Child Protection Education with pre-service teachers using a Strengths Approach: Findings to date

The University of Sydney
Communities and Change
Research Festival 07
Presentation: Tuesday 23rd Oct
11.10 – 11.35am
MacCallum Room

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Why? Caution Children Crossing Ahead

The reasons for the project are three fold:


2) Teacher confidence is lacking in the area of child protection education (Baginsky 2003).

3) ‘Strengths Based’ practice is a potentially useful framework although underused in education (McCallum, 2002)
Strengths Approach

‘is an approach to people that is primarily dependent upon positive attitudes about people’s dignity, capacities, rights, uniqueness and commonalities’ (McCashen, 2005)

Understanding of theoretical framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFICIT OR PATHOLOGY (STRUCTURALIST) MODELS</th>
<th>STRENGTHS (POST STRUCTURALIST) MODELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The focus is on problems and causes</td>
<td>The focus is on solutions, possibilities and alternative stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>The client is viewed as someone who is damaged or broken by the problem</td>
<td>The client is viewed as someone who is using their strengths and resources to struggle against the problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>The worker (professional) is the expert</td>
<td>Both the worker and client bring expertise</td>
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<td>The process is driven by the worker</td>
<td>The process is driven/directed by the client</td>
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<td>The goal is to reduce the symptoms or problem</td>
<td>The goal is to increase the client’s sense of empowerment and connection to the people and resources around them</td>
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<td>The focus is on insight/awareness</td>
<td>The focus is on the ‘first step’ to change</td>
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<tr>
<td>The resources for change are primarily available through the worker</td>
<td>The resources for change are the strengths and capacities of the client and their environment</td>
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David Lees, 2004
**Methodology:**

Qualitative study:

- Small study (20 participants JCU Pre-service teachers)
- Participants completing a integrated ‘Strengths Based’ Child Protection Module within an ECE core subject
- 3 phases of data collection
  1. Interviews ‘Open Views’, focus groups & discussion board during the subject
  2. Feedback after practicum in schools
  3. Feedback one year post subject

**Changing the frame**

- victims > survivor
- damaged > resilient
- abused > empowered
- expert > co searchers
- interview > Open View
- problem > opportunity
Figure 2: Project literature review model using a strengths approach

Define child abuse and child protection, present worldwide data
Present national statistics and state/local statistics
Present likelihood of issue affecting personally
Explore issue effects on children
Explore issue for teachers
Clarify relevant barriers
Explore strengths
Find resources
Future plan
Vision
Literature findings

Child Abuse

- Global
- Australia
- Qld
- Definitions
- Overwhelming
- Lack of connection
- Fear
- Regulatory

Child Protection

- Descriptive & successful resources
- Adjunct programs
- Calls for a new model

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Five Column Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The issue or story</th>
<th>A vision</th>
<th>Strengths and exceptions</th>
<th>Other resources</th>
<th>planning steps and strategies solutions &amp; goals.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Early Findings

- Reactions to statistics ‘overwhelmed’
- Need for preparation
  ‘I don't really feel comfortable with teaching and addressing child protection. I guess that for a lot of people it would be a very sensitive issue and sometimes easier to just 'not go there'.' (Participant 8)

Connection with CP

Telling the story

- ‘While I was on one prac the teacher told me that a child in the class had recently stated to her mother that she had been sexually abused by a family member. As I reflect upon the situation, I realise that I tried to deny that this child had been abused. It was not a case of not believing the child, but I just did not know how to react to this child anymore. Also, I did not want to think of the horrible experience and the negative impact it would, and had already, had on that child’s life.’ (Participant 7)

- ‘I read that the boy had a broken arm and nose and had 271 bruises, some quite old.” (Participant 9)

Visioning

- ‘As adults, and especially parents and teachers, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety of those children in our care. These children look to the adults in their lives for nurturance, guidance, support, protection and most of all love.’ (Participant 9)
Strengths Approach

'I think that the strengths based approach offers a way of thinking about how we react to certain situations and how these situations make us feel... The thing that I like the most about what I have learnt so far is the idea of changing the frame. Through changing the frame, it gives us a whole different way of thinking about who we are and what is possible for us' (Participant 19).

Questions?

Involvement?

- Would like to know more or be kept informed of the research progress?

- Unanswered questions?

Please leave your name and contact details with me and I will add you to the project contact list or contact me:

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