Social work management in Ireland: Time for education and training

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Abstract: *This article discusses exploratory quantitative and qualitative research into the training and education needs of social work managers in Ireland from four sectors of service, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Probation Service, hospital social work and non-governmental (NGO) social work sectors. 176 questionnaires were distributed. (56 were returned; a response rate of 32%), 3 focus groups were held with 15 participants and 3 individual interviews were conducted with social work managers. They were asked to identify their postgraduate training, their span of responsibilities, the level of management training they had participated in, and the gaps in their management training. While 82% of this sample of social work managers had post qualifying training and education, which enhanced their social work skills rather than their management skills, none had received social work management training. Three out of 56 had completed a Masters degree in Health Service Management. The probation service, laudably, was the only sector that provided management training. However this training was problematic to the managers as it was perceived as not geared for the social work field. The research participants experienced grave misgivings at their lack of management training and prioritised their training needs as including strategic management, cost benefit analysis, organisational management and financial management. This research clearly identified the need for social work management training and supports the immediate establishment of programmes that address this need in order to enhance existing service delivery.*

Key words: social work; management; education; training; Ireland

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Introduction

The numbers of practising social workers in the Republic of Ireland have grown in recent years and social work in Ireland has now become a much more recognised and recognisable profession with its own accreditation system which conforms to international educational standards. There had been a continued increase in the number of practitioners up until 2008 when the impact of the economic recession resulted in budgetary constraints within the health services. Regardless of the current economic depression the areas in which social workers now practice are more extensive than before. Despite this expansion, within the context of social work education, Ireland has, with only a few notable exceptions, failed to develop a range of postgraduate programmes for social work graduates. Regarding the education and training needs of social work managers, there has been little recognition in the literature that these managerial positions require a set of specific management skills which are unique to the role.

Increase in social work posts

The social work profession in Ireland has undergone a period of transformation in recent years with the most recent figures showing a significant expansion in the number of social workers from 1390 posts in 1999 to 2237 posts in 2005 (National Social Workers Qualifications Board, 2006). This represents a 61% increase in the number of posts within a 6 year period. Although there are no figures indicating the increase in the number of managerial posts, it is reasonable to assume that the number of management posts also increased during this time. Consequently there has never been a period in Irish social work history when there has been such a large group of managers in the profession.

In some ways the situation of social work education in Ireland in the first decade of the 21st century resembles the state of social work education in North America in the 1970s where questions were being asked about the suitability of experienced social work practitioners in providing effective management practices. Arising from this it was evident that at that time in America little or no attention had been paid to their training needs (Patti, 1977; Ellis, 1978). Slavin noted that:

> In the long line of development of social work, the latter part of the 1970s will be seen as a period that witnessed the coming of age of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings for the administration of social services. (Slavin,1977 p. 245)

The lack of appropriate training provided by respective social work education programmes was further emphasised in a survey conducted by Egan and Bendick (1977), in which they stated:

There is an increasing awareness in the social welfare field that managerial and analytical expertise is a major gap in the professional staff resources of public welfare agencies… the situation is said to exist because many agency managers are social workers whose professional education did not emphasise managerial skills (p.359).

Supporting Patti (1983), Rosenberg and Clarke (1987) who interviewed 14 social workers who had progressed to become executive managers in Canadian hospitals, argued that

social workers are ill prepared for the transitional processes that normally occur in social work, that of moving from clinician to supervisor to manager. What needs to be strengthened in social work masters programmes are areas of strategic planning, financial management, financial accountability and general management skills to provide a basic level of knowledge useful to all social workers, a base that could be supplemented by later education appropriately specific to job tasks. (p.154.)

With the gradual expansion in the social work role over the last thirty years this statement could arguably now be made in relation to Irish social work management.

While the history of social work in Ireland has been documented by Skehill (1999, 2004) and Kearney (2005) the role and development of social work managers has been largely ignored. Due to the lack of research in this area it is difficult to gain an understanding of the role which managers perform, their range of supervisory responsibilities and the gaps in their education and training.

