Racial, social and spatial inequalities: Supporting Black African Students on practice placement using UBUNTU philosophy

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Abstract: This paper, based on a systematic review for a doctoral study, addresses racial, social, and spatial inequalities affecting Black African social work students. It emphasises the dearth of research on challenges faced by these students in Ireland, drawing insights from UK and USA research to underscore attainment disparities. The paper emphasises the holistic and worldview approach and advocates for support from practice educators using my newly created practical tool, which is rooted in the Ubuntu philosophy, to meet the unique needs of Black social work students on placements. Ubuntu translates as, 'I am because we are'. As such, it provides a unique African interpretation of social work education given its holistic and worldview approach to meeting the needs of individuals and groups hence, its uniqueness as an underpinning guideline for supporting Black social work students in practice placement. This article concludes that the practical framework developed by the author, in line with the Ubuntu Philosophy, will enhance the learning and achievement of Black social work students.

Keywords: placement; Black social work students; practice education; support; Ubuntu

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Introduction

The Irish population increasingly became more racial and culturally diverse due to migration (CSO, 2017, Chapter 5) over the past two decades. Before this, social work education and practice in Ireland was predominantly Caucasian; however, Walsh et al. (2009, p.14) noted that as of 2007, 125 qualified social workers of African descent were practising in Ireland. Anecdotally, a significant increase in this cohort has been observed at practice and education levels since the study was published. CSO (2016) reports that African descents make up 1.4 per cent of the Irish population; Black social work students are part of this 1.4 per cent. To date, limited research and literature exist about the experiences of students from the Black African community. Various definitions of the term Black have been provided; however, this article will use Black and Black African interchangeably to refer to social work students of African descent who are of black skin colour (Singh, 1992; Gabriel & Tate, 2017). This practice tool will add to the existing literature by introducing a Practice Teaching Model as a stopgap until additional research and studies are conducted.

Globally, social work has attracted a heterogeneous student body with contrasting academic readiness and diverse racial and social backgrounds. In recent times in Ireland, there has been an observed increase in the number of students from minoritised communities enrolling on these courses (McCartan et al. 2022, p.14), with practice learning being a crucial component of their curricula. While this is encouraging news for Ireland, there is limited literature on this emerging cohort who may experience forms of racism, as indicated in literature from other regions (Kwhali, 2017; p.5). The Black students in this article self-identify as having African heritage or are otherwise connected to the African Diaspora through their lineage. Furthermore, capitalising the term 'Black' is deliberate and inclusive of Black individuals who share everyday experiences within various global contexts (Kapitan, 2016).

Ubuntu is an African philosophy that translates as, 'I am because we are'. It simply means humanity towards others. The Principles of Ubuntu exist in other worldviews. Bangura (2005) argues that Ubuntu provides a unique African interpretation of social work education, considering that both are holistic in approach and endeavour to create environments that meet the needs of individuals and groups. This alignment between social work's holistic approach and Ubuntu lends itself to this valuable resource for ensuring culturally responsive practice placement environments. As

such, this article will explore the Ubuntu philosophy and demonstrate how it can support Black social work students while on placement.

Social work education has, in the past, examined the transgenerational educational disadvantage of Black and other minority ethnic populations and the resulting disparities in achievement, retention, success and progression of Black versus white students (APA, 2012; Rogers, 2021, p.225). Other studies have identified numerous factors that continue to contribute to this phenomenon, such as economic and social stratification, racial disparities, and unequal access to resources (Fairtlough et al., 2014; Dinnerson, 2019; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019; Advance Higher Education, 2020). As such, compared to their white counterparts, Black students are more likely to fail their practice placement or have them terminated (Tedam and Munowenyu, 2016). This paper seeks to address these issues by presenting an application of the Ubuntu philosophy aimed at ensuring that practice learning is more inclusive for Black students.

This article will further examine the inequalities experienced by Black African social work students in practice placements, highlighting the implications for educators and advocating for culturally responsive support. It will highlight a review of relevant literature on Black social work students during placement and proffer a practical application of the Ubuntu philosophy as a guiding framework to support Black social work students on practice placement. Further, this article presents an original model based on the existing Ubuntu philosophy to support Black social work students during their practice placements.

