Shifting the focus from expert-centred to student-centred learning resources: Creating student-centred learning resources for direct practice

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ABSTRACT

There is a lack of suitable multimedia resources for student learning in the three core methods of social work and human services practice: case work, group work, and community practice. In particular, there are very few audiovisual resources on direct practice that do justice to the particular contexts and complexities of social work practice. Existing audiovisual resources tend to focus on generic communication skills, or alternatively assume contexts such as clinical counselling that are not directly applicable to social work or the human services. In this article we provide an overview of a project that aimed to produce peer-based audiovisual learning materials for students in direct practice courses in social work and human services programs. In addition to describing this project, we consider the significance and benefits of involving students rather than ‘experts’ in developing these teaching and learning resources in terms of expanding traditional understandings of student-centred instruction.
Keywords: Direct practice; teaching; student-generated content; audiovisual resources

INTRODUCTION
The successful acquisition of skills in direct practice is one of the preconditions for students going on professional field placements. In order for students to learn and effectively apply the core methods of practice, they need to be able to directly observe the skills being demonstrated in context, practise their application, and receive feedback on their performance. In this sense, it has been suggested that students ‘learn by doing’ (Schön, 1987, p. 17), which is also one of the key tenets of student-centred learning (O’Neill and McMahon, 2005). Observation of others demonstrating practice skills in contexts relevant to the application of those skills is an important part of skills acquisition (Koprowska, 2003; Trevithick, Richards, Ruch and Moss, 2004; Gillingham, 2008). In this regard, the use of audiovisual materials has become an integral and important part of teaching direct practice (Chan, 1993). It is the use of such audiovisual materials that are the focus of this paper, which describes a project which sought to develop a set of peer-based audiovisual resources for teaching direct practice. In doing so, we consider how this project expands on traditional understandings of student-centred instruction to incorporate the use of student-generated content for teaching and learning purposes.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, we survey the small but growing body of literature on the use of student-generated content in higher education before considering how it may complement a student-centred approach to teaching direct practice. Following on from this discussion, we critically examine the suitability of a range of existing audiovisual materials on offer for teaching direct practice. Next, we describe an Australian based project funded through a teaching and learning grant which aimed to produce a set of student-centred audiovisual resources for teaching direct practice. In the final section of the paper, we reflect on the pedagogical potential of moving beyond traditional understandings of student-centred instruction to incorporate the active involvement of students in actually developing teaching and learning resources.

STUDENTS AS PRODUCERS RATHER THAN CONSUMERS OF CONTENT
In contrast to traditional teacher-centred instruction, student-centred instruction positions students as active participants in both learning and teaching (Felder and Brent, 1996; Weimer, 2002). Adopting such an approach entails a move away from a teacher-centred model of knowledge transfer and recognising the role of both ‘student and tutor alike in the revision and making of knowledge’ (Martin, 2009, p. 302). As a broad based approach to teaching, student-centred instruction encompasses a range of methods and strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, inquiry-based learning, group work, and the use of role plays and simulations (Felder and Brent, 1996). Advocates of student-centred instruction claim that it increases students’ motivation to learn and allows for a great identification with the course material being taught (Barraket, 2005; Felder and Bent, 1996; Weimer, 2002). Constructivist theories of learning underpin student-centred approaches to teaching, and in this sense students are recognised for their role in creating knowledge rather than just being on the receiver end of predetermined content (Yuen and Hau, 2006).
The use of student-generated content for the purposes of teaching is consistent with the notion of student-centred instruction, where students have the opportunity to learn from their peers. However, while a substantial body of literature exists on student-centred pedagogies, the idea of generating student-created content for learning and teaching purposes has not been widely canvassed (Boettcher, 2006; Chang, Kennedy and Petrovic, 2008; Collis, 2005; Lee, Chan and McLoughlin, 2006; Sener, 2007; Wheeler, Yeomans and Wheeler, 2008). Collis (2005) termed this the ‘contributing student approach’, where the goal is to have students develop learning materials and share them with peers in other learning settings. However, it is still the case that most educators tend to rely on ‘pre-packaged learning materials’ developed by experts (McLoughlin and Lee, 2008). As Sener (2007, p. 1) pointed out:

Contemporary education at all levels tends to cast students in the role of content consumers; they are presented material which has been developed by others – teachers, vendors, instructional designers or other professional developers – and are expected to demonstrate that they have observed that material in some way.

