Learning How to Help: An In-Depth Look at Social Work Education Teaching Methods Utilized by the Ball State University Social Work Department Focusing on the Classroom as Organization Model

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by

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Abstract

Learning stretches across a person’s entire life span. Infants learn to hold their heads up, toddlers learn to talk, young children learn to read, and adults learn how to navigate the intricacies of having jobs and being in relationships. Formalized education and teachers seek to communicate information to students through models and methods of teaching so that their students learn quickly, efficiently, and deeply. The social work field is no different. Social work education uses traditional methods of education in conjunction with a field instruction, or practicum, the field’s signature pedagogy. Essentially, students learn in a classroom and then are pushed into the “real world” to operate as social workers. Ball State University is unique in its approach to social work education as traditional methods of teaching are employed along with practicum; however, there is an additional class that allows students to operate as a not-for-profit while exploring organizational culture and processes. This paper discusses traditional education methods and models used in social work education and social work’s signature pedagogy. Also, discussed is a unique model, the Classroom as Organization model. The model is examined and praised for its uniqueness and effectiveness. An older model similar to the classroom-as-organization method is discussed, and recommendations are made to the Ball State University Social Work program as to how elements of the Classroom as Organization model can be used in other courses to increase student experiential learning. This paper aims to highlight the need for practical application of classroom material to “real life” practice.
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People learn from the time they are born. Infants learn how to communicate, toddlers learn to walk, elementary school children learn to read, and teenagers learn to drive and solve complicated math problems. Humans take in information and put knowledge to use in everyday life. How we acquire this information is both general yet unique to each person. Since formalized education began, teachers have worked to understand how students learn best. Social work educators are no different and they subscribe to certain methods of teaching.

However, tradition suggests that social work programs depend on field education as their main method of applying learned information and translating it into practical skill in the workplace. Through a discussion of general teaching methods, field education, and the presentation of a unique social work education teaching method, this author makes conclusions regarding the most useful social work teaching model and recommends how the Ball State University (BSU) Social Work Department can implement this model into other classes besides Social Work 300. The author will also include a personal narrative of her experiences as both a student and an instructor inside this model, the Classroom as Organization (class-org) Model.

**General Teaching Methods**

**Direct Instruction**

The most basic teaching method and model is that of direct instruction. This method of conveying curriculum and classroom information contains three crucial but distinct parts: presentation of material, explanation, and reinforcement. Additionally, it also follows specific and orderly steps in order to be functional (Mikacevich, 2012).
LEARNING HOW TO HELP

To begin, the instructor reviews the most previous lesson taught and relates the material to the upcoming lesson in transition unless it is a brand new topic. Next, presentation and demonstration is key. The teacher presents the new material through a display technique such as an overhead projector, PowerPoint presentation, poster, lecture, or multimedia source. While this occurs, clear guidelines, the work required, and criteria for grading among others things, is also presented to the students. Next, the instructor questions the students to obtain valuable feedback on their comprehension of the newly presented information (Mikacevich, 2012).

Breaking from the teacher being the main handler of the new material, the students then complete some sort of related practice such as a work sheet, board work, or presentation. The teacher is not totally removed from the practice, but rather still has heavy input. During this step, students get to practice and implement the new material they learned while giving the instructor an opportunity to assess the students' understanding or misunderstanding of all or part of the material. The instructor also is able to provide useful and intentional feedback (Mikacevich, 2012).

Following direct practice is indirect practice. Students commonly know this step as “homework.” In this part of the model students have the opportunity to work with the new material on their own, and away from the teacher. Indirect practice reinforces what was taught in the classroom. Finally, the material is reviewed and reinforced. The teacher generally checks the students’ “homework” and again provides clarifying feedback. If there are still any gaps in knowledge of the lesson material, the instructor also addresses the misunderstanding (Mikacevich, 2012).

The Direct Instruction Model is seen as extremely effective. This model organizes material and controls the direction learning will take and keeps both the teacher and the students on task. Further, students are always clear on what is expected of them because the lesson plan and expectations are
presented in a comprehensible way. Willingham (2009) supports this method's effectiveness as he implies students cannot analyze or think critically without factual knowledge. He also says, "The implication is that facts must be taught, ideally, in the context of skills..." (p.26), which informs some of the drawbacks of this method of instruction. The Direct Instruction Model generally involves lecturing, which tends to bore students and disconnects them from their teacher when done the wrong way. Lecturing is done in a classroom and not necessarily in context of the subject matter. However, quality lecturing, according to Davis (2009), is "a natural, spontaneous conversation between instructor and student, with each student feeling as though the instructor is speaking to an audience of one" (p. 111). She asserts that while teachers have to lecture, they must not read straight from notes as it reduces opportunities to engage with students and also takes away any natural give-and-take that might be present in a normal conversation (Davis, 2009) Additionally, it is easy for teachers to spend a majority of their class lecturing if they do not budget their time well. Finally, direct instruction requires students to be highly attentive, so that when they do not behave as such, teachers are challenged in their disciplinary skills (Mikacevich, 2012).

The Ball State University Social Work Department, similar to other departments, often employs the direct instruction model. Professors present material in a clear fashion and then test students through homework over the learned content. Generally, professors in the department rely on PowerPoint lectures to convey information in the presentation and demonstration step. In the questioning and dependent practice steps, professors generally present a problem for students to solve in small task groups, and then present how they would implement the practice to the class. Willingham (2009) supports this repetitive method as he emphasizes that the only way to develop ability and competence is to repeat information and processes frequently and numerously.
Additionally, the department relies heavily on reinforcing content in independent practice through written assignments. Papers, both long and short, are used to assist students in gathering evidence-based research and helping them communicate their information and ideas professionally through writing. The professors grade the assigned papers and offer comments with a final grade.

Case-Based Small Group Method

As mentioned before, in its implementation of direct instruction, the Ball State Social Work Department’s professors tend to favor lectures to convey information followed by small groups to enforce learning along with papers. Case-based small groups are a teaching strategy in which students are clustered into smaller groups, preferably five to ten members, to address content or a specific case problem. In these groups, students exchange their points of views on the lesson material and work through problem solving together (Nyguist & Wehrli, 2003).

Through problem-based learning, students work through problems by suggesting hypotheses, developing and researching issues, and applying new information to the case they are given. In order for case based small groups to be effective, it is imperative that instructors meticulously design cases that are typical of the content of the lesson. Additionally, teachers must be able to address conflict that can arise in such groups. To avoid conflict, instructors must create a space for students to function safely and comfortably in the group. This means, students feel free to ask questions, suggest ideas, and make mistakes without fear of reprimands (Nyguist & Wehrli, 2003).

There are many advantages to case-based small groups. Small groups often give students the opportunity to offer their existing knowledge in order to build from other’s knowledge. However, student knowledge is limited as students, particularly in the social work field, do not have enough background information or experience to apply to situations, so this may actually be a limitation as well.
Group participation encourages the exchange of ideas and develops key traits such as leadership, effective communication, and practice working in teams. Also, critical thinking is often developed in groups using problem-based learning. Along with advantages, there are also cautionary elements that come with case-based small groups. With multiple people participating in a group, getting off task is a very real danger. If a group is larger, there is also a chance that not all group members will feel comfortable participating or feel motivated to contribute. Case-based groups run the risk of conflicts between members and often take a large amount of time. Lastly, as mentioned before, these groups can provide opportunities for group members to build on each other’s knowledge, however, they can be frustrating if there are large gaps between group members in levels of knowledge and skill (Nyguist & Wehrli, 2003).

The BSU Social Work Department professors frequently implement case based small groups, but more so in the 300 level classes and above. For example, the Social Work 320, instructor convenes students into four to six allocation committees. Individual members together decide which of their classmates’ written grant proposals are adequate to receive funding. In Social Work 330, students, together in groups, look at intricate family case studies and apply different frameworks and theories of development to the scenario. Willingham (2009) supports the application of different frameworks and emphasizes that students learn complex concepts by comparison of examples.

The Social Work 400 class includes group activities as does the 410 class. Social Work 400 requires students to separate into groups to research specific topics related to working with groups in practice. The 410 class continues the Department’s focus on generalist practice, as this is the underlying philosophy of the program. Professors require students to listen to lecture material and then practice the skills they learned in groups by applying theory, role-playing, or coming up with intervention plans.
Socratic Method

The Socratic method is one of the oldest and most commonly integrated teaching methods. Socrates first developed it as reported by Plato in his famous story of *Meno*. The method involves asking students a series of connected and purposeful questions. Each question is crafted to make students grasp conceptual knowledge on their own terms or at their own level of understanding. There is no direct model of how or what questions to ask, however the types of questions generally play out in a similar fashion. The teacher faces the student with an establishing question and makes the subject of the discussion clear. Next, an expanding question, followed by an organizing question is asked. A final probing question is presented ending with a relative question (Mikacevich, 2012).

