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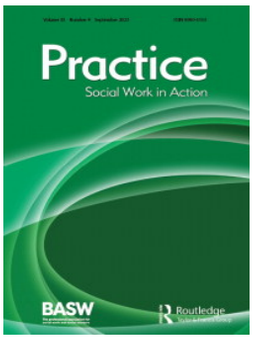

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The Impact of Service User Involvement in Health and Social Care Education: A Scoping Review

Hannah Jobling and Suzanne Sayuri Ii

The involvement of service users in social work education is longstanding, and there exists a rich body of research which explores the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of service users, academics and students in relation to this involvement. However, existing reviews of the literature conclude that few studies examine the impact of service user involvement in education on subsequent social work practice. This scoping review takes a broader approach, by mapping research which evaluates the impact on practice of service user involvement in education across domains of health and social care. Utilising the PRISMA guidance on scoping reviews, we conducted a systematic search of articles published between 2003 and 2021. The search generated six qualitative and three mixed methods studies for inclusion, which were analysed using narrative synthesis. All studies supported the claim that involvement of service users in professional education can make a constructive contribution to practice. The review highlights four themes from the studies: the application of transformative learning; impact on outcomes; influence on organisational practice; and challenges to integrating learning into practice. These themes provide a foundation for identifying potential future directions for research and pedagogical practice on service user involvement within social work education.

Keywords: social work education; health and social care education; service user involvement; practice impact

Introduction

The participation of service users in social work education reflects the prominence of the participation agenda in the health and social care field over the last three decades. Universities in the UK have pioneered partnership with service users since the late 1980s (Ramon and Sayce 1993), and from 2003 service user involvement in programme design and delivery has been a regulatory

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requirement of social work programmes across the UK (McLaughlin et al. 2016). There is also a growing literature on the involvement of service users in social work education internationally (Cabiati, Camilla, and Pinto 2022; Ramon et al. 2019). A mandate for participation in social work education has subsequently evolved, influenced by the convergence of different agendas, including the development of service user movements, the rise of consumerism in health and social care, and the incorporation of anti-oppressive practice and (self)empowerment into social work theory and practice (Levy et al. 2016). It is widely accepted that the main purpose of this mandate is to develop practitioners who are able to understand what service users need and want from a social worker, and who are prepared to involve service users in decision-making (Branfield, Beresford, and Levin 2007; Duffy et al. 2017). On this basis, claims have been made that participation 'works' by improving the practice of future social workers and therefore the experiences of service users (Beresford et al. 2006; Branfield 2009).

However, the assertion that participation in social work education makes a positive difference to practice has not been substantiated fully. Despite the extensive body of research into participation in social work education, existing literature reviews (Robinson and Webber 2013; Taylor and Le Riche 2006) have found few studies that evaluate impact on practice skills, and none that undertake direct research into practice. The majority of research included in these two reviews evaluate changes in student perceptions and attitudes towards the involvement of service users, which is "indicative of fitness to practice, rather than demonstrable practice itself" (Taylor and Le Riche 2006, p. 422). The prioritisation of impact-focused research has subsequently been called for (Agnew and Duffy 2010; Robinson and Webber 2013; Taylor, Braye, and Cheng 2009). However, a recent systematic update (Stanley and Webber 2022) of Robinson and Webber 2013 review concludes that little has changed during the last decade in terms of research on practice impact. Given the continuing paucity of such research, this scoping review takes a broader approach than the existing reviews, by evaluating the empirical literature across professional domains within health and social care rather than solely within social work. More specifically, the aim of this review is to analyse the impact of service user participation in professional education on practice and to draw out themes and research gaps which can be applied to social work education.

Methods

The scoping review method was chosen as it is oriented towards an overview or mapping of the research on a topic, rather than answering a specific research question with reference to quality appraisal (Arksey and O'Malley 2005; Munn et al. 2018). It is therefore suited to this review which

encompasses a range of disciplinary domains and methodologies and is focused on the application of substantive themes and the identification of research gaps for social work education. The review followed the PRISMA guidance for scoping reviews (Tricco et al. 2018).