Sener (2007, p. 1) further contended that although students are constantly generating content throughout their studies in the form of essays, reports or presentations, such content usually has a limited audience – the marker and the student – and is not seen as having value for instructional purposes. Here, this material is seen more as ‘a vehicle for student expression than a body of knowledge to be consumed’ (Sener, 2007, p. 1). There is, however, a growing body of evidence that suggests that student-generated content is useful in engaging students and improving learning (Dale and Povey, 2009; Sener, 2007; Lee, McLoughlin and Chan, 2008). Moreover, Collis (2005) went so far as to claim that students potentially take away more learning from peer-generated than professionally generated learning materials. While this claim remains untested, what is apparent is that there is a growing recognition that ‘students are no longer passive consumers of knowledge but also producers’, in turn signalling a more active approach on the part of students to knowledge creation (Lee and McLoughlin, 2007).

A growing interest in student-generated content has partly come about through the promotion of Web 2.0 technologies such as Youtube and Facebook in teaching and learning in higher education (Chang et al. 2008; Dale and Povey, 2009; Lee and McLoughlin, 2007; Wheeler, Yeomans and Wheeler, 2008). For example, Lee et al. (2006) instigated a project where a group of second year students produced a series of educational podcasts for first year students enrolled in an information technology subject. The idea behind the project was to try to address the first year students’ preconceptions and anxieties about the subject material by engaging their peers as teachers. On a pedagogical level, Lee et al (2006) suggest that such a model of instruction is consistent with peer tutoring where both tutors and tutees can potentially benefit from the experience.

In a similar vein, the project that is the subject of this paper is premised on the understanding that student-generated content can potentially be a valuable resource for teaching direct practice. In the following section, we briefly outline some of the core tenets underlying the teaching of direct practice while also highlighting some of the limitations of...
using expert-centred content for instructional purposes. This discussion precedes a critique of some of the existing audiovisual resources on offer for teaching direct practice that feature expert practitioners.

TEACHING DIRECT PRACTICE USING A STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH

Skills-based courses that focus on the core methods of casework, group work, and community practice are an integral part of social work education and require students to be actively involved in their own learning. In this sense, they necessitate a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. Student-centred learning has been defined as ‘ways of thinking and learning that emphasize student responsibility and activity in learning rather than what the teachers are doing’ (Cannon and Newble, 2000, p. 16 cited in Lea, Stephenson and Troy, 2003, p. 321). Students are positioned as pivotal agents in their own learning, and learning is viewed as an interactive process (O’Neill and McMahon, 2005). Such an approach to learning is endorsed in most courses on direct practice which also incorporate experiential learning (Diggins, 2004). The idea here is that learning takes place through concrete experience, which is usually a simulated experience such as a role play (Maidment, 2009). Students are usually required to role play their skills so that educators and peers can provide feedback on their performance. Afterwards, they are encouraged to critically reflect on their performance and modify their actions in accordance with their own self reflection and this feedback (Koprowska, 2003).

Video recording and reviewing role plays are recognised as valuable learning experiences for students, who are able to identify what worked well and, perhaps more importantly, what they could do differently next time to improve their practice (Cheung, 1997; Maidment, 2009). However, being observed and in some cases filmed while learning the core methods of practice can be an anxiety provoking experience for learners (Fisher and Koprowska, 1999; Diggins, 2004; Moss, Dunkerly, Price, Sullivan, Reynolds and Yates, 2007). For some students, the prospect of being put ‘under the gaze’ may actually compromise their learning; they are so conscious of being filmed that the camera becomes their sole focus rather than the client they are meant to be ‘joining’ with or the group ‘icebreaker’ they are introducing. Alternatively, they may measure their performance against that of the ‘expert practitioner’ demonstrating the skills, which in turn may fuel their insecurities rather than encouraging a sense of competence.

In recognition of these factors, several authors stress the importance of providing a safe environment for students where they can try out new skills and risk making mistakes without fear of ridicule or judgement (Koprowska, 2003; Diggins, 2004; Moss et al. 2007; Maidment, 2009). At the same time, Moss et al (2007) highlight the importance of injecting a degree of realism into the learning experience by drawing on situations and issues which students are likely to encounter in practice. While these authors espouse the value of bringing service users into the classroom to conduct role plays with students, they also note the costs and practical difficulties associated with doing this (Moss et al. 2007). For many educators involved in teaching direct practice, DVDs featuring filmed role plays or even movie sequences are the next best thing. However, Chan (1993) contends that most of the audiovisual materials on offer focus predominantly on psychotherapy and are
not suitable for teaching practice in its local context. In particular, he is critical of ‘brand-name linked’ approaches which make great claims for their particular brand of therapy and lead students to believe that ‘first this particular theory worked, and second that particular utterances were responsible for the effects seen’ (Chan, 1993, p. 76).