Mikacevich (2012) reports that the greatest achievement of the Socratic method is that it takes the teacher, normally viewed as the keeper of knowledge, to the secondary position. Instead, the student is the holder of the power and asks questions and is in control of his or her own learning. Additionally, this teaching method requires few resources and can be used in almost any setting. This method also encourages the participation of quieter students, allowing them to give input into the overall classroom culture as they are more apt to comment when they hear content discussed that is relevant to them or with which they disagree. Lastly, this method enforces the idea that student opinions are valued and important (Mikacevich, 2012).

The Socratic method is generally not directly used in the BSU Social Work department; however, it is indirectly integrated into direct instruction, as assignments and assessments key into what is really important (Willingham, 2009). Sometimes professors ask series of questions when problem solving out loud with a class as well. In Social Work 300 (SOCW 300); the classroom is set up using the Classroom as Organization Model, discussed in detail later in this paper. The instructor, who often asks
more questions than she answers, bases this model on a Situational Leadership Model by Paul Hersey adapted to the classroom setting by John Schermerhorn (Schermerhorn, 2001). This model is reminiscent of the Socratic method. Students must, on their own accord, figure out organizational structure, while the professor makes calculated inquiries as well. Students may write assigned research papers and perform in class activities as products to demonstrate learning, but she gives students’ questions back to them, in order to push students to take control of their own learning experience. Appleby (2003) supported this habit by saying “...in order for group work to be truly engaging and authentic, groups need to be challenged with difficult questions” (p. 26).

Direct Patient Contact

Although the social work profession often refers to those they serve as clients, the words: consumers, participants, residents, patrons, and other terms are used to bring generality and to avoid a demeaning tone. With this thought, the Direct Patient Contact Model is another closely held general social work education teaching method. This method of teaching puts students in direct contact with clients in a practice setting. Students engage in hands-on, real-life scenarios. Additionally, student learning, in a direct service relationship with clients, can be individualized and allow for continuous feedback from the organization hosting the student whether in a volunteer situation or practicum setting.

In order to employ this method of teaching, Willingham (2009) asserts that it is a necessity for students to be able to relate all parts of practice and be able to identify the parts that are important. Basic knowledge and skills related to practice come in the lower level courses in preparation for practice in real life settings. Students’ learning in clinical settings, where they interact with an organization’s consumers, takes the classroom to the field. The hosting staff of the organization commits to handling and managing the students’ learning experiences. The major disadvantages to this method are that a
student's experiences in a real life setting may not match all of his or her course-identified learning objectives and encounter the possibility of inconsistencies. Also, teachers cannot directly observe or supervise all of their students in such a field setting making accurate evaluations tricky and sometimes unfair (Nyguist & Wehrli, 2003).

The BSU Social Work Department employs this method of teaching in both its 200 (SOCW200) and 400 (SOCW400) courses. In both classes, students seek out volunteering opportunities, state learning objectives, and complete a certain number of hours in a setting that matches to both class content and their personal interests. Generally, the volunteer coordinators or supervising staff members of receiving organizations responsibly evaluate the students' performances. Students also typically write reflection papers or give presentations about what they learned and are graded upon such activities.

As Nyguist and Wehrli's (2003) research suggests, it is difficult to achieve consistency with this method. The model relies heavily on the receiving organization's understanding of the volunteer experience learning criteria and social work teaching and pedagogy. Direct client contact, especially with volunteering, needs to be consistent in lesson, not necessarily in exact experiences, so that all students are able to reinforce each other. Davis (2009) says, "...learning is improved when there is an alignment among what instructors intend to teach, what they actually teach, and what they test” (p.4). This method was endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE, 1986; Glass 1987) as a teaching method that allows more learning when used in conjunction with homework assignments.

**Role Playing**

Another important teaching method employed by the Ball State University Social Work Department is that of role-playing. In role-playing one or more students take on a role and behave in such a manner as if they have the characteristics of a person in that role. This method is only successful
if the instructor institutes a safe learning environment that allows students to experiment within their roles and make mistakes without consequences. Further, role-playing is most effective when students have reached a level of knowledge, competence, and skills that they can accurately "be" the person represented in the role. Nickerson (2007-08) highlights that students get to "...develop empathy or become aware of one's assumptions" (p.3) during role-play. Role-playing is done well when situations that are role played are realistic and relative to appropriate learning objectives, and when there are clear directions, a set time limit, observers, and a time for constructive feedback after the activity is over (Nyquist & Wehrli, 2003).

Much like other popular teaching methods, there are many advantages to role-playing. Some helpful advantages to social work education is that it provides opportunities to develop skills before working in the actual field and improves students' ability to transfer theory to practice. Role-playing also actively involves students and gives them the opportunity to learn in environments where they can identify which helping behaviors are useful and which are not.

Role-playing also has disadvantages despite being a popular method of instruction in social work classrooms. Sometimes having to act out a role 1) puts pressure on students and even causes embarrassment, 2) depends on the student's imagination to move the exercise forward, and 3) has the potential of strong emotions. Also, if role-playing is not observed and critiqued by a qualified instructor then the experience has the capacity to reinforce inappropriate behaviors for the field. Lastly, this method can possibly cause emotional reactions in students if a scenario being acted out strikes a chord with his/her past life experiences (Nyquist & Wehrli, 2003).

Role-playing is especially popular in the Ball State University Social Work Department. In Social Work 200 and 400 students participate in this specific method of instruction. The role-plays in
Social Work 200 are short role-plays and depict a social worker interviewing a client for further information. Students also film their own interview after practicing in class. The quality of and grade for the taped interview is determined by teacher feedback and student reflection.

Social Work 400 operates similarly except the interview length required for the upper level class is 30 minutes. Additionally, students write an extensive bio-psycho-social-cultural paper on the “client” they interviewed. For added learning, students meet in small groups with the instructor outside of regular class time to watch the interviews, and provide and receive constructive feedback. Students are instructed to keep feedback related to learning goals and general good interviewing techniques so that there is not extraneous picking of the observed student. Nickerson (2007-08) explains the situation well when he says, “...by being clear about what students should look for, instructors increase students’ observation skills and deepen the learning that occurs in the process” (p.3).

Social Work Education’s Signature Teaching Method

The Ball State University Social Work Department utilizes all of these previously mentioned common teaching methods, however, the curriculum of every class points toward the capstone class of the program, Social Work 462, or practicum. Practicum is another word for field education, and this method of teaching has been crowned social work’s signature pedagogy. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), from which Ball State’s Social Work program is accredited, defines field education as a method of instruction in which the social work profession calls its students to perform the role of practitioner (Pierce, 2008). The goal of the pedagogy is “to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting” (Pierce, p. 2, 2008). Field education is also always systematic in its design, supervision, coordination, and evaluation (Pierce, 2008).
Field education has theoretical basis in adult learning theory and Kolb’s model of experiential learning. Its implementation allows students to learn through two interlinked concepts. The first concept is that students exist, function, and perform in real field settings to perform helping roles and then are called upon to reflect on their understanding and reactions to situations they encounter. The second concept involves students processing their practicum situations. They have the chance to evaluate the interventions they used with clients and determine their level of competence. They also compare their actions to course-learned theories and conceptual frameworks. Students acquire knowledge from these two simulations of learning (Willingham, 2009) that in turn direct and influence their future practice (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010).

The social work profession hails Jane Addams as an early pioneer in the helping profession. Mary Richmond is another notable woman who had much to do with the development of formal social work education, particularly field education. In the late 1800’s, Richmond was concerned that many cases and families did not respond to services. Due to this concern, in 1897, she delivered a speech at the National Conference of Charities and Correction calling for formalization of social work practice and schools to train students. Further, in 1899, she developed a manual of practical tips and suggestions for social workers entitled Friendly Visitors Among the Poor (NASW, 2013). Richmond called social workers to a higher level of education and developed practical application strategies that gave birth to the idea of field education.

