‘That was awful! I’m not ready yet, am I?’ Is there such a thing as a Good Fail?

Stuart Eno[1] and Judy Kerr[2]

Abstract: Failing students in practice placement is frequently viewed as a negative and emotionally challenging experience for students and practice teachers and, as such, a situation to be avoided. In this article the notion that failing is the ‘right thing to do’ is explored from the perspective of Senior Agency based Practice Educator and a University Course Director for Practice Learning and from their experience of supporting both students and practice educators in the process.

Reasons for failure are considered and the concept of ‘reluctance to fail ‘is explored in the context of the expectations of assessment of practice. We argue that there is such a thing as a ‘good fail’ and that Social Work educators need to support the positive challenges of rigorous assessment rather than focus on the uncomfortable ‘feelings’ surrounding the notion of failure.

Practice educators have an important gate keeping function which needs recognition in the process of assessing readiness to practise. We suggest that not only do practice educators and tutors need to embrace a fail recommendation as justifiable but also that students themselves are able to recognise a lack of readiness to practise and can acknowledge a sense of’ relief’ in a fail outcome.

Keywords: practice learning; failing students; gate keeping; reluctance to fail; the good fail.

1. Senior Learning & Development Officer, Perth and Kinross Council
2. Senior Teaching Fellow and Programme and Practice Learning Director, University of Stirling

Address for correspondence: Judy Kerr, School of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling, Colin Bell Building, Stirling FK9 4 LA.
j.a.kerr@stirling.ac.uk

Date of first (online) publication: 24th May 2013

Introduction

Traditionally, a student failing their practice learning placement is seen as a negative outcome. 'Fail' is seen as a more challenging recommendation to substantiate than 'Pass' and carries with it an emotional loading for both students and practice educators. This paper explores some of the factors contributing to this perception. It also questions how helpful this is as a default position, both for the student(s) and the profession. We ask if there are circumstances in which 'Fail' is not only appropriate but also actually helpful to the student and their ongoing development?

The paper is based on the writers' experiences within Scotland, which has its own system of professional governance. There is a specific assessment framework, the Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE, 2004) that is applicable to Scottish social work qualifying programmes. Assessment issues and processes, though, are not country specific, as demonstrated by the literature. We would argue, therefore, that the paper's relevance is not restricted to the Scottish context, but has a broader application focusing, as it does, on process and relationships.

The place of practice learning

There is a building body of literature that looks at the practice learning components of professional qualification programmes, recognising the centrality of learning that takes place in a practice setting, along with the need to formally assess that learning and development as part of the individual's progression towards becoming a competent and effective professional worker. Indeed, this is one of the founding principles of the current Scottish assessment framework for social work;

> Practice is seen as an essential element of the qualification. Development of the students' skills and abilities in practice is based on the fact that practice is a setting for learning, a way of learning and an essential part of learning that students must complete' (SiSWE 2004, p.19)

In the UK professional learning is a combination of academic study and practice-based learning, which leads to a joint award, an academic degree and professional qualification, which 'effectively facilitates admission to

the profession and acknowledges ... the value of practice learning as key to raising the status of the social work profession' (Shapton, 2007, p.40).

Social work practice learning often has a more profound and lasting impact than classroom teaching (Bellinger, 2010), and is often the aspect best remembered by students (Doel & Shardlow in Parker, 2008). As Parker (2007) discusses, various authors have explored its significance and described it as the environment where knowledge and experience can be transformed into professional learning and activity, and as Lefevre (2005, p.579) argues 'professional learning evokes strong personal reactions and feelings for students ...' largely around anxiety about assessment and its outcome.

In some respects, this begs more questions than it answers. For instance, Bellinger (2010, p.2451) questions the possible locations of such practice learning, and whether the emphasis on statutory placements, that is, mainstream formal settings principally in local or central government agencies, glosses over a number of issues. Among these are whether such opportunities are geared more towards '…training future agency staff…' (which could be characterised as the building of technical competence, and which can militate against '…the creative development of social work …concerned with social justice and individual and social change', which introduces broader personal and moral dimensions).