A systematic approach was applied to the literature search and the following databases were searched: Web of Science, Social Care Online, NICE Evidence Search, CINAHL, PsycInfo, and PAIS Index. Five search terms and their respective synonyms and derivatives were used with Boolean operators: 'service user', 'participation', 'education', 'impact' and 'evaluation'. An additional literature search was undertaken using Google Scholar, relevant online journals were searched individually, and citations in bibliographies were followed up using the Pearl harvesting method (Sandieson 2006). The final search strategy for Web of Science can be found in Appendix.

The search was limited to English language publications, and to empirical, peer-reviewed papers published from 2003 to 2021, to reflect policy developments and regulatory changes in the UK where most research on service user involvement has taken place. In addition, studies on participation were only included if they related to service user involvement in teaching and learning; therefore, studies which commented solely on service user participation in programme management and oversight were excluded. Aside from this, the selection criteria were broad, with all studies included that referred to the education of student practitioners by service users across pre-qualifying and post-qualifying programmes. As noted earlier, on the basis that the three existing reviews of literature in this area (Robinson and Webber 2013; Stanley and Webber 2022; Taylor and Le Riche 2006) had found little practice impact-focused research within the remit of social work education, it was deemed useful to conduct the review on interdisciplinary terms. Therefore, unlike similar reviews that are discipline or subject specific (Minogue et al. 2009; Morgan and Jones 2009; Robinson and Webber 2013; Repper and Breeze 2007; Stanley and Webber 2022; Taylor and Le Riche 2006; Townend et al. 2008), the search was conducted across allied health and social care disciplines. Results from the search criteria covered social work, nursing, mental health nursing, mental health, and interprofessional education in health and social care. No restrictions were placed on study design, with qualitative and quantitative designs included. As is typical of scoping reviews (Arksey and O'Malley 2005; Vest et al. 2021), we did not assess research quality.

Duplicates were removed and papers were initially screened by title and abstract before being fully reviewed. Both authors independently assessed the papers to ensure they met the review criteria and to aid consistent data extraction. Two discrepancies were identified, and their exclusion was decided after discussion. The guidance of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) was followed for a review of this kind, by extracting study characteristics, and charting and collating the data in the included studies. A narrative synthesis approach to

analysis (Popay et al. 2006) was taken to account for the diverse nature of the included studies.

Results

The included studies analyse the impact of service user involvement on practice in professional education (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Burrows 2012; Furness, Armitage, and Pitt 2011; Hughes 2017; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004; Rush 2008; Rhodes 2013; Turnbull and Weeley 2013; Tanner et al. 2017) (see Table 1 for an overview of study characteristics). Three of these studies are from social work education (Burrows 2012; Hughes 2017; Tanner et al. 2017), three from nursing (Rush 2008; Rhodes 2013; Turnbull and Weeley 2013), and three from interprofessional programmes, all with a focus on mental health (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Furness, Armitage, and Pitt 2011; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004). Of the nine studies, four (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Burrows 2012; Furness, Armitage, and Pitt 2011; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004) are of post-qualifying programmes and evaluate impact effect when students are already in practice. All articles reported on UK based research and included a range of methodologies and research designs, with six being qualitative studies (Burrows 2012; Furness, Armitage, and Pitt 2011; Hughes 2017; Rush 2008; Rhodes 2013; Tanner et al. 2017) and three deploying mixed methods (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004; Turnbull and Weeley 2013). Only one of the studies applied a comparative design (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006), and three gathered longitudinal data (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Rhodes 2013; Tanner et al. 2017). A description of the search results is documented in Figure 1. All nine studies, with caveats, support the claim that participation can make a constructive contribution to ensuing practice. Four themes were derived from the narrative analysis: the application of transformative learning; practice outcomes; influence on organisational practice; and challenges to integrating learning into practice.