Field education takes place in a one-to-one, supportive and challenging instructor and student relationship. The social work student is placed in a practicum setting where persons who have problems in life are served. The student’s field supervisor has a social work degree and usually at least two years of practitioner experience. Students also have to complete a certain minimum number of hours in the field (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010), 400+ hours at the undergraduate level and 900+ at the graduate
level, and meet with clients individually and in groups. In the Ball State University Social Work Program, students meet the requirements and additionally study more advanced concepts of practice by writing four papers. Students attend regular monthly seminar classes to present their research and get feedback from their peers. They also generate a weekly log and meet in regular and weekly supervision conferences with their field supervisor. Students come prepared with an agenda for these meetings. Each student is assigned a department liaison who joins these conferences three times a semester.

Field education is a vital part of social work programs across the United States and is required by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE), however, its format has been called into question in recent literature. Schulman (2005) said "...if you wish to understand why professions develop as they do, study their nurseries, in this case, their forms of professional preparation" (p. 52). Pedagogies, like social work field education, should have three key parts: surface structure, deep structure, and implicit structure. Surface structure is the actual concrete teaching and demonstration of content and skill. Deep structure refers to the way that a profession decides is the best way to impart knowledge to its students. Implicit structure is the moral component of "...beliefs, professional attitudes, values, and dispositions" (Schulman, 2005, p. 55).

Schulman (2005) also defines pedagogies as having distinct characteristics. Signature pedagogies are to be routine across all courses, programs, and institutions. Additionally, it is to be noted that pedagogies that merge theory and practice are never simple, however, once they are learned, allow the student to think with them rather than about them. Pedagogies also require public performance of students. Students must actively perform their learned professional roles or instruction cannot continue. Requiring public performance, like in practicum, helps fight against obstacles to learning such as invisibility, lack of accountability, and the ability to be anonymous. Pedagogies also require students to
be interactive with their instructors and fellow classmates to equally work towards learning (Schulman, 2005).

In recent research, social work field education has been examined and critiqued as to whether or not it meets all of the traits and characteristics of signature pedagogy. Outside of these guidelines for field education, there is little consistency as to what is required. Field instructors, for practicum students, do not all share and impart information the same way, nor do they have the same supervision nature and schedule (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010). In a sense, outside of the basic requirements, not much of field education is routine. The experience that I might have could be vastly different from another student’s. Another critique of field education is that students only partially perform in public. Because students have roles in which they are required to work with other professionals, the community, and clients, they have accountability and visibility. However, field instructors cannot be with students at all times and have to rely on written and oral reports of performance when working with clients in private (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010).

Finally, Wayne, Bogo, and Raskin (2010) commented on the interactivity of social work students in practicum settings. These researchers stated,

In social work field education, however, the student is responsible to the client system, field instructor, agency, and the school through the faculty liaison, but rarely are students accountable to other students through group structures in any form (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010).

They also reported that seminars are sometimes common in programs to discuss field assignments, which is in line with the Ball State University Social Work Department curriculum for practicum.
Classroom as Organization Model

Although field education as the signature pedagogy of social work is definitely necessary and effective, it has been called into question for its lack of uniformity, different lengths of public performance, and low interactivity of students with other students. Structural changes could be made to the practicum experience; however, the social work field is neither uniform nor a “one-size-fits-all” work arena. Taking away or making vast changes to students’ experience in the practice field would be detrimental to their total education. The Classroom as Organization (class-org) model combines all teaching methods discussed before, into one.

A Ball State University professor has pioneered and developed a unique class that focuses on human service and/or non-profit organizational structure, a work setting where many of the students are likely to become employees. The professor designed the class largely from the work of John R. Schermerhorn Jr. and additional frameworks focusing on communities. Generally, 30+ students meet weekly for three hours. The class simulates a women’s organization named The Indiana Women’s Bureau (IWB). Students take the role of a board member, staff member, client, or volunteer. Three students are visible leaders as the president, vice-president, and commanding executive officer (CEO). The class, identified by the university as Social Work 300, offers fifteen weeks of class sessions, allowing the students to explore important topics relevant to macro-practice, such as mission and vision statements, fair hiring laws, governing by-laws and strong and meaningful leadership, and others while simultaneously running this organization in class. The semester ends with a final banquet on the last night of class.

Students produce documents that are appropriate to their roles as well as complete both weekly and long-range directed assignments, all of which are placed into a portfolio reflective of the semester’s
work. The portfolio is turned in at the end of the term. Students participate in staff and board meetings, work on a governance committee and interact with clients. Some students act as the organization’s client group themselves. Students are also required to shadow and interview a real practicing macro-social worker and attend a board meeting of an existing organization. They also complete a cultural assessment of this or another organization. In follow up, students reflect on the content they are learning in class and compare it to what actually plays out in real life. All class activity is aided by “The Orchid Book,” which is a former Strategic Plan turned supplemental textbook developed by the professor when she was in practice and named by one group of past students. “The Orchid Book” outlines what students need to know to operate the IWB and understand its inner workings.

The next section of this paper breaks down each week of the course’s activities and shows Schermerhorn’s research and its application to the class structure, adapting Schermerhorn’s model to social work education. As well, additional community frameworks are introduced.

Every Week

Over the whole course, students complete six total weekly assignments, multiple macro field setting observations, attend an agency board meeting, complete a Cultural Competency assessment, post on ten weekly discussion board posts, complete a partner community assessment, and produce self directed research and role documents. As described earlier, class sessions begin with committee governance meetings, followed by Direct Instruction of material by the professor, and ends with “role” meetings.

Certain aspects of the course take place every week and are influenced and molded by the personalities of the students. As mentioned before, students are separated into different roles: board member, staff member, client, or volunteer and committee member. All of the students, in roles as board
members, staff, or volunteers, separate by role to accomplish different organizational functions. As the organization is designed as a non-profit, the board operates as the governing body and uses a committee structure. Examples of the committees are the finance, public policy, program, fund development, and board development. At different weeks during the semester, each committee gives a presentation, applying theory to practice and using a framework borrowed from Netting, Kettner, and McMurty (2004).

**Weeks One and Two**

In the first two weeks of class students are re-introduced to the precepts of macro-practice and its importance to planned change and its current role today. Additionally, students begin the first nights of the class-org by organizing themselves into becoming their version of the Indiana Women’s Bureau, including either choosing or being assigned to their roles and governance committees. The students learn about organizational values in general, and their organization’s values specifically. Governance of a non-profit is emphasized. As the new board of directors forms, it picks a president and vice-president who are in charge of the class-org and act as co-teachers for the rest of the semester. The instructor becomes a consultant. Generally, deciding whom the president and vice-president are is a hectic process because the board must also be aligned structurally.

Most students are unsure of how to organize themselves, so chaos ensues. Because of this chaos, students are then given an assignment to research Robert’s Rules of Order and proper parliamentary procedure and to compile their learning in a short paper – the first of the six assignments named above. Students also take a pre-test followed by a post-test in the final class that surveys their knowledge of organizational behavior and skills.
Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn (2002) define organization as “a collection of people working together in a division of labor to achieve a common purpose” (p. 7). The Indiana Women's Bureau is clearly defined to students as one that works to support and better the lives of women through its programs and services. This idea guides them throughout the entire semester as they work together for this cause. During the first week of class, the instructor also introduces the class-org model assignment. Without understanding that the IWB is an organization that is reformed each semester, the students are presented with the scenario that the previous CEO ran away and stole one million dollars, a large amount of their operating budget. This scenario begins organizational learning, or the process in which students understand how organizations gain knowledge and utilize information to adapt to ever-changing circumstances (Schermerhorn et al., 2002).

In the second week of class, the professor emphasizes that although the IWB is a women's organization, there are many ways organizations run. She emphasizes a feminist or collective framework but compares it to a bureaucratic method of structuring an organization. An inclusive discussion of these models supports contingency thinking. This method of thinking maintains that there is no universal unfailing way to run an organization or manage people. Through contingency thinking students discover how different management techniques work effectively depending on the situation (Schermerhorn et al., 2002).

Week Three

Week three of the Classroom as Organization Model is centered on the topic of leadership and its importance in an organization. Each student assesses his or her leadership style in an effort to define one’s own unique style, and then is required to write a short narrative and reflection on "Self as Leader." The two assignments described at this point, parliamentary procedure and leadership reflection, are due
in the week that follows. The remaining four out of six total assignments hold fast to the upcoming week's agenda. Instruction focuses on strengths-based leadership while administrative v. leadership tasks and roles are also compared. Higher-level leadership and managerial leadership characteristics are analyzed. Often during this week, discussion revolves around the differences between a manager and leader as the newly forming IWB begins to subconsciously consider the qualities of their leader.