This exploratory research

This research aimed to explore the gaps the training and education needs of social work managers in Ireland (Leinster, 2009). The research was both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative study involved distributing a questionnaire by email to 176 social work managers, with a total of 56 returned completed questionnaires amounting to a response rate of 32%. The qualitative research was carried out by running three focus groups with 15 managers and three individual interviews with managers. The research had a number of objectives. Firstly, to identify the extent and nature of their postgraduate education. Secondly, to obtain their views about their education and training needs and the required content of a programme which will meet these needs. Thirdly, to gain an understanding of the values, ethics and principles which may have informed their decision making in the absence of specific social work management training.

Research method

An e-mailed questionnaire pilot study was distributed to ten social work managers. They were asked to comment on the suitability and relevance of the questions and for suggestions, additions or amendments to improve the clarity of the questionnaire. Nine completed and returned the questionnaire by e-mail. The one who failed to respond cited pressure of work as the reason for her not participating. A number of amendments were suggested and accepted.

The sample study used non-probability selection, as the researcher had no control over the representation of the sample, but rather was reliant on the willingness of the participants to partake in the questionnaire (Babbie, 2001; Cournoyer & Klein, 2000).

The selection of respondents proved somewhat difficult due to, firstly, differing definitions of the notion of 'social work manager' and secondly, the use of listings of posts to make contact with respondents. The National Social Workers Qualifications Board, in a survey on social work posts in Ireland in 2005 (NSWQB, 2006), found that there were 236 social workers in management grades located within the sectors of Health/General, Local Authority and the Probation Service. However the definition of a manager differed slightly from the definition for this research, as the NSWQB counted Assistant Directors of Probation, while Principal Probation Officers, who are a grade lower and more numerous than Assistant Directors, have been included in this exercise.

The NSWQB has a national database of all social work posts in Ireland and the respective grades. However due to the Data Protection Act (1988) they were not in a position to release any addresses or email contacts. Consequently the email addresses of those defined as managers for this research were obtained by telephoning each of them in the HSE social work area, each hospital and NGO. This task was made easier within the Probation Service where access to the email address of each Principal Probation Officer was willingly provided by senior management in the Probation Service. Thus the 176 questionnaires represent a sample of social work managers in Ireland rather than a complete list.

Amongst the 56 (32%) completed questionnaires there was representation from the HSE, Hospital Sector, Probation Service and NGO's. The one area which elicited no response was that of managers in the Local Authorities which totaled 22 or 9% of the managers in the NSWQB (2006) study. The Probation Service has 48 Senior Probation Officers and all their email addresses were made available. Of this total, 14 or 28% responded. However as the researcher did not have access to the email addresses of all managers in the other areas it was not possible to identify the proportion of the total population in each sector which responded.

Table 1 below represents the total number of returned questionnaires according to each of the four sectors and the percentage return from the questionnaire sample.

The group with the greatest proportionate response was the Probation Service

while the HSE was less well represented despite having the greatest number of social work managers.

Table 1
Returned Questionnaires by Number and Percentage.

Organisation type	Questionnaire Respondents (*n*)	Questionaires returned (%)
Health ServiceExecutive	22	39
Probation Service	14	25
Non governmental organisation	12	22
Hospital Social Work	8	14
Total	56	100

Limitations in methodology

The research was affected by over representation from the Probation Service and under representation from the HSE. This created the problem of emphasising the opinions of managers who work in a relatively small area of the profession in Ireland, while at the same time failing to ascertain the views of a wide range of managers who work in the most populated area namely the HSE. The response was also numerically relatively small with only 56 respondents. This small response fails to truly capture the varied range of areas where managers are working. The use of email as a method of distributing and receiving the questionnaire excluded those managers who did not have an email address. It is difficult to ascertain how many managers did not have an email address. While the distribution process was made easier by the use of email, only one third of the questionnaires were returned by email, while the other two thirds were printed and returned by post. Thus a lack of competence or comfort with the technology may have discouraged some participants. The response rate amounted to 56 or 32% returning completed questionnaires.

Basis for the questionnaires

It may be debatable as to whether social worker managers are best placed to accurately identify their own training and education needs. However, as there has been no research conducted in this area in Ireland, it seemed appropriate to open up the debate by allowing managers to express themselves in a participatory and empowering way in starting the process of identifying their own educational needs. The research was influenced by previous researchers such as Scourfield (1980) who had previously surveyed managers in the field and by Menefee and Thompson (1994) and Menefee (1998) who researched what social work managers actually spent their time doing.