Racial, social mobility and spatial inequality of Black social work students

Racial, social and spatial inequalities associated with underachievement and disparity in the award of social work qualifications to students from minoritised communities are profoundly entrenched and evident in higher education and social work (Fairtlough et al., 2014; Hillen and Levy, 2015; Cramer, 2021). For instance, based on an analysis of aggregated data, Cramer (2021) states that the award gap between white and students from the Black and ethnic communities in the UK, the Netherlands, the USA, and Australia are linked to institutional factors rather than individual abilities. This can be attributed to the historical and existing contexts of racial

inequalities concerning Black populations, which have been consistently demonstrated and documented (Yosso, 2005, p.72; Olusa and Gavigan, 2020; Work Race Equality Standard, 2020). Indeed, these disparities in educational performance and achievement are more pronounced among Black African students, erstwhile identified in the UK as BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) students (Hussein et al., 2009). An example of such disparity exists in the UK, whereby 81.4 per cent of white students are awarded a First or Second Class Upper award compared to 68 per cent of students from African, Asian and other minoritised communities (Advance HE, 2020b p.128).

The resulting underachievement and disparity in social work qualifications have been ongoing issues that educators in schools and universities have attempted to address (Channer and Doel, 2009; Mbarushimana and Robbins, 2015; Bernard et al., 2014). The most common factors among Black social work students are racial inequality, poor social mobility, income and racial discrimination (Tedam and Munowenyu, 2016; Moriarty et al., 2015). These factors invariably present and contribute to their practice placement experience. Racial inequality causes unequal resources, power, and economic opportunities between races to impact minoritised groups long-term. Evidence suggests such inequality is perpetuated in predominantly white spaces such as classrooms and workplaces (Thomas et al., 2011; Bhopal, 2018). Access to higher education has been hindered by systemic racism, resulting in a devastating impact on Black students at the third level. (Lavalette & Pinketh, 2013; Arday, 2021, p.973). Black African students' experiences of conscious or unconscious racism, social integration and inclusion and language barriers tend to impact their academic progression and integration within predominantly white educational settings (Yosso, 2005, p.72; Jessop and Williams, 2009, p.9; Ukpokodu, 2013). As a result, many often experience isolation, decreased self-worth and difficulty engaging with learning (Jenkins et al., 2021, p.159-161). Kumi-Yeboah et al. (2020, p.25) further highlighted that conflict between their traditional and cultural values and the white-dominated culture and learning environment contribute to the impact on the learning and adjustment of Black students.

Due to the inequality and structural barriers that pervade Black communities, many students from Black African backgrounds may experience difficulties that profoundly impact their ability to thrive in education. Other factors impacting Black students' social and spatial reality include backgrounds of low-income households, health inequalities, social

exclusion and language barriers (Bernard et al., 2014; Brandon et al., 2013; Hollingsworth et al., 2018). Also, Black students who would not have English as a first language or those with accents not consistent with most English-speaking students encounter significant barriers in predominantly English-speaking learning environments. For instance, Ro (2021) notes that English spoken by Asians, Africans or Middle Easterners may be perceived as challenging and unpleasant, thus suggesting cultural and linguistic discrimination of culturally and linguistically different students.

Practice learning and Irish social work education

Social work in Western Europe, where it originated, is predominantly white. Therefore, there is a fundamental necessity to ensure that the racial, social and cultural differences of non-white students and practitioners are considered in the development of policy, practice and education. To qualify as a skilled social worker in Ireland and other parts of the globe, practice learning, or practice placement as it is called in Ireland, is a vital and mandatory component of the curricula (CORU, 2013). Practice learning is a form of clinical education that provides students with the opportunity to apply their classroom learning within practice settings to achieve the required professional competence (Shulman, 2005: 52). Not in order of importance, practice education competencies that are important in ensuring quality practice learning include interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, empathy, compassion, and self-awareness, providing productive feedback and coaching (UCD, 2008). Regarding Black students, additional competencies required for a culturally responsive practice placement include ensuring an inclusive environment, an understanding of cultural identity and knowledge of the systemic inequities experienced by Black African populations, sensitivity to microaggressions, appreciation of multiculturalism, and a commitment to anti-racist practices (Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2006; Bernard et al., 2014; CORU, 2018).