The Application of Transformative Learning

All the studies discussed the transformative nature of service user participation on student learning, and the subsequent reflective application of this learning into practice. Three studies (Hughes 2017; Rush 2008; Rhodes 2013) drew explicitly on Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning to conceptualise shifts in participants' perceptions and actions. Mezirow (2000) defines transformative learning as a change in learners' frames of reference which enables them to be "more open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more

Table 1. Review of studies that evaluated the impact of service user involvement in higher education programmes.

Study	Study focus	Sample	Methods/techniques	Findings
Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson (2006)	Interprofessional Education – Post-qualifying programme evaluation in community mental health over 5 years	Eighteen groups of first- and second-year students in the programme; 23 student workplace interviews; 13 manager interviews	Mixed Methods - Meetings and discussion with programme members, participant observation, group interviews, questionnaire, workplace interviews with students, individual interviews with managers, User-defined 16-item rating scale	Students reported positive learning outcomes, programme users reported service user-centred assessment and care planning, greater improvement in life skills compared to comparators. The study could be a model for systematic evaluation with users in education and training.
Burrows (2012)	Post-qualifying social work education programme collaborative partnership between service user educators, practitioners and academics in four local authorities	Thirty-three questionnaire respondents out of 300; consolidation portfolio numbers not listed; manager participants numbers not listed.	Mixed Methods – postal questionnaires, post-qualifying consolidation portfolio analysis, semi-structured interviews with team managers	Impact of service user educator input on candidates is both intrinsic and extrinsic. Integration of service user perspectives increased understanding of practice development. Gaps were uncovered in manager supervision of the practitioners' development needs.
Furness, Armitage, and Pitt (2011)	Interprofessional Education – Health and social care – Evaluation of Trent Universities Interprofessional Learning in Practice Project	Ten individuals from service user group (2 facilitators, 1 manager, 4 service users, 2 practitioners and 1 student). Seventeen individuals from a care setting (2 facilitators, 2 managers, 4 service users, 2 parents, 5 practitioners and 2 students).	Qualitative methods - Focus groups and individual interviews with service users/parents and carers, practitioners, and students	Direct contact between service users and practitioners and learning opportunities for students were beneficial for all parties. Long-term benefits of service user involvement need to be assessed further.
Hughes (2017)	Undergraduate and graduate social work programmes and practitioners	20 participants (6 students, 2 newly qualified social workers, 6 social workers who qualified in the last 10 years, and 6 social workers who qualified prior to 2005).	Qualitative methods – Written narrative, focus group or individual interview	Four main areas of impact: Enhanced awareness of the lived experience, Taking on board suggestions of good practice from service users and carers; Developing a more critical 'real life' understanding; A culture of recognizing service users and carers as experts.

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*).

Study	Study focus	Sample	Methods/techniques	Findings
Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon (2004)	Post graduate mental health programmes – PGDip Mental health innovation and MA Mental Health	26 out of 41 questionnaire respondents (15 completed PGDip or the MA course and 11 were currently on one of the courses); 10 of the 26 respondents took part in a semi-structured interview.	Mixed methods – attitude questionnaires and semi-structured interviews	Perceived values of the contribution of service users were good to excellent. Service users provided insight, clarity and a challenge to conventional practices. A majority of respondents reported personal or professional benefits of attending the course.
Rhodes (2013)	Pre-registration nursing programme	1 pre-registration nursing student	Case study with in-depth narrative interviews. One interview on completion of nursing program and a 12-month follow-up interview.	Participant reported increased self-awareness, greater awareness of others, reflection of the influence of service user involvement and how reflections guided actions in practice through transformative learning.
Rush (2008)	Diploma nursing programme	26 mental health nursing students (21 females, 5 males, 21–55 years)	Focus group interviews	Participants reported benefits of hearing lived experiences; learning is grounded in reality and the participants felt moved emotionally; the emotional content of the experiences; role as a learner, rather than a nurse; reflection on practice; training and support for service users. With the interaction of the listed mechanisms, transformative learning can take place.
Tanner et al. (2017)	Undergraduate social work programme – final year students at Universities of Birmingham and Queen's.	Phase 1 (Pre-registration):14 out of 59 questionnaire respondents at Birmingham; 21 out of 79 questionnaire respondents at Queen's Phase 2 (Follow-up 6-9 months into employment): 4 questionnaire respondents from Birmingham and 5 responses from Queen's; 7 interviews (Birmingham)	Mixed methods – pre-qualification questionnaire and focus groups interviews; follow-up questionnaire and interview 6-9 months after employment	Students had exposure to experiential knowledge and felt an emotional impact from service user experiences. They learned about resilience and reflection on their own experiences of practice. Service users with diverse backgrounds could be recruited to the programme and service user involvement should be across the whole programme.

