followed this pattern; in Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden (Agnew and Duffy, 2010.), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Čekić Bašić, 2009.), Macedonia (Bornarova, 2009.), Serbia (Brkič andJugović, 2009.), Italy (Allegri, 2015.; Cabiati and Raineri, 2016.), Croatia (Džombić and Urbanc, 2009.), and also in Slovenia (Zaviršek and Videmšek, 2009.) (Videmšek, 2021.: 175).

In our national contexts, experts-by-experience in England have contributed, for example, to the development of health, social care, and allied health professional education for over 20 years (Anghel and Ramon, 2009.), Moreover, there is a requirement to evidence patient and public involvement (PPI[4]) in the development of research bids in the UK. The inclusion of public involvement in research underlines the rebalancing of the power inequalities in research – similarly, the involvement in social work education emphasises the importance of co-production in the design, delivery and development of teaching and learning programmes (SCIE, 2015). Moreover, in many European countries there is a growing consensus that experts-by-experience should be key stakeholders in all aspects of the design and delivery of the social work programmes; equally, such initiatives are developing in Slovenia in research, education, and practice (Fox and Videmšek, 2021.; Videmšek, 2009.; Videmšek, 2017.). Such an approach is increasingly seen as important in achieving a more proactive partnership model of engaging and working with experts-by-experience and carers.

User involvement in English social work programmes was first mandated in 2002 (DH, 2002). Anghel and Ramon (2009.) undertook an early evaluation of the first two years of implementation of a novel user and carer involvement project set up in an English university using an action research methodology. Service consultants (involved service user and carer representatives) valued the opportunity to share their experiences, and students appreciated the authenticity of the consultants' stories. Some academics reported that they recognised the importance of participation in drawing out the real experience of using services, but one rejected the concept of 'shared teaching' as a realistic model. Anghel and Ramon (2009.: 197) noted that the involvement of users in social work education has 'provided a challenging experience marking the beginning of the shift in the local culture of social work education'. They however acknowledged that the paucity of funding restricted the potential for a wider involvement and that the culture of teaching needed to change in order to recognise the importance of building a partnership with service users and carers.

In the same English university, Anghel, Fox and Warnes (2010.) evaluated the impact of the social work programme on students' understanding of 'working in partnership with service users and carers' by using concept mapping. Service user involvement underpinned the organisation and implementation of this study (Fox and Ockwell, 2010.). At the beginning of the course, the concept mapping process revealed that students found 'working in partnership with service users and carers' to be a vague and nebulous concept. At the end of the programme, the concept maps revealed that the students had developed a much more sophisticated understanding of this idea. Service user involvement in teaching, practice-learning whilst

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4 In the UK, public involvement in research is »research being carried out »with« or »by« members of the public rather than »to«, »about« or 'for« them« (NIHR INVOLVE, 2020).

on placement, and classroom-based teaching had all contributed to this progression in their understanding of this concept. This finding shows that a multitude of perspectives and learning can contribute to students' respect and value of the knowledge that service users and carers bring to the social worker / service user relationship.

Recently Fox, Dean and Amas (2021.) presented a best practice example of the involvement of experts-by-experience in a virtual role-play assessment. This assessment adopts a model of shared responsibility between lecturers and service users in the process of assessing students' capacity to enter their initial placement. It is underpinned by acknowledgement of the expertise that service users bring to this process. As we seek to introduce a new model of assessment, following a course revalidation, many of the lessons need to be revisited again as we seek to maintain a shared position of power that truly values expertise-by-experience. These studies indicate that social work educators need to constantly re-evaluate the positions of power they take, and the processes of support provided for people with lived experience, alongside the respect and value accorded to their expertise-by-experience.

METHODOLOGY

We drew on extensive literature and reflected on our own experiences in our Faculty of Social Work in Ljubljana, Slovenia and the School of Education and Social Care in Cambridge, England implementing involvement in social work education. We considered the current modifications to the way experts-by-experience contribute to the courses in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our experiences highlighted how our different HEIs approach the involvement of service users in social work education and the unique differences in how involvement is operationalised in our respective HEIs. This context led us to consider three questions that will be presented in this article:
1. How can social work programmes promote effective service user involvement?
2. How does involvement benefit social work students themselves?
3. How has Covid-19 influenced the delivery of social work education and the involvement of service users in our respective social work programmes?