One area of inquiry that merits attention is the cultural appropriateness of the teaching and learning relationship between Black social work students and their practice teachers. The literature emphasises the importance of these components as a significant factor in the practice learning experiences of the student and the practice educator (Mehrotra & Gooding, 2022). This is essential because when the culture and racial

backgrounds of racial minority students are acknowledged or considered during placements, students tend to thrive and progress in their learning. Mehrotra and Gooding (2022, p. 4) further strengthen the argument of the Higher Education Futures Taskforce (2021) discussion paper that Black and other minority ethnic students bring unique perspectives and diversity of experiences to field placements. The authors opine that students from migrant backgrounds contribute invaluable cultural perspectives and resilience, such as being role models and mentors to other students, particularly those from similar backgrounds. As such, having Black African students in field placements helps promote inclusivity and culturally sensitive education and practice (Hillen and Levy, 2015).

One of the findings from a review conducted in the UK found that students from Black and other non-dominant ethnic communities experience discrimination during their practice placements and consequently tend to underachieve and are more likely to fail practice placements than any other racial groups (Bernard et al., 2011, p.7). Another UK study in a social work faculty of a predominantly white university found that cultural differences, lack of access to suitable placements, racial discrimination, and language barriers impact Black students (Hussein et al., 2009). In response, the faculty developed and implemented culturally appropriate strategies to improve Black students' overall learning (Thomas et al., 2011 p3). Tedam (2019) maintains that there is still a significant dearth of literature seeking to understand the complex issue of Black social work students' experience of practice placement (Tedam, 2019).

Practice teachers and tutors teach, mentor, supervise, evaluate and recommend students are 'fit to practice' upon graduating (CORU, 2013). While practice teachers and tutors provide guidance, they acquire new skills and knowledge, including pedagogical skills of teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, mentoring and coaching (CSWE, 2015). As such, they can verify and consolidate their personal and professional development. Practice educators must see students as co-collaborators in the practice learning relationship. Additional benefits of providing placement to students include the opportunity to build and develop professional management of others, free labour provided by the students, and the opportunity to learn current trends and develop a deeper understanding of one's professional identity (Unrau et al. 2020). The benefits to the teams, service and ultimately, the service user are immeasurable. CORU (2019, p.6) mandates that the provision of quality learning opportunities that adhere to the CORU standards of proficiency are provided to students. This includes

providing a practice learning experience tailored to each individual's needs (CORU, 2019, p.16). Specifically, Black students have reported that their positive experiences and successful outcomes have been due to having supportive practice educators and placement supervisors (Tedam, 2014, p.139). Although this article focuses on social work discipline, the Ubuntu philosophy proposed applies to practice teaching across all health and social care professions.

Research and literature insights and findings on Black social work students on practice placement

Despite the observed increase in Black social work students in Ireland, there has been relatively little discussion of their experiences in the classroom and during practice placements. This contrasts the attention paid to Black social work students in other contexts (Aymer & Bryan, 1996; Bernard et al., 2011; Tedam, 2014; Brown et al., 2019). This suggests the need to focus on how Black social work students can be best supported in clinical education based on the findings from the literature that posits that Black social work students and, broadly, practitioners in predominantly white learning environments experience various forms of disadvantage (Solozarno et al., 2000; Tedam, 2014). Synthesis of the findings on Black social work students in other regions reveals several themes, such as racism, a differential in achievement levels, underrepresentation, poor faculty support, and working harder than their white counterparts (Olusa, 2018). Hillen et al. (2013), writing from a Scottish perspective, argue that these challenges result in more unsatisfactory experiences and outcomes for Black social work students.

Woods (1997 p. 50, 52) highlighted that despite providing positive comments about the approaches of some of their practice teachers, the Black students reflected feeling dissatisfied with their practice placement due to negative experiences. Similarly, Black students' negative experiences of overt and covert forms of racism and racial prejudice impact their ability to apply learning to practice and complete the required timeframe for the practice placement (Aymer & Bryan, 1996; Razack, 2001; Furness, 2012; Bernard et al., 2019). According to Woods (1997), during their placement in a white-dominated team, Black social work students reported that the atmosphere was not conducive to learning as some of the team members

appeared to feel threatened by the presence of the students. Findings from a Canadian qualitative study of Black social work students further reveal that the students' experience of marginalisation in placements was due to their expectation to conform to Eurocentric and white-centeredness as the standard for learning and performance, which led to complex relationships between the practice teachers and the Black students (Razack (2001).