They identified a diverse range of competencies and began to recognise that the social work management role demands a set of complex and wide ranging skills. Research conducted by Martin, Pine and Healy (1999) amongst practising social work managers attempted to ascertain if the MSW programs prepared managers for the role. Their findings were largely encouraging and emphasised the importance of providing specialist MSW programmes in Administration. Research conducted in South Africa, by van Bijon (1999), focussed on what the participants – practising managers participating in an MA (SS) (MH) (Mental Health) degree – actually did in their roles as managers. It was concluded that social work undergraduate training needed to include management theory, financial management and accounting, strategic management and organisational theory. On the basis of the above, questions were constructed to address issues under broad categories such as; qualifications and training, areas of work, range of responsibilities, reporting relationships, identification of training needs, prioritisation of management roles and responsibilities, and, employers support for additional training and education. These questionnaires formed the basis for the complimentary data gathering through focus groups.

Focus groups

Focus groups, defined by Kreuger (1994) as 'A carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment,' were conducted to elicit the views of managers in a way which would complement the quantitative research information. A particular objective was to utilise this method to trigger thinking amongst participants to encourage deeper and wider discourse. To help ensure accuracy the focus groups were recorded using a digital recorder. One group was composed of Principal Probation Officers while the other two were composed of representatives from NGOs. Focus groups were planned to include respondents from both the HSE and the Hospital sector. However, as the focus groups were being set up, in the autumn of 2008, the global recession impacted on the economic climate in Ireland. As a direct consequence of this the HSE demanded immediate cut backs in its travel budget and within the HSE where the majority of managers work, an embargo on travel was imposed which affected both the HSE and hospital social work managers. While the focus groups were very accessible anyway to participants as they were timed to coincide with already scheduled regional meetings, the financial cutbacks made this method most timeouts. For those organizations that had not scheduled meetings or who had cancelled meetings due to the cutbacks, focus groups were not possible. To reduce the effect of the loss of holding these two cancelled focus groups, three individual interviews were conducted with two local HSE managers and one manager from a local hospital setting. The three managers who were interviewed were selected

because of their accessibility as they all worked in close proximity to Galway where the researched was based.

The focus groups were held in Dublin, Limerick and Roscommon after the information from the questionnaires had been collated. The resulting information gathered from the focus groups informed the following questions amongst others:

1. Have you participated in management training or education? If so what form did it take. How beneficial was it?
2. What do you base your decision making on in the absence of social work management training?
3. What are the values which determine your management decision making?

Research findings

Post graduate qualifications of social work managers

Analysing the data from the completed questionnaires, the majority of respondents/ participants, 82%, have acquired additional postgraduate training or education. While this may not be particularly significant for social workers at a senior level, what is of importance is the nature of the further education they have pursued. The most common type of postgraduate education which respondents have completed is counselling (23%), mediation (13%) and Family Therapy (11%).

There were similar findings from the focus groups where participants reported the importance of acquiring additional training in traditional social work areas. The range of additional qualifications the focus group participants acquired extended from mediation, to Montessori teaching, research skills, life coaching, and a variety of specific counselling qualifications. Formal higher level management qualifications were conspicuously absent from any post graduate education undertaken by managers in the focus group sample. Amongst questionnaire respondents, only three had completed a Masters in Health Services Management which is a programme offered to managers working generally in the health services, rather than specifically geared toward social work managers. None of the respondents had completed any other recognised management qualification. It is remarkable that the nature of the participants' post graduate education and training has led to the vast majority of them enhancing their social work skills rather than their management knowledge and skills.

Responsibilities of managers

Table 2
Mean numbers of staff in teams supervised by the social work manager

Organisation type	Number of staff
Health Service Executive	23.0
Hospital social work	10.2
Probation Service	7.5
Non-governmental organisation	5.2

The research showed that within the social work management role there is considerable variation in the responsibilities of managers within and between the four main types of service in which they work; The Health Service Executive (HSE), hospital social work, The Probation Service and Non Government Organisations (NGO,s) (see Table 2). The specific question which gave the results represented in table 1 was:' How many staff are there in the team you supervise?' Note that the term 'supervise' was understood by the respondents to mean total staff number accountable to the manager.

The social work managers employed by the HSE each supervised teams which had an average of 23 staff while in contrast the managers working with the NGO sector supervised on average only 5.2 staff. Within these contrasting ranges managers working in the area of hospital social work had responsibility for managing and average of 10.2 staff and within the Probation Service each Senior Probation Officer managed a team comprising of 7.2 people. The range of staff included social workers, child care workers, administrative workers and others.