DISCUSSION

How social work programmes promote effective service user involvement

Social work education in the UK and Slovenia has traditionally focused on anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice (Dominelli, 2002.) with an emphasis on social workers as advocates of social justice (BASW, 2018). Social work education in the UK now often has a greater focus on legislation and understanding of the ethics, values, and authority of social workers; particular attention is paid to this once students are attending statutory practice placements. However, teaching delivered at the English university still emphasises the importance of developing effective communication skills with service users (Scourfield, 2017.), undertaking reflective processes in practice (Fook, 2016), understanding the many theories that underpin social work (for example, systems theory, task-centred practice etc.) (Payne, 2021.), and acknowledging the impact of poverty on the lives of service users and their families (Backwith, 2015.).

In Slovenia, social work education has been in existence for over half a century. The University of Ljubljana, a public institution, provides the only social work course in Slovenia. The School for Social Workers was established in 1955 (Zaviršek, 2005.). Firstly, it was a two-year diploma programme named Višja šola za socialno delavce [*High school for social workers*]. In the 1970s it was integrated into the University of Ljubljana. It developed a four-year university-level programme and launched postgraduate specialisation programmes in 1992. From 1995 it was again reduced to a professional school with a four-year programme, until in 2003 it became a faculty and introduced graduate study programmes (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 2005.). Experts-by-experience increasingly participate in social work education, however it is not a requirement for experts-by-experience to be key stakeholders in all aspects of the design and delivery of the study programmes. Nevertheless, many academics concur that involving experts-by-experience in education enables a narrowing of the gap between theory and practice, and mirrors the profession's values of respect, partnership, and co-production.

Increasingly, in practice, social workers in the UK have been bound by the impact of austerity. Austerity was a UK governmental response to the financial crisis of 2008 that led to the rationing of resources only to those with the highest need, as the government sought to reduce funding to publicly funded services by rolling back the state's involvement (Pantazis, 2016.). Social work in England has thus become a profession in which social workers have increasingly become statutory instruments undertaking safe-guarding actions for vulnerable adults and children (The Care Act, 2014.; The Children Act, 1989.; 2004.). The policy of austerity in the UK has reduced the practitioner's ability to promote wellbeing in their every-day practice;

although the enactment of wellbeing has been a guiding focus of the legislation for children and families and adult social care (Children Act, 1989., 2004.; The Care Act, 2014.). This has an impact on the way social work education is delivered. Despite this, empowering frameworks have been developed and translated into every-day practice, such as the Family Group Conference. This development instituted both in children's services (Manthorpe and Rapaport, 2020.), and more recently, posited as a potential shared decision-making model in mental health (Ramon, 2021.).It underlines social workers' attempts to increase the decision-making capacity of service users and carers, whilst maintaining effective safeguarding activities. These developments underpin the continuing commitment to promoting social justice and empowerment, as underlined by ethical frameworks (BASW, 2018.; SWE, 2020a.) and adhere to statutory duties alongside safeguarding in professional practice (Care Act, 2014.; Children Act, 1989.).

We outline key factors that support the involvement of experts-by-experience in HEI by highlighting the national legal frameworks and the wider context in our countries which support involvement. In the English experience, the involvement of service users in social work education is that of 'an established future' (Duffy and Hayes, 2012.:368) and it includes active involvement in design, management, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of social work programs (Duffy and Hayes, 2012.). In England, current guidance is now expressed in the standards of Social Work England (SWE), the social work regulator. SWE (2020.a) states: 'Social work courses must be governed, resourced and managed using effective and transparent processes in collaboration with employers and people with lived experience of social work. There must be processes to monitor and manage the quality and delivery of courses.' More specifically, guidance (SWE, 2020.b) states that social work programmes must 'Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum'.

In England, experts-by-experience are involved extensively in social work education (Anghel and Ramon, 2009., Fox, 2020.). On the English university social work programme, service users contribute to the planning, development, and delivery of education. They contribute to a preparation for a practice module by conveying their experiences of service use (Fox, Dean and Amas, 2021.). They support assessment processes in this module by undertaking a mock interview with students in which they role-play a character from a case study, which they have co-created (Fox, Dean and Amas, 2021.). They are also involved in interview panels about their experience of service use, in delivering Equality and Diversity Training, and co-delivering other teaching sessions. They contribute fully to admissions processes, being equally responsible for the selection process of potential students and their feedback must be acquired in the placement assessment process (Fox, 2020.).