The importance of practice learning is generally accepted, with adult learning principles (for example, Kolb, 1984) informing current practice. However, diversity of delivery (and, indeed, conceptualisation) is still much in evidence. Practice learning arrangements and processes are located within national frameworks for the professional qualification programmes. But, while those frameworks provide a central overview for the awarding institutions (universities), there has been significant variation among individual award programmes. Caspi and Reid (2002 in Parker, 2007, p.764) noted a lack of coherent and agreed procedures for the delivery of practice learning, which is a strong feature of student feedback in the Institute of Research and Innovation in Social Service (IRISS) Scottish study (Orme & McGoldrick, 2009). Here, students suggest that their practice experience is a product of setting, personality and relationship, hence individualised and profoundly subjective, echoing some of the conclusions of Lefevre (2005)

Assessment process

Similar issues arise in respect of assessment of the practice learning itself. Again, the IRISS research (Orme & McGoldrick, 2009) indicates confusion on the part of the students as to *what* is being assessed – and *how*. That uncertainty is not restricted to students. It is not clear if, as assessors, we are judging whether people are good enough to pass or bad enough to fail. In her research into nursing practice placements, Duffy (2003, p.80) notes that, while mentors were

> ... adamant that they would recognise and act upon unsafe practice, it was of interest that it was only when major problems were evident that mentors actually felt able to fail a student.

Mentors report a level of confidence in relation to students deemed to be demonstrating unsafe or dangerous practice, that is that they were bad enough to fail. However, in matters of attitude or understanding, there is much greater reluctance to put concerns in writing, let alone recommend a fail. While we may have major reservations about a student being good enough to pass, then, those reservations do not, it seems, provide a secure basis for failing them. This is particularly interesting in the light of the significance given to values and knowledge within social work education.

Similarly, Duffy's (2003, p.47) findings indicate people are less likely to register student shortcomings in the earlier stages of the programme. At least partly, this is justified in terms of the student(s) having opportunity to 'make up ground' in the subsequent stages of the course. Indeed, it would go some way to addressing the power issues noted by Parker (2007) (discussed more fully below) by providing further opportunities for the students to exercise some influence over the assessment outcome(s) - or it would do, if those concerns were caught within a formative framework. The research suggests, though, that mentors are not formally recording such concerns and forwarding them to faculty staff. Even where that does happen, such information is often withheld from subsequent mentors, for fear of introducing bias into the assessment. Shapton (2007, p.41) argues that 'failure to fail' is also an identified feature of the social work practice learning landscape.

Inquiries (for example, Laming, 2003) have highlighted concerns about social work practice standards and levels of training. This tends to locate

the discourse in the area of competencies and the exercise of authority, particularly in relation to risk. As crucial as these are, they are part of a wider picture. Wilson and Kelly (2010) discuss some of the criticisms of competence-based approaches, noting that our understanding of how people become skilled and effective practitioners is still limited. Professional practice encompasses more than a set of competencies. Within the current Scottish award, academic understanding and achievement are immediately obvious additions. However, the requirements frameworks (SiSWE; the Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection (KCs) and the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF)) along with practice education wisdom identify a range of other factors to be considered within the assessment:

* Confidence and assertiveness, the understanding and exercise of professional authority;
* Responsibility for own and others' ongoing development;
* Conceptualisation and analysis;
* Integration of theory and practice;
* The development of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice;
* Self-awareness;
* Critical reflection and reflective practice.

Students report uncertainty (Orme & McGoldrick, 2009) about how such factors and features are assessed. It is relatively straightforward to identify tools and mechanisms used – reflective journals, process recordings, observations of practice, feedback, case recordings and reports, supervision discussion and so on. More difficult is articulating the methodology for processing such evidence. Most programmes have Practice Assessment Panels or their equivalent, where evidence from practice is reviewed in respect of demonstrating adequacy. However, it can be argued that these replicate the unexplicated processes within the assessment itself and rely on tacit understandings. Standardisation activity can go some way towards addressing this but Parker's (2008) research reports student reservation about these mechanisms, seeing them as arenas in which power is brokered but from which they, as learners, are excluded. Membership of such panels or forums varies across programmes, adding to the view that not only are assessment processes varied but so too are quality assurance mechanisms.