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*).

Study	Study focus	Sample	Methods/techniques	Findings
		and 3 interviews (Queen's)		
Turnbull and Weeley (2013)	Pre-registration nursing programmes	185 adult, 84 mental health and 15 children pre-registration nursing students	Evaluative case studies	Students were asked to identify one significant area of learning they could apply to their future clinical practice as a 'student pledge'. The pledges were evaluated. Of 219 pledges, 171 were about care and compassion, communication, and fluid and nutrition. Over three-quarters of the pledges were fulfilled. Service user involvement provides raw experiences that minimizes the theory-practice gap.

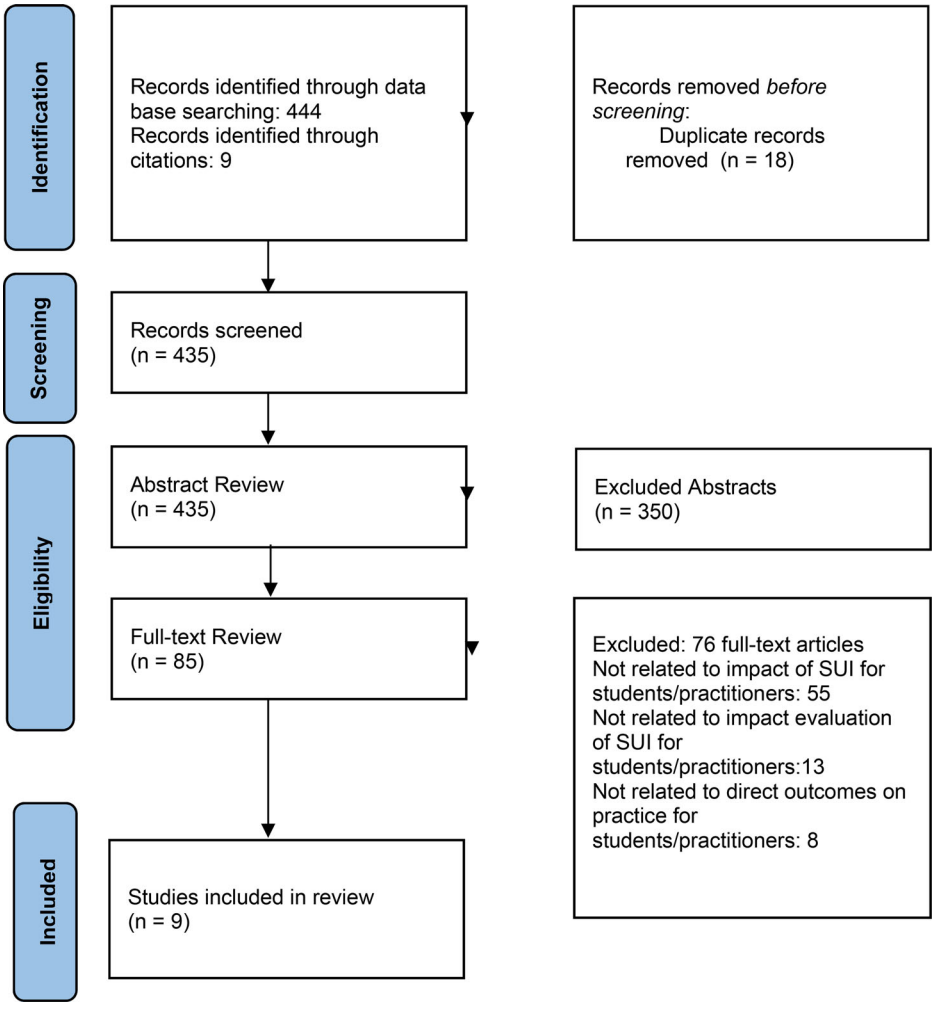

Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart for a scoping review. *From:* Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj. For more information, visit: http://www.prisma-statement.org/

true or justified to guide action" (7–8). Participants across all studies described their process of change in these terms, as well as the impact it had on their interactions with service users.

Transformative Learning Becoming Embedded over Time

Three of the studies (Hughes 2017; Rhodes 2013; Tanner et al. 2017) reported active discussion with service users in educational settings held significant resonance for practitioners which continued to influence their practice over

time. For example, the social work participants in Hughes (2017) talked in terms of 'light bulb moments', whereby the influence of interactions with service users came to the fore at particular points in practice, sometimes years after. Similarly, Rhodes (2013) described the participant, a student nurse, recalling a particular session as having "never left me, that sort of had … a big impact on myself … that experience has pretty much helped me out a lot in my job" (296). These accounts suggest that learning arising from service user involvement in education can attain significance retrospectively and become part of evolving reflective practice. Hughes (2017) describes the role of 'double-loop' learning (Kolb 2014) for students. The stories service users shared in teaching sessions gained more significance for participants when they encountered similar situations in their practice.