Service user involvement in social work education in England is more advanced than in its Slovene counterpart at the University of Ljubljana; circumstances specific to these contexts influence this difference. At our English university, service user involvement is led by a committed and active co-ordinator who works to involve service users in all aspects of social work education (Fox, 2020.). This model of involvement supports the effective implementation of user involvement at our English university. Moreover, the statutory funding in the UK available to support the involvement of experts-by-experience in social work education, and its requirement by the social work regulator, Social Work England (2020.), underlines the necessity to continue to co-produce the social work programme with our service user experts. This is a fundamental enabler to effective involvement in England because these factors act as a lever to compel service users' continued participation in social work education, which is perhaps lacking in Slovenia.

At the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work, service user involvement in social work education is not mandated but is implemented at the discretion of the professor leading the module. Zaviršek and Videmšek (2009.) highlights that the need for the involvement of experts-by-experience in education has been acknowledged, but its integration into social work education has seldom extended beyond guest lecturing. There is however a belief that the involvement of experts-by-experience in education can narrow the gap between theory and practice, as underlined by Urek (2017.) over a decade later.

Slovene social work academics had the opportunity to learn from the UK experiences of user involvement by participating in a shared European project that sought to train mental health professionals to provide non-institutionalised community mental health. Experts-by-experience with a diagnosis of mental ill-health were involved with academics in co-producing the content for a teaching programme in which they collaborated in delivering. This has led to experts-by-experience being involved in a wide range of teaching opportunities in the lecture room, and one expert-by-experience who manages a selective module which is always over-subscribed. Some professors invite experts-by-experience as guest lecturers every year. Experts-by-experience have been involved in teaching since 1996 (Zaviršek and Videmšek, 2009.: 215), however, the major shift towards the involvement of experts-by-experience in teaching was facilitated by Tanja Lamovec (Lamovec, 1995.) and the people around her who challenged the power/knowledge of different professionals as well as educators and became continuously involved in social work teaching (Zaviršek and Videmšek, 2009.: 212).

Furthermore, experts-by-experience are invited to give feedback in all practice learning in a student's placement; they are also invited to give feedback on the collaboration of students and experts-by-experience in developing individual care plans, preparing, and delivering training programs (the EX-IN project was one of these examples) and opportunities for contributing to module assessment. Contri-

butions by experts-by-experience have led to many different issues being explored in the programme, such as experiences of mental ill-health, illicit drug use, same sex relationships, gender reassignment, disabilities, and marginalisation.

The contribution of service user involvement to knowledge in social work education

In this section we discuss how service user involvement contributes to the development of knowledge in social work education. The process of user involvement in social work education benefits student learning in many ways by: connecting them to the reality of experiencing social work services (Fox, 2020); enabling them to learn to communicate in an effective way by 'practising' their skills with service user experts (Fox, Dean and Amas 2021.); understanding their perspective to promote partnership-working with people who use services; increasing the effectiveness of interventions by focusing on the strengths and abilities of service users (Rapp and Goscha, 2012.); and by becoming reflective practitioners through a focus on the narrative experiences of people who use services (Fook, 2016.).

Furthermore, Unwin, Rooney and Cole(2018.: 386) highlight how important it is for practitioners in training to hear the perspective of lived experience in health and social care education because it enables them to acknowledge experts-by-experience as individuals 'worthy of respect and dignity', and such involvement 'is a pro-active way of trying to develop different cultures of care in future generations of professionals' (ibid, p.386). It thus enables future professionals to gain an insight into lived experiences. However, Baldwin and Sadd (2006.) reported students' ambivalence about the involvement of people with lived experience in health and social care education in the UK. In their study, students believed that the lived experiences told by experts-by-experience were either too professional on the one hand, or that the stories were too personal on the other. They found it hard to relate to the validity of user knowledge, neither recognising its usefulness for influencing practice nor its value in developing theory.

In Slovenia, Zaviršek and Videmšek (2009.) noted that one of the major obstacles to the involvement of experts-by-experience is the view of professionals who see experts-by-experience as people who need care and are dependent, and not as competent teachers with valuable skills. Zaviršek and Videmšek (2009.) noted that if experts-by-experience are perceived as incapable of solving everyday difficulties, they will not be allowed to become involved in social work teaching and responsible communication with social work students. Zaviršek and Videmšek (2009.: 211) noted that the paternalistic voices that were a barrier to the involvement of experts-by-experience feared that unknown teaching situation might trigger trauma, stress, and could re-traumatise the person. However, many experts-by-expe-