While these statistics point to a wide variation in the numbers of staff supervised in each of the organisation or section types, within each of the four organisational areas there was also a very wide range of managerial responsibilities. For example, one manager working in the HSE supervised 95 staff and another three managed more than 50 people. In stark contrast, three managers in the HSE do not supervise any staff, although their title was Principal Social Worker which is a senior managerial position and they were paid at a management grade. Thus within the HSE itself there is a very significant imbalance between the extent of their management responsibilities, yet they all have the same job title. Social work managers in the NGO sector supervise on average 5.2 staff members, the lowest number of any of the service types, significantly less than HSE managers and almost half of the number of staff which the social work managers in hospital supervise. While the numbers of staff which a manager supervises is a significant indicator of their scope of managerial responsibility, there are other areas of responsibility which are also important as discussed in the next section.

Differing range of responsibilities

Although they may have responsibility for supervising fewer staff, managers in the NGO sector indicated from the focus groups that they have a more diverse range of responsibilities. Five of the managers working in the NGO sector stated that they are chairpersons of various committees such as human rights committees, or are the designated persons with responsibility for managing abusive incidents within the organisation. These managers reported seeing themselves as senior managers because they participated as members of the senior management team. One manager described the difference between being a Social Work Team Leader with the HSE with responsibility for a small team of 6 Child Protection and Family Support workers and the contrast with his promotion to Head of Social Work in a large NGO. The transition meant that now, as a member of the senior management team, he was jointly responsible for (but not directly supervising) 950 staff in an organisation with a budget of 50 million. He described how ill equipped he felt participating in management decisions.

Key decisions made within organisations often relate to the way the finances are prioritised. Only a small percentage of managers have budgetary responsibility; 32% within their own department and 16% within their wider organisation.

Respondent opinion regarding their needs for future training

Respondents were asked to identify their further training needs from the following selection.

Table 3
Respondents identified training nees

Training Needs	Percentage who Identified further training needs in these areas.
Supervision	39
Strategic Planning	59
Policy Making	36
Programme Development	38
Organisational Management	41
Financial Management	41
Staff Development	32
Staff Training	23
Human Relations	25
Mediation	18
Representing organisation at policy formulation	25
Service Delivery Evaluation	50
Programme Evaluation	50
Cost Benefit Analysis	52

The questionnaire asked participants to prioritise their training and education needs in fourteen areas including planning, finances, supervision, human resources, evaluation and policy formulation. The greatest need expressed by the cohort was for further training in the area of strategic planning, which was prioritised by 59% of the study group. Similar training needs were previously identified by Scourfield (1980), Phayane (1995) and van Bijon (1995). Cost benefit evaluation was seen as a significant training need by 52% of respondents along with service delivery evaluation, 50%, and programme evaluation, 50%. The areas of organisational management, 41%, financial management, 41%, and supervision at 39% were also recognised as high needs.

The areas of lowest priority in relation to further training were in human relations, 25%, staff training, 23% and mediation at 18%.

Only a minority, 16% of respondents, stated that they participated in management decisions relating to financial management within their wider organisation, while 32% had financial responsibilities within their team.

Arising from the focus groups, the areas where further training and education was identified centred on the need for enhancing supervision skills, case management, conflict resolution and the management of issues of a personal nature which spill over into the workplace. There was general agreement that interpersonal conflict was an area which presented managers with difficulty. Some said that dealing with conflict between team members, often referred to as 'personality clashes' was regarded as being particularly difficult to resolve. One manager commented, 'I feel comfortable working with the service users and their families but it is more difficult working with colleagues or managers and it is different when the issues are of a more serious nature and it is outside the supervision session. It could be an HR / Industrial relations issue and I am quite worried about it, rather than a practice or a professional issue. When a social worker comes and says ' there is an issue I have to talk to you about', my heart sort of sinks as it might be an issue to do with confrontation'

The importance of having an accessible human resources department for advice was voiced on two occasions by managers working in NGO's. Amongst participants working in the NGO sector there was a consensus that their Human Resource departments were easily accessible and offered sound advice which they followed. Within the larger statutory organisations the Human Resource departments were perceived as being more distant and less accessible and managers were more likely to rely on the advice of peers or a more senior manager for advice about what they described as a personnel problem.

