The Use of High-Impact Practices for Teaching Social Justice Content in Social Work Curriculum

Sharon Alston; Kirsten Ericksen
Norfolk State University, USA

Abstract

Social justice is an essential concept of the human service profession and a core value of the social work profession. In social work education, students acquire this knowledge through implicit and explicit curriculum. For example, students learn the concept and importance of social justice in the delivery of service in the core curriculum (i.e., human behavior, policy, research, and practice courses). This approach to learning new content is traditional in that students acquire this knowledge through readings, class discussions, and final term papers. An intentional and interactive instructional design such as high-impact practices (HIPs) may be more advantageous in teaching social justice content. Researchers used a mixed-method research design with a self-administered survey to collect data from a convenience sample of 27 social work students on their perceptions of HIPs and its utility for advancing knowledge (awareness, understanding, and appreciation) of social justice. HIPs are teaching and learning strategies that have been proven to be beneficial to increasing students' learning and retention of knowledge (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). This preliminary research strongly suggests that HIPs have an impact on participants' learning and, specifically, their understanding of social justice content for both micro issues to macro-level of concerns. Overall, students reported 1) HIPs had a significant influence on the acquisition of social justice content, and 2) having an overall positive experience with HIPs. It is recommended that faculty, regardless of discipline, explore the use of HIPs in facilitating discipline-specific knowledge.

Keywords: Social justice; curriculum; instructional design; high-impact practice (HIP).

Introduction

Social justice is an essential concept of the human service profession and a core value of the social work profession. The engagement in social justice activities by human service professionals (educators, clinicians, lawyers) helps to ensure the equitable distribution of resources and services to those in need to include people in poverty, with disabilities, and who are marginalized and disenfranchised. In social work education, students acquire this knowledge through implicit and explicit curriculum. For example, students learn the concept and importance of social justice in the delivery of service in the core curriculum (i.e., human behavior, policy, research, and practice courses). This approach to learning new content is traditional in that students acquire this knowledge through readings, class discussions, and final term papers. An intentional and interactive instructional design such as high-impact practices (HIPs) may be more advantageous in teaching social justice content.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) lauds the positive outcomes of the use of HIPs as instructional design. HIPs are teaching and learning strategies that have been proven to be beneficial to increasing students' learning and retention of knowledge (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). HIPs such as Experiential Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Service Learning are instructional strategies that engage students in "sustained, collaborative real-world investigations" (Coffey & Lavery, 2015). While HIPs approaches have been used in higher education, little is known about the use of HIPs in social work education. Less is known about the use of these approaches in the translation of knowledge of social action and social justice. This paper assessed the effectiveness of HIPs as an innovative instructional method for teaching social justice content in a Social Work program. In this article, the researchers are exploring if social justice content can be more effectively taught with an intentional and interactive instructional design such as HIPs.

Literature review

The literature on the use of HIPs is promising. For example, Kuh (2013) found a pronounced benefit from participation in HIPs for underserved student populations to include African American students. Specifically, in their research related to underserved student populations, Finley and McNair (2013) found students reported perceived gains to deeper learning following participation in all/any high-impact practice in education. Additionally, Arroyo et al. (2016) concluded HIPs such as learning communities can incorporate adaptations to benefit underserved populations (i.e., Afrocentric perspectives) and provide best practices and learning environments.

The AACU also highlights other benefits of participating in HIPs. For example, students who participate in service learning, learning communities, faculty-student research, and study abroad perceived their learning more positively than students who did not participate in the same practice (Finley & McNair, 2013). Benefits of cumulative engagement in HIPs were also identified. Students who participated in five to six HIPs activities reported more gains in personal and social development, practical competence, and general education than students who have less engagement or no engagement of HIPs (Finley & McNair, 2013).

Of the many approaches of HIPs, this paper is specific to Experiential Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Service Learning. Experiential learning has been found to be valuable for student gains in knowledge and skills (Clements & Minnick, 2012; Cramer et al., 2012; Humphrey, 2014; Kolb, 1984; Lichtenwalter & Baker, 2010; Rosenwald et al., 2013). Experiential learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning incorporates active learning through the use of engaging activities to provide application of course content and enhanced comprehension. Students learn through observation and interaction, frequently participating in 'hands-on' experiences (Kolb, 1984).