rience can confront new challenges and difficulties and manage the stress of being involved in an unusual and unknown environment of teaching (Zaviršek and Videmšek 2009.: 211; Fox, 2016.). For example, research underlines that experts-by-experience often feel a sense of empowerment as they engage with social work education. Hacking et al. (2007.) highlighted the sense of empowerment that service users experienced through involvement in an art project. They reported how service users experienced a sense of achievement and power as *artists*, something that enabled them to make a difference and contribute to knowledge. Similarly, in a study evaluating user involvement in social work education in the UK, Fox (2020.) reported that experts-by-experience found a real sense of achievement and empowerment from influencing student practice and noted their feelings of privilege at being able to see students gain confidence and competence as they began their training and became practitioners. The involvement of experts-by-experience in social work education is a starting point in the process of validating experiential knowledge. Moreover, such a process can begin to challenge the development of tokenistic attitudes and approaches to service users by re-shaping the power structures within social work education, research and practice.

Moreover, informing this debate, currently in Slovenia, the concept of inclusive education is extremely important in discussions about the development of educational policies. Zgaga (2019.) notes that the concept of inclusion has become one of the central concepts in education in the past few decades, not only in professional discourse, but also among the public. Inclusion is one of the modern paradigms of education. According to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), states must ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. The Convention sets the obligations of the States Parties to ensure that, among other things, people with disabilities receive the support required and reasonable accommodation is provided. This underpins the concept of respect for disabled people because all European countries have ratified the convention.

Furthermore, since 2019., the University of Ljubljana has been the coordinator of the project EUTOPIA (European Universities Transforming to an Open Inclusive Academy for 2050), an alliance of ten European universities. The main objective is to create learning opportunities for all groups of students, especially those who are disadvantaged due to their gender, race, ethnicity, migration background, economic status, or disability. The EUTOPIA inclusion focus aims to ensure that higher education is inclusive and accessible to all students (Videmšek, 2021.). Interim results of the project evidence that an inclusive higher education perspective not only contributes to individual development and well-being, but increases educational opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups. Inclusive higher education institutions are therefore better placed to act as direct role models for wider society. In

this article we highlight that experts-by-experience can act as teachers, professors, and mentors; we go *beyond* just suggesting that disadvantaged people should be able to access mainstream education. Inclusive pedagogy (Florian, 2019.) can be an alternative approach to address exclusion in education, but we argue that in social work inclusion requires acknowledgement of the place of experiential knowledge in teaching, practice and research. However, despite this, in contrast to the UK there is no mandatory requirement to engage experts-by-experience in training social work students in Slovenia.

Covid-19: adaptations to teaching delivery and user engagement in social work education

Teaching provision in HE social work programmes in both the UK and Slovenia has moved to blended face-to-face learning following the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic; and recurring lockdowns have at times prohibited all face-to-face learning and forced all teaching to be online. Face-to-face placement attendance has been paused at times, and the implementation of online virtual connections followed. Furthermore, much social work practice has also modelled this change and contacts with service users and carers take place, where possible, online; and in environments when this is not appropriate, with suitable risk assessments to health and safety and the wearing of effective Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is the experience of not only many social work practitioners, but also many social work students in practice placements.

The Covid-19 pandemic has urged us to re-think how our universities function whilst we rely on the use of digital tools to deliver teaching and student meetings. In the EUTOPIA project we completed short surveys, examining how 6 different EUTOPIA universities responded to the situation. The experience has exposed how the most vulnerable members of our communities are excluded and demonstrated the need to scrutinise our work and learning environments from the perspective of those who are most in need. To facilitate inclusion, we need to acknowledge the experiences of digital exclusion to ensure that participation becomes possible. Moreover, the adaptations required to facilitate the inclusion of disabled *students* in current modes of learning reflect those needed to support the participation of *experts-by-experience* in social work education (Vidmšek, 2020.).

In illuminating this discussion, we need to understand the dual nature of ICT as it both enables and disables and includes and excludes. Digital accessibility is perceived as being available for all students, irrespective of status or background. The results show that it is beneficial for many students, because for example, they value the opportunity to prepare for teaching sessions by looking at video materials in advance of sessions (Bauman et al., 2019., Vidmšek 2020., Vidmšek et al.

2020.). Moreover, digitally enabled teaching often provides better sound quality than in large lecture halls. Such formats are often very advantageous for students with additional learning needs because they can hear or read content several times; and furthermore, students with physical disabilities report that they do not need to arrange transportation to attend lectures (Johnson et al., 2010.). Moreover, online lectures enable all to express their views and to choose alternative forms of communication such as 'chat' or 'oral question'. This enables people with visual or hearing impairments to be active participants in the class.