Racism has been recognised as a barrier to progression for students from Black and minority backgrounds (Bernard, 2020). From another qualitative study of Black, disabled and lesbian, bisexual and gay students as well as the teaching and non-academic staff of a university in the UK, the majority of the Black and minority ethnic students reported that discriminatory behaviours and attitudes among practice teachers, service users and other team staff contributed to their differential experiences compared to their white peers (Bernard et al., 2011). Notably, during the emergent chaos of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, Black social work students on field placement who participated in Tedam's (2021) qualitative study in the UK reported experiences of race-based differential treatment compared to their white classmates. One example given was that their white classmates received approval for similar requests that the Black students were denied. Drawing from the findings of the study, Tedam (2021) highlighted that the covid-19 pandemic further worsened the peculiar situation of Black African students on placement. This argument is consistent with the general experience of Black social work students in white-dominated educational contexts (Bernard et al., 2013; Mbarushimana and Robbins, 2015). Regrettably, and as Singh (2019) and Tedam & Cane (2022) posit, a lack of empirical evidence exists to demonstrate how social work education programs adequately equip social work students to address issues related to racism effectively.

Fairtlough et al. (2014), from their qualitative study of ethnic minority social work students in England, reveal that Black and ethnic minority students progress more slowly on their social work programmes than their white counterparts. Indeed, the authors report that socioeconomic factors of disadvantaged educational backgrounds, economic pressures and caring responsibilities for relations contribute to these students' challenges. Nonetheless, the intersectionality of gender, race, disability, class, and poor placement experiences potentially increase the risks of failed placements, especially for Black male social work students (Brandon et al. 2012).

From the above-identified challenges that Black African social work students experience while on placement in white-dominated placement

environments, the following part of this paper will explore Ubuntu, an African Philosophy of humanness and showcase how it can be used as a resource to support Black students during their practice placement in Ireland.

The Place of UBUNTU in social work practice learning

Questioning what support for Black social work students during placement should look like is essential. As noted earlier, Black social work students present with unique perspectives, needs and challenges. Therefore, ensuring positive and conducive placements will support them in achieving their placement and learning goals. Based on a literature review which highlights the role of practice teachers and tutors as gatekeepers into the profession but also considers their duty of optimising student learning and achievement specifically, for Black social work students (Tedam, 2012; McDermott & Harkin-MacDermott, 2021). As early examples in the UK, Stubbs (1985) and Ahmad (1990) argued for including indigenous African philosophy in social work education and practice, given its potential to challenge white distortions of the Black experience. In recognition of the historical racialised injustice and how it continues to impact those of African descent, Mugumbante et al. (2023) cite that in addition to the colonial antecedents of social work, the lack of Ubuntu-informed educational resources as barriers to the implementation of Ubuntu in contemporary social work.

Ubuntu is a transgenerational philosophy of practices and values from Sub-Saharan Africa (Gade, 2012). It is indeed a robust sub-Saharan African worldview that promotes the idea of humaneness and highlights the significance of interdependence between people. It refers to the perception, process, content and quality of human interactions. Ubuntu means that all people and environments are interconnected and interdependent (Bangura, 2005). As such, Ubuntu aligns with the philosophy and ethics of social work as it refers to humanness and gives room for deeply-held African ideals of the interconnectedness of human beings. Ubuntu is one of the agendas representing the current theme of the Global Agenda Social Work and Social Development 2020-2030, established by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Council on Social Welfare and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). In alignment with Ubuntu's translation of 'I am Because We Are', the IFSW's

call for solidarity within communities, societies, and globally is reflected in Mayaka et al. (2023). This suggests that Ubuntu has the potential to become a global framework for advancing and culturally responsive social work education and practice. Uwihangana and Habineza (2023) support this view noting that Ubuntu is gaining momentum as a global worldview framework in social work.

Ubuntu is underpinned by some African values common to social work, such as *upenyu*. When translated, *upenyu* implies that the preservation of life should be paramount at all times. (Samkange & Samkange, 1980, p.7). The values of Ubuntu noted in Table 1 below echo loudly in social work as Ubuntu and social work share common values of humanity. The overarching values of Ubuntu that are most relevant to practice learning are being applied in this paper. To break the continuity of underachievement of Black students in practice education, it is crucial to gain this insight to understand how best to inform practice learning from a culturally responsive perspective.

From the table below, Ubuntu's generic life values are based on equality, respect, justice, altruism, responsibility, collectiveness, reciprocity, support, community, caring, sharing, trust, integrity, and social change.

