

The current situation in social work education in Papua New Guinea

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ABSTRACT

Across the developed world, schools of social work typically offer their field education programs in an organised fashion that meets the accreditation standards set down by the national accrediting professional association which, in turn are consistent with international standards. In developing countries this is not necessarily the case. This paper reports on a small research project that was conducted to review the current situation in social work education in Papua New Guinea, and to act as the basis for ongoing review and development of the offerings from one available program. While there is a high level of commitment to ensuring that students experience a positive field education experience, there are many challenges to be confronted, particularly at the structural level. In order to raise the standard of social work field education, institutional and structural barriers need to be addressed.

Keywords: *Fieldwork; field supervisors; international standards; review; social work; University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG)*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of social work education, there is general agreement among commentators over time that field education is a critical component of the curriculum and that field education is the place where classroom learning becomes integrated with practice (Fortune, McCarthy and Abramson 2001; Rai, 2004; Wong and Pearson 2007; Bogo, Litvack and Mishna 2010; Dhemba 2012; Holody and Kahn 2012). It is concerning then that in the context of the program offered through the University of Papua New Guinea; there has been a steady trend over the past three years of expressed need for improvement in the delivery of field education among field supervisors and students. There is a lack of resources and support for both students and field supervisors. While field supervisors are expected to provide learning opportunities for students to apply and develop their knowledge and skills, they do so in the absence of over-arching standards for the delivery of fieldwork education. At the same time, there is also very limited locally generated literature on social work education and none specifically on field education in Papua New Guinea.

Programs of social work education in developed countries are generally familiar with the need to offer field education in line with standards established by their accrediting bodies, usually the national social work association. At the University of Papua New Guinea, the field education program has largely developed in the absence of overarching standards. Staff in the Social Work Strand at the University have made a commitment to an ongoing process of review and research to remedy this situation and achieve their aim of being a premier source of social work education in the region. UPNG remains the only provider of social work education in PNG since its establishment as a course in “social welfare in developing communities” in 1972 and as an undergraduate bachelor of arts in social work in 1974 (Lawahin, 2012). Since then, with varying degrees of success, the program has maintained its commitment to promoting quality social work education outcomes.

Critical issues for consideration include the effectiveness of planning and coordination of the field education program by the University of Papua New Guinea staff; the extent to which the field education placement meets the student learning needs; the extent to which agency policy and program objectives are met through involvement with students on field education placement; and the extent to which the delivery of the University of Papua New Guinea’s field education program meets international social work education and training standards.

At the University of Papua New Guinea the intention is to construct field work as an integral component of social work education linking and validating classroom learning with the delivery of professional practice. Sewpaul and Jones (2004 and 2005) outline clear standards regarding the social work program curricula which schools should consistently aspire towards. Nash (2004) specifically provides a critique of those standards and also highlights areas to guide the delivery of social work field education in the Asia-Pacific Region. The emphasis is on aligning social work education and training in the region with international standards as well as allowing flexibility to embrace different contextual environments of individual countries.

This paper, therefore, sets out to describe and discuss a small research project undertaken, as the first part of a longer term process, to ensure that field education offered through the University of Papua New Guinea will reach a position where it is consistent with international standards and offers valuable learning experiences for the academic staff, field educators, social work service providers and the recipients of their services and social work students who are the key stakeholders. The study had formal approval by the relevant University Ethics Committee and the Social Work Strand at the University of Papua New Guinea formally consented to facilitate the data collection process, signifying their commitment to beginning a process of review and re-development of at least one unit of the social work education curriculum.

We begin by offering a brief overview of the Papua New Guinean context to help the reader gain understanding of the contextual issues that influence social work education in that country. We then explore some of the tensions in the international social work arena. We will then briefly outline the emergence of social work education in Papua New Guinea. After presenting the methodology that underpinned the research, the findings are presented concluding with a discussion of their implications for the ongoing development of social work education in PNG.

ABOUT PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Archaeological evidence suggests that human settlement in Papua New Guinea dates back some 60,000 years and that the first Europeans did not have contact until at least the sixteenth century. Lee (1985) reports Papua New Guinea as a largely Melanesian society, where the pre-capitalist way of life emphasised small communities occupying a village, or cluster of villages; kinship as the means of organising family and community life; and work allocated along the lines of men being responsible for defences and clearing of the land whilst women were responsible for agricultural work, child rearing and raising of pigs. However, Lee (1985) further noted that although this last was a valuable commodity used in exchanges, women did not have ownership of pigs.

Today, Papua New Guinea remains a nation in transition. Papua New Guinea has a history of colonisation dating from the nineteenth century and is Australia's only former colony. Papua New Guinea achieved independence in 1975 at a time when foreign aid accounted for 60% of government budget and 24% of Gross Domestic Product (Feeney, 2005). Following independence the approach of government was largely one of spending on consumption rather than investment with the consequence of limited spending on schools, health and roads (MacPherson, 1996). The government focus was on addressing immediate problems, thus there was little action on creating development initiatives that would improve livelihoods through income generation and secure wellbeing and autonomy for the future.

The total national population as at 12:30 pm on August 17, 2013, was estimated to be 7.310933 million and growing at the rate of 3% annually (Country Meters Info., 2013). Numerous problems have confronted, and continue to confront, the nation. Life expectancy is the lowest in the region, only a little over half of the population is literate

and agriculture remains the primary source of income for 85% of the population (Feeny 2005). There is a large mining sector that is highly capital intensive and only provides for 3% of employment (Feeny 2005). Following independence, economic growth remained slow and per capita incomes fell and there are concerns about the extent to which the mining boom will have direct impact on the lives of ordinary people (MacPherson 1996). There are also concerns about the rate of child labour and rates of school participation (MacPherson 1996).

In the contemporary context, young people aged 12 – 25 years constitute one third of the total population and of these 85% are concentrated in rural areas compared to urban area (Mafile'o and Api 2009). This is a problem despite a National Youth Movement Programme being introduced in 1980 at a time when educational opportunities, at even the most basic level were scarce, with 82% of young people not receiving any education or training. Such youth upon entering the workforce were confronted with little opportunity to achieve the social status and rewards associated with paid employment, leaving some to pursue a life as subsistence farmers and others to migrate to the cities and live by semi-criminal activity (Mills 1989).

In the broad higher education context, teaching has been identified as a national priority though, in common with other countries in the region, funds for universities have declined in real terms and the quality of libraries is varied (Braddock 2002). At the same time the universities of the region are responsible for a significant proportion of the research in the country while lacking the resources necessary to carry out large scale research projects (Braddock 2002). It is therefore critical that the higher education sector in Papua New Guinea establishes its own research agenda, avoiding academic dependency on other nations, and putting their own tacit knowledge into practice rather than relying on knowledge provided from other nations (Gerke and Evers, 2006). The research presented in this discussion is clearly consistent with this imperative, reflecting endeavours to address a locally identified problem and to identify solutions that are contextually responsive and feasible while also meeting the standards internationally to guide the profession.

DEBATES IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

To trace the development of social work and social work education and to explore tensions in international social work is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead a brief summary of some key debates and tensions is presented by way of contextualising our discussion.

Social work as currently conceived, is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging from the secularisation of the welfare role of organised religion in Western society during the nineteenth century. The concept is essentially a construct of Judaeo/Christian values (Payne 2005). Social work practice is a product of modernity. The social sciences that began to emerge in the nineteenth century sought to explain people, society and the human condition (Howe 1994; McDonald 2006). There are widely divergent views about the nature of social work and no universally accepted idea of valid knowledge, skills or expertise for professional practice (Payne 2001; Asquith, Clark and Waterhouse 2005).

Regardless of its location, social work remains vested in humanitarian ideals, concerned about the amelioration of social problems, support and empowerment, advocacy and negotiation (Lyons 1999). The postmodern approach offers opportunities to move beyond the western model of casework and the privileging of the western paradigm which is relevant to more developed contexts, by viewing indigenous approaches as equally valid and worthy of promotion in developing settings like PNG. As such there is need for us to think in terms not of difference, but of interdependence and interconnectedness (Payne 2005; Lyons 2006).

The development of social work in non-Western countries has been linked to the stage of economic development the particular country is experiencing (Cox 1995). It is argued that the establishment and development of social work is not possible without some sense of movement beyond the traditional lifestyle (Cox 1995). Thus it becomes possible to understand the trend of countries seeking to import the available forms of social work, but then later becoming dissatisfied with its goodness of fit with the local context, giving rise to the key debates around localisation and globalisation. There are divisions about the commitment of the profession to internationalising, the extent to which social work values can be universal and what forms social work practice should take (Gray and Fook 2004). This latter tension is around the extent to which social work should remain remedial and the extent to which it should become developmental (Midgley 2001).

The indigenisation of social work refers to a process of relating the social work and social work education function to the cultural, political and social realities of a particular country (Gray and Fook 2004; Gray 2005). Indigenisation is based on dissatisfaction with the dominant paradigm. Indigenisation involves the crystallisation of local traditions and thought and using local thought to challenge and refine methods and models from the Western school (Ferguson 2005).

Calls for indigenisation reflect feelings of discontent with the imported model of social work practice, to an extent that the recipient country identifies incongruities with the Western model (Ferguson 2005). The need for indigenisation reflects a position that social work, as defined by Western standards, is only available to a minority of the world's population (Tsang and Yan 2001). The reality for developing countries is that governments and community organisations have been struggling to find responses to social problems in the absence of a fully developed social work profession (Tsang and Yan 2001). In such contexts, indigenisation is not only a professional concern, but also an assertion of local autonomy. Social work therefore needs to operate at local, national and global level, each being an important site to effect change (Ife 2001). It is no longer only at the national level that social workers need to advocate for changed social policies.

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The emergence of social work and social work education appears to have its roots in the development process in that some level of development beyond the traditional lifestyle is needed to enable social work to take root as governments search for responses to the problems associated with modernisation (Cox 1995).

In the Asia Pacific Region, according to Cox and Britto (1986), curriculum development was affected by national objectives and manpower requirements. On the ground at the local level, the development of field education was affected by numerous challenges and only tenuous links occurred with international associations. On both local and regional fronts there was a focus on developing indigenous models of social work education and practice that were culturally relevant to the local context, and rejecting what Haug (2005) described as the presumption that dominant international social work discourses were universally applicable and superior to other traditions.

The University of Papua New Guinea was founded in 1965 in a context of rapid social and political change leading up to independence in 1975 (O'Collins 1973, 1993). This process of change heightened the awareness of the need for trained personnel to deliver developmental, preventative and remedial social welfare tasks (O'Collins 1973, 1993). Accordingly, the University appointed its first lecturer in social work in 1971 (O'Collins 1973) and the professional program leading to a Bachelor of Arts (BA in Social Work) was delivered from 1974.

The program was accredited by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in the same year and the Social Work Strand has regularly renewed its membership with this body and with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The accreditation status remains to be reactivated, as there is need to review the UPNG social work program and create a clear relationship between the academic program and the PNG Social Workers Association (PNGSWA) which are responsible for reviewing and renewing accreditation. The PNGSWA was established in the 1970s, but has since been struggling to fully function to be able to develop standards to guide the delivery of the broad social work education and the specific requirements of the fieldwork education program. An evolving partnership with another university which has been described elsewhere (Brydon, Kamasua, Flynn, Mason, Au, Ayius and Hampson 2012) has acted to give impetus through a peer relationship, to begin a broad review of multiple issues. While this is a university-to-university partnership, the similar arrangements are needed for the PNGSWA to form a sustainable mentoring relationship with another similar professional association or better still with IASSW and IFSW.

The intention of the social work education program was:

through social work practice, the social work program will continue to respond to the welfare and social development needs of Papua New Guinea and the international community (Yeates 1982 cited in O'Collins 1993 p.81).

However, there are questions about the extent to which the visionary statement has been translated into reality. There have been minimal research and publications from the social work strand even though the social work education program has graduated some of the finest leaders in the country since its inception. The strand contributes to the development of knowledge and practice of working with people and communities and continues to address current social realities and challenges (Social Work Strand Handbook 2010). The program endeavors to foster the development of graduates committed to social

justice, equality, participation and empowerment of communities, and research and curriculum development in the context of a rapidly changing and globally interdependent environment. Social justice, human dignity, equality and participation are recognized as goals of social work practice.

Some of the challenges confronting academic staff at UPNG Social Work Strand in the contemporary context include lack of reliable access to internet resources and international literature, high workloads, needing to run the field education program over the Christmas break when the university is formally in recess, and continuous budgetary challenges. There are also challenges in meeting agency protocols, lack of a usable database on agencies available for fieldwork, challenges in time management and coordination, and challenges in enacting a participatory approach to planning and delivery of fieldwork courses among academics, students and field supervisors.

SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The study program offers an undergraduate social work qualification and opportunities for enrolment in an Honours program and postgraduate study at the Masters level. Students entering the course direct from completed secondary level enter into the degree Bachelor of Arts in Social Work. Students who are not school leavers, but who have a minimum of acceptable professional work experience are eligible for entry into the Bachelor of Arts (Professional Studies, Social Work). The field education component is offered through the subjects Social Work Practice A and B at the third year level of study and Advanced Fieldwork as the final practicum which are taken only by students enrolling for Bachelor of Arts in Social Work. Bachelor of Arts (Professional Studies) students do not do fieldwork because they have already been practicing social work and are needing a recognized qualification in the profession.

While there is a formal professional social work body, it has yet to be able to realise its aims in relation to the definition and implementation of guidelines pertinent to social work education and practice. Consequently, there are no established local standards that are consistent with international ideals to guide the development and delivery of social work field education curriculum at the University of Papua New Guinea. A particular challenge is the lack of published information specifically concerning field education in Papua New Guinea and it was possible to locate only four articles that even alluded to the topic (O'Collins 1973, 1993; Lovai 2003; Brydon et al., 2012).

The impacts of the absence of internationally trustworthy local standards and benchmarks have been evident. The field education program structure, placement planning approaches and processes and tools used appear to compromise successful outcomes for field education. Resources and support for the field education program has been one of the greatest setbacks for the social work training at the University of Papua New Guinea. Prior to this study, there has been no known review of the University of Papua New Guinea Social Work Field-work Program. Further, the literature pertaining to comparative programs across the Pacific Region (i.e. University of the South Pacific) is extremely limited. However, Lee (2002) and Kwong (1993) point out some of these problem areas also exist elsewhere. Common problems they

identify include how academic content and field experience are integrated; conflicting demands of job and field instruction responsibilities; need for the setting of transparent standards for the evaluation of students; training for both new and experienced field supervisors, communication between schools and agencies; and attention to the qualification and needs of students. To achieve needed change, the university's field education course coordinators, field supervisors and students must be prepared to be proactive in order to address these issues. In order for this to happen, institutional and structural developments must be undertaken to facilitate needed changes in the field education program at UPNG.

Despite the challenges, the UPNG Social Work Strand has informal but strong links with health and human service providers, community development programs, NGOs, churches, donor funded projects and government who have continued to offer placements for social work students. These links and partnerships reflect a Melanesian tradition that emphasises personal relationships over organizational and institutional standards. This tradition is built on communal care and support and a value of a wantok (friend) as an important social protection mechanism. This is the strength and foundation by which many Melanesian communities are built and is one of the main reasons the UPNG Social Work Fieldwork and students' placement program has survived without embracing international standards thus far.

Placements provide students with the opportunity to gain practical experience in an approved social work setting, putting their academic learning, skills and attitudes in social work practice through experience, practice and reflection (Social Work Strand 2012; O'Collins 1993).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted as part of Master of Social Work (MSW) studies, and ethical approval was gained from the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencement of the study. This research utilised a qualitative, exploratory approach. This approach is used to contribute to the process of developing research knowledge as the researcher observes, interviews, records, describes, interprets, and evaluates the settings as they are (Alston and Bowles 2003; Finlay 2012). The importance of qualitative research lies in enabling an exploration of the participants' multiple realities and experiences of the social phenomena under study. To deepen our understanding of this social phenomenon, the researchers used structured and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to gain insights into the issues pertinent to field education. The data collection strategy involved two focus groups: one for academics and one involving field supervisors. All were purposively selected for their knowledge of field education in PNG and invited to participate. Research participants were also given an opportunity to participate in individual interviews if they wished. In total there were two focus groups and ten individual interviews. The main aim of the interviews was to gauge the experiences and views of academics and field supervisors on current challenges to redevelop social work, particularly field education, at UPNG that is relevant to the PNG context and consistent with the global social work profession.

The primary research question was:

“What should the University of Papua New Guinea fieldwork program look like?”

Within this broad context we sought to understand the current practices in delivering the field education program; whether these practices meet international social work standards and stakeholder expectations; and the preferred ways forward to improve the delivery of field education. Similar specific questions were tailored for different audiences to gather research information which included: what the purpose of fieldwork is, roles of different players in fieldwork, what standards exist that guide the education and practice of social work student fieldwork at UPNG, what are the challenges of delivery and supervision in fieldwork and what is the way forward to redevelop social work education at UPNG? Qualitative analysis was done with the collected data, and the findings were discussed using a thematic method. Findings were analysed and discussed according to the research objectives and the themes that emerged from the information gathered. Although there was a small sample of research participants, the data was relevant to the objective of the research.

The study had several limitations including considering only a small group of research participants (n = 10), and it did not consider the views of the students who are arguably critical stakeholders. Recruitment was limited to participants from the National Capital District in Port Moresby. The primary strengths of the research are that it represents a first time effort to undertake a detailed review of the field education and it details and explores some of the challenges confronting social work education in developing countries as they strive to be locally relevant and globally responsive.

WHAT WAS LEARNED?

It was encouraging to find a high degree of convergence among all research participants that emphasised their understanding of fieldwork education as being centrally concerned with the integration of classroom learning and direct practice:

to give students exposure to the practice that we are doing and for them to try and connect that with the theory that they were taught in class

(an academic focus group and supervisor participant).

... to provide opportunities for students to participate in real professional social work practice settings and apply social work theories, principles and models learnt in class

(supervisor participants).

It is like an initiation into the social work profession where students are guided by professional social work practitioners to demonstrate the applicability of the social work knowledges they have acquired. Dhemba (2012), Johnson, Bailey and Padmore (2012), and Maidment (2000) all identify fieldwork as preparing students for professional practice. In PNG culture, initiation is understood as about trial and testing of qualities and abilities before being proclaimed as being ready to take on something. This is what happens in initiation into manhood.

The research participants also identified a number of strengths associated with the program, noting that it builds, maintains and consolidates both networks and relationships between the university and local social service organisations and communities in the area. This was highlighted by one research participant who indicated:

... it maintains and consolidates the relationship between my organization and UPNG Social Work Strand for ongoing collaboration in student fieldwork (a supervisor participant).

In general, both academics and field supervisors conceptualised the fieldwork education program as contributing to the development of human resources in Papua New Guinea. Further, the students who participated in the program generally displayed a positive attitude towards their fieldwork placements and generally contributed to agency dynamics in a positive way.

The research participants also raised issues in need of attention regarding planning and delivery aspects of fieldwork education. A critical challenge hindering the development and delivery of locally relevant and globally responsive social work education and professional practice was identified to be the absence of national social work education standards and less regard of embracing international standards. In particular, the research participants who held academic positions focussed on the broader spectrum of compliance with national and international standards while the field educators were more concerned with institutional standards at the university and the capacity of the field to deliver positive fieldwork education experiences.

.... we need to do research on the internet and see what other schools are doing and align our program to bring it up to some generally acceptable standard (an academic participant).

... more should be done in getting students prepared and identifying their fieldwork placements and not just leaving them choosing themselves. Rather than students coming to us, academics or fieldwork coordinator come to us to discuss relevant processes and procedures that are involved in fieldwork, (2 supervisor participants).

... given the university does not have insurance or health cover for students and with fieldwork as important learning component of social work, students must consult with parents before travelling out to other provinces or rural communities. We take it for granted that no one is going to fall off and die, have an accident or run over by a vehicle and parents won't come demanding money for compensation (an academic focus group and participant and a supervisor participant).

A critical challenge in re-developing the fieldwork education program is the extent to which standards can simultaneously conform to international standards and to local conditions. A particular aspect of local conditions concern the so-called PNG (Melanesian) way of life. One way to align these variables could be to:

.... go out, catch up for lunch or a coffee and then talk about fieldwork other than through normal formal communication channels and that is the kind of relationship and friendship

that we value in PNG. For example if I don't know you, I could not have made time for this interview. It is a relationship that we have developed earlier than your current study which matters (a supervisor participant).

This is seen as a critical issue. The PNG (Melanesian) culture plays a significant part in local life although there is nothing specifically written down about how this might influence the delivery of fieldwork education. Central to the concept is the notion of 'whom you know' regardless of whether this is through professional or individual association. It is through this and long invisible but strong partnership with our traditional partners that UPNG fieldwork has survived this far.