More widely, the pandemic has increased our awareness of the diverse needs of students as well as staff. The current context has led to a pedagogical rethinking: how do we ensure that our online teaching is of the highest quality and maintain contact with students? Moreover, in a similar exercise, how can we similarly involve service users more effectively in teaching and recognise their additional needs to support their involvement? Thus, experience with Covid-19 has highlighted our responsibility to ensure that studies and support services are accessible and inclusive to all student groups, reflecting our similar duty to understand the needs that service users might have to be effectively involved in social work education. (Leskošek and Mešl, 2020.)

At our English university, service users have embraced digital technology to support the teaching on the social work programme. SUCI (Service user carer involvement) experts, as they are known at our university, have been involved in leading the preparation to a practice module by continuing to undertake role plays, but adapting this by participating through virtual media (Fox, Dean and Amas, 2021.). They have completed online interview panel sessions, and one expert has embraced the use of digital media in delivering the Equality and Diversity training. Others have adapted their participation in the admissions process by engaging with online admissions interviewing and assessment.

Although some service user experts have limited access to ICT technology, their involvement has been highly professional, accomplished and committed, highlighting their capacity and capabilities to embrace change, manage stressful situations, and to remain highly competent teachers, trainers, and experts-by-experience in these different and challenging times. However, in Slovenia, the short review of curriculum delivery reports a lack of user involvement in the lectures during the Covid-19 period, with only few examples of the involvement of people with first-hand experience supporting teaching as guest lectures.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have discussed how experts-by-experience are involved in the different contexts of our individual HEIs; highlighted how expertise-by-experience can

develop the social work discipline and benefit social work students; and examined service user involvement in our HEIs in the Covid-19 environment. As we explore the issues of service user involvement in social work education, it is important to acknowledge that one of the problematic aspects of the concept of 'inclusion' is that inclusion is mostly seen as something done BY the powerful majority FOR the marginalised groups. It thus reinforces the power relation while appearing to address it. That contrasts with an advocacy and activist stance where the marginalised work against this power structure to ensure their voices are heard and their perspectives are represented.

Despite this, following the emergence of Covid-19, we have been forced to adapt our teaching protocols, to implement online delivery and to develop a digital experience that students can access effectively. However, as the involvement of experts-by-experience becomes established across Europe, and HEIs start to work on ways to improve inclusion, at what point do and must we consult experts-by-experience in how this should be done or how it is developed? Both academics and students need to be ready to integrate experiential knowledge into practice and to acknowledge experts-by-experience in social work education, research and practice.

The lessons learnt from this pandemic, which underline the need for universities to be accessible to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, highlight the necessity to place equal value on the needs of experts-by-experience who may contribute to social work programmes, being willing to adapt our teaching practice to their needs. We must listen to the views of service users and the requirements they have to increase both their online presence and their face-to-face contributions (Fox, Dean and Amas, 2021.; Fox, 2020.). This would enable us to truly co-create learning content and delivery of teaching, and other ways in which they support social work programmes.

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ISKUSTVA VEZANA UZ UKLJUČIVANJE KORISNIKA USLUGA U OBRAZOVANJE U PODRUČJU SOCIJALNOG RADA U ENGLESKOJ I SLOVENIJI

SAŽETAK

U ovom radu raspravlja se o prirodi uključivanja korisnika usluga u visokoškolske programe socijalnog rada u Engleskoj i Sloveniji. Rasprava se temelji na našim iskustvima u pružanju podrške takvim programima te na dokazima iz stručne literature. Prvo se izlaže rasprava o učinkovitom razvoju uključivanja korisnika usluga u visokoškolske ustanove u ove dvije države. U drugom dijelu se istražuje kako uključivanje stručnjaka po iskustvu koristi obrazovanju studenata socijalnog rada. Zatim se analizira kako je pojava COVID-19 utjecala na obrazovanje u socijalnom radu i na uključenost korisnika usluga u nastavnim programima socijalnog rada u obje države. Zaključuje se da su oba nastavna programa socijalnog rada bila prisiljena prilagoditi se potrebama studenata u online okružju i prihvatiti inkluzivno obrazovanje. Kao rezultat toga predlaže se da bi potrebe stručnjaka po iskustvu trebale utjecati na razvoj obrazovanja u području socijalnog rada te da bi se trebalo savjetovati s njima o tome kako oni odabiru da ih se uključi u obrazovnu praksu.

Ključne riječi: iskustveno znanje; stručnost po iskustvu; uključivanje korisnika usluga; Engleska, Slovenija