Schermerhorn et al. (2002) defines a manager as someone who “...perform(s) jobs that involve directly supporting the work efforts of others” (p.9). Managers often challenge others to get important tasks done quickly and with a standard of high-quality work. Managers often work long hours, are extremely busy people, but above all are communicators. Communication in both a leadership and managerial role is often verbal and takes place in both formal and informal meetings. An effective manager is a person whose organization consistently accomplishes tasks, is committed, and is positive minded.

Typically, the managerial process also follows a distinct order. Managers generally plan for their team or organization by setting and defining goals, objectives, and the actions required to accomplish them. Next, an organization finds its place when the manager sets up work roles and systems in order to complete goals. Managers then lead their organization by working to maintain positive interpersonal relationships and communicating with team members. Finally, managers control goals and outcomes by monitoring performances and making corrections to their organization’s team member’s work if necessary (Schermerhorn et al., 2002). In the class-org, these basic management principles are followed when each student’s “supervisor” reviews and assess, in part, his/her work at the end of the semester.

An organizational chart clearly outlines the authority structure of a company or non-profit as in the case of the IWB. One of the next tasks of the IWB is the hiring of their CEO or administrative
leader. Placed above a manager in an organizational chart is the higher-level superiors, or board members in this model. These members of the organization lead the entire group and are responsible for making policy decisions that affect everyone's work. They achieve upward influence and have personal power. Personal power comes from characteristics of a person rather than their position in an organization. Higher-level superiors have the highest amount of power, but are generally the most removed. They also do not have direct contact with clients or lower level workers (Schermerhorn et al., 2002). This research presented by Schermerhorn is especially true in each semester of the IWB as each class experientially discovers and demonstrates the differences between governance, administrative leadership, and management.

Week Four

In week four, following the previous week's discussion on leadership, the Board President appoints a Search and Screen Committee that reviews and chooses a candidate for the CEO position. Students vying for the position submit resumes and are interviewed during the first few hours of the class period. After the interviews, which are held in front of the class, one person is chosen based on a two-fold process: the organization’s criteria for a leader developed the week before and successful interviewing. Class discussion in week four then focuses on the importance of a mission statement and its relationship to the organization’s culture. Due to the CEO interviews, unlike other weeks, the board and staff do not meet for board and staff meetings. Instead, class discussion explores the IWB’s mission as the organization’s members seek to understand how they support and are committed to the organization’s mission and if they associate with the organization’s values. Throughout the described interview process, the professor has asked each CEO candidate a mission-related question and in subsequent discussion of the interviews, the intent of the question is explained. The purpose of these questions is to model how an organization determines a candidate’s commitment to the culture and
understanding of the mission. Further, the professor points out how the organization’s programs support and reflect the mission.

The professor’s lecture relates to how programs and actions of the organization must always be in line with the mission statement, how mission influences organizational culture, and how members join organizations based on shared values and beliefs. The professor draws from sociology literature and assumes students have prior knowledge and learning experiences related to both how cultures form and the intrinsic traits of culture. Next, the professor challenges students to develop a personal mission statement highlighting both their professional and personal values that will guide their future practice. The personal mission statement assignment will be turned in for grading during the next class period.

Schermerhorn et al. (2002) asserts the importance of mission statements as they “…focus the attention of organizational members and external constituents on the core purpose” (p. 7) of the organization. Mission statements force organizations to achieve both short and long term goals. Additionally, these statements give rise to strategies that lead to accomplishing goals. Mission statements reflect organizational culture. Organizational culture is “…the system of shared actions, values, and beliefs that develops within an organization and guides the behavior of its members” (p. 43). Each organization’s culture differs; no two are alike. Organizational culture also affects the quality of work life for employees (Schermerhorn et al., 2002). The instructor often gives many examples from her own personal work and practice during this week’s discussion about the importance of adhering to mission statements and choosing an organization for which to work for a culture that is supportive of one’s own personal mission statement, i.e., personal and professional values.

Week Five
Week five is centered on salary negotiation after the previous week’s activity of selecting a new CEO. Salary negotiation is modeled for the whole class. The new CEO is asked to list necessary benefits in addition to their desired starting salary. Members of the Search and Screen Committee, who were in charge of interviewing the candidates for the position the previous week, step aside and the Board of Directors and president assigns another Ad Hoc committee to act as the IWB’s negotiating personnel in the negotiation process. Specifically, the Personnel/HR Committee is asked to determine the benefits package the organization offers the candidate, and the Financial Committee is asked to determine a reasonable mid-level salary along with a first offer low-level salary and maximum high-level salary. All students are expected to research what is typical for a like agency.

The rest of the class-org observes the process of the negotiating team and candidate coming to an agreement on benefits and a salary. In this process, the instructor coaches both the candidate and the negotiating personnel, or sometimes the teaching assistant works with one side or the other. Once a compromise is reached the CEO is officially hired. The instructor is clear that the CEO is not officially hired until both parties agree upon benefits and salary. Next, the instructor leads a discussion on the whole process of interviewing for a job and negotiating one’s benefits. At the end, the class examines fair hiring practices. The weekly class assignment is then to research fair hiring practices and compare their research to the hiring process witnessed in their class-org. The product is a small paper.

Many U.S. laws support Schermerhorn’s et al. (2002) concept of workforce diversity, or “the presence of individual human characteristics that make people different from one another” in the workplace (p. 15). Essentially, diversity in an organization depends on key demographic differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and ability. Equal opportunity measures are federally mandated so that in organizations base employment decisions on non-discriminatory and inclusionary criteria. These protected groups are hopefully no longer at a disadvantage. Affirmative
action policy is related to fair hiring in organizations. Affirmative action policy corrects for proven discrimination and/or compensates for imbalances in the workforce. Having an affirmative action plan is legally required for federal and governmental agencies and organizations that do not comply with fair hiring laws (Schermerhorn et al., 2002).

Schermerhorn et al. (2002) also speaks to this week’s content when he defines a type of negotiation called distributive negotiation. Distributive negotiation refers to two parties claiming advantage for available position or resource. This type of negotiation is mostly used when negotiating for salaries. In distributive negotiation, there is a bargaining zone. The bargaining zone is “…the zone between one party’s minimum reservation point and the other party’s maximum reservation point in a negotiating situation” (p. 137). The professor encourages students to demonstrate both of these concepts during the CEO salary negotiations. Because both the new CEO and Search and Screen Committee come to the meeting with goals and a bottom line, they can make offers and counteroffers until an agreed upon salary and benefits for the position is reached.

Week Six

Ethical dilemmas frame the discussion in week six. The question how an organization upholds its ethics is asked. Generally for this class, Professor Shelly requires students to read scholarly articles and consider cases related to different practice situations. Students are required to think ethically and to evaluate to what lengths they will go to uphold the National Association of Social Worker’s (NASW) Code of Ethics (2008). Random students are selected to debate or elevate a situation or issue in for the class-org to consider. Following the debate, Elaine Congress’s (2000) framework for resolving ethical dilemmas is introduced. The students’ assignment is to research the topic of “whistle blowing,” and
highlight a social worker who rather than that successfully and bravely fought against social injustice by whistle blowing particularly in social work services or non-profit organizations.

Schermerhorn et al. (2002) defines ethical behavior in an organizational setting as “…that [which is] accepted as morally “good” and “right,” as opposed to “bad” or “wrong,” in a particular setting” (p.12). One’s personal and professional ethics are challenged, when conflicting choices are present and a person has to decide between doing something that benefit few or many, themselves, or their organization. Ethical dilemmas are often described as deciding between two options when a good solution is not possible. People working in organizations encounter these situations with their bosses, people they supervise, clients, and outside constituents. Typical components of ethical dilemmas involve honesty in communication, gifts and/or gratuities, entertainment, kickbacks, employee terminations, fundraising and pricing for services (Schermerhorn et al., 2002).

Week Seven

Week seven serves as a review to how organizations begin and develop. Emphasis is placed on not-for-profit tax status. Fitting with the not-for-profit tax status and other components of organizing social service organizations is the grassroots nature of how they begin. The clients of the IWB are scheduled to present on this topic. A framework of grassroots and community organizing presented in Netting, Kettner, and McMurty (2005) is the basis of their presentation. The clients present the definition of grassroots organizing and its purpose in communities, teach the concepts to their fellow coworkers, and sometimes go as far as role playing their experiences as clients in the IWB.