Values which underpin management practice

One of the questions posed to the focus group participants was, 'What are the values which determine your management decision making?' In response there was

a common understanding of the values, principles and ethics which underpin the practice of social work management. One manager responded by stating,

When it is finances the value system is value for money, when you talk about ethical values we talk about meeting the needs of the customer, we only exist to meet the needs of the people we serve.

Another replied;

Knowing what service users want, respect for them – looking at what is possible – trying to inform the organisation of the needs of the service users out there and finding out what the expectation of the organisation are of the social work department.

One manager working in the area of disability with an NGO was very conscious that his focus was on ensuring that the needs of service users took priority. He reflected that the organisation has a

strategic plan incorporating each section of the agency and how each department fits in with the identified goals of the customers, the agency and our funders. There is clarity in the strategic plan about who is responsible to achieve the identified goals and the time scale and the results. Social work has a role to lead some goals, and identify the outcomes to achieve the goals.

In contrast one of the senior probation officers described how the service is drifting away from a client centred approach, in his opinion towards a

… broad, business based management - outputs, inputs. You could literally be in any form of commercial organisation. There is a drift towards doing what we do in terms of generic management principles rather than any specific social work input. When you reach a certain level of management it is about process, procedures, performance indicators. It is about familiarising yourself with the whole world of business and business concepts and then seeing how you can apply these business concepts to the work you do. For most of us with a social work background it is a new experience and there is a certain difficulty which comes with trying to integrate a business orientation with the social work end of things. The consensus is that social work gets lost in the middle of it all.

These quotations taken from the focus groups provide an example of how one manager who works with an NGO perceives the way in which the traditional values within social work that emphasise advocacy, self determination and individually chosen outcomes, have been retained within the smaller NGO. This is in contrast to the manager who works within the probation service which has undergone major growth in recent years with an enhancement in staff numbers and an expansion of its

statutory role in relation to the management of offenders. This expansion, according to some of the managers, has been clearly undertaken at the expense of some core social work values. Another manager stated:

> *I came from a business background into probation. When I came in five years ago there was a social work emphasis, the emphasis on corporate management wasn't evident. I think we have grown so fast and we are trying to put a corporate structure on ourselves and we haven't levelled off yet. We have emphasised getting good procedures but the other side, the client focussed side hasn't really caught up yet.*

Conflicting expectations of organisations and the social work role

Bearing in mind that opportunities to participate in social work management training are largely absent, it was seen as an important exploration to gain an understanding of the influences which come to bear on the value systems which inform the decision making of social work managers.

Managers face conflict between the demands of the organisational expectations versus the demands of the people who use the services, articulated through the voice of the social worker. Social work is the primary profession which has a direct responsibility to act as advocates with and for people who use the services. The Irish Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics validates this by stating in the second and third principles

> Social workers will advocate with and behalf of those whom society excludes and in doing so should engage with service users and facilitate them in contributing their views to such developmentsm… Social workers will strive to use their power appropriately within such relationships and will place special emphasis on the consideration of and promotion of service users' views in all decisions that are related to the quality of their lives. (Irish Association of Social Workers, 1992 p..2.)

The focus group conducted with senior probation officers was particularly enlightening in this respect as the probation service had commissioned a global human resources consulting group, Penna with the remit

> To equip managers of the Probation and Welfare Service with the necessary personal, interpersonal and leadership skills to meet their current role objectives and prepare them for future leadership roles. (Jones & Duffy, 2006)

This is the only specific management training for social work managers which this research identified. (see Penna, 'Learning for Leadership Programme, Programme Outline' at. www.penna.com).This programme was divided into four modules delivered over a 12 month period.

According to all six of the probation officers participating in that focus group, the training had some limited value but was in many ways not what they needed. The following quotation summed up the general consensus of the group:

For Senior Probation Officers there is a real deficit around support for practical issues. There is a loss of framework of what social work is about (in the Penna training). It is drawn to the organisational goals; the training is absolutely removed from the ethics and values of the social work profession. There is nothing about social equality; it is not about that, that's the real deficit in the management training within what is apparently a social work setting.

This attitude was also further reinforced in the eyes of the senior probation officers as they referred to the fact that the accompanying course outline failed to refer to the social work management literature. This they perceived as a serious omission.