Looking at power within the assessment activity is helpful. It introduces the notion of the practice learning experience as a combination of interaction and transaction. Parker (2008) discusses the concept of 'field

of power', identifying it as '... a space of force-relations between agents with different kinds of capital...' (2008, p.995). Within this, in line with a social constructs perspective, evidence, assessment and the power dimension can be seen as negotiated outcomes, located within the extant relationships involving service users, colleagues and especially training team members – student, academic tutor, practice supervisor (based in the agency with line management responsibility for the student's work), and practice educator/assessor. We would suggest that the relationships between the various participants provide the arenas and mechanisms in which and by which such force-relations are brokered. This, in turn, underlines the centrality of relationship within the process, and the importance of the structure and dynamics of the various relationships. For us, it also makes sense of student reports (Orme & McGoldrick, 2009; Parker, 2007) of the perceived significance and impact of their relationships, particularly that with their practice educator/assessor (the person making the pass/fail recommendation), resonating with Lefevre's study (2005).

Further, it makes sense of the participative elements noted by various authors, for instance Bellinger who argues that learning to practice requires '…embodied participation' (2010, p.2456). Wilson and Kelly (2010) talk of student levels of satisfaction in components of their programme and levels of confidence in their developing competence. These are person-based elements. Parker's findings lead him to propose that '... a positive teacher/student relationship was instrumental in learning safe practice' (2007, p.771) echoing Hughes and Pengelly (2002, p.3), who assert that

> ... the way a supervisor is able to exercise authority is as crucial as ever in ensuring a supervision that promotes safe and effective service delivery.

In later research, Parker (2008, p.995) returns to the topic and explores student satisfaction with process and outcome. Reported problems or dissatisfactions were associated with '....what was seen as an abuse of status rather than perceived authority.'

From this, especially in the practice context, can we more confidently propose that form is important in the student social worker's learning matrix as well as content? If so, how can we take account of it in our management of the qualification process? We would suggest that, as in work with service users, relationship is central and the student needs to have confidence in its openness, accessibility, equity, and transparency, promoting, as Lefevre suggests, 'students' capacities to expose their practice to scrutiny' (2005, p.79).

The purpose of assessment

Ordinarily, we would suggest that assessment is seen to be a combination of measurement and judgement – to assess is to 'calculate or estimate the value, importance or quality of someone or something' (Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 2005). Within professional qualifying courses, then, we are judging a student's adequacy in relation to their ability to undertake the required task(s), and their readiness and fitness for progression to the next stage (of the programme, or into practice). This adequacy relates to academic level, as they are undertaking a degree programme, and to practice performance in relation to their professional award. Here the complexities start, for we have not only the two dimensions (academic and practice performance) but also the product of the relationship or dialectic between them. The qualification is a degree but not solely an academic award. The intellectual and knowledge components need to be expressed, conveyed, demonstrated and applied in non-academic contexts as well as through more traditional academic channels. What is more, students need to incorporate and integrate practice wisdom and practical knowledge – resources, policies and procedures. Similarly, the qualification is not a vocational one, though practice competence is an essential element. As Shapton (2007, citing Carpenter, 2004) proposes, behaviour is a central concern. Behaviour goes beyond practice competence(s); he suggests it is '...an aggregation of skills into methods of working...' (p.43). As outlined earlier, we would suggest it also includes assertiveness, confidence, presentation, exercise of authority, inter-personal interaction and so on. A crucial dimension of our assessment process for qualification, then, is the student's level of operation within this matrix of knowing and doing and educators/assessors need to be confident that the student is operating at a good enough level. This is a complex judgment.

Gate keeping for the profession is another associated purpose addressed by assessment. In other professions this can be explicitly recognised through achieving membership status (in medicine, for example, there are the Membership exams); the social work parallel now, we suggest, would be registration, with access to the protected title of 'Social Worker' Indeed, a stated aim of the introduction of the Standards in Social Work Education was to raise the standards of the professional qualification for those entering the profession, and to increase the level of professionalism in the existing workforce. The intention was also to locate the qualification within nationally established benchmarking standards (the Quality

Assurance Agency for Higher Education's Benchmark Statement & the National Occupational Standards for Social Work). However, in discussing assessors' difficulty in failing students, Shapton (2007, p.39) explicitly asks if the '…process is failing the caring professions?' But, we need to be careful. As Lafrance et al. (2004) suggest, whilst there may be advantages to more 'specific criteria' being developed, it is important to' exercise caution ... lest the criteria contradict social work values, which promote a belief in the capacity for change '(pp.337-338).

Public confidence in the profession and the profession's profile in the public eye are important issues in the portrayal of social work and social workers in the media, illustrated by the differential responses to the various services in high profile situations. A case in point would be Baby P (Laming, 2009) and the initial media reporting, which gave prominence to social work involvement compared to that of the medical services and staff. To enhance the confidence levels, the profession needs to educate wider society about the nature and purpose of our work and to take responsibility for ensuring that staff and services are of a high quality. Running in close parallel with this is the concern for the safety for, and duty to, service users and, where applicable, their carers.