'Small But Big' Changes

Participants from different studies (Hughes 2017; Rush 2008; Rhodes 2013; Turnbull and Weeley 2013; Tanner et al. 2017) also talked about small, meaningful changes they made to their practice, which were directly connected to service user involvement in their education. Turnbull and Weeley (2013) evaluated the implementation of student nurse 'pledges' to make a difference to the care experience of service users during their placement, with over 75% of participants reporting success in fulfilling their pledge. The authors noted that the student pledges were often about 'simple' but nevertheless impactful aspects of practice, such as giving clear information about what to expect from the service. One participant in Rush's (2008) study of mental health student nurses reflected on the impact of a service user educator stating they felt 'unimportant' when they were not greeted properly: "Well I actually felt quite ashamed because I knew that I'd been guilty of doing it … But … it only takes two seconds to say hello and I thought how insensitive it was of me not to think of that … So now I say "hello" and I make a point of doing it" (537). Transformative learning is therefore not only about promoting complex or large-scale changes but can also involve service user input supporting practitioners to embed the 'basics' of effective engagement into their practice (Tanner et al. 2017).

Encouraging Openness to Alternative Approaches and Perspectives

The final aspect of transformative learning reported by the majority of the studies (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Burrows 2012; Hughes 2017; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004; Rush 2008; Rhodes 2013) was how service user accounts enabled participants to be more open to alternative approaches and perspectives in their practice. There were three interlinked dimensions in

the studies: being open rather than defensive to service user perspectives; acknowledging and working with the complexity of service users' circumstances and experiences; and applying practice frameworks in a critically informed and person-centred way.