Although Chan made this claim over fifteen years ago, we would suggest that it is still the case that most of the audiovisual resources on the market are therapeutic in nature, do not do justice to the three core methods of social work and fail to consider the different contexts in which social workers operate. Alternatively, they focus on generic communication skills which, while useful, do not in themselves demonstrate actual practice methods. Moreover, many of these films depict ‘expert’ practitioners whose advanced level of skills may be far removed from that of the student practitioner. It is also questionable whether the use of such films sits comfortably with student-centred instructional methods which are pedagogically opposed to the expert instructor model (O’Neill and McMahon, 2005). In the following section, we outline in more detail some of the limitations of these audiovisual resources and put forward an argument as to why films depicting expert practitioners may not be the best teaching tools for students learning direct practice.

THE LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS FOR TEACHING DIRECT PRACTICE

Social work is a complex activity that encompasses a range of methods, notably casework, group work, and community practice, which in turn are shaped by the particular organisational context in which these methods are enacted. Ferguson (2008, p. 561) identified ‘the home visit, the car journey and the office/organization’ as the three primary sites of social work practice. He contends that social work practice can equally be ‘mobile’, where practice may take place in the car and continue in the office or home. There are very few audiovisual resources on offer that capture this mobility. One notable exception to this is a BBC documentary that tracked a number of social workers employed by Bristol Social Services as they conducted home visits, looked for children who had absconded from out of home care and conversed with them in cars while they drove them to their foster placements (BBC, 2004). However, most audiovisual resources that have been produced for the sole purpose of teaching direct practice tend to assume that social workers are in fact counsellors who operate predominantly in therapeutic or clinical contexts. Social work, however, is not just counselling or therapy and in this sense such films fail to capture the complexities of practice.

There appears to be an under-development of audio-visual material on direct practice with involuntary clients, such as mandated clients and service users who are in some other way compelled to attend services. There are some exceptions to this, such as Trotter and Mumford’s (2000) video recording which depicts a child protection worker interviewing a parent. The dominance of audio-visual material on direct practice with voluntary service users implies that work with involuntary clients is a special or rare field of practice. Yet, many social work and human service professionals, particularly newly qualified workers, practise with involuntary service users (author, 2010). While on placement, social work students are likely to encounter involuntary clients in settings such as mental health, prisons
or child protection, or alternatively clients who may express some ambivalence about seeing a social worker. When students are not exposed to these types of scenarios when learning about direct practice, it can be a jarring experience to encounter an ambivalent or even hostile client for the first time on placement or as a new graduate.

Turning to group work, we would suggest that there are very few audiovisual resources available that capture the different kinds of group work conducted by social workers. In particular, very few films portray the more informal groups that social workers facilitate such as support groups or drop in groups. In our experience, most of the group work resources on offer are of the therapeutic kind and commonly portray ‘group therapists’ who are recognised as experts in their field. One such film, ‘Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges’ (Corey et al. 2006), features an intensive three day group program that attempts to portray the stage theory of groups and, while useful in this regard, again assumes a therapeutic context for practice that many practitioners may not be able to identify with. In community services contexts, groups can be chaotic, prone to interruptions, and often do not go according to plan, especially if they involve parents with young children or participants with unpredictable behaviour. However, these aspects of groups are often ‘missing’ from film portrayals of group work.

There are similarly few teaching and learning resources on community development or other forms of community work that actually demonstrate the skills used in this type of practice. Mendes (2009) made mention of some useful videos on community issues and campaigns that are suitable to show students, but to our knowledge there are very few audiovisual resources available for students on the skills and processes associated with actually doing community work, such as facilitating a community meeting.