To address the maintained inequality identified in social work (Kavroudakis et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2019), Mugumbate and Chereni (2020, p.xiv) encourage social workers to consider how best to apply Ubuntu ideology in our 'teaching, learning, writing, research, fieldwork, practice and reflection'. This implies that adopting Ubuntu as an approach in practice teaching will strengthen learning and ensure quality placement for both the practice educator and the student. Ubuntu recognises that all humans are equal. On this premise, it is proffered as a helpful framework for supporting Black students during their practice learning.

Drawing from Gay's (2002) culturally responsive approach to enhancing Black students learning, it is crucial to ensure culturally responsive practice learning environments for Black students. Indeed, this approach provides a framework for recognising and affirming Black social work students' unique strengths and experiences and helping them process and manage racism and other challenges they may encounter during placement. Below is the author's Practice Teaching Model adopting UBUNTU as an acronym for a culturally responsive practice placement. The introduction of the UBUNTU acronym for culturally responsive practice placements is original and timely as it supports the growing decolonising agenda across HEIs globally (Gray et al., 2013; Mabvurira, 2018; Harms-Smith, 2019). Other studies, such as

Ubuntu Values	Translation
Upenyu	Life
Ukama	Relationship; The state of being related by kindred, affinity, or other alliance (Mbigi, 2000)
Umuganda	Service to others
Ururami	Justice
Ubunyarwanda	Nationhood
Uhuru	Liberty, independence, sovereignty or freedom
Umachobane	Sustainability
Itorero	Good members of society, and a strong sense of cultural values and leadership skills
Umoja	Unity, peace or harmony
Omutaahi and kagisano	Good neighbourliness
Musha	Permanent home in ancestral lands and country
Shosholoza	Resilience
Simony e or Teranga	Strengths in numbers, we are one
Kuumba	Creativity or mentoring
Ujima	Collective responsibility
Utungamir i	Leadership
Ushavi	Workmanship or entrepreneurship
Unyanzvi	Professionalism
Munno mukabi	A true friend is one who helps or stands with you when you have problems
Mambo vanhu	People centredness
Medemer	Synergy

(Mugumbate and Nyanguru, 2013) and (Chigangaidze et al., 2023), have drawn upon the Ubuntu philosophy for social work education and practice more generally. Additionlly, this is the first use of the individual letters of Ubuntu as providing distinct and unique areas for practice educators to use to guide their relationships and work with social work students on placements. The UBUNTU Practice Teaching Model, discussed below, is distinguishable from the philosophy using capitalised letters.

Below is the author's Practice Teaching Model adopting UBUNTU as an acronym for a culturally responsive practice placement. While this model is presented as a sequential model, it is essential to note that practice educators are not strictly bound to follow a linear progression starting with the 'U' (Understanding) phase. The tangible strategies in the model allow for flexibility and adaptation to meet the unique needs of learners and the specific context of the practice teaching environment.

Understanding Take the time to engage with the student and understand their needs. Respect their culture, experiences, and perspectives. The core value of understanding is significant in this context. Seeking to understand and engaging in meaningful discussions encourages an attitude of curiosity and empathy towards the experiences of these students and a willingness to learn from them (Tedam, 2012). It ensures recognising and affirming the unique strengths and experiences they bring into placement. This core value is beneficial to both the practice teacher and the student. At the cultural interface, a practice teacher's use of reflective listening by repeating what is said with clarification and expressing associated emotions can foster a feeling of being understood in their own right (Miller, 2014).

Belonging Ensuring acceptance and being valued in a new environment helps foster a sense of belonging (Gutierrez & Jacob, 2021). From the time of the pre-placement meeting, it is necessary to consider the student's racial background and consider how racism could impact the student in the agency (Goldingay, 2012). Students feel more supported when their placement supervisors are comfortable with diversity and acknowledge the strengths therein. As a core value of Ubuntu, having a sense of belonging helps foster a sense of support and security for Black students so that they can voice their concerns if they experience racism or discrimination. This assures them that their voices will be heard and that any issues encountered will be addressed openly and promptly.

Unique Perspectives Black students' unique experiences and perspectives in placement cannot be undervalued. Practice educators need to acknowledge these and celebrate diversity. As Lefevre (2005, p.565) highlights, student perspectives during placement fosters a quality learning experience and learning. Within this perspective, the practice teacher can address complex issues and concerns with students as they emerge. In so doing, the students, particularly those who may have had negative experiences, could be supported to develop their confidence and self-esteem in placement. Practice educators must perceive their students as knowledgeable and valuable assets and allow them to incorporate cultural references and fluency into the learning environment (Gay, 2002).

Note and Nurture Noting every detail, such as regularly checking in with the student, offering verbal and written guidance on their performance, and sending informational emails about resources and upcoming events, could help them succeed in their placement. The goal is to ensure that each student feels included, respected, and supported throughout their practice placement. The philosophy of Ubuntu promotes teamwork and collaboration, meaning that this principle promotes collaborating with the Black students as they are supported to adjust to the new setting and feel confident in their new role. The core skills of nurturing relationships, central to social work practice, should be employed in building trust through consistent objective feedback, respect and empathy towards Black students on placements (Truell and Crompton, 2020). This ensures a nurturing relationship between supervisors and students. In line with 'I am because we are', nurturing relationships is at the core of social work practice. It is integral to creating a secure environment where Black students can trust that their cultural needs are recognised, acknowledged, and supported throughout their placement journey. Practice educators must be cognisant of how their interactions with their Black students shape these relationships and strive to ensure that each student feels valued, respected, and heard.

Teach and support Black students returning to education after a long absence, and those with English as an additional language may experience complex and varied difficulties during their practice placements. Acknowledging these challenges and offering appropriate support is essential (Gutierrez and Jacob, 2021). These could involve providing relevant resources such as mentoring, undertaking a coaching approach to teaching and guidance when needed. Further, providing adequate

support to Black students would cultivate confidence in their writing and speaking and help them navigate the specialised professional language of the agencies in which they are placed. Maintaining professional social work standards while ensuring no compromise in the standard of work is an important balance when supporting Black social work students on field placement. Practice educators should be particularly cognisant of this to ensure patient safety and quality service. Using supervision to explain procedures and expectations, vigilance in checking evidence of learning and standards of practice and providing additional resources or guidance as necessary enables a more collaborative approach to resolving issues. The goal is to foster a supportive learning environment that will encourage success without jeopardising safety.

Unity Encouraging collaboration and emphasising the importance of maintaining professional boundaries while fostering connectedness can foster unity. Additionally, creating opportunities to celebrate successes together can further promote team spirit and act as a reminder that everyone is in it together. Building genuine connections helps foster mutual understanding and gives students a space to process their experiences. Also, it is worthwhile to encourage meaningful discussions with everyone involved so that every voice is heard (Watkins, 2017). This ensures that students are involved in their learning and promotes the ownership of their learning. Celebrating minor and significant accomplishments with the broader team will help Black students develop the necessary skills and knowledge to make the most of their experience and succeed. Practice teachers must strive to create a culture of acceptance that celebrates diverse cultures, backgrounds and perspectives (NASW, 2015). This could involve implementing inclusion or providing resources that focus on the unique experiences of Black individuals in social work.

Conclusion

This article has been written to encourage reflection, discussion and action on supporting Black students identified in the literature as being at risk of failing or not progressing in their social work practice placement. Based on findings from the literature reviewed, this paper has illuminated how lifelong racialised disparities affect Black social work students during

practice placement. Further, drawing from the Ubuntu philosophy, the article introduced UBUNTU Practice Teaching Model as a strategy to minimise differential outcomes and racism for Black social workers in Ireland with a focus on practice learning. Research findings have substantiated that Black students in predominantly white institutions experience racial microaggressions, often negatively impacting their academic, social, and emotional experiences and preparation for practice (Kitchin, 2015). Notably, the course Handbooks developed by the colleges and schools of social work in Ireland provided to students and practice educators serve as guidance for practice placements; significantly, there is a recognition of insufficient formal support for Black social work students undertaking placement learning. This suggests the need for a robust appraisal of existing practice placement guidelines.

Placements should be continuously assessed for quality assurance, and support should be provided to ensure that placements which present potential problems are adequately addressed. Furthermore, before students from Black African backgrounds commence placement, it is essential to discuss what a culturally responsive placement will mean for them (Goldingay, 2012). Applying the author's practical teaching model in line with Ubuntu Philosophy, as expatiated above, will enhance the quality of learning and achievement of Black social work students. To date, there has been no attempt to investigate the experiences and challenges of Black social work students in Ireland while on practice placement. Therefore, this paper recommends a study into the experiences of Black social work students on placement to better develop this area of support for them and other ethnic minority students.

By addressing the gap in the literature and proposing a unique solution, this work makes a valuable contribution to the field of social work education and practice.

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