The framework for grassroots organizing begins with an assessment of the political and economic context needed for change to occur. The assessment identifies three systems for change. The target system, which is the first system, is “…the individual, group, structure, policy, or practice that
needs to be changed for the primary beneficiaries to achieve the desired benefits" (Netting, et al, p. 339, 2004). The second is the political and interpersonal implications of fixing the problem, and the third identifying possible resources used, to increase the likelihood the change is actually going to happen. After knowing change is needed, the framework suggests selecting strategies and tactics to jumpstart the effort and to implement it. Some effective strategies could be campaigning, educating, persuading, lobbying, or appealing to the mass media. The final step is carrying out the full plan calling the community to make a change (Netting, et al, 2004). The client group becomes more mindful of the fact that planned and organized change is the goal of any social work practice endeavor each week.

**Week Eight**

Week eight centers on the organization’s relationship to the community. Community and conflict theory are extensively explored as well as the role of community in people’s lives. Community of place is thought of as where one grew up or lives today, and where one shares history, values, traditions, and communication patterns. Essentially, communities provide their members support and identity. Warren’s (in Henderson & Vercseg, 2010) functions of community are also applied. Communities provide five functions, three of which are social support, socialization, and social control. The remaining two are mutual aid and access to goods and services and the means to achieve them. Community members stretch across all demographics but also exist in a mutually competitive cooperative environment. Additionally, communities generally produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. The hypothesis of conflict theory emphasizes that all relationships in a community exist as a negotiation of power (Netting, Kettner, & McMurty, 2004).

Along with learning theoretical concepts regarding communities, the professor stresses the importance of how theory applies to communities and how organizations exist in the community
structure to meet the members’ needs. Both coexist. In order to apply this learning and prepare the
students for the community assessment assignment, Dr. James Connolly, the Director of Middletown
Studies at Ball State University, is invited to present Muncie’s path as a community over time.
Historically, Muncie, Indiana was a booming metropolis for factories and business due to the natural
resources available for manufacturing but then faded into one of foreclosures and poverty when the
natural gas was depleted and later the automotive industry moved elsewhere. Dr. Connolly presents an
impressive model of community assessment using a demographic breakdown, identifying the
community’s values, traditions, and infrastructures and educating the students of the historic
Middletown studies. After this presentation, the students are assigned to complete their own community
assessment of subsystems of women in a subsection of the town of Muncie. The framework the students
use for their assessment is lent from Netting, Kettner, and McMurty (2004).

Week Nine

The IWB appears as an organization that only presents opportunities for micro social work
practice as most programs involve direct contact between staff and clients. However, much like in other
direct service not-for-profits, micro practice interactions drive, inform, and direct macro practice. The
two types of social work practice are interconnected and drive the success of each other. To inform and
familiarize the staff members of the organization with the clients’ stories, clients are interviewed in front
of the class. The interviews serve a vital purpose to help the class-org answer a key question: How do
client issues and problems inform trends and problems in macro practice?

Micro social workers work with individuals and groups while macro social workers work in
policy sectors, communities, and organizations. Macro social work, in a sense, is “zoomed out” on social
problems, while micro social work “is on the ground” working with individuals affected by problems.
Netting, Kettner, McMurty, and Thomas (2001) explain the relationship between the two sides of practice when they write, "Macro activities go beyond individual interventions but are often based on the needs, problems, issues, and concerns identified in the course of working one-on-one with service recipients" (p.6). Micro level social workers are the first to see problems and recognize areas of service delivery where there is a need for macro level change. If a small number of people present with the same problems, treating them as isolated client issues is logical. However, if a majority of a client base presents with the same problem, it is indicative that there is a problem with service delivery systems and there is a need for change. For example, if micro level social workers notice that many individual clients and families have children who are getting into trouble with the law after school and during the summer months, it may be logical to reevaluate community enrichment programs for youth.

The client interviews during this week help pull together the connection between micro and macro social work practice. Students acting as clients develop client stories that speak of oppression and discrimination causing staff to interact with social injustice and human rights violations which speak to social work core values (NASW, 2008). Client stories revolve around a presenting problem. Some examples of past client stories include: a rape victim, a prostitute, battered women, a woman with disabilities in a lesbian relationship struggling for acceptance and services, an underage runaway, prostitutes, and many others. The clients have the freedom to not only explain their situation but also act it out and actually take on the persona as their own. During the interview, staff members fulfill the core competency of operational practice behavior (CSWE, 2008). Staff members later carry out the interview process and proceed into assessment, intervention, and evaluation. The professor relies on education and training from Social Work 200 and 330 for students to understand how to carry out this process.
Following week nine’s initial client in-take interviews, a staff meeting is held to discuss each
client’s stories and presenting problems. The purpose of this meeting is to determine the client’s
appropriateness to receive services or if a referral should be made to a different organization or agency
that is better equipped to meet the individual’s needs. In past years, the meeting has been held in front of
the entire class-org or alternatively in a private staff meeting; it is left to the students’ discretion. The
most recent class decided to hold the meeting publicly due to the learning they believed would stem
from the experience, and their desire to be a visible entity much like the board.

Appropriating clients into suitable programs and referring clients due to lack of services that fit
needs is one class experience that supports the NASW standard of cultural competency. In Cultural
Competence in Social Work Practice (2001), standards four and five especially speak to the need and
expectation of staff to value and advocate for diverse clients and to support client cultures. Standard four
states, “Social workers shall use appropriate methodological approaches, skills, and techniques that
reflect the workers’ understanding of the role in culture in the helping process” (Cultural Competence in
about and skillful in the use of services available in the community and broader society and be able to
make appropriate referrals for their diverse clients” (Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice, p. 4,
2001).

Students complete a Cultural Competence Assessment on an agency in the community for
homework. This assessment is purchased from the bookstore at the same time as the textbook used for
the course. This competency assessment is adopted from The Child Welfare League of America
(CWLA). The goal of the assessment is to help students analyze not-for-profit organizations on their
commitment to cultural competence and diversity. The NASW Cultural Competency standards call for the workforce to always match the diverse populations served, for social workers to seek to create opportunities for clients in culturally appropriate service delivery systems, or to adapt service delivery systems to better meet their cultural needs among many others (p. 22). This assessment booklet helps students to accurately decide if a potential employer is holding to these standards later when in practice.

In discussion with the professor of the class-org, it is noted that this week may be the weakest area in the whole experience. There is a large amount of activity and information that has to be covered putting a large strain on class time. The professor trusts that students have studied and are familiar with the social work cultural competence standards earlier in the social work program, but there is the potential that they need to be revisited. Finally, the work of Schermerhorn (2002) supports cultural competency as he writes that some essentials to management are attending to cultural diversity in the workplace, global economy, and social and ethical behavior.

**Week Eleven**

The IWB is a membership organization, and this type of organization conducts their annual business at a public meeting. Week Eleven focuses on the IWB’s annual meeting. The underlying content and purpose of the meeting is the opportunity for students to learn techniques to assess the programs and services of the organization, as well as the internal structure through an organizational audit. The format for the audit is found in Netting, et al (2005). Non-profit organizational annual meetings are business meetings at which the CEO informs the membership regarding the staff’s work. The president introduces the meeting, the vice presidents and/or committee chairs present the happenings within the board, and the CEO presents the organizational audit. The organizational audit is
a large document the staff prepares with information gathered from “the Orchid Book” throughout the semester.

The audit’s structure assesses people, and technological resources by naming its sources of revenue, client characteristics, client’s services, as well as the demand for services and competitive organizations also providing the same services. Next, through the audit, the students as a staff detail the structure of the agency’s programs and its managerial style. Lastly, accountability of the IWB to employee relations and budget management is studied (Netting, Kettner, & McMurty, 2004). The CEO directs and oversees the work of the staff team as they compile this extensive information into a document and present it at the annual meeting. This exercise informs students of the different basic components of a thriving operational not-for-profit organization. It also teaches students to employ an auditing framework for assessment reasons. Auditing skills will hopefully transfer to practice.

**Week Twelve**

Week twelve of the class centers on program development. The staff designs a program plan for implementation after the Board’s Program Committee completes a Needs Assessment as to the community’s programming needs. Pieces of a program include staffing, funding, building support, marketing, and effectively evaluating and measuring the results of a program. For instance, this semester’s IWB proposed adding a free medical clinic to the IWB’s roster of programs. The current program idea and data was presented to the Board by the Program Committee chair who asked many questions and inquired about details. Program development follows a specific process. First, the Program Committee must conduct a needs assessment so as to be informed on what is happening on a micro level to affect change agency wide. Second, the data reveals a trend of how needs are not being met which gives birth to a program concept. Third, the program concept is presented to and approved by
the Board of Directors. Fourth, the Program Committee relinquishes the program into the hands of the staff to plan and implement.