In Rhodes (2013) study, the participant reflects on the way service user involvement in her education positively influenced her understanding of and response to challenge by the individuals she works with, for example "allowing an angry parent 'to rant … I let her finish … trying to understanding their needs … where they are coming from'"(300). More generally, Burrows (2012) reported changes in the practice participants in a postgraduate social work programme, whereby they were consistently placing service user perspectives at the centre of their decision-making. Participants in Hughes (2017) study reflected that hearing a variety of (sometimes contradictory) service user perspectives in their education, meant they consciously avoided taking a 'simplistic' approach to engaging with service users based on assumptions about needs and preferences. One participant recounted how learning about the unique circumstances and challenges of family foster carers enabled her to be "more prepared [to] reflect this understanding of the carer's dilemmas" in her assessments (207). Adopting critical and creative practices was described by participants in Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon (2004) study of a postgraduate mental health programme; organisational frameworks were flexibly interpreted and informed by discussion with service users. Likewise, participants and their managers in Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson (2006) study described participants in a post-qualifying mental health programme as taking more of a partnership approach to work with service users and being more willing to enable positive risk-taking.

Practice Outcomes

In contrast to the majority of studies, which reported self/supervisor assessed changes, Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson (2006) was the only study that attempted a comparative analysis of direct practice *via* surveying the views and outcomes of service users in relation to student practice. It did this through undertaking a quality of care survey and measures of well-being with those service users supported by the study participants and two groups of service users from areas where the programme was not run. Whilst service users in the intervention and comparator groups all reported favourably on their quality of care, there was a statistically significant difference between the intervention and comparator groups in relation to level of involvement in care planning, discussion of carer input into planning, and discussion of medication and side-effects. The service users supported by study participants also showed statistically significant improvements in their social functioning compared to the comparator groups.

Influence on Organisational Practice

Changes to individual learning and practice were reported by all of the studies. Half of the studies also discussed how service user perspectives could bring about change in organisational cultures and practice (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Burrows 2012; Furness, Armitage, and Pitt 2011; Hughes 2017; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004).

Sharing Learning and Advocating for Change

In four studies (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Burrows 2012; Furness, Armitage, and Pitt 2011; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004), the impact on collective practice was related to participants sharing learning and promoting service user-inclusive attitudes and approaches within service forums. Furness, Armitage, and Pitt (2011) discuss how participants in their study of an interprofessional learning project in mental health reported going on to advocate for service user involvement within services. Similarly, the participants in Burrows (2012) study reported sharing their approaches to service user involvement with their teams, with the aim of developing collective practice and values. Interviews with participants' managers affirmed that the participants had raised awareness of their learning organisationally and directly related this to service user input. A participant in Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon (2004) study emphasised how service user involvement in their programme had given them the "knowledge and confidence to challenge colleagues with different perspectives" (490).

Developing Initiatives for Organisational Change

There was a further focus in some studies (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Hughes 2017; Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon 2004) on the concrete changes made by participants to organisational practice. Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson (2006) gave examples of initiatives developed by their study participants post-learning, such as setting up service user groups, enabling service user involvement in service planning and staff recruitment panels, and the coproduction of accessible information and resources. Individual transformative learning was also linked to sparking a drive for collective change. Participants in Khoo, McVicar, and Brandon (2004) commented that they were collaborating in service user research following the course; one participant noted that service user-led learning had "activated certain sorts of professional resources and I changed jobs to use them more fully … I can promote increased user involvement in my new role and that comes directly from the course"(489). Involving service users in education can support

challenges to practice orthodoxies and the development of collaborative provision.

Challenges to Integrating Learning into Practice

However, as has been noted in the extant literature (Baldwin and Sadd 2006), there are challenges to translating the influence of service user education into individual and collective practices within organisations and this was acknowledged as an issue across half the studies (Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson 2006; Burrows 2012; Turnbull and Weeley 2013; Tanner et al. 2017).