Assessment, then, is a highly complex process. It involves form as well as content, process as well as purpose, with each of these dimensions containing their own complexities.

If, as suggested, it is critical that the assessment process generates robust outcomes, should we not be ruthless towards 'failure' and celebrate processes that weed out the unsuitable still a bit unsure of weed out!? Would you prefer 'identify' or 're-direct'? It would seem not. Most of the research seems to identify 'Fail' as a problem rather than a predictable and, indeed, necessary element of the profession's gestalt.

Of the limited literature in this area, there seems to be an operational assumption that 'Fail' is a negative outcome. It is implicit in much of the existing research – Duffy (2003), Finch (2011), and Basnett & Sheffield (2010) – where the difficulties in failing a student are explored. These are most often considered in respect of the impact on the practice educator, and in terms of the emotional demands generated (with parallel processes for the student). Indeed, the discussion can be located within an emotional paradigm, and Duffy (2003, pp.38-40) explicitly reports on the anger component of the experience of giving or receiving a fail message. Arguably, this is associated with the notion that failure is linked to termination of studies(a view held by students) and that to avoid such an outcome,

programmes in social work have come to be seen as 'difficult to fail' , with students often 'given the benefit of the doubt' (THE, 2009) (a sentiment shared by practice educators). However, while these perspectives can indeed make sense of people's reported experiences, we argue there are other possibilities. There are instances where a 'Fail' is positive and even constructive. There is such a thing as a 'Good Fail'

As we discussed, social work students are assessed against the agreed professional requirements for a combination of reasons, most obviously, in order to be awarded the professional qualification (and academic degree) that allows them to register, apply for employment and, if successful, to practise. In theory, at least, it provides prospective employers with a benchmark of knowledge, skills and competence. The assessment also now incorporates a statement about future learning needs, linking into continuing professional development. However, students are also assessed against the standards as a gateway into the profession, as a quality assurance measure that (hopefully) identifies those who are suitable and those who are not. As such, an outcome that appropriately meets these criteria (Pass or Fail) could be described as 'Good' in terms of being appropriate and effective, but can a 'Fail' be more than instrumentally effective in the terms used above?

Much of the limited literature examines 'Fail' recommendations in terms of the associated difficulties. The process of making such a recommendation is seen (and experienced), almost by definition, as problematic. Much of this centres on stress factors, coping strategies and supports (or lack thereof). The process is located within an experiential context, with a prominent emotional dimension. But, is this the way we view other social work decisions? A parenting assessment or a capacity assessment present similar emotional demands; there can be life-changing implications for those involved. Opportunities and at times requirements for consultation, supervision and/or collaborative decision-making assist practitioners in these situations, Student work however, is often individualised usually around the practice educator. Certainly, there are suggestions of this in Basnett & Sheffield's discussion of 'Coping' (2010, pp.2126-2128). This may be an important area to develop further.

The literature suggests that a stressful component for the practice educator is when their recommendation is not supported, is challenged or even undermined by other parts of the process – with the academy generally identified as the problem. However, the issue of how this is different to other events we encounter in social work emerges again, raising the question of

whether – in relation to our own professional population – we act within or apply a different conceptual framework in relation to assessment of students, compared with other social work assessments.

The situation is further complicated by the location of the placement within the student's learning experience. Three aspects are particularly pertinent here. The first is the potential for students to be given 'the benefit of the doubt' or the assistance of a 'tail-wind' in first placement, as mentioned earlier (Duffy, 2003, pp.68-71) Anecdotal evidence from our own experience, suggests that the tensions around a 'Fail' recommendation are as prevalent at this stage as any other but there can be either a tendency to the theory of optimism or a passing of the chalice In other words, there can be a hope that they will be able to make up the ground (Duffy, 2003, pp.50-52) on placement two, or – if the issues are substantive – these will be picked up and addressed next time round. (This rationale can sometimes be supported by the view that the higher level of demand on final placement will make any shortcomings more explicit – which, we would argue, turns a rationale into a rationalisation).

Secondly, at final placement stage, the level of investment and the stakes involved are possibly at their highest; nearing the end of a 3 or 4 year programme or having implications in terms of financial burden (Parker, 2008). Consequently, the loading around a recommendation is maximised, so that the pressures, discussed by other authors are arguably at their greatest.