Seeking an alternative to the educational audiovisual resources on offer, some social work educators have turned to the movies. The movie ‘Precious’, for example, deals with the themes of poverty, sexual abuse and teenage parenthood, and some educators have suggested that it may be a useful teaching tool for social work (Wright, 2010). The film features the pop singer Mariah Carey who ‘dresses down’ to play the role of a social worker who works with a young woman with a history of long term abuse. However, in a recent review of the film, Richard Sullivan from the University of British Columbia School of Social Work claimed that ‘media representations seem to never get either the work or the circumstances of social work quite right’ (Sullivan, 2010). This viewpoint mirrors the findings of a study conducted by Freeman and Valentine (2004), who examined forty-four movies depicting social workers and observed that most of these films focus on the ‘micro level of practice’, portray social workers as being white, middle class, able-bodied and pretty, and depict child welfare as the most common practice setting. They go on to suggest that the omissions in these films are just as important as what is portrayed:

*What is missing in terms of social work representations in these movies is as informative as what is present. Mostly missing from these movie narratives of social work are attention to social injustice, engagement in social action and social change, macro social work interventions, social workers of color, gay and lesbian social workers, and social workers with disabilities.*  
(Freeman and Valentine, 2004, p. 160)
In other words, they suggested that the dominant construction of social workers in these movies does not do justice to the diversity of practitioners and the different forms of practice that they engage in. In particular, these authors suggest that attention to the macro level of practice is missing in these films. Accordingly, while movies may be of some use in demonstrating micro practice skills for students in the classroom (or alternatively demonstrating elements of bad practice that students can then critique), they equally risk perpetuating stereotypes of social workers while marginalising two of the three core methods of social work.

In summary then, we would suggest that there are significant limitations to many of the existing audiovisual resources on offer for teaching direct practice because of their lack of engagement with the complexities of practice and their failure to portray the full range of methods used in social work. In addition, many of these depictions of direct practice feature expert practitioners which, while not problematic in itself, may not resonate with ‘beginning learners’ who need to normalise the experience of making mistakes and learning from them. Our intention is not to devalue such teaching resources, as we recognise that there is a place for expert-centred audiovisual resources and similarly those that depict therapeutic or clinical work, especially in courses of an advanced nature. However, there is equally a need to develop student-centred resources that will assist students to learn and practise all the core methods of social work in a way that does not make them feel that they need to perform like the experts. As Koprowska (2003, p. 301) pointed out, student anxiety about learning new skills can be reduced if educators can show that ‘putting skills into practice is a process rather than a performance’. In the following section we describe a project that sought to develop a student-centred audiovisual resource for teaching and learning direct practice.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Earlier in this article we suggested that the act of being observed coupled with the knowledge that their performance will then be assessed can be anxiety provoking for many students. In recognition of this, we envisaged that involving students rather than ‘expert’ practitioners in the production of audiovisual training resources would assuage some of this anxiety and possibly enhance student learning outcomes. The rationale for using students in the filmed scenarios was underpinned by the idea that seeing other students practise their newly acquired skills would help normalise the experience, especially if these student actors risked making mistakes in front of an audience. In this sense we envisaged that producing a set of peer-based audiovisual learning materials would fit more comfortably with a student-centred approach to learning direct practice. We further anticipated that the films would stimulate student interest in direct practice and ensure that learning is directly relevant to the field.

The aim of the project was to design and produce three multimedia learning packages, each comprising a DVD and workbook focused on skills underpinning the three core methods of direct practice: casework; group work; and community practice. In addition, we wanted to record a panel discussion among students about their use of the specific method in their placement context. The aim of filming the panel discussion was to provide students
with authentic material about how students use these methods and skills in local practice contexts. It was anticipated that these learning packages could then be trialled for use for classroom teaching and as a self-directed learning resource for students.

We invited social work students enrolled in the final two years of the four year bachelor of social work program to participate in the project. Our criteria for inclusion in the project were that, first, students had successfully completed their second year direct practice courses and, second, that they had some experience in deploying the specific methods on placement. We also sought to recruit students from a broad range of practice contexts in order to demonstrate the variety of settings in which the method is used. All participation was voluntary and prior to filming written informed consent was obtained from the fourteen students who elected to be involved in the project. Each student who participated in the films was given a $50 book voucher in recognition of their time, which included not only the filming but attendance at several prior planning meetings.

It should be noted that in planning the project, our intention was not to focus on the actual learning of the students involved in the production of the films. These students had already completed their direct practice courses as well as their first field placement. However, what is noteworthy here is that these students were able to reflect back on their own experiences of learning direct practice and use these insights to generate a student-centred perspective on the development of the filmed scenarios for the project.