Culture and Value Clashes

Tanner et al. (2017) highlight how important a receptive culture and partnership opportunities with service users are to the application of learning from service users into practice. For the social work student participants in their study, the openness of colleagues and managers to the inclusion of service user perspectives was the most significant enabling factor to embed collaborative ways of working. Conversely, where colleagues were unsupportive, participants described their own approaches to collaborative practice 'slipping'. A 'complacent' and 'nonchalant' culture was seen by participants as antithetical to nurturing values-based practice; it was seen as depersonalising for both themselves and the service users they worked with, as this participant comments, "they are only a number, I am only a number" (480). Service hierarchies were also found to limit the adoption of collaborative practices, with some of the managers of participants interviewed in Burrows (2012) study perceiving threat at the acquired skills with which the participants returned to practice.

Lack of Resources and Restrictive Organisational Processes

Participants in a number of studies also indicated other barriers to learning integration such as gaps in practical support. Barnes, Carpenter, and Dickinson (2006) reported the barriers for participants in their study were "more about resources than attitudes" (432). The managers interviewed in Burrows (2012) study understood the importance of applying service user knowledge to organisational improvement, but also reported that among other service priorities, implementation of service user centred initiatives was limited. At an individual practice level, participants in Tanner et al. (2017) study described how relationship-based approaches which would foster meaningful service user involvement were difficult to apply when encounters with service users were

brief and administrative. For the students in Turnbull and Weeley (2013) study who reported being unsuccessful in meeting their pledge, reasons given were often beyond their control, relating to issues such as the overwhelming pace of work, lack of staff, or lack of support from busy mentors.

Discussion

The requirement to involve service users in professional health and social care education has provided an impetus for the development of a wide range of inventive projects for participation, as demonstrated by the studies included in this review. Participation, despite its challenges, is seen as bringing several benefits for all stakeholders, particularly for students coming into practice. However, the focus of this scoping review has not been on the learning experience of students *per se*, but on analysing the potential impact in practice, and it is here that drawing on literature from across disciplines has proved useful to identifying both knowledge gaps and implications for research and practice in social work education.

Implications for Research and Pedagogical Practice

It is notable that only nine studies were deemed suitable for inclusion in this review, and out of those nine, only three are of social work programmes. The review also highlights the lack of studies which undertake a comparative approach (qualitative or quantitative) to evaluate practice outcomes. Further, only one study includes data from service users to inform assessment of student performance in practice. Reflecting the longstanding involvement of service users in professional education in the UK, none of the studies included in the review were from other countries. Notwithstanding the complexity entailed in evaluating practice impact (Tanner et al. 2017), this review therefore supports the conclusions reached by others (Stanley and Webber 2022) that there is significant room for developing research on the impact of involvement on practice in social work education. Specifically, the inclusion of measures of service user experience and outcomes in future research would increase the robustness of evaluations of practice impact. Conducting research on practice impact internationally would also generate understanding of the effects of different models of involvement and how they play out in varying socio-cultural contexts.

However, these points should not downplay the contribution of the studies in this review to understanding the relationship between service user participation in professional education and practice behaviours, particularly considering the direct connections participants across the studies made between their practice and educational encounters with service users. Much of the

existing literature focuses on the initial aspect of transformative learning (Mezirow 2000) when evaluating service user involvement, where students experience shifts in attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and associated qualities such as empathy. The studies explored here take this a step further by elucidating how such transformative learning translates into practice. The studies were able to reinforce the link between when and how students experience service user involvement in their education, and the subsequent impact it has on their actions. Further research into the pedagogical nature of service user involvement, integrating it at different stages in student's learning, and comparing types of participation, would be valuable in evaluating how participation is influential in the learning process and in subsequent impact on practice.

Moreover, the longitudinal studies in the review demonstrate how service user involvement in social work education can have both diverse and cumulative impacts at different points in practitioners' trajectories. As Hughes (2017) notes, learning from service user involvement may only attain significance at a later stage of practice, and therefore the prioritisation of longitudinal approaches in tracing shifts in practice, as well as practice outcomes, would be beneficial.

