

# PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ASSESSMENT IN PRACTICE EDUCATION

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# INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

- PHENOMENON OF INTEREST
  - Lived experiential meanings of student assessment related to practice placements
- RESEARCH QUESTION
  - How is assessment related to a practice placement experienced meaningful by the student participants of the study

- PART OF A WIDER RESEARCH PROJECT:
  - Two aims underpinned by phenomenological descriptive & interpretive strategies
  - To produce eidetic & idiographic knowledge of the phenomenon



# BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Potentiality of practice placements	Potentiality of assessment in practice setting	Mixed practices & conceptions of assessment
Facilitating student learning & making curriculum more relevant	Enhancement of student learning & self-improvement	Two functions in HE: certification & enhancement of learning
Facilitating professional learning/identity	Enhancement of lifelong learning	Increasing challenge in student assessment experience
Preparing students for professional practice	Bridging practice & improvement in a wider sense	Limited focus on meaningful assessment
Boud & Solomon 2003; Boud & Falchikov 2005 2006; Laitinen-Väänänen 2008; Dall'Alba 2009; Webster-Wright 2009; Yorke 2011; Poikela 2012; Trede 2012; Thistlethwaite 2013	Segers & Dochy 2001; Morris 2003; Dornan et al. 2005; Clouder & Toms 2008; Boud 2000,2007; Boud & Falchikov 2005,2006; Morris & Stew 2013; Vuoskoski & Poikela 2015	Boud & Falchikov 2005,2006; Chikotas 2009; Deaney & Bragge 2009; Ashgar 2012; Ferns & Moore 2012; Dearnley et al 2013; Evans 2013; Molloy & Boud, 2013; Vuoskoski 2014

## SHORTAGE OF STUDIES ON:

- Assessment experiences
- Placement experiences
- Physiotherapy specific perspectives

## LITTLE HAS BEEN WRITTEN ON:

- Assessment related to placements
- Meaning of assessment
- Phenomenological perspectives

# RESEARCH CONTEXT



## THE PRACTICE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Complex learning environments challenge assessment strategies
- Current challenges of Health and Social Care
- Discontent with feedback and assessment
- National Student Survey (NSS, 2017)



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# RESEARCH CONTEXT (cont.)



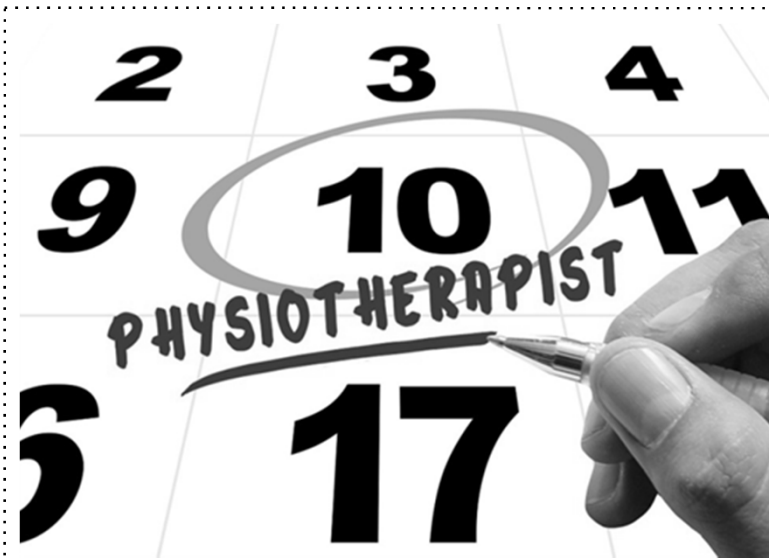
## TWO PRE-REGISTRATION COURSES AT UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON (BSc & MSc)

- The notion of student assessment refers to
  - Student assessment process
  - Professional practice setting
  - Integral & mandatory part of the HE process and course curriculum
  - 6-week period
  - Mandatory total of 1000 hours



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## RESEARCH CONTEXT (cont.)