The impact which this training had on their relationship to the organisation was very interesting. One participant commented that

We have two separate organisations. The seniors deliver the service, once a manager goes above the senior probation officer level they don't have a particular involvement in the delivery of the service.

Later the same person noted that

I speak two languages, I speak social work language to my team and I speak business corporate speak to my line manager and director, so it is a sort of schizophrenic existence.

When asked which language she was more comfortable with she stated

I would be more comfortable with the social work language.

While the participants' perception was that the training had failed, it is possible that there might have been a number of influencing factors that warrant some consideration here about this perception. The training programme appeared to not use content material that directly related to the area of work in which managers operated. Their perception was that it did not meet their needs precisely because it did not overtly take into account the ethical framework which underpins social work practice.

In their promotional information Penna state that their

experience spans the entire Public Service (British), Including central government departments, agencies, local authorities, local government, non-departmental public bodies (NDPB), emergency services, the NHS and further and higher education. (http://www.penna.com)

So it appears that Penna had appropriately addressed the type of organisation that they deal with in relation to their work with the probation service.

The senior probation officers who participated in the focus group had roles as supervisors and line managers of probation officers and did not perceive themselves as leaders within the organisation. It might be argued then, that a type of training which directly addressed their roles as the line managers to probation officers would have been more beneficial.

It is unfortunate that the Penna training has met with this level of discomfort from the participants, as it appears to have much to offer the field of social work and social work managers and leaders in particular. It might be useful to surmise that there might not have been appropriate consultation between Penna, the senior management of the probation service and the senior probation officers themselves, about their training needs.

Discussion

A number of key points arising from the research warrant further examination.

Regarding their post graduate education, Irish social work managers have continued to enhance their social work skills rather than develop their management skills. Arguably the most available appropriate qualification, the Masters in Health Service Management, has to a large extent, not been utilised by social work managers. There may be several factors at play here. It may indicate that additional qualifications which enhance traditional social work skills, rather than management training or education appear to be advantageous when applying for promotion. This may be linked with a perception by senior organisational management that they might not be aware that social workers need management skills and in particular, social work management skills. It may also indicate that the rapid expansion in the employment of social workers and social work managers has run ahead of the ability of training institutions to provide appropriate training.

It appears that the lack of any formal management education or training has not prevented social work managers' promotion into their current position. As is evidenced in this research, social work managers themselves are uncomfortable with their lack of specialised management education and training. The senior managers of organisations need to not only become more acutely aware of this lack, but need to conduct assessments around the possible deleterious effects that it has on managers, their teams, and most importantly, the service users. They need to look urgently at using those assessments to put appropriate management training into place for their social work managers.

Organisations need social work managers who are fully equipped to deliver their services and if they are not being trained effectively as managers or leaders, they

are not in a position to take up this leadership challenge. Effective and progressive service delivery depends on this.

Key decisions made within organisations often relate to the way the finances are prioritised. As discussed earlier, only a small percentage of managers have budgetary responsibility; 32% within their own department and of those, 16% also had financial responsibilities within their wider organisation. While only 32% of questionnaire respondents stated that they had financial responsibilities, only 41% of the total number of respondents identified this area as a further training need. Two issues are of immediate importance. Firstly, the fact that such a small proportion of social work managers are responsible for financial management is rather concerning. If social work managers are not included in the formal financial decision making processes in organisations, then their areas of service may be inadequately represented, resulting in a deterioration of service to those in greatest need. Secondly, the reason why they are not included needs to be examined further. Is it because they have no training in financial management, or that they have sought no training because their financial responsibilities are limited?

The Probation Service should be lauded for having the foresight to not only recognise the training needs of their managers, but to respond to that need by engaging with the Penna training. It is unfortunate that participants were left not feeling more skilled and empowered. Perhaps the learning from this experience could be taken up by all parties. Firstly, that the initial negotiation between the Probation Service and Penna could have identified the correct level of management participants for the training. Secondly, these early negotiations could have seen some value in Penna including some explicit material around social work ethics into their training. Thirdly, Penna and the senior managers of the Probation Service might have included the senior probation officers in the initial preparation to be clear about their needs and expectations. And, fourthly, the confusion around whether the course was primarily concerned with promoting management skills, or promoting leadership skills, could have been clarified and negotiated more successfully by all parties.