As well as highlighting the process of applying learning to practice, the review also explores the various ways learning manifests in practice, including the fundamental and more complex messages from service users that students take into their practice, and the influence on organisational culture and processes. The data on individual practice chimes with research into the qualities and skills service users value in social workers, from being reliable, accessible, honest and 'human' (Kam 2020) to taking a 'whole person' approach and supporting self-determination (Wilberforce et al. 2020). However, although there have been positive advances in recent years, service user groups (Beresford et al. 2006; Rimmer and Harwood 2004) have long raised concerns that their involvement can at times be an under-theorised, time-limited and tokenistic exercise. It is important therefore to model good practice through getting power dynamics 'right' in the learning environment if social work students are to become service user-focused practitioners (Molyneux and Irvine 2004). This would involve educators being critically reflective of their own practice and conceptions of involvement, to foster meaningful participation (Branfield 2009; Fox 2011; Rooney, Unwin, and Shah 2019). The application of learning frameworks by educators, such as Mezirow's (2000) conceptualisation of transformative learning, may support a focused and outcomes oriented approach to service user involvement.

It is important to also acknowledge the various challenges for integrating learning into practice explored within many of the included studies. The results support Tanner's et al. (2017) conclusion that greater attention should be paid in social work research and education to both what hinders and helps students adopt service-user centred approaches in their transition to practice.

In terms of education, this would involve developing student capabilities - *via* both classroom and placement-based learning - to navigate challenging practice contexts and recognise the characteristics of organisational/collective cultures that are supportive of centring service user perspectives. For example, there is a rich body of literature on policy practice, rights-based approaches and more recently anti-poverty practice (Ife, Soldatić, and Briskman 2022; Krumer-Nevo 2020; Weiss-Gal 2016) in social work which illustrate how to promote service user-centred practice in organisations and sustain such practice even within constrained circumstances. At a systemic level, it would also involve embedding service user knowledge consistently in practice education, and social work educators working in partnership with placement providers to support and assess students in applying learning from service users, particularly within organisational initiatives. Finally, research into the role of service user knowledge in early career frameworks would deepen understanding of the support newly qualified social workers utilise in consolidating their learning from service users into practice.

Limitations

We did not assess or review the quality of the studies in the scoping review. Additionally, the decision to include all types of educational programmes in the review, including post-qualifying, means care needs to be taken when interpreting the results. However, taking a pragmatic approach to searching the literature is a common characteristic of scoping studies (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). Finally, whilst we followed the PRISMA guidance (Tricco et al. 2018) for scoping reviews which provides a rigorous framework for review processes and reporting, there were certain elements of the guidance we were not able to observe, such as a research protocol.

Conclusion

Through consolidating research literature from different disciplines and identifying themes relating to impact, the review has highlighted valuable learning points for the practice impact of service user involvement in social work education. The studies included in the review suggest that learning from service users can influence practice in a variety of ways, whilst also illuminating the multifaceted challenges organisational hierarchies can bring to translating learning into practice for students. We have suggested several directions for further research and pedagogical practice based on the knowledge gaps and themes present in the review. Our findings support the conclusions of previous reviews on the need for further comparative and longitudinal studies, the development of impact-focused research internationally, and inclusion of

measures of service user experience and outcomes in future evaluations. Substantively, the review points to mapping the nature of involvement against both student experience and practice impact, and examining the role of early career frameworks in encouraging the consolidation of service user-centred learning. For social work education, considerations include: deliberation by educators on conceptions of participation; productive theorisation of involvement, and supporting students, practitioners and organisations to meet challenges in embedding practice impact.

Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix. Web of Science Database Search.

Search number	MeSH terms	Title	Search results
1.	Service* NEAR/2 user* or carer* or family NEAR/2 carer" or patient* or client* or consumer*	Title	2771664 results
2.	Participat* or involve* or engage* or collab* or partnership*	Title.	522277 results
3.	Impact or effective* or effect* or outcome* or evaluat*	Title	6750881 results
4.	Educat* or train* or teach*	Title	1073900 results
5.	1 and 2 and 3 and 4	Title	148 results

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