Although we, as educators, initially developed the ideas for the scenarios drawing on our practice experiences and knowledge of students' placements, the students were involved in workshopping and further fleshing out the scenarios to be used in the audio-visual materials. For the casework DVD, two role plays were developed that focused on practice in a statutory and voluntary setting. The statutory scenario focused on a child protection service setting and the voluntary setting focused on casework with a young woman seeking support in decision-making about an unplanned pregnancy. The students involved in filming these scenarios met initially with the project team to develop their ideas in relation to filming the role plays, but then met independently of the team to further refine their roles. However, the role plays were not scripted as the goal was not to portray 'perfect practice' but rather to convey the reality of students 'practising' skills for direct practice.

A young mothers' group was chosen for the group work scenario as we knew that a number of students on placement had been involved in participating in such groups. A decision was made to focus on the first meeting of the group, as this requires practitioners to utilise a wide range of skills such as making participants feel welcome and comfortable, attending to practical concerns, clarifying issues around confidentiality, establishing group rules and starting to instil a sense of ownership of the group. In addition, we decided to portray two different group meetings, the first one dealing with a 'not so good start' and the second one portraying 'a better start'. The rationale for this was that it would provide an opportunity for students viewing the DVD to think about what the facilitator could do differently to improve the group's functioning. Similar to the casework scenarios, dialogue was not scripted.
The scenario for community work was based on a true event where an inner city community was challenged to confront negative publicity about their community and increasing tensions within that community. Newspaper articles about the tensions as well as some of the students’ own experiences of the community or similar communities where they had placement experiences were used as the basis for developing the scenario. The student practitioners involved in this role play facilitated a community meeting where they brought together different stakeholders within the community to discuss the issue and identify how they could work with the community to bring about positive change.

Each filmed role play was no longer than twenty minutes, with the majority being around ten minutes. Our intention was to ensure that the excerpts could be played in classes to stimulate discussion. From our experiences in the classroom, we were concerned that longer scenarios may not facilitate the sort of student engagement with the material that we were seeking.

In addition to the role plays presented in the DVDs, each DVD also features a panel discussion with the participants in the role plays about their practice experience in using the specific methods. The panel discussions provided an opportunity for students to discuss their placement experience and to share with the audience their reflections on the strengths and limits of the skills as well as the kinds of challenges they may encounter in using these skills. Our intention was to provide students with an opportunity to hear from peers a realistic appraisal about how the methods being taught in the classroom applied to the placement experience, which is also consistent with a peer learning approach (Boud, 2001). We envisage that these insights might help to provide students with a realistic understanding of the range of skills they may use on placement and the contexts in which these skills will be used. We anticipate that this may also further motivate students in learning a range of practice skills.

The end product of the project was three DVDs that feature students applying the skills that they had been taught in case work, group work, and community practice, and later reflecting on their use of these skills on placement in a panel discussion. Rather than aiming to portray ‘perfect practice’, these DVDs demonstrate what is closer to ‘real life practice’, where student practitioners do not always get it right, and then reflect on what they could do differently next time. As a teaching resource, the DVDs demonstrate ‘skills practice’ rather than ‘perfect practice’, and in this respect their purpose is to also stimulate critical reflection on practice.

The intention of the project team is to now evaluate these multimedia learning packages for teaching and learning purposes. In this regard, some preliminary work has commenced. Second year social work students enrolled in a direct practice methods and skills course were asked to rate the quality and learning value of the DVD on casework with voluntary clients after viewing it in class. Out of sixty-nine responses, sixty-one (88%) respondents rated the DVD as of being very good or good quality. The remaining eight students (12%) rated it as being of average quality. When asked how helpful the DVD was for learning social casework, sixty-eight respondents (99%) rated it as being very helpful or helpful.
Students were also asked if there were any other comments that they wished to make about the DVD. Some described how watching the film had contributed to their own learning about casework, particularly in terms of being able to discern the skills that were used by the student practitioners. For example:

The social worker played a great listening role, and I was able to identify her tracking skills.

_The DVD showed a lot of interviewing skills in casework such as paraphrasing, summarising, and probing._

Several students took this a step further, using the DVD to reflect on their own learning and to identify the skills that they believed they needed to develop:

_I learnt a few things about skills needed to engage a client._

_Good clear communication from social worker on a very complex case; it taught me ways to communicate about sensitive topics._

_[It] made me able to relate and understand skills I need to gain or improve on._

Two participants used the opportunity to provide critical feedback on the practice of the student practitioner, inferring what could have been done differently to improve the interaction:

_Would have been good to see more paraphrasing demonstrated._

_Some parts were a little stilted._

Nonetheless, the realistic portrayal of practice situations was viewed as a positive aspect of the filmed scenario by other students:

_It's really helpful to have this resource that demonstrates communication skills in a ‘real-life’ setting._

_Very realistic. Good to have access to these sorts of resources to really feel comfortable with this field of work._

_I liked it. They were both good actors. It was believable._

In contrast, another student picked up on where the film departed from real life practice.