The framework for program development emphasizes the necessity of identifying a specific consumer problem and client population who will be served by a new program. Next, a specific intervention is researched, and an implementation plan is designed. In developing an intervention, the program proposers write out outcome objectives and define criteria for measuring success. Additionally, the Fund Development and Finance Committees are involved in determining how financially feasible the program is.

Process objectives and a plan for action are the foundation of the new program. For example, a new program proposal explains who will do what and in what time frame. Finally, the new program is evaluated for effectiveness through reliable measures (Netting, Kettner, & McMurty, 2004).

Week Thirteen

Self-care is a skill emphasized in social work education. Tending to one’s own personal needs is vital to having the mental, physical, and emotional capacity to care for another’s needs. Self-care extends from staff all the way to the board in the class-org model and in real-life organizations. Typically, self-care is carried out collectively in organizations in the form of a retreat. During this week’s class session, the IWB Board hosts a retreat for the other students or employees. The class is structured by the plans of the Board so topics for the night could include mission-focusing activities, fun activities such as bowling, movie, or game night, and even educational activities. The professor recalls a particularly creative Board who brought in Mexican cuisine and made virgin margaritas to create an enjoyable and stress free evening for the IWB employees.
Technically, organization Board retreats are for educating staff and directors, building up their enthusiasm, and refocusing and reviewing the organization’s mission (Futter, 2002). The IWB retreat night has been modified and changed over time as the employees are still students, and students get extremely stressed towards the end of semesters. Instead of only focusing on organizational mission and enthusiasm for serving clients, the night tends to be more a stress reliever. College students have a unique relationship to stress, as college is typically a developmental period in which students throw out any adopted health behaviors, both negative and beneficial. Highly stressed students are less likely to exercise and eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables (Hudd et al., 2000; Ying & Lindsey, 2013). Additionally, Johnson (1993) suggests that college students learn maladaptive and regressive coping behaviors due to feeling overwhelmed both by tasks that need completed and pressure from friends (p. 29). In an effort to combat these trends in poor stress management and to increase self-care collectively for the organization, the Board-sponsored retreat night is treated as a relaxed fun filled night, and the professor reports that most classes enjoy the class session.

**Week Fourteen**

Week fourteen brings the class’s attention to the volunteers of the IWB. The volunteers present to the others in the class-org on the role of volunteers in an organization, and on the risk of using volunteers or unpaid staff in the organization’s work. The volunteers present using an ethical audit framework. The lesson for students is that audits of all natures occur mainly for accounting and quality control purposes. An audit focus is on essential aspects of an organization’s functioning and to include the incorporation of social work values and ethics. Ethical audits discuss topics such as client rights, confidentiality and privacy, informed consent, service delivery, boundary issues, conflicts of interest, documentation processes, defamation, supervision, consultation, referral processes, training, fraud, termination of services, and clinician’s incompetence (Reamer, 2000). The IWB volunteers assess the
organization’s work in these areas each semester and present their findings to the board, staff, and clients, and alert them to existing and potential risks. The main idea the volunteers research and present is that volunteers are an invaluable assets to not-for-profits, however, there has to be proper definition of their roles, screening, adequate insurance coverage, governing policies, and professional development or training (Masaoka, 2011). This information is also intended to carry into students’ future practice.

**Week Fifteen**

In week fifteen the entire class wraps up and pulls content together. The instructor invites a colleague and friend who is a dual professional, both a social worker and lawyer, and who has facilitated this same discussion almost every semester for the past 16 years to debrief with the students. Even so, the agenda and tone for this discussion is different each year as some classes have a very high level of conflict for which a particular style of facilitation is required. Other times, students are not in conflict and just need space to share their learning experience. The students are usually randomly separated into small groups to brainstorm the semester’s learning. This week often further relieves stress as the students turn in their completed work for the semester. The mode for this work is in the form of a portfolio that holds all of their research, discussion boards, self and peer evaluations, field experiences, and role assignments. The students also take a posttest regarding their skill and knowledge of organizational workings. They, along with the teacher, compare results to show improvement since the first day of class.

**A Similar Model**

The class-org model is uncommon, however there is a similar model documented in social work education research. Although it is an older model, it is most congruent with the class-org model. It involves a large group role-play focused on client situations rather than an organization. Moss (2000)
developed this project to meet a pedagogical challenge to teach students about the themes of social work practice. Moss knew that students would engage with client situations once in a practicum placement. This model particularly focuses on anti-oppressive practice. The core of the large group role-play is that every student is involved and engages in role so that no one is only an observer. All students have input into the exercise and course matter in varying degrees. Some students have more central roles while some have secondary roles that are not at the center of the situation, but all are required to participate (Moss, 2000). This is somewhat of a student-centric model.

The teacher meticulously plans a storyline on which the role-play depends. The role-play includes no more than 25 students. The teacher decides the complexity of the story so that it challenges students to meet learning goals and CSWE standards. Additionally the instructor must be clear and have practice wisdom as to what point he or she pauses the role-play and explores theoretical subject matters and implications for practice. Further, the teacher encourages students to use genograms to map the complex family structures embedded in the role-play according to their role’s frame of reference (Moss, 2000).

In his documentation of the large group role-play model, Moss (2000) provides a detailed synopsis of a story line. The model story involves events leading up to the marriage of two separate couples, and the eventual affair of the husband of one couple with the wife of the other. The affairing couple eventually marries. Both couples have children. The story increases in complexity, but instructors adopting this model have the freedom to develop their own stories or adjust the current one. Moss (2000) reports that the teacher must control the complexity of the story to meet student-learning needs and also must regulate the pacing of the developing story (Moss, 2000).
The role-play calls for six, two-hour sessions with teacher preparation in between each. The teacher is essentially the storyteller, revealing more and more information for students to include in the portrayal of their roles at appropriate times. The teacher controls, with discretion and some intuition, the class discussion and freezes the situation at appropriate learning and opportune moments. Moss (2000) also explains that through this role-play, students begin to experience being “social worked.” Essentially, this means students begin to understand what it feels like to either be a practicing professional or how discouraging and defeating it feels to be a client excluded from one’s own case and loss of one’s own autonomy (Moss, 2000).

As anti-oppressive practice framework is at the center of Moss’s large group role-play experience; issues of race, disability, and gender are taken into account. When assigning roles, Moss (2000) first allowed students to volunteer for the roles they wanted to emulate even if it was a different gender than one’s own. Disability was looked at differently, as students with disabilities still had the same choices in roles as non-disabled students, but their disability became part of the role they played. Race was handled similarly to disabilities, as students were allowed to pick their roles and portray someone of a different race. Race, was not to be ignored, but rather was thought to be a vital part of the role. Moss warns against tokenism or exploitation of a protected group and insists that when race and disability becomes a focal point of the classroom, it be handled sensitively and with a learning purpose (Moss, 2000).

In terms of evaluating students, Moss (2000) recognizes limitations. No established assessments other than anecdotal evidence exist for this experiential learning situation to rely upon. Moss (2000) requires on-going student diary entries in order to chart their development and progress. Students are also encouraged to include their genograms in practicum placement portfolios. Moss (2000) also invited an outside source to evaluate his teaching and the role-play’s implementation. He also asked for
feedback from students whose comments were, overall, positive. The students' comments were introspective and reflective. They reported gaining a new perspective on how easy it is for social workers to ignore client autonomy and make decisions for those we serve rather than respect client self determination. Students in Moss’s initial implementation of the role-play also reported they began to understand the bridge between classroom theory and practice (Moss, 2000).

A limitation of this model includes the issue of absence by students. Since the learning construct is very involved and depends on all students being involved, students cannot miss sessions. It is too difficult to catch up on missed content. Additionally, role consistency is explored, as all students experience the client role as well as the social worker position. Time constraints limit theoretical content constructs, as the teacher has to manage time in such a way that students have time to de-brief both the ongoing story and the theoretical content. Through the role-play students have the opportunity to be responsible for making connections and being responsible for their own learning. Time is key to student autonomous learning, for if time so is rushed, the teacher may feel coerced to make the learning connections for them. Lastly, the limitation of the large-group role-play is the extensive involvement of the teacher. The teacher has the emotionally demanding task of being comfortable allowing students to operate independently (Moss, 2000).