Research has demonstrated integrating experiential activities (including watching a movie from another culture, speaking with a couple from this same culture, and participating in group discussions) positively impacted the participants' intercultural sensitivity (Jain, 2013). Research related to team-based experiential learning theory has found positive student satisfaction and perceptions of learning gains (Venema et al., 2015).

Researchers have found experiential learning prominent in specific social work curriculum content, including macro-level change (Jewell & Owens, 2017), group work (Clements & Minnick, 2012; Warkentin, 2017), and research (Venema et al., 2015). Students participating in experiential groups reported a better understanding due to their own experience in the group process (Clements & Minnick, 2012). Warkentin (2015) found students' use of experiential methods assisted with group knowledge and skill development. Social work students engaged in community training and collaborations to improve their understanding of power and macro practice level skills (Jewell & Owens, 2017).

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an active-learning pedagogy in which students gain knowledge and skills by investigating and responding to a complex question, problem, or challenge by creating and implementing a final product (*What Is PBL?*, n.d.). Project-Based Learning has been found to develop higher-order thinking and critical thinking skills in students (Bradley-Levine & Mosier, 2014). Project-Based Learning leads to a change in teaching pedagogy in which students take ownership of their learning, and educators serve in the role of facilitators (Dole et al., 2015).

The impact of project-based learning (PBL) on student learning is evident. Kwon et al. (2014), in his paper on PBL with 99 students in engineering, concluded that students reported significant gains related to their learning experience. He reports 76% of students agreed that the PBL teaching and learning activities, such as projects, discussions, and presentations, help them to achieve the learning outcomes for the course (Kwon et al., 2014). Gülbahar and Tinmaz (2006) report that students in an undergraduate education course were extremely satisfied with PBL. Students in the course reported advantages of PBL as "eliminating direct instruction, learning by doing, active

participation and that they were offered opportunities to participate in the course" (2006, pp. 317–318).

Further research using PBL includes the work of Heinricher et al. (2013), who assessed the long-term professional and personal impacts of PBL on careers and lives of 2,532 alumni. They reported the greatest impact in the areas of personal abilities, interpersonal and communication skills, professional advancement, world views, and personal impacts. Specific impacts were taking responsibility for one's own learning, solving problems, succeeding in a career, awareness of how one's decisions impact others (Heinricher et al., 2013).

Other researchers have found service learning to be beneficial regarding the service learning pedagogical approach in social work curriculums (Petracchi et al., 2016; Schelbe et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2002). Specifically, research-based service learning pedagogy has demonstrated growth in students' social responsibility related to policy advocacy and civic awareness (Lim et al., 2017) or promoting altruism (Forte, 1997). Additionally, some have offered suggestions to improve the outcomes and implementation of service-learning programs (Lemieux & Allen, 2007), recognizing that most baccalaureate social work education programs offer at least one course with a service learning component (Petracchi et al., 2016).

Williams et al. (Williams et al., 2002) found inclusion of service learning in a master's level course to increase students' perceived self-efficacy related to mezzo and macro-level skills. Similarly, research finds service learning to be a positive experience for students while developing a greater appreciation for the course content (Postlethwait, 2012). Schelbe et al. (2014) assert that service learning in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) curriculum helps students build a sense of community, apply theoretical concepts, increase self-awareness, and give exposure to the social work profession.

Service learning incorporates a field-based experience as a portion of the course requirement. The intent, in part, is to have students apply what they are learning in the classroom to the community in order to achieve real-world applications (Kuh, 2008). According to Kuh and O'Donnell (2013), service learning provided deep learning and gains in three areas; general, personal, and practical. This suggests that through participation in service learning, students are prepared to become good community citizens.

As the literature suggests, HIPs such as experiential learning, project-based learning, and service learning are innovative instructional methods. In this research, the term HIPs refers to experiential learning, project-based learning, and service learning.

Methodology
Research design

The purpose of this research was to explore the use of HIPs as an innovative instructional method for teaching social justice content in the social work program. We conceptualize social justice content as educational material relating to engaging in diversity and difference in practice, advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice, and engaging in policy practice. Social justice knowledge is conceptualized as having awareness, understanding, and appreciation of social justice content.

The study employed a mixed-method concurrent research design with a qualitative focus. The qualitative approach used Hermeneutic phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach acknowledges the uniqueness of the lived experiences of participants and the influence on the phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is social justice related to social work.

The following research question is explored:
1. **How effective are HIPs at increasing students' knowledge in social justice?**

Study setting and procedures

The study takes place in a four-year university in the southeast region of the country. The School has a BSW, MSW, and Ph.D. program comprising over 600 students. The School offers content in both Micro and Marco concentrations; however, its program is heavily clinical with a curriculum that focuses primarily on direct practice knowledge and skills with individuals. The school is well poised to utilize HIPs to integrate social justice content into the social work curriculum, and it is timely. The area in which the school is located is undergoing structural changes through urban revitalization. While the redevelopment will bring structural improvements in the form of new parks and modern homes, it will also displace many current residents. Providing students with specific knowledge and skills in the area of social justice is essential as we are preparing them to engage in the current social and political climate that will inevitably affect the profession of social work and the places where they will become employed.

In the spring of 2018, the researchers implemented and evaluated HIPs in a general education course, a research course, and a practice course. In addition to the standard curriculum, students in each course planned or engaged in a project around a social justice issue.

Experiential learning occurred in the Trauma-Informed Practice with Children and Families practice course. A focus of this course was health disparities and marginalized populations. Seven students participated in the elective course.

Learning outcomes for this course include the ability to: 1) Recognize ethical dilemmas that social workers may experience in a setting that assesses and/or treats children or families who have experienced trauma; 2) Identify assessment and diagnosis of and treatment methods for individuals with physical trauma-related problems to provide effective social work services (while maintaining good professional self-care); 3) Identify how complex life challenges and protective factors impact individuals and families that are affected by traumas.

Throughout the course, students participated in experiential activities including the pouring of red sand for human trafficking, obtaining certification in Stewards of Children Child Sexual Abuse Prevention training, self-reflective wellness activities aimed to prevent secondary trauma (meditation, journaling, mindfulness), and attending a sexual abuse international expert presentation. Specifically, guided mindfulness activities (breathing, eating, and coloring) were completed in class, journaling techniques were discussed in detail, and resources for meditation were provided to address any potential secondary trauma.

The research course utilized PBL. The student learning objectives were: 1) Use practice experience to inform research and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery; 2) Conduct a needs assessment and program evaluation, 3) Write concise and accurate research reports. The associated tasks were to identify a problem and its cause, identify a solution, evaluate the solution's effects, and write a report of the findings. The students identified the "problem" as a lack of knowledge and use of research in social justice by students in the social work program, and the solution was to expose students to professionals engaged in research at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

The research students collaborated with staff from the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency of Washington, DC, Hampton City Schools of VA, Human Services Department of Defense, United States Navy, and Skills Builders Independent Living Agency for Youth to sponsor a research symposium. The focus of the symposium was to educate all social work students on the importance of research across micro and macro levels of practice—specifically, how research is used to address racial and health disparities in services and outcomes for marginalized groups.

The symposium was held during social work month, with over 80 students and faculty in attendance. Additionally, students developed a survey to assess the impact of the symposium on student learning and analyzed the data using SPSS.

Service learning was the high-impact practice used in the introduction to university life course. In this freshman course, four undergraduate social work students completed the survey. The following learning outcomes were among the course objectives: 1) Use written communication skills to argue and critically assess ideas and viewpoints; 2) Distinguish and Assess concepts and perspectives of cultural diversity; 3) Apply principles of responsible citizenship within and beyond the campus community.

Course assignments were developed to facilitate learning outcomes using the high-impact practice of service learning. Each small group of students identified a social justice community need, developed, and implemented a brief project to address the need. Issues students examined included the school to prison pipeline, underserved youth with disabilities, and disparities in health and mental health among older adults. The projects were a youth mentoring program, a recreational program for youth with disabilities, and an intergenerational matching experience.

Participants and recruitment

Recruitment was limited to students who were enrolled in the courses where the researchers were teachers of record in the three noted courses. However, students were given the option to participate in the study without an impact on their final grade.

The participants were 27 social work students who were currently enrolled in one of three courses. Of the 27 students, 16 were graduate students. The total sample consisted of 16 students enrolled in the research course, seven students enrolled in the practice course, and four students enrolled in the Introduction to University Life course. Ninety-six percent were female, and 4% were male. Seventy-five percent were African American, 11% were Caucasian, 3% were Latinx, and 11% identified as other. Students ranged in age from 20 years to 46 years with a mean age of 24 and a standard deviation of 6.2.

Data collection and measurement

A self-administered survey was distributed to students on the last day of class. The researchers ensured confidentiality by providing each student with an envelope in which he or she was to return the survey. The survey is a suggested measurement of the social work competencies offered by Petracchi & Zastrow (2010) and comprises nine subscales, each measuring one of the core competencies outlined in the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Academic Standards (EPAS). Each subscale comprised two to five items on a 5-point Likert scale and assessed how HIPs help students to acquire knowledge of social justice content. For this paper, we utilized three subscales; Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice; Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice; and Advance, Engage in Policy Practice as the measure of knowledge of social justice content. We operationalize knowledge of social justice content using the combined score on the three subscales of knowledge of social justice content.

The qualitative section of the questionnaire required students to share their perceptions of how HIPs contributed to their learning and what skills they had acquired as it related to social justice.
1. Please provide your feelings, thoughts, or perceptions about high-impact practices such as Experiential Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Service Learning as an instructional pedagogy (instructional method);
2. Briefly describe specific high-impact practices such as Experiential Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Service Learning activities that enable you to acquire new knowledge about your course;
3. Please list some specific skills you have acquired because of participating in high-impact practices such as Experiential Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Service Learning;
4. Please provide recommendations for improvement of the use of high-impact practices such as Experiential Learning, Project-Based Learning, and Service Learning; and,
5. Please list any activity that YOU believe has increased your learning in this course.

Additionally, respondents rated whether the HIPs were either 1, indicating extremely ineffective, or 5, indicating extremely effective. Higher scores indicate a higher degree of students' perception of effectiveness in helping to acquire knowledge regarding knowledge and application of social justice content and skills. In addition, we collected demographic and categorical data: age, gender, ethnicity, and course enrolled.

To the researcher's knowledge, the reliability and validity of the competencies as a full scale has not been established. Item analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the subscales Engage in Diversity, Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice; and Advance Engage in Policy Practice. Reliability for each subscale ranged from .70 to .95, which is an acceptable measure of reliability (Abu-Bader, 2011). Table 1 lists all scales with the number of items and Cronbach's alpha statistic for each.

Table 1: Reliability coefficient of instruments.

Scale	# of items	Range of Possible Scores	Reliability
Differences in diversity	3	3-15	.70
Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	2	2-10	.72
Advance Engage in Policy Practice.	3	3-15	.95

Strengths and limitations

There are significant strengths in that the results help to validate highly effective instructional design that can be utilized in social work but has utility for other disciplines and content areas. While not a focus of this study, we identified other advantages of HIPs that reach beyond the classroom, such as critical thinking, self-awareness, and collaborative work. However, there were some limitations, as well. The measure of social justice content used in this study is newly developed and only tested knowledge acquired through the use of HIPs. We did not assess current/prior knowledge of social justice content. However, because these were first- and second-year students in undergraduate education and first semester students in graduate education, the researchers assumed that students would have limited if any knowledge of social justice and it would not have a significant influence on the outcome of the study. The small sample size was also a limitation, and two students did not complete the final survey. No information is available to assess if there were differences between the two students who did not complete the survey and those students who did. We assume the two missing students did not have a significant impact on the outcome of the findings. Generalizability is also a limitation due to the non-probability sampling technique applied and the small sample size.

Analysis
Qualitative

Systematic content analysis was used to guide the review of the students' self-reported experiences after their participation in HIPs. A deductive approach was used to analyze the survey data using the social justice defined categories. As discussed previously, social justice knowledge was operationally defined as the combined score on three social work subscales -Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice, Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice and Engage in Policy Practice. These subscales were used as preset categories and guided the researcher's analysis in reading the survey text for meaning and common experiences of the HIPs participants. NVivo 11 software was used to assist with the qualitative data analysis. The researchers developed an initial codebook (nodes in NVivo), which was reviewed by both researchers until agreement occurred. During the contextual analysis, similarities and differences between the categories were examined for themes and common emerging patterns. Significant statements were reviewed and provided connections and meaning of the findings for interpretation of the data.

Quantitative

Using SPSS, we conducted a descriptive analysis of the three subscales of social justice content to answer the research question: "How effective are HIPs at increasing students' knowledge in social justice?" We then reported the percentage of students who felt HIPs were effective at helping them to demonstrate knowledge across the three areas of social justice (Differences in Diversity, Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice; and Advance Engage in Policy Practice). Mean scores are also reported for the three areas of social justice knowledge under investigation (Differences in Diversity, Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice; and Advance Engage in Policy Practice). The results of the descriptive analysis were used to confirm and validate the qualitative data of the survey (Creswell, 2014).

Results

The purpose of this research was to explore the use of HIPs as an innovative instructional method for teaching social justice content in the social work program. As a reminder, we conceptualize social justice content as educational material relating to engaging in diversity and difference in practice, advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice, and engaging in policy practice.

Social justice knowledge is conceptualized as having awareness, understanding, and/or appreciation of social justice content. Overall, the results for the analysis of the data suggests that participants reported 1) HIPs had a significant influence on the acquisition of social justice content, and 2) they had an overall positive experience with HIPs.

Participants reported aspects for each HIPs ranging from having awareness about social justice "offering support to people who felt left out or not worthy" to actively working with individuals to advocate for micro-level needs "being able to help and assist" and macro issues "understand how policy and funding is [*sic*] implemented as well as the services and goal of the program." Participants in the HIPs experienced gains in their social justice knowledge. Both the qualitative and quantitative data support these findings related to HIPs and social justice content.

The qualitative data were examined for common emerging experiences among students regarding their perceptions of the outcomes from HIPs. Through systematic analysis, specific emerging common experiences related to HIPs and social justice social work education was evident. Student participants from all HIPs reported an increase in knowledge of social justice content. Specifically, *advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice (competency # 3)* were demonstrated in participants' responses "the group work on the demolishment of the public housing communities allowed for these items to be put into place."

The quantitative data support this finding as 90% of students reported that HIPs were either effective or highly effective at helping acquire knowledge in the areas of advance *human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice*.

Students reported advances in awareness in engaging *in diversity and difference in practice (competency # 2)* through statements such as "offering support to people who felt left out or not worthy," and "how to deal with people with less needs." This finding was also confirmed through the quantitative data. Ninety-three percent of students reported that HIPs were effective or highly effective at helping acquire knowledge in the areas of *engaging in diversity and difference in practice*. Other students shared the social justice emphasis of *advancing and engaging in policy practice (competency # 5)* through their experience "in research methods, I learned how to research is used to advocate for my clients in program evaluation and provide better outcomes to help the client." This finding was also confirmed through the quantitative data.

Eighty-seven percent of students reported that HIPs were effective or highly effective at helping acquire knowledge in the areas of *advancing and engaging in policy practice*. The social justice content (based on noted competencies) emphasis related to HIPs is represented in Table 3.

Table 3: Social justice content emphasis for High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

Social Justice Emphasis	HIPs Participant Qualitative Data Results	HIPs Participant Quantitative Data Results
Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice - competency # 3, *(Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice).*	"the group work on the demolishment of the Norfolk housing communities allowed for these items to be put in place" "understand how policy and funding is implemented as well as the services and goal of the program" "being able to help and assist"	90% of participants reported HIPs were effective in advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice
Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice - competency # 2, *(Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies)*	"Being able to work with groups of people" "how to deal with people with less needs" "Being able to work [in] a group with others" "offering support to people who felt left out or not worthy"	93% of participants reported HIPs were effective in engaging in diversity and difference in practice
Advance and Engage in Policy Practice- competency # 5 *(Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services).*	"in research methods, I learned how to research is used to advocate for my clients in program evaluation and provide better outcomes to help the client." "in creating the logic models, we had to look as various programs"	87% of participants reported HIPs were effective in advancing and engaging in policy practice

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted to answer the research question "How effective are HIPs at increasing students' knowledge in social justice identified in related competencies including; engage in diversity and difference in practice (competency # 2), Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice (competency #3) ; and Engage in Policy Practice (competency # 5)?"

For *engage in diversity and difference in practice,* the mean was 14 with a standard deviation of 1.4; the mean for *advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice* the mean was 9 with a standard deviation of 1.47. The mean and standard deviation for items 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 is 4.8 SD .42, 4.7 SD .54, 4.6 SD .54 respectively. 3.1, 3.2 were 4.48 SD .97, 4.62 SD.68 respectively. For the #5, engage in policy practice, the mean was 13 with a standard deviation of 2.36. The mean and standard deviation for items 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 were 4.37 SD 79, 4.48 SD 89, 4.48 SD 84, respectively. The results from this analysis are reported for the total scale as well as by each item on each scale. (See Table 4).

Additional significant findings emerged from the data. Students who participated in HIPs reported very positive reviews about the approach. One student stated, "I enjoyed this way of learning over working alone. The HIPs allowed everyone to collaborate and solve problems." Another student reported, "I liked the way the class was taught. I learned a lot about research and how it is used in the social work field, and we got to do a lot of hands-on activities…"

Other students reported the teaching and learning activities provided through HIPs helped them to acquire new knowledge. Several students listed the logic model activity, inputting data, research proposal, and research symposium as helpful activities to acquire knowledge. Students noted through statements such as "offering support to people who felt left out or not worthy," and "how to deal with people with less needs." This finding was also confirmed through the quantitative data. Ninety-three percent of students reported that HIPs were effective or highly effective at helping acquire knowledge in the areas of *engaging in diversity and difference in practice.* Students reported acquiring skills such as public speaking, networking, critical thinking, decision making, and reasoning.

Table 4: The mean and standard deviation for social justice.

Variables of Social Justice	Mean	SD	Mode	Minimum Maximum
Differences in Diversity* (competency # 2)	14	1.4	15	10–15
• Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.	4.8	.42	5	4–5
• Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.	4.7	.54	5	3–5
• Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.	4.6	.54	5	3–5
Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice* (competency # 3)	9.0	1.4	10	2–10
• Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels.	4.48	.97	5	1–5
• Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.	4.62	.68	5	2–5
Advance and Engage in Policy Practice (competency # 5)	13.00	2.36	15	3–15
• Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services.	4.37	.79	5	3–5
• Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services.	4.48	.89	5	2–5
• Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.	4.48	.84	5	2–5

This research further supported the benefits of "hands-on activities" reported by HIPs participants. Findings from Gülbahar and Tinmaz (2006) suggest students also reported benefits from the "hands-on" activities utilized in the HIPs. Participants' assertion that they acquired additional skills was similar to Kwon et al.'s (2014) findings citing 76% of students agreed that the PBL teaching and learning activities such as projects, discussions, and presentations help them to achieve the learning outcomes for the course (Kwon et al., 2014). The HIPs service learning was found to "help students acquire new knowledge outside the classroom" and demonstrates similar findings to Postlethwait (2012) developing appreciation for the course content.

Discussion and recommendations

This study demonstrates preliminary evidence for the use of HIPs in social work education. The impact of social justice competence gains was apparent across the undergraduate and graduate programs. This preliminary research strongly suggests that HIPs have an impact on participants learning and, specifically, their understanding of social justice content for both micro issues to macro-level of concerns. Incorporating HIPs within social work courses offers many benefits to students. Through the opportunities provided by HIPs, students are able to observe the impact of their efforts in "real-time."

In addition, through the use of HIPs, students have a more intimate experience with real-life problems that they are charged with resolving, especially with respect to social justice. This process helps to build students' confidence in their ability to influence change. HIPs create engaging learning experiences, improved students' understanding of course content, and increased students' ability to identify and apply strategies to promote and advocate for specific issues related to the fair and equitable distribution of resources and services.

Increased awareness is another benefit of HIPs. In the classroom, students are informed about the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation and how these values influence the ways by which and under which conditions they will engage in social justice work and activities. Through

HIPs, students are actively engaging with diverse populations and are forced to process and regulate their feelings almost immediately. As a result, students are able to see how their personal biases and values can influence how they engage with diverse clients and constituencies. There are some drawbacks to this approach, such as some students' initial inability to self-regulate, but with prior preparation and assessment of students' skills and abilities, the experience can be invaluable training for emerging social work professionals. Specifically, students can participate in journaling to enhance self-reflection and learning about the experience.

Additional benefits of HIPs include opportunities for students to engage in inter-professional collaborations on social justice issues with lawyers, health care professionals, educators, and economists. For example, projects could center on the impact gentrification has on families such as affordable housing, access to healthcare, childcare, concentrated poverty, and develop interdisciplinary approaches to advocate for resources such as funding, new policies, and access to affordable housing.

The HIPs within academic courses alone will be insufficient. The assignments and activities must be rigorous and interactive, so students are able to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and application of the specific content. Some suggestions are to develop assignments that are student-driven. Students are more likely to be willing to engage in activities in which they have a particular interest. For example, for future assignments, students can research social justice issues of importance to them, develop plans, and facilitate programs to address the need. In addition, faculty should share resources about local justice issues, including educational materials, weblinks, and agencies, to determine the best approaches to local advocacy. This study produced preliminary data on the utility of HIPs as an effective instructional strategy. While the results are promising, we recommend further research with a larger sample size. In addition, including comparison groups can add to the internal validity of the research and the credibility of the use of HIPs.

We also found students showed evidence of critical thinking skills, self-awareness, and collaborative work; however, we did not assess for changes in these variables. Further research could include HIPs as an approach to course delivery rather than content-specific, thereby assessing how students develop skills across different domains of learning (cognitive, affect, psychomotor).

Finally, this study included graduate and undergraduate courses and assessed different HIPs approaches within the three courses. A comparative study to assess for differences across course level, age, gender, and course may provide additional evidence for the use of HIPs, for example, comparing gender differences in learning through HIPs.

Conclusion

This research suggests the influence of HIPs across content areas can help to develop knowledge of social justice in social work students. Both qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate gains in social justice competence, as reported by students participating in high-impact practices. Through these approaches, students collaborate with professionals (teachers, recreation specialists, and criminal justice staff) from other disciplines (education, psychology, criminal justice) to plan and organize around a social justice issue. HIPs encourage students to create or engage in projects that explore and develop meaningful approaches to address the identified social justice issue. If we expect students to remain competitive and competent in their respective disciplines, faculty must continue to explore effective instructional designs that facilitate learning and skills that create pathways to employment. If social work and other discipline-specific programs are to remain competitive among the ranks of colleges and universities, their faculty must be willing to incorporate innovative pedagogical approaches that provide opportunities for students to gain knowledge, skills, and competence to compete in the current social, political, and economic climate of our society. Faculty in social work programs are uniquely positioned to facilitate these ideals as a purpose of the social work profession is to promote the value of social justice. Therefore, social work faculty must be innovative in their instructional design and delivery of course content in a way that actively engages students in the classroom and in the communities in which they will become employed. High-impact practices provide a method to achieve this.

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About the Authors

Dr. Sharon T Alston is an Assistant Professor of Social Work in the Ethelyn R Strong School of Social Work at Norfolk VA with over 10 years of teaching experience. Her primary area of teaching is in research methods for social workers. Her teaching research in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Dr. Alston uses High-impact practices to facilitate student learning, increase student engagement and increase retention among students of color. She is also interested in understanding how students evolve in their use of higher-level thinking from acquisition of knowledge to the evaluation and creation of new knowledge.

Dr. Kirsten S. Ericksen is an Associate Professor in the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work at Norfolk State University (NSU). As a practicing professional for 10 years, Dr. Ericksen gained experiences in leadership and professional encounters in micro, mezzo, and macro levels including; higher education, early intervention (birth-3), school social work (K-12), service organizations, and non-profit agencies (Executive Director for BBBS). Her research interest applies to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Specifically, research related to using innovative engaging methods integrated into the classroom to enhance their learning and skill development (practical application) and help them become effective professionals and build resiliency with clients/communities

Addresses

Dr. Sharon Alston;
Norfolk State University; 700 Park Ave Norfolk VA, USA 22192

e-Mail: stalston@nsu.edu

Dr. Kirsten Ericksen;
Norfolk State University; 700 Park Ave Norfolk VA, USA 22192

e-Mail: kser icksen@nsu.edu