### ASSESSMENT IN PRACTICE

- A mark contributing towards the degree classification
- The placement is marked/graded based on specific criteria within the assessment tool
- Senior physiotherapists in their role as practice educators facilitate and assess student learning



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# METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

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- A qualitative approach
- In-depth, interpretive strategies
- Underpinned by phenomenology and hermeneutics



# PHENOMENOLOGY & HERMENEUTICS

Shared interest in the human lifeworld,  
as the world of lived experiences

- Primacy of this subjective lifeworld and its relatedness to specific situations and contexts
- This world is directly given in our experience, fundamentally characterised by meaning
- Exploration of lived experiential meanings within phenomenological interpretive attitudes





# RESEARCH METHODS

- 
- Individual interviews of seven student volunteers (audiorecorded, transcribed verbatim, same interviewer)
  - In-depth interview techniques to seek as complete a description as possible of the assessment experience
  - Phenomenological interpretive analysis, two researchers meeting regularly after each step to reach collective understanding of the phenomenon



# EMERGING FINDINGS

(after analysing four transcriptions)

- Sense of dissonance between ‘learning’ and ‘marks’

*“Because my first one [placement]... I didn’t do too well mark-wise, but I got to see a lot and experience a lot, and learn a lot, but marking wise it wasn’t too great” (P1)*

*“That’s very clear on how to get good grades....it’s just that consistency part you need...so I could tick all the boxes in there, but whether I can actually show them to my educator ...it’s not clear how to...it is proving it” (P3)*



- Sense of dissonance between ‘learning’ and ‘marks’

*“we agreed on certain... certain things that I could do in my practice that would mean I would be in a certain grade boundary, and that was really helpful to begin with, knowing that I could go on for the rest of the placement thinking that actually if I do this I know I’m going to be roughly there, so... that was good for my practice so that I had something to aim towards really”*

(P2)



- Sense of variation in the educator's approach

Example of the 1<sup>st</sup> educator:

*“But I felt kind of more pressurised as they were there kind of looking at you, and seeing how you where doing it.. and it felt more.. like an exam” (P1)*

Example of the 2<sup>nd</sup> educator:

*“The educator was really relaxed... she would also step back a little bit... and be a little bit off the side.. I was used to feeling more comfortable.. and just allowing you to do as much as you can..” (P1)*



- Sense of being empowered

*“I was given the options of either recollecting of all my thoughts, or, if I felt ready, then we could discuss it.. and find out more of things that I ought to have looked over more, or that I’d done really well, and that would help me kind of reflect for the next time... on what I’ve done good” (P1)*

*“in reality ... on one I was given the opportunity to say first how I felt that I’d done and on the other it was very much led by her comments and we would go through those systematically” (P2)*



- Sense of being disempowered

- *“and sometimes it’s hard for them (the educators) to keep their mouth shut as well.... they say oh it was good you did that because of this.. but you don’t get a chance to say, well that’s what I was thinking, they kind of say it for you”(P3)*

- *“but I think when your on placement it’s hard for you to .. if your educator is saying something, you don’t want to say something and come across as being rude or undermining them, because they are the ones that are going to be grading you” (P 3)*



- Sense of reflection for learning

*“ the first week it was more spent watching her with the patients...asking questions....and after seeing a patient I would go everything with her which was good, so I was not just watching I was learning”*

*“and as the weeks went on...then it was, ok we want you to do a subjective assessment, so they would watch me to do that and then she would go over it with me....so it wasn't like I was left on my own”*

*“the beginning of week three I started doing all the objectives and the treatment plans again with her there, and a few times I was on my own, but they were always within reach, so I could go and say I wasn't sure about this” (P3)*



- Sense of using the assessment tool

*“when you said assessment process, for me, I immediately thought of the pink assessment form, which is ultimately where you get your grade from and that’s between your educator and you to look at the beginning, during your halfway and at the end” (P2)*

*“on the pink form they have boxes on the end that say, OK, end of placement... and what you have achieved, and that’s supposed to .. You’re supposed to discuss that with your educator, but I didn’t actually receive that, so there were no discussion with me and him and what we’re going to put in those boxes together” (P4)*





## EMERGING THOUGHTS/MEANINGS (continues)..

- Sense of dissonance between ‘learning‘ and ‘marks’
- Sense of variation in the educator’s approach
- Sense of being empowered
- Sense of being disempowered
- Sense of reflection for learning
- Sense of using the assessment tool



# Two parallel trains?



Two tasks  
of assessment  
in HE:  
Assessment for  
certification  
&  
Assessment for  
learning

(Falchikov & Boud  
2005; 2006)



# EMERGING IMPLICATIONS

- How can we increase the focus on assessment for learning without detracting from the need to assess for certification?
- How do we promote collaboration and partnership in assessment?





ANY QUESTIONS?