Regarding the values which inform their decision making in the absence of management education or training, the research has opened a discussion regarding how managers are influenced by the expectations of their management responsibilities and how they marry their decisions with the code of ethics determined by the profession. From the focus group discussions it was evident that social work managers are influenced by a value system which is influenced by the social work code of ethics. However it is also important to acknowledge that this area warrants a more thorough investigation and that no definitive answers were provided at this exploratory level.

Conclusions

Social work managers in Ireland have to date had few opportunities to further their training or education in the specific area of social work management. Amongst the group of managers who participated in the research, few had acquired recognised management qualifications despite their onerous responsibilities. Their range of managerial responsibilities is so varied as to be highly inequitable, both within specific organisations and between organisations.

The participants' prioritisation of their training needs in the areas of strategic planning, cost benefit evaluation and financial management was particularly powerful and needs to guide organisations and the profession, toward building better managers. The Probation Service's training initiative might have been more useful given the confusions of the target level and possible early negotiation problems, but certainly needs to act as a good example to other organisations.

While the issue of the social work Code of Ethics and the role it plays in informing management decision making is not recognised in the literature in Ireland, this research suggests that social work managers believe that it plays a crucial role in developing their management capacity.

To the distress of social work manager participants in this research, there was a complete absence of any social work management training or education. Their explicit desire to engage in relevant training is evidenced in this research. The establishment of social work management programmes, which marry management skills with social work ethics and values, is long overdue. Thus, better training of social work managers will result in more effective service delivery.

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Apprendix: The questionnaire

Questionnaire

Identifying the Training Needs of Social Work Managers

1.	First some facts about you		
1.1	Gender:		Female
1.2	What Age Are You:		

1.3 What social work qualifications do you have: Please ✓

BA Social Science ☐
BA Arts ☐
Diploma in Social Work ☐
CQSW ☐
MSW ☐
Other – Please Specify Below:

1.4 What year did you qualify as a social worker

2.	Qualifications and Training

2.1 What additional postgraduate qualifications do you have:

Qualification	*Please ✓*	*Year Obtained /Expected*
PhD	☐	
MBA	☐	
Masters in Health Services Management	☐	
MSc in Health Services Management	☐	
Masters in Health Promotion	☐	
M. Litt	☐	
M. Phil	☐	
MA	☐	
Other – Please Specify Below:		

2.2 Training Details

Training	*Qualification*	*Year Obtained /Expected*
Family Therapy	Certificate	
Counselling	Certificate	
Medication Studies	Certificate	
Addiction Studies	Certificate	
Family Support	Certificate	
Community Development	Certificate	
Advanced Diploma in Child Protection and Welfare	Certificate	
Diploma in Practice Teaching	Certificate	
Other – Please specify:		

2.3   **Which of the following skills and knowledge from your Postgraduate Education and Training facilitated your role as a Social Work Manager?**

Advanced supervision skills	☐
Advanced skill development	☐
Advanced your knowledge	☐
Advanced your theories and ethics	☐
Advanced your competencies	☐
Increased self awareness	☐
Increased level of reflective practice	☐

3.   Job Overview

3.1   **Job Title?**

Head Social Worker	☐
Principal Social Worker	☐
Other	

3.2   **Do you Work?**

Part Time	☐
Full Time	☐

3.3   **How many hours are in your official working week?**

3.4   **Name and address of the organisation you work with?**
Organisation Name:

Address:

3.5   **Type of Organisation :**

Statutory	☐
Voluntary /Community	☐

3.6   **Please tick the main area in which you work (*please tick one box only*)**

Child and Family	☐
Foster care	☐
Adoption	☐
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	☐
Adult Psychiatry	☐
Medical	☐
Older People	☐
Mental Health	☐
Addiction	☐
Refugee / Asylum Seekers	☐
Unaccompanied Children	☐
Travelling Community	☐
Intellectual Disability	☐
Sensory and physical disability	☐
Community Development	☐
Probation & Welfare Service	☐
County Council	☐
City Council	☐
Defence Force	☐

	Other – Please Specify:	
3.7	How many years have you worked in your present position?	

