



SOCIAL WORK SELECTION: MINEFIELDS AND RIVER CROSSINGS

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Social-work educators have long sought to identify factors that may predict student success in their programmes. Educators are familiar with the amount of time and effort that it takes to deal appropriately with students who are academically suitable but exhibit unsuitable personal qualities or inappropriate behaviour. Add to this the social-work values of acceptance, respect for people and a nonjudgemental attitude, and the selection of suitable candidates become even more problematic.

It is well documented that social-work programmes use academic performance, the ability to communicate clearly and accurately in spoken and written language, criminal record checks, psychometric tests and interviews as part of their selection processes. However, it has been reported that interviews are not really effective in identifying those likely to struggle once admitted to the programme. It is also seen as expensive and time consuming.

Since interviews do not really enhance the selection process, an alternative and effective mechanism is necessary. In this paper the application of experiential learning activities will be explored as an alternative mechanism in the selection process. During group activities certain personal characteristics of applicants are determined. The development of this selection method will be discussed as well as a pre-test on current social work students. The results of the pre-test are used to determine the reliability of the information gathered from the experiential learning activities. The implementation of the pilot process during the selection of the 2011 students will be discussed as well.

