

Struggle and failure on clinical placements in speech pathology: Lived experiences

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

Rachel Davenport

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis contains published paper/s/scholarly work of which I am a joint author. I have included as part of the thesis a written declaration endorsed in writing by my supervisor, attesting to my contribution to the joint publication/s/scholarly work.

By signing below I confirm that Rachel Mary Davenport contributed a major component of this work by undertaking the following roles: conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, visualisation, writing original draft and writing-review and editing following supervision from all co-authors for the publication entitled "Struggle and failure on clinical placement: a critical narrative review"

A/Prof Sally Hewat

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Abstract

Background

A core part of any health professional course is the clinical placement component (Delany & Molloy, 2018). The majority of students complete their placements successfully, however in any given cohort there will be a small number of students whose performance during placement is considered less than satisfactory. These students are sometimes referred to as ‘struggling’ or ‘failing’ students, amongst other terms. The current literature regarding struggling or failing students in speech pathology is scant so it is necessary to look to other health professions to gain a better understanding of how students experience failure. A review of the currently available literature indicated a focus on exploring risk factors and predictors of failure for the health professional student from the perspective of the educators and universities, however there was an apparent gap in the student experience or ‘voice’.

Aims

The research presented in this thesis aimed to explore and understand the lived experience of struggling student speech pathologists on clinical placement, within the wider context provided by the experiences of clinical educators (CEs) and university clinical education coordinators (CECs) when working with these students.

Methods

A qualitative study using narrative inquiry methodology was used. There were two phases of the study. Phase 1 explored the *retrospective recollections* of experience of five struggling or failing students and 11 CEs, through semi-structured individual interviews, and eight university CECs through a focus group. Phase 2 explored the lived experiences of struggling or failing students, two CEs and one CEC through semi-structured interviews which were conducted with participants contemporaneously with the clinical placement.

Results

Qualitative analysis of the participants' narrative accounts revealed distinct themes, as well as the way participants sought to interpret their own experiences through cultural archetypal character tropes and story plotlines. The findings in the data assisted in developing an understanding of how students who struggle on clinical placements, and the CEs and CECs, made sense of and understand their experiences. The findings also highlighted that struggle and failure to reach the required level of competency may not solely relate to problems with skill development or skill execution but rather that multiple other factors contributed to the student learning experiences.

Conclusion

Findings from both phases of the study revealed some of the complexity associated with struggle and failure in clinical learning and was able to identify some of the multiple interacting factors impacting learning, not least the relationship between the student and CE. These results were discussed in light of the impact on clinical workplace learning with future research directions being identified, and a variety of strategies or actions for students, CEs or universities are proposed to assist students' workplace learning.

Structure of Thesis

The work completed for this research is presented in the format of a thesis with a publication.

There are seven chapters, including the publication in chapter 2, and are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

Chapter 2: Struggle and failure on clinical placement: a critical narrative review (References from the publication have not been included in the reference list for the rest of the thesis)

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 4: Recalling the experience: In depth case studies

Chapter 5: Recalling the experience: Group data

Chapter 6: The lived experience

Chapter 7: Lived experiences of struggle and failure informing clinical workplace learning

Publications, Presentations and Prizes Arising from this Thesis

Publications

Davenport, R., Hewat, S., Ferguson, A., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2018). Struggle and failure on clinical placement: A critical narrative review. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, n/a-n/a. doi:10.1111/1460-6984.12356

This journal article won the HASS (School of Humanities and Social Sciences) publication prize in 2017 at the University of Newcastle.

Conference Presentations

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2019). *'I don't think you're meant to be a speech pathologist but I can't tell you why' - Student experience of struggle*. Paper presented at Speech Pathology Australia and New Zealand Speech Therapy Association joint Conference 2- 5 June 2019, Brisbane.

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2019). *Clinical educators' experiences of supporting struggling students: 'It was horrible, horrible, it felt just horrible'*. Paper presented at Speech Pathology Australia and New Zealand Speech Therapy Association joint Conference 2- 5 June 2019, Brisbane.

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2015). *Clinical education for failing and marginal students: a multi-disciplinary scoping review*. Paper presented at Speech Pathology Symposium 24 November, Newcastle.

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2014).

Development of professional competency: Critical experiences of marginal or failing students. Paper presented at Asia Pacific Educators Collaboration in Speech-Language Pathology (APEC SLP) 17-18 May 2014, Melbourne.

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2013). *Critical Characteristics of Marginal or Failing Students.* Paper presented at Communicating Together Speech Pathology Symposium 2-4 December 2013, Newcastle.

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2013). *Critical Factors in Student Failure: An Exploration of Ideas.* PeArL session presented at the Australia & New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators Conference 25-27 June 2013, Melbourne.

Conference Poster

Davenport, R., Ferguson, F., Hewat, S., McAllister, S., & Lincoln, M. (2014). *Development of professional competency: The voice of the failing or marginal speech pathology student.* Poster presented at the International Association for Medical Education conference (AMEE) 30 August- 3 September 2014, Milan, Italy.

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