3.8 How many staff are in the team you supervise

3.9 What discipline do they belong to?
Social Work ☐
Child Care Workers ☐
Administrative ☐
Other: specify ☐

4. Job Details

4.1 What position did you hold prior to your present position?
Job Title

Name of Organisation

4.2 Who do you report to?
CEO ☐
Child Care Manager ☐
General Manager ☐
Area Manager ☐
Principal Probation Officer ☐
Assistant Principal Probation Officer ☐
Head of Social Work ☐
Other – Please Specify:

4.3 For which of the following are you accountable to your Line Manager?
Programme Budget ☐
Professional Accountability ☐
Supervision ☐
Staff Development ☐

4.4 Is there liaison between Interdepartmental Heads of Department?　　Yes

4.5 Do you attend meetings of the Interdepartmental Heads of Department?　　Yes

4.6 In your view what are the Roles and Functions of the Interdepartmental Heads of Department Meetings.

Interdepartmental Networking ☐
Sharing Work Loads ☐
Ensuring Overall Departmental Cohesion ☐
Identifying and Addressing Organisational Need ☐
Collaborating between departments ☐
Identifying common goals and objectives ☐

4.7 Do you sit on the Senior Management Team?　　Yes

4.8 What is your role on the Senior Management Team?
Representative of the Social Work Department ☐
Representative of the Multidisciplinary Departments ☐
Chairperson of a Committee ☐

Other: Please Specify:

5. Identifying Training Needs

5.1 In which of the following management decisions/functions are you involved within your organisation?

Strategic Planning	☐
Policy Making	☐
Programme Development	☐
Organisational Management	☐
Financial Management	☐
Staff Development	☐
Staff Training	☐
Human Relations	☐
Mediation	☐
Representing your organisation at policy formulation	☐
Service Delivery Evaluation	☐
Programme Evaluation	☐
Cost Benefit Analysis Evaluation	☐

5.2 In which of the following management decisions/functions are you involved within your team?

Strategic Planning	☐
Policy Making	☐
Programme Development	☐
Organisational Management	☐
Financial Management	☐
Staff Development	☐
Staff Training	☐
Human Relations	☐
Mediation	☐
Representing your Department at policy formulation	☐
Service Delivery Evaluation	☐
Programme Evaluation	☐
Cost Benefit Analysis Evaluation	☐

5.3 Rate the following in terms of its significance for the Social Work Management role?
Please Rate on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 – Strongly agree to 5 – Strongly disagree)

Supervision	1 - Strongly Agree
Strategic Planning	1 - Strongly Agree
Policy Making	1 - Strongly Agree
Programme Development	1 - Strongly Agree
Organisational Management	1 - Strongly Agree
Financial Management	1 - Strongly Agree
Staff Development	1 - Strongly Agree
Staff Training	1 - Strongly Agree
Human Relations	1 - Strongly Agree
Mediation	1 - Strongly Agree
Representing your Department at policy formulation	1 - Strongly Agree
Service Delivery Evaluation	1 - Strongly Agree
Programme Evaluation	1 - Strongly Agree
Cost Benefit Analysis Evaluation	1 - Strongly Agree

5.4 What opportunities does your organisation provide for additional Management Training?
Full Payment of Fees ☐
Part Payment of Fees ☐
Study Leave ☐

5.5 How are your training needs identified?
Yourself ☐
Training Manager ☐
Your Line Manager ☐

5.6 What are the expectations of your organisation?
Presentation on training received ☐
Implementation of training ☐
Other - Please Specify:

5.7 In which of the following areas do you feel you need further training?
Supervision ☐
Strategic Planning ☐
Policy Making ☐
Programme Development ☐
Organisational Management ☐
Financial Management ☐
Staff Development ☐
Staff Training ☐
Human Relations ☐
Mediation ☐
Representing your organisation at policy formulation ☐
Service Delivery Evaluation ☐
Programme Evaluation ☐
Cost Benefit Analysis Evaluation ☐

5.8 Does your agency have a policy to promote the training needs of Social Work Managers? Yes

5.9a Rate in order of significance the components of a Social Work Management Course?
(Where 3 is highest rating and 1 is lowest rating)

Advancement of Skills   Rating of 1
Advancement of Knowledge   Rating of 1
Advancement of Value Base   Rating of 1

5.9b Are you familiar with any Social Work Management Course delivered currently? Yes
If "*yes*" please specify:

Once you have completed this questionnaire you must save it as "completed questionnaire document" and return to me at jlnuig@gmail.com.

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. If you would like to add any further comments please feel free to do so.

Comments: