Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education

A refereed journal of the Australian Association for Social Work and Welfare Education

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Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education

Volume 6, Number 1

September 2004

Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education is published by the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Education, c/- School of Social Work and Social Policy, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia.

Printed by Printing Edge Melbourne Pty Ltd, Preston.

ISSN 1329-0584

This issue is dedicated to the memories of
Wendy Weeks and Frances Killion

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Women, Social Work and Identity: Building a Global Community

In 2004 the journal is pleased to see six papers encompassing an eclectic mix of ideas, research and theoretical positioning. They point to a healthy level of research and debate within our Universities on social work and welfare education. Three of the papers have identity and image of social work as the overarching theme. Four of the papers emphasise the gendered nature of social work and welfare practice. Women are central not only to human service practice, but to our ideas of what constitutes practice.

Social work has focused much of its energy for nearly one hundred years on whether it is a profession or not. The debate on social work as a profession does not appear to go away. The debate centres on the nature of the social work task and the gendered nature of practice. Helen Cameron's paper outlines a study of new graduates and their perception of social work as a profession. This includes how clients and other professions perceive social work. The data suggested that the practitioners' perception was that social work was poorly appreciated by both clients and other professional groups. Cameron concludes with a number of suggestions that social work needs to take on board to overcome this 'negative' image.

Ione Lewis' paper continues the theme of professional identity, which emerged in Helen Cameron's earlier paper. This indepth study of practitioners focuses on their overlapping identities as social workers and counsellors. Lewis's study provides three categories of practitioners – those with strong identification with social work; those who have ambivalent identity with social work and those with negative images. Lewis concludes that social work's identity is much more complex and nuanced. She presents data on all three groups and makes it clear that identity is a complex issue and essentially heterogenous in nature.

The history of social work is a vast empty desert. Bits and pieces of the Australian 'story' are being written and put together by a small band of researchers. The paper by Lesley Hughes contributes to our 'story' of social work in Australia. Her paper continues the theme of the 'undervalued' nature of women's work in the human services ('undervalued' by men). She couples this with the specific story of Catholic nuns and their role in the nineteenth century. This is a fascinating case study of the leadership 'styles' of religious women and how that shaped their human service activity. Lesley Hughes argues that there are lessons to be learnt for present day human service organisations from this style of women's leadership.

Human service education has focused strongly on skills development. However, until recently skills were defined narrowly within the lens of interpersonal helping. Human service practice is now much more technologically driven than ever before. Education is paramount so that the practitioner drives technology not the other way around. Darren de Warren and Joanna Mensinga provide a wonderful case study of innovative education using ICT. The course builds upon a community and using technology to further social work practice. It is team focused and mirrors the reality of practice in

rural and regional Australia. The course is embedded in experiential learning and continues the innovative educational practices in Australia.

Ruth Phillips' paper provides an important introduction to the notion of Global Social Policy. The internationalisation of economies has dramatic implications for the 'type' of social policies that are generated. To understand social policy development in Australia it is important to place it in its international context. As part of the global economy, material and cultural forces shape the policy debates. Phillips' paper acknowledges the internationalisation of social work practice, as social workers join many other professions in being part of a global workforce. She extols the importance of social workers understanding economics. Without access to this language, which dominates policy debates, social work will become marginalised.

Carolyn Noble continues the debate in her paper. In a richly textured theoretical paper, Noble provides the reader with an argument for restructuring social work education. This is to face the challenge of global capital. She notes the challenges within universities as discipline-based knowledge becomes splintered, restructured and transformed into transdisciplinary knowledge. Universities are no longer the only 'custodians' of knowledge but are a competing player on the information age. Social work she argues needs to move from its focus on acquiring its 'own discreet skills and knowledge as these are no longer relevant'.

Noble argues that social work has to 'wrestle with the postmodern world of uncertainty, polarisation, fragmentation, and radical relativity'. There is resonance with the earlier papers on the debate on social work identity. Echoing de Warren and Mensinga, Noble calls for experiential learning to transform social work education. She provides helpful 'guides' to what that would constitute. Carolyn leaves us with many questions but she has provided many satisfying answers. It is a journey into restructuring social work education, a journey all of the contributors share.

In Vale – Darren de Warren and Joanna Mensinga's paper is dedicated to Associate Professor Frances Killion who died this year. Frances established the course at Central Queensland University and all of us will feel the loss of a wonderful woman full of energy.

The journal also wishes to express its deep sadness and sorrow on the death of Associate Professor Wendy Weeks. Besides her many gifts, activities and accolades Wendy was a strong supporter, tireless worker on behalf of and committed to the building of the Australian Association for Social Work and Welfare Education.

We will miss them both and dedicate this issue to them.

Peter Camilleri

Imaging the Profession: Social Work in Focus

Helen Cameron

Introduction

This paper provides a reading of social work through the eyes of a group of social work practitioners. The current classification of human endeavor, raising some occupations whilst diminishing others, is based largely on historical, cultural and gender based factors. This means some occupations are more readily categorised as professional in nature, whereas others are consciously or unconsciously left out of this grouping, rendering their practitioners burdened with lower occupational self-esteem. This paper reports on a study of the perceptions of a group of social work practitioners about their own profession.

Literature Review

Social work is dogged by challenges to its professional status, yet this is complex and contested turf, especially in the deregulated world in which Australian social workers practice. In asking recently qualified social workers to consider perceptions of their status in others' eyes I set them a difficult task as there remains considerable lack of agreement even about what it means to be a professional in current society.

Defining Professional Status

There is undoubtedly a kind of intuitive process at play in any process that asks populations to rate occupations and this is linked to socially perceived 'prestige', as Coxon and Jones (1978) term it, in comparing various occupational groups. As well, the opinions of populations have the potential to shift over time as particular groups rise or fall from public favour, or as new occupations emerge. Becker (1970, p. 93) stresses the role that intuition plays in estimating the social standing of occupations and suggests that the term profession is a kind of 'honorific symbol' that is part of social convention, deeply imbedded in society. In support of this idea, Coxon and Jones (1978, p. 31) point out that people give much the same ordering of occupational standing over many diverse studies. As Becker (1970, p. 93) suggests, individuals know what a profession is at an almost intuitive level of recognition.

The groups firmly placed in the professional camp by this general 'folk view', include some that never stray far from the top of the professional category in occupational studies such as by Ganzeboom and Treiman (1996) in the USA, and Jones and

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McMillan (2001) in Australia. Medicine and law are invariably included in this elite club, firmly established there by virtue of historical tradition, seemingly indelibly so, despite social criticisms about professional conduct in both groups, though especially so in law. However, why these and some others are firmly 'in' the professional club whereas others have more shaky status or are definitely 'out' is less clear.

Professional status appears to be influenced by variables of gender and patriarchy as is suggested by Witz (1992). It is no accident that occupational groups termed 'people-working professions' are frequently those dominated by female workers and with lower social standing. People-working professions are differentiated from others through their emphasis on 'transfer of knowledge, not just the use of it' according to Bennett and Hokenstad (1973, p. 35) this immediately suggesting some lack of definition in professional expertise or at least the public recognition of it. In the mid 1900s, Hall describes 'women's work' as 'teaching, nursing and social work and librarianship' (Hall 1969, p. 327). These professions have consistently been dominated by females and rated lower than others, as in Jones and McMillan (2001) as well as in the survey of practitioners conducted for this study. As well, the Senate Committee (1998) notes that 'promotional positions are also dominated by men'. This is an example of occupational gender closure again, as discussed by Witz (1992), operating even within a profession with predominance of females, related to the 'glass ceiling' that women encounter in their attempts to gain promotion or positions of influence within many professions and for many women in a so-called 'female profession' this implies considerable insult.

Pringle (1994, p. 208) proposes that 'notions of creative genius' are essentially male in nature, or at least are defined by males as such. Although she does not make the connection so plainly, it is inferred that people-working professions do not require this sort of 'creative genius' and are thus considered more suitable for females. This is a flawed argument and does not explain why the few men who enter these occupations do so well in the promotional stakes. Witz (1992, p. 3) suggests that most analyses about professions and work 'continue to reproduce...professional men's own construction of their gendered self-image'. She also thinks that a revised analysis of 'gender and professions...is long overdue' and addresses this gap as she further unpacks the construction of work, gender and patriarchy in modern society. Witz describes the continuing intrusive impact of patriarchy, along with the persistence of capitalism, in shaping 'middle-class women's lives' (Witz 1992, p. 34).

Historical perspectives have affirmed the gender divide. Hughes (1973) noted the need for grades or levels of professions with some being more professionally developed than others, synchronous with commentators such as Etzioni (1969) and his theme of *semi-professions*. However, categorisations such as 'semi-profession' are unhelpful if they become permanent labels, as seems to be the case with the people-working groups like social workers, teachers and nurses. For instance, these groups are often discussed as though they are recently developed occupations, still maturing, even though all have been a part of society much longer than some others, such as computer programming and nuclear science. A tag like 'semi-profession' can be a life sentence to an occupation in a society that defines some workers as fully-fledged professionals - and others as lesser creatures. Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1964) also refer positively to the idea of grades of professions and categorise some occupational groups as less than fully developed in this regard. They clearly define some as

outside the club, for instance because they are *state controlled* (eg. predominately state employed as in nursing, teaching and social work to some extent). As such, these are seen as less than fully professional primarily because they are not independent in terms of their earning (ie. fee-setting) capacity. However, we live in unstable times and social forces are changing the definition of work.

Does the Professional Tag Improve People-Workers' Status?

A number of commentators suggest that newly developed occupational groups wishing to raise their profile to that of the more established professions, could do better than to seek to emulate their attributes and qualities. For instance, Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist (1990, pp. 204-205) refer to restrictive professional definitions as being more about a profession's 'energetic propagation...of their own definitions of what they are, what they are doing and what it is that entitles them to be called a profession'. They point to the tendency of existing professions to 'demand a monopoly of services as well as freedom from control by others' (Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist 1990, pp. 222-223) and this may not be good for professional standards. Freidson (1994, p. 28) recognises some concerns about an occupational group moving towards professionalisation when it appears it might be using such a claim to gain better standing or higher fees. Burbles and Densmore (1991, p. 45) are uneasy about lower ranking groups scrabbling after professional recognition, as they suggest this creates barriers between workers and their clients – such as teachers and students/families or nurses and their patients. However, a dignified claiming of the right to call oneself a professional could avoid this unseemly clutching at recognition.

Abounding cynicism about the older professions highlights further questions about the value of newer groups claiming professional status. There are many concerns about the behavioural and moral standards of members of professions and about how well they deal with 'the complexity of social and ethical problems' in current society according to Sadar (2000, p. 26). In this sense, both the ancient mysteries of the traditional professions *and* their modern competencies have come under question. In these litigious days, professional groups are no longer protected from the public gaze by the smoke and mirrors of professional mystery. Sadar (2000, p. 27) suggests people no longer accept that professions possess 'innate moral superiority', and that 'technical expertise' does not always equal 'moral enlightenment'. It seems that professions are increasingly required to open up aspects of their practice to outside evaluation and are subject to assessments of their effectiveness.

Burbules and Densmore (1991, p. 45) are quite sure that 'mimicking traditional professions such as law and medicine' will not befit the teaching profession. They see professional status as implying more formalism, resulting in teachers being distanced from their students. They also see teaching's claims on professional standing as leading (paradoxically) to increased demands for accountability and surveillance of teacher productivity (Burbules and Densmore 1991, p. 45). They conclude that '(R)ather than relying on an undemocratic concept that connotes privilege, special status and the superiority of mental over manual labor', teachers need to emphasise their 'common purposes and commitments to education' (Burbules and Densmore 1991, p. 60).