Thirdly, we have yet to meet a student who sincerely felt that placement experience had fully prepared them for the transition to employment as a social worker. Whether first or final full-time placement, then, there is the question of what and how much does the student need to do, to successfully progress to the next level. For us, this makes sense of some students .– while not happy with a Fail recommendation – reporting a sense of relief that the decision that they are not yet ready for progression on the programme or into practice has been taken about them and for them – is taken away from them in spite of their acknowledgement of its rationale.

Consensus is also important. As noted above, if the recommendation is not agreed and accepted by all parties, it becomes contentious and more likely to be problematic. However, we would again suggest that consensus is not, itself, sufficient for a 'Good Fail'. We both have experience of students agreeing and accepting a Fail recommendation, but seeing this as closing doors rather than as a step towards an open one.

Other conditions also need to be met. Firstly, the potential for successful,

subsequent achievement needs to be present, and recognised. More importantly, the student needs to be able to see the outstanding task(s) as achievable (that is that they can build on the achieved experience as in Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, or, as Lafrance et al. argue, there is a need to guard against the possibility of punishing students who are as yet unready for practice '*... as we try to assess the student's capacity for change*' (2004, p.338). Here from our experience, the process and value of direct observation of practice needs to be recognised as a critical element in identifying the aspects of unreadiness.

Observations can often provide the setting where unreadiness is thrown into sharp relief for the student. They are often the situations where all the components (including confidence, authority and autonomy) need to interact, producing an outcome that is greater than the sum of its parts. Indeed, it was one such situation that generated the title of this paper!

Secondly, issues and problems need to be identified in specific terms, sometimes along several dimensions. Most readily, this can be in terms of the evidence-base for the recommendation, with clear discussion of the particular aspects – whether these are by omission or commission (for example, insufficient theoretical or legislative knowledge or application, problems around practice skills, or organisational functioning). But they also need to be discussed in terms of their magnitude; there needs to be quantitative as well as qualitative narrative – the length of the journey as well as the direction - and the assessment needs to incorporate analysis. From this, the student may be able to discuss not only what needs to be achieved, but how it might be achievable, usefully articulated with the student's learning style (Morrison, 2006; Honey & Mumford, 1982).

The practice educator, then, needs to feel confident and competent enough (and supported by their agency and the University), to address the assessment requirements directly within the parameters of the particular placement, not leaving any of the business to be done elsewhere. (S) he needs to prioritise professional responsibilities (competence, progression into the profession) over the personal demands and commitments of the student, and (s) he also needs to be clear that the progress achieved to date gives an effective foundation for the student to tackle the next stage of their development, and especially clear that future opportunities are progressive and not just a means of redressing earlier deficiencies.

We would suggest that the requirement should be that a positive outcome of a placement is a robust, fair and defensible assessment (drawing on fair assessment principles – see, for example, Suskie, 2002), and which is in

line with other professional assessments social workers and educators are asked to produce. That is, it should be articulated against professional and practice principles and constructs, located within an accepted assessment framework, that it is evidence-based, and transparent.

A Good Fail

We propose, then, that a 'Good Fail' has recognisable components to it, which would include those features outlined above. While we would not go so far as to suggest that the student should be happy about a 'Fail' recommendation, there needs to be a sense of appropriateness for them, that it is fair and equitable. Additionally, it is important that all parties are able to recognise and articulate substantive progress and achievement within the completed placement; progress that can be built on, so that the 'failed' placement is a constructive part of a generative process.

The parties involved essentially need to include the academic staff, whose support to student and practice educator is important in the process of a fair and transparent assessment, avoiding the contention that for practice educators '...the student's failings are felt as assessors' failure' (Finch, 2011). It is acknowledged that learning is an individual process and students can and do fail academic assignments during the course of their programme and are permitted opportunity to resubmit with the benefit of constructive feedback. University programmes need to consider the 'practice' failure as part of that same learning process.

Our view is that, a 'Good Fail' needs the placement to run its full course, with it being actively managed in respect to the existing practice learning as well as in relation to a future, repeat opportunity.

Our respective experiences suggest that the frequency of a 'Good Fail' is relatively low. This may be influenced by, or could be attributed to, what we described earlier as the 'giving of the benefit of doubt' in the first assessed placement. However, we would certainly argue that they do, indeed, occur and that it is worthwhile recognising them, both in terms of their intrinsic value and in terms of what we might learn from them. As Parker (2010, pp.984-985) argues, a disrupted placement rather than being 'a devastating one ...can be a site of enhanced learning'. Students can and do benefit from another opportunity to maximise their readiness to practise and their safety in practice. Significant to the success of a repeatable fail is the role

undertaken by the University in the intervening period (suspended study) between the failed and repeated opportunity. A key factor here is the need to support students to prepare for the placement and continue to meet the requirement of readiness for and fitness to practise. This can be achieved for example through temporary employment, further academic study and/or tutorial contact.

Arguably, Universities will have 'a variety of agendas, including maximising (their) pass rate and advocating on behalf of the student' (Shapton, 2007, p.51). However, as Bellinger (2010, p.2462) proposes 'Placements are opportunities to develop new possibilities for practice in response to changing social conditions...' We suggest that placements are also opportunities for a robust assessment of potential to practise rather than a preoccupation and anxiety about outcome.

References

Basnett, F. and Sheffield, D. , 2010) The impact of social work student failure upon practice educators. *British Journal of Social Work* 40, 6, 2119-2136

Bellinger, A. Talking about (re) generation: practice learning as a site of renewal for social work. *British Journal of Social Work,* 40, 2450-2466

Duffy, K., 2003) *Failing Students: A qualitative study of factors that influence the decisions regarding assessment of students' competence in practice* , available on line at: available on line at: http://www.nmc-uk.org/documents/Archived%20Publications/1Research%20papers/Kathleen_Duffy_Failing_Students2003.pdf

Finch, J (2011) *The internalisation of failure-practice assessors narratives of, (not) failing social work students in practice learning settings.* Conference Paper, International Practice Learning Conference, Bournemouth University

Furness, S and Gilligan, P (2004) Fit for purpose: Issues from practice placements, practice teaching and the assessment of students' practice. *Social Work Education,* 23, 3, 465-479

Honey, P. and Mumford, A. (1982) *Manual of Learning Styles*. London: P. Honey

Horwath, J. and Morrison, T. (1998) *Effective Staff Training in Social Care*. London: Routledge

Hughes, L and Pengelly, P (2002) *Staff Supervision in a Turbulent Environment: Managing process and task in front-line services* London: Jessica Kingsley

Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection, available online at: http://www.

scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/13102807/0

Kolb, D (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.* New Jersey, Prentice-Hall

Lafrance, J., Gray, E., and Herbert, M. (2004) Gate-keeping for professional social work practice *Social Work Education,* 23, 3, 325-340

Laming, Lord (2003) *The Victoria Climbie Inquiry: Report of an inquiry by Lord Laming.* available online at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008654

Laming, Lord (2009) *The Protection of Children in England; A progress report.* available online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/12_03_09_children.pdf

Lefevre, M. (2005) Facilitating practice learning and assessment: The influence of relationship. *Social Work Education,* 24, 5, 565-583

Morrison, T. (2006) *Staff Supervision in Social Care.* Brighton: Pavilion

Orme, J. and McGoldrick, R. (2008) *New Degrees, New Standards* available online at: http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/new-degrees-new-standards-researching-social-work-qualifications-scotland-and-england-joan

Parker, J. (2007) Developing effective practice learning for tomorrow's social workers . *Social Work Education* 26, 8, 763-779

Parker, J. (2008) When things go wrong! Placement disruption and termination: power and student perspectives. *British Journal of Social Work,* 40, 983-999

Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF, available online at: http://www.scqf.org.uk/

Shapton, M. (2007) Failing to fail students: Is the assessment process failing the caring profession? *Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning,* 7, 2, 39-54

Soanes, C. (Ed.) (2005) *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary.* (10th ed.) Oxford, OUP

Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) available on line at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16202/17019

Suskie, L. (2002) *Fair Assessment Practices; Giving students equitable opportunities to demonstrate learning.* available online at: http://www.elcamino.edu/administration/vpsca/docs/assessment/FairAssessmentPractices_Suskie.pdf

THE (2011) Social work degrees difficult to fail, MPs told. http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk 6/8/2009

Wiggins, G. P. (1999) *Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the purpose and limits of testing.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wilson, G. and Kelly, B. (2010) Evaluating the effectiveness of social work education: Preparing students for practice learning. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40, 2431-2449