Although this learning experience is not exactly the same as the class-org model, its essence is kindred. Moss (2000) sought to push social work pedagogy into a bridge experience where students get to experience “the field” in a safe environment similarly to the class-org model. Present in his large group role-play is the underlying understanding that social work practice is much more than learning through lecture, note-taking, and tests. Social work education is primarily taking in information and applying it confidently “on the ground.” Moss developed a micro-experience (one-on-one client and social worker interaction) while the class-org model incorporates both micro and macro elements.
Moss’s role-play can almost be considered a larger and expanded model of week nine’s client intake interviews. Much like Ball State University’s Social Work 300 course, Moss developed a calculated and structured learning experience that helps students learn in an environment that is close to actual professional practice.

Personal Reflection

Student Reflections

I completed the classroom-org course, Social Work 300, in the fall of 2012 as a junior in college. I entered the class completely blindsided because I did not do any of the readings recommended; particularly the syllabus and The Orchid Book. I do not even think I knew what the class was about until I walked into the room. Up until this point in my higher education, I had not been challenged with the need to come to class well prepared, as I had always been able to maintain good grades with a regular limited amount of effort. With little information about how difficult the class would be, I was unaware about what transformative qualities the class would have for me as a student, social worker, and professional.

One of the biggest lessons that I learned from the course was how to operate in an organizational setting instead of a traditional classroom. Although the class still included traditional elements of teaching such as lectures and homework, I was consistently forced out of my comfort zone. I could not come to class, relax, and listen to a lecture, but rather was expected to give consistent and quality input into an organization that needed the care of its members. I learned a plethora of information regarding organizational structure and how an organization centers on the goal of improving the lives and situations of its clients. Since my role in the class was a staff member who also participated in the work of the public policy committee, so I became well versed in local, national, and international policies that
affected women. I gained extensive knowledge on organizational frameworks as well as the duties of a staff member versus a board member. Among others, I learned how to interview for a professional position, properly negotiate a salary, organize and/or participate in a grassroots effort, and interpret the laws of the United States government to protect equal rights.

Another memorable lesson I took from the course was the importance of communication, both verbal and written. As the class was run like an organization (thus the name classroom-as-organization), members of the class were often in conflict with one another; the cause was often due to a lack of or ineffective communication. In order to resolve conflict in class, I learned to be quick to confront, slow to judge, and hasty to apologize when wrong. In regards to written communication, my level of writing and professionalism was greatly challenged and improved. I remember turning in my first assignment and getting it back with an extremely low grade due to improper format and lack of scholarly sources. I had always been a good student and was distraught because I received such a poor grade. Our teacher’s assistant explained to the class that the level of written work that was required of a junior level class, and I set out to write more professionally for the remainder of the class. The rest of the semester, I put in lots of time pouring over my classroom assignments. I remember the professor lecturing about the necessity to represent one’s self well in the workplace and how that often comes through the channel of written communication. That piece of advice has stuck with me ever since.

The Social Work 300 class was instrumental in pushing me to become a professional rather than just a student. I felt like I was given access as close as possible to the real field while still being under the supervision of a respected teacher. Essentially, the classroom model gave me room to fail without extreme consequence. In my final review of my time in the class as a student, I wrote in my portfolio:
"I think I have grown the most as a future social worker in this class. This is as close to real practice, besides practicum, as I'm going to get while in school. I was very frustrated and confused at the beginning of the semester but once things got into a routine, I feel I learned a lot. I think before this class I thought I knew what was expected of me to earn high marks, as I have always been an "A" student. However, after the first assignment, I learned that much more was required, and I am glad I was pushed to produce a higher quality of work. I feel my portfolio reflects this growth when my first drafts of assignments are compared to my final copies. After this class, I feel I am more prepared for upper level classes along with practicum. Lastly, I love that this class gives the freedom to make assignments more individual and personal. I loved my shadowing experience and getting to research topics and populations that I am passionate about."

Teacher's Assistant Reflections

After a hard and challenging yet growth filled semester, I knew I wanted to become the teacher's assistant for the Social Work 300 class and couple the experience with my honors thesis project. I valued the class and attribute a majority of my learning to its hands on, yet safe, method of teaching. However, I think at the beginning of the semester I romanticized the class in such a way that I forgot that the students would go through the same stages of frustration and confusion that I did at the beginning.

Fulfilling an instructor role of the course was much more difficult than I thought but still provided many valuable lessons. As the teacher's assistant, I was in charge of grading the first drafts of work for half of the class. Since I shared the role with another student, she graded the other half of the assignments. Grading proved to be a very time consuming and frustration-inducing experience. Similarly to my experience, the students all did very poorly on their first writing assignment. After a lecture on proper APA format and individual help, I expected the quality of work to vastly improve.
However, the rest of the semester still produced sub-par work from many students despite constant correction. When these frustrations set in, the professor of the class was quick to point out that teaching does produce frustration sometimes. In self-reflection, I realized that I expected students to have the same reaction to poor grades and heed correction as I did. I wanted the students I was assisting to have the same learning experiences and work ethic as I did. I felt more akin with the students who heeded correction and produced excellent work after receiving a poor grade only once.

Additionally, sometimes the students were very stressed out and more concerned with their grade than their learning. The organization as classroom model often causes students to be stressed and uncomfortable due to being out of one’s comfort zone. Having to operate as a professional rather than just a student is a new frame of reference and students tend to stumble in this new paradigm. During these pressure and anxiety-filled times, students took their frustrations out on my fellow teacher’s assistant and me. I found it very hard to be empathetic despite the fact that it was needed. Eventually I figured out the students were in the process of making the same learning revelations that I did when I was in the class; I would often allow them to be mad at me rather than demanding respect.

Further, despite getting a closer look at some of the negative aspects of teaching that my professors must deal with regularly (I now “get” this), I learned lessons right along with the class-org members, and experienced the “ah-ha” moments at the end of the semester a second time around. Weeks seven, eleven, and twelve were especially helpful. During week seven’s class session, the clients present on grassroots organizing. The client group dressed the part and stirred us to understand their frustration with the IWB. They claimed they were not receiving services or attention as they had been posing their client problems and situations with no response from staff members. They decided to leave the IWB and seek services elsewhere. To make this point clear, they left the classroom following their presentation.

With all this “drama,” many of the staff and board members realized the important lesson that an
organization’s clients always come first. This message is one the professor’s underlying goals and she is purposeful in her intension to drive it home throughout each semester. It was once again emphasized to the students and me.

Week eleven marks the annual meeting for the IWB. As with actual non-profit organizations, the Board President runs the meeting and different committees give presentations and updates on their progress to the stakeholders of the organization, or in the case of the IWB, the organization’s members. Additionally, as mentioned before the whole organization gets to vote on changes to things such as the by-laws. The driving thought behind an annual meeting is that, “Transparency and accountability are critical if the public is to continue funding the good work done by small, grassroots organizations” (Certified General Accountants, p.5, 2008). Essentially, all of the organization’s information is on display. At the Annual Meeting, minutes from the past year’s meetings and financial statements are approved, committee reports are examined, amendments additions to by-laws are presented and questioned, and other official business takes place.

The annual meeting was extremely short this semester, and the students rarely asked questions of the proposed changes to their by-laws. Also, the finance committee reported a discrepancy with the budget that no one seemed to question. Professor Shelly commented on the shortness of the meeting and advised the students to always question changes in an organization as they have stock in what happens just as much as presidents and CEOs. Seeing as how the organization members are the stakeholders, the professor emphasized that it is important to hold those in leadership positions accountable. This lesson did not come up in my Social Work 300 class, further indicating that each semester is different, so I learned along with the class that day to always advocate for myself and my clients and to not be afraid to ask questions in a large group organizational setting such as an annual meeting.
The last most meaningful lesson came about in week twelve. This class session was especially helpful for the students and myself. As mentioned above, at the beginning of the semester, the IWB hires a new CEO, which means, as is the case in organizations from all sectors, interviewing possible candidates for the position. In this case, the candidates were students. During the interview process, the Search and Screen Committee did not ask all of the candidates the same questions and even ventured into religion with one candidate. Later, after the students wrote their paper on fair hiring laws, the student who was asked questions regarding his religion during the interview process filed an official discriminatory complaint with the governing body. The student also researched how one once complains about discrimination in the workplace and discovered the EEOC. During week twelve, the IWB addressed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaint as we collectively learned how a complaint is handled as if there is an indication of discrimination. The EEOC hearing (a mock trial) was led by a former EEOC professional who role played with the students. Though not built into the curriculum or class-org model, because it simulates an organization, the instructor allowed the issue to be elevated, for the purposes of learning and so the simulations would definitely be helpful to students in the future.

The last class was also very helpful in that all of the students began to have the “ah-ha” moment that all of the stress had been leading up to. The last class of every semester, the instructor’s colleague and friend, who is a social worker and lawyer, to debrief the class-org experience with the students. This professional is committed to the student’s learning, as she has been involved with the final class session for nearly 16 years. All of the students share their thoughts and their learning over the semester. Students typically report feeling accomplished and as if they have grown immensely as a social worker. The students, much like myself, report feeling like they had learned to “do” as a social worker, rather than just how to write papers or take tests. It was really interesting seeing others journey through the
process from frustration to accomplishment much like I did. The professor of the class-org model states that while each semester's events are different, the same lessons are learned.

**Recommendations**

In light of extensively reviewing the teaching methods used in the Ball State University Social Work Department, with a special emphasis on the classroom as organization model, recommendations can be made in order to use the model to better the learning of students in other social work classes. The classroom as organization model is based in organizational research and supported through a similar model documented in social work education research. As a student and teacher's assistant in the social work department, I believe these recommendations will greatly improve upon the practical and theoretical learning of students behind me.

To begin, I recognize the usefulness of traditional teaching methods and respect their role in communicating information. Not all learning can be done experientially. At some point, information has to be shared and there is simply no other way to do so than sharing it verbally and in written form. I do believe that traditional methods of teaching should be partnered with experiential learning though in order to make the connection between classroom and real life application, or in technical terms, theory to practice as expected and outline by CSWE. All social work courses have a different topic: practice, human behavior in the social environment, research, policy, and field. Social Work 300 is a practice course, so simulating an organization is feasible and still meets the course objectives. The core principles of a simulation and role-play used in the model though can be applied to other courses. With that being said, Social Work 200, 400, and 410, also practice courses, could best be partnered with the classroom as organization model with some adjustments.
LEARNING HOW TO HELP

Social Work 200 is a course designed to impart fundamental generalist social work practitioner communication and relational skills to students. Additionally, students are required to volunteer in the field for 25 hours during the semester in order to meet the field experience requirement (Ball State University, 2013). As I am now a senior in the department, I have taken this course. Throughout the semester, communication and relational skills were taught and practiced then tested through a filmed interview of a client, played by a classmate. The aim of the role-play was to attain clarifying information on a case. We also practiced interviewing skills in shorter spurts during class.

Social Work 200 includes many aspects of experiential learning already but could be expounded upon with the introduction of elements similar to the classroom as organization model. A model very similar to Moss’s large group role-play could be implemented. As the class mainly focuses on interviewing communication and interpersonal skills, it would be increasingly difficult though to do a class wide role-play. A simpler adjustment to Moss’s model would be to separate the class into groups of five with one client, one social worker, and three outside sources the social worker must also interview for information regarding the client. Outside sources mimic the extra sources practicing social workers often engage and seek information from regarding a client’s full story. This role-play will give the students practice in interacting with entities that matter to clients such as other professionals, family members, or school officials if the client is a child.

The roles could rotate, giving everyone a chance to play each role. These interviews could still be taped, but be a semester long project so as to give students adequate practice time and better prepare to enter the field. Further, after the interviews are taped, each person could analyze their time as both the client and social worker. Hopefully, students would develop empathy for client situations and learn how to better develop intervention plans when acting as the worker. Both the analysis and the needs plan could then be presented by each student in a presentation as their final project. Normal class time could
be devoted to theoretical content and lecture. As the small group interview would require students to meet together for a half hour, five times throughout the semester, the volunteering experience could be reduced to 20 hours. Formulating the course this way would be switching to a student-centered classroom, suggesting that students learn more by self experience than just observing.

Social Work 400 is another course that would benefit from adopting elements from the class-org model, synonymous with the student-centered model. This course delves into a greater understanding of methods, values, and professional competencies used in the social work field as a general practitioner. Group work and group theory is also heavily emphasized (Ball State University, 2013). Making changes to this course would alter its pedagogy into a student-centered model.

I just recently completed this course, and although it is very thorough with content, I believe some slight adjustments could be beneficial. Lecture is the primary form of communication with groups of students taking on different topics and applying those topics to group social work. For example, I spent a week of this semester teaching my fellow classmates about group work with kids and reality therapy in groups. In addition to the students teaching the class, an outside field experience of 25 hours is also required. Most students this past semester were very disappointed in the sites where they completed their field experiences, despite being recommended by the university’s Student Voluntary Services or by other social work faculty.

In order to incorporate the “real life” aspect that the class-org model incorporates into Social Work 300, the classroom structure might change wherein students use 15 minutes of class time to briefly present their assigned course material, and then in the remaining hour actually facilitate a group work activity. Actually challenging the students to facilitate a group would be monumental. Currently, students must do two smaller activities throughout their presentation of group work material, however,
no small group activity really encompasses what it's like to actually lead a group. Additionally, to make the hour-long group simulations more effective, the instructor of the course could assign client roles to act out rather than be pressured to share their own personal problems. The student facilitators would be unaware of the different types of clients their other classmates would be asked to portray, thereby testing students’ ability to lead a group.

The last practice class that I suggest for change is Social Work 410, another practice course that has the potential of adding class-org elements and student-centered pedagogy. This class is similar to Social Work 200 but challenges fourth year students to a higher level of skill, methods and competencies. The course is very heavily focused on interviewing, much like Social Work 200, but it also emphasizes developing extensive client bio-psycho-social-cultural assessments and intervention plans. Despite the necessity of acquiring and demonstrating these practice skills, the course is taught strictly from a lecture format.

The main assignment for the course is a large paper that focuses on one client. Students partner up and each take a turn being a client and a social worker for a thirty-minute interview. After the interview, students write an assessment and intervention plan for their client. Students also write a shorter analysis of their interviewing and communication skills. While this assignment does provide life like experience, a few adjustments could greatly improve student learning. For this course, I recommend my similar ideas for Social Work 200. Students could again be separated into smaller groups, access client cases, relate to all aspects of the actual client’s situation, and connect and interview all outside sources. To make this arrangement a student-centered learning model, instead of taping the outside sources interviews, students could be required to interview them in class, putting more pressure on the assessment aspect. Additionally, other classmates who are observing can provide their fellow classmates...
with constructive feedback. As a student in this course, four other students reviewed my interview, but having more opinions and observers would have been helpful.

**A Final Note**

The class-org model, as used in Social Work 300, has been molded and adapted from its original structure first created by John R. Schermerhorn. In order to gain insight into its origins, development, and future as a model, a phone conversation occurred with Dr. Schermerhorn to discuss the model and this particular thesis project. After hearing how his model has informed and inspired the teaching model for Social Work 300, Dr. Schermerhorn had a few distinct thoughts.

Originally, the class-org model was created solely for the purpose of teaching non-profit management from a business perspective. It was a unique pedagogical model to bring to a business school, and students had similar reactions as Social Work 300 students did to its contrast to normal lecture classes. Students liked the change in pace in the classroom but also frequently got frustrated because the experience was outside of their comfort zones. Additionally, Dr. Schermerhorn pointed out that within the context of business school there was no real world immersion that followed and built upon the classroom experience. Essentially, there was no practicum in his business school that occurs in social work programs. Dr. Schermerhorn attests that the original model, built for a management course, was out of context, and that the class-org model actually fits social work pedagogy as the practicum is able to emphasize and develop lessons learned within the class (J. Schermerhorn, personal communication, April 4, 2014).

He also was adamant that he believes a majority of his model’s success in the social work arena is from the Social Work 300 professor’s expertise. Dr. Schermerhorn stated multiple times that not anyone is able teach within this model as it takes extreme confidence, experience, and understanding of
the student learner’s experience. The class-org model is somewhat calculated chaos so it takes a seasoned educator to anticipate its turns and developments while also imputing necessary information to students. He praised the efforts and dedication of this professor and explained that her credibility as an educator was high (J. Schermerhorn, personal communication, April 4, 2014). Dr. Schermerhorn’s comments during the phone conversation added great insight and confirmed this model as a worthwhile and appropriate pedagogy for the study of social work while also supporting the work of this thesis project to expand elements of the model to other social work courses.

Conclusion

The Ball State Social Work Department, over the years, has produced quality social workers that are both passionate about their profession and skilled in their work. This particular department is also home to a unique teaching model that allows students to act, think, perform, and work like real social workers but also to still exist in a space that allows failure in a safe environment. The classroom as organization model is incredibly useful and pushes students to grow and stretch their abilities and venture outside their comfort zones. Although traditional methods and models of teaching are valuable and have their place in social work education, adopting elements of the discussed model into classrooms could be incredibly useful to both social work educators and students.
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