

Public Abstract

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WITHIN A GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

This quantitative research project was premised on two emerging trends in graduate social work education: competency-based assessments and students developing a professional social work identity. Competency-based assessments have become a new standard for social work programs who are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. To this end, the construction of a competency-based assessment instrument of four identified practice behaviors was pursued. Second to the construction of an instrument, this study explored the connection between professional competencies and involvement in professionalization activities for the graduate-level social work student. Methods of data collection were two self-constructed instruments administered to a convenience sample population of 54 students. Data was analyzed using descriptive analysis and Pearson r correlation analysis. Findings suggest pre-student professionalization activities correlate with higher competencies in professional work habits, professional appearance/hygiene, professional communication skills, and professional development skills; and involvement in professionalization via instruction correlated with higher competencies in professional work habits. The other two categories of professionalization activities (professionalization via practicum and professional association) did not correlate with competency of the four practice behaviors. The researcher recommends continued discourse regarding assessment of the professional competencies for social work graduate students and activities which might enhance their professional identity.