Social support systems, according to the Melanesian way, are all about friendship and family ties. The fundamental values of generosity and kindness for your kinsmen in PNG are an unconditional social support system. Family and community network is important and the informal networks that exist are vital in PNG society. This is the kind of structure that is inbuilt in the context we work in. We have always fallen back on our Melanesian support network and system (families, social support networks, and friends) for our nourishment and support in the worst of times.

The results suggested there is a functional social work program at UPNG. However, there are challenges to be addressed. The main positive from the study is that the program contributes to the development of human resources of PNG and is functional despite difficulties faced.

The participants also proposed actions that need to be taken to improve on current practice issues. Generally, the proposed actions tend to call for embracing and contextualizing international social work training standards and eventual development of PNG specific minimum standards of social work education including fieldwork (Nash, 2004). Recruitment of a full time fieldwork coordinator was considered the first step to developing fieldwork that meets the requirements of a global social work profession.

DISCUSSION

While there is clearly a range of issues that require attention both in the immediate future and over time, perhaps the most exciting aspect of the findings relate to the issue of the Melanesian way of life. These approaches and strategies by their form and nature have been built on Melanesian tradition. This tradition is built on values embedded in Melanesian societies like Papua New Guinea. These values are communal egalitarianism with a life steeped in notions of communal care and support to each other (Maladede 2006). With such a closely knitted relationship, there is strong valuing and enactment of a Wantok System. This is a system often misconceived as a corrupt way of doing things in public office, with a perception of it leading to lack of development and other negative consequences. On reflection however these values are commonplace in global fieldwork education because they revolve around cooperation, participation and partnership in developing and delivering fieldwork in professional social work education. In the absence

of established standards and the capacity to enact them, these values are what have been keeping the PNG fieldwork program functional.

The Melanesian culture of Papua New Guinea plays a significant part in any development work in Papua New Guinea. Unfortunately, there is nothing written on specific Melanesian Ways that should be observed in fieldwork. The study established how our practices, strategies and procedures including processes add value to our fieldwork program. From the study, the UPNG Fieldwork Program embraces the PNG Way in delivering and managing its student fieldwork placements. It is derived within the National Goals and Directive Principles as enshrined in our Constitution specified in Goal 5: Papua New Guinean Ways.

While there are many indications that the fieldwork program has been developed along the lines of the Melanesian Way, this does not appear to have been clearly identified and articulated as a guiding framework and there has been no conscious effort to develop this model on a fashion that is consistent with the stated established standards. These findings, therefore, represent an opportunity for the UPNG fieldwork program to clearly articulate its standards for the fieldwork education program in a fashion that is simultaneously consistent with both the Melanesian Way and international expectations of social work education. In other words, the program is poised to develop a truly indigenised approach to field education.

CONCLUSION

While it clearly appears that the fieldwork program studied has been delivered through the Melanesian (PNG) Way, both strengths and challenges in its operations have been identified. While proud of valuing a Melanesian approach to organizing student placements and delivering fieldwork in doing so we pay less attention to equally embraced international standards set for the education and training of the social work profession.

Mills (2002), in referring to the University of the South Pacific, raises a number of issues pertinent to Papua New Guinea including the lack of professionally trained human resources personnel; fragmentation of services and no focal point for social planning; social problems on the rise in all welfare sectors; and a need to ensure that social workers possess skills that are directly relevant to the context in which they work. Mafile'o and Api (2009) urge that, in the absence of well-developed formal support services, the focus of practice ought to rest on recognising and harnessing the strengths of informal supports, a position clearly consistent with the PNG (Melanesian) way of life. This view recognises the local contextual factors that shape approaches to social work education generally and fieldwork education in particular.

Notwithstanding contextual variables, social work students need to be equipped with a level of skill at the time of graduation that will enable them to practice in an acceptable fashion. We have argued, as have others, that the field education placement is a critical aspect of student preparation. To deliver a high standard of field education, the placement experience needs to be embedded in culturally and contextually relevant and appropriate standards.

This discussion has highlighted some of the challenges inherent in offering a well-developed and conceptually sound field education program in the context of a developing country where the professional association has struggled to offer the leadership that is somewhat taken for granted in developing countries.

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