_It was edited. Perhaps in real life situations we don't get to edit out 'unperfect practice'. Maybe better to have filmed all in one go even if it is not always great._

Interestingly enough, this student picks up on an idea that we hoped to convey through the project, which is that real life practice—unlike that commonly portrayed in films
depicting expert practitioners - is often imperfect. What this student alludes to is the need to normalise imperfect practice in learning situations, and we would endorse this view.

While we anticipated that the DVDs and accompanying workbooks would enhance the learning experiences of students enrolled in direct practice courses, it is noteworthy that there were some unanticipated outcomes from the project for the students involved in actually filming the project. Several of these students used the DVDs to showcase their own practice skills to potential employers once they had graduated. Others wrote up their experience of being involved in the production of the DVDs and included it in their resumes as an example of team work, and as demonstrating their ability to work cooperatively with others on a common project. Lee and McLoughlin (2007) similarly observe that student-generated learning resources can potentially benefit not only future students, but also the ‘student producers’ actually involved in making the resources.

When the resources were officially launched, students also commented on how much they enjoyed doing the project. Several students, however, disclosed a level of self-consciousness about seeing themselves on film, especially knowing that a wider audience would be watching and reviewing their performance. In hindsight, it would have been useful to spend more time preparing students for this outcome. Nonetheless, these same students indicated that making the films had built their self confidence. In a similar vein, Hamer (2007) suggested that involving students in the production of learning resources affirms their existing expertise and skills.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Earlier in this paper we highlighted some of the perceived limitations of existing audiovisual materials for teaching direct practice in social work and the human services. In our experience, if such audiovisual resources are used to demonstrate practice skills, they often have to be presented with a caveat such as ‘this is a counsellor working in a clinical context and not necessarily the kind of work that you will be doing on placement’. Their lack of authenticity coupled with their predominant focus on counselling or communication skills separate from the diverse contexts of social work practice means that students often do not gain an overview of the full range of methods used in direct practice, or the clients they are likely to encounter on placement. The project described above represents an attempt to fill this gap in teaching and learning resources for direct practice; it aimed to involve students in producing a more credible set of audiovisual resources that demonstrate the three core methods used in direct practice.

It is commonly assumed that in order to learn direct practice, students need to first observe expert or experienced practitioners demonstrating the practice skills associated with each method. However, we would contend that students can equally learn from the practice of other students and, moreover, that there are particular benefits associated with this style of learning. In particular, we concur with other proponents of student-centred instruction that the utilisation of peer-based rather than ‘expert-based’ learning resources allows students to more readily identify with this material and may assist in facilitating a more engaged approach to learning (Dale and Povey, 2009; Lee and McLoughlin, 2007; Lee et al. 2008;
Sener, 2007). Watching their peers demonstrate practice normalises the learning context while also potentially reducing students’ anxiety about being observed in practice, especially when they see their peers risking being ‘imperfect’ in front of the camera. This in turn signals to learners that part of the learning process is about reflecting on what did not go so well, and identifying what could be done differently next time. In other words, imperfect practice is normalised rather than pathologised.

Such a model of learning fits comfortably with a student-centred instructional approach which recognises students as both active learners while also affirming their role in the production of knowledge (Chang et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2006; Wheeler et al. 2008). Senner (2007, p. 7) claimed that ‘in an educational system that was truly learning-centred, student-generated content would play a prominent role’. Arguably, the pedagogical potential of utilising student-generated content for teaching and learning purposes is still under-recognised in social work and will possibly challenge both lecturers’ and students’ traditional reliance on ‘authoritative, “text-book” or teacher-created content’ (Chang et al. 2008, p. 165). However, we would suggest that the project described in this paper does represent a step in this direction in that it represents a shift in focus from expert-centred to more student-centred teaching and learning resources. In this sense, we recognise the potential for student-generated content to enhance the learning experiences of other students while also acknowledging the need for further evaluation of such resources.

References