Healy (2000, pp. 88, 89) sees professionalism, and in particular social workers' professional expertise, as a deeply ambivalent issue. The clients in Healy's study were scathing and dismissive of social work expertise. From a client perspective, views about what is professional expertise, and who are respected professionals, came down to whether a worker 'has something 'technical' to offer them, such as birthing or medical services' (Healy 2000, p. 88). This questions whether non-medical and non-technical groups - like social work and teaching - can gain much by just claiming professional status for themselves, especially in the eyes of their clients. Becker (1970, pp. 87-103) also thinks the symbol of the 'professional' has lost its currency as it:

> ...ignores such facts as the failure of professions to monopolize their area of knowledge, the lack of homogeneity within professions, the frequent failure of clients to accept professional judgement, the chronic presence of unethical practitioners as an integrated segment of the professional structure, and the organizational constraints on professional autonomy. (Becker 1970, p. 103)

It appears that some occupational groups seem destined by their history to struggle endlessly with questions about their right to be seen as professions and social work is certainly one of these. Abbott has a view that social work *has* a 'good' professional definition, a 'public image based on a character trait' - that of *altruism* (Abbott 1995, p. 561) - the idea of social workers as 'do-gooders'. He says this soft image has persisted, despite social work's best efforts to define its work as based on scientific research, or to find a place within communities of scientific research. This claim on scientific status is made by a range of writers in the USA and Australia, such as Thyer (2001), Roseman, O'Connor and Healy (1998), and Crisp (2000). However, Abbott believes neither the public generally, nor those who employ social workers are convinced of its scientific persona, and that in general social workers continue to be viewed as idealistic *do-gooders* - not scientists. He also considers that the public is right to view social workers as altruistic - because he says that generally they are. He points out that social workers toil for 'pathetic salaries' and are connected through their daily work with the least admired sectors of society - the poor, the dysfunctional and the criminal - all of which are 'politically controversial'. For all this, social workers put up with loss of public esteem and reputation through their association with their clients (Abbott 1995, p. 561) – and all this certainly sounds like altruistic work.

Jones (2000) adds that social work, in attempting to secure a professional position for itself, has done itself no favours. He believes social work's push (or that of the AASW) to maintain tight control over education and entry standards, exclusionary attitudes towards other human service workers and bids for registration by title, have and will work against support for social work in Australia. He terms such an approach the 'aspirant model of professionalism', and contrasts this with the 'critique model' that views such moves towards greater professionalism as attempts to claim illegitimate power and prestige in society (Jones 2000, pp. 156, 157). Healy (2000) also expresses some ambivalence about social work claiming professional status and demonstrates the underlying problem of indefinable expertise (p.88). Jones (2000) believes claiming professional status will not advantage social work in current society and refers to Abbott's (1995) analysis of the boundaries - or lack of - between many professions in modern times, and particularly in the social services field. What he

highlights here of course, is the deregulated field in which social workers find their employment these days, echoing Healy's (2000) analysis of indeterminate expertise. However, Jones (2000, p. 155) does see social work needing to organise itself and to be more enterprising if it is to retain a place in Australia's current economy and this suggests increasing its professional definition and status through the best means available.

The study described in this paper is a product of my concern about how well we prepare students for social work practice in the Australian context. It is apparent that social work is a complex and poorly understood aspect of human endeavour. Therefore, its practitioners are often lacking in occupational self-esteem and deserve support in regaining a sense of pride in their work and their profession. The paper provides an arena for the expression of practitioners' views about their profession. The academic workplace can be very distant in focus from that of the social worker in the suburbs of a large city, or in regional centres and rural locations. Many of the practitioners surveyed in this study felt ill-equipped through their university education to manage the challenges of the work awaiting them on graduation. They deserve better and I hope that this paper will benefit my students - past, present and future - and their professional educators.

Methodology

The data discussed in this paper were gleaned primarily through interviews with a small number of practitioners. The research approach has been a qualitative one, where comments from my respondents are used to illustrate and expand ideas emanating from the previous review of the literature.

Primary Data Sources and Sampling

Primary data collection entailed the conduct of indepth interviews with a sample of social work practitioners. The population from which the samples for this study were drawn comprises recent graduates from a four-year Australian social work qualification that is AASW approved. All of the interview respondents have been employed in social work/human service positions for between one to around four years, since graduation, between 1998 and 2001. The limitation of the sample group in terms of recent graduation is to ensure those surveyed have some recent professional work experience, enabling them to offer informed commentary on the context points of this study.

Through access to university records, I gained a database containing the names and addresses of graduates over the years mentioned. A questionnaire (not discussed in this paper) was distributed by mail to all those on these lists. Thus a modified form of cluster sampling was employed as defined by ABS (1989, p. 31). Due to the focus of the study and the homogenous nature of the cluster sample (ie. all recent social work graduates from the same program) the risk of sampling error is reduced (ABS 1989, p. 7).

The sample for the interviews, some responses from which are included in this paper, was gained through a written invitation to participate, posted out with the survey. All

those who returned the slip were contacted but some of these were unable to be included for a range of circumstances. The sample of practitioners able to be interviewed was small in number (11) and comprised 10 females and one male. The interview sample represents 17.5% of those who completed the questionnaire. Respondents were all working in positions in the human services field. Three were working in Family and Youth Services – including child protection work – (within the South Australian Department of Human Services – DHS) and one was in a management role in DHS. Two were in non-government family support services, two were in hospital-based social work positions, one was in a women's support service that included domestic violence work, one worked in a correctional setting and one was located interstate as a social worker in an Indigenous setting.

Results

Australian social workers practice in a wide range of contexts. As well, in working with their clients, they encounter many other professions in their day-to-day work. It is apparent in the following data that they are fully aware of what their clients and practitioners from other professions think about their profession. However, it is apparent that most respondents see others' perceptions and attitudes as hurdles to negotiate, not as insurmountable obstacles in their work.

How They Think Their Clients See Them

The interviewees offered comments about how their clients view them and their work, and this commentary reveals several themes, including the vexed issue of child protection work. As in the media, or possibly because of it, it seems that some clients have incomplete or inaccurate views of social work roles and functions. One respondent said 'They have heard about us - but it is not clear to them what we do'. Another suggested 'They see us as nosy and a bit almighty - especially if we are working with involuntary clients or in child protection work'. Several commented about the impact of social work's history in child welfare. One said 'A lot of negativity comes from our history - our poor record of working with families - especially Indigenous ones – and the dreaded 'welfare' image. This is gradually breaking down as we reconstruct those notions and work at strengthening families. But we need to acknowledge the past - for them and us'. Another working in child protection appreciated that their involvement was seldom welcome and said 'We come into clients' lives at difficult times for them - and they are often not very glad to see us. It takes time to win them around'.

One practitioner also mentioned the elderly as 'speaking very badly of social workers - from the day when they were young and children were taken away from families. But we have moved on from that and clients are just looking for someone to blame - and we are it!' A community-based practitioner said 'We are not respected by clients in the broader community - they see us as do-gooders too'. On a positive note one said 'Some of our clients think we are wonderful' - but she felt a need to add that 'Some don't though – as we have to question them and they feel like we are intruding - and sometimes we are'.

In general then, these respondents were well aware that clients are not necessarily positive about coming to see a social worker. The history of social work weighs heavily on most practitioners and colours their relationships with some clients. They express frustration about social work's reputation - and that this sometimes goes before them into relationships with clients. Even though they see that many social workers take a 'strengthening families' approach now, they still see social work's chequered history intruding on their work with families.

Many practitioners see themselves as trying to make the best of it with suspicious and negative clients. They understand the sources of social negativity, are well aware of how social work is viewed by other professions alongside whom they work, and anticipate negative attitudes towards their profession from a range of locations. Most are convinced that no other professional group does what they do, nor faces their difficulties. Despite this, the superior and negative attitudes of other professionals impact on respondents' self-esteem, and erode their comfort with their professional role.

How They Think Other Professions See Them

Social workers often have reason to work alongside many other people - police officers, psychologists, doctors and nurses for examples. Their interstitial role means they link with many other professions in locating services for their clients, and work in collaboration with some in providing these. I asked respondents how they appear to be regarded by these other professionals. Of course, attitudes and behaviour vary depending on the profession and the individual. In general though, there was consensus among those interviewed that most other professionals lack a clear appreciation of what social workers do in terms of the complexity of their tasks. As well, some report that doctors are the main offenders in terms of ignorance about their work - and that they also demonstrate the most arrogant and negative attitudes towards them.

Doctors

Several respondents had worked in hospitals alongside doctors and formed some very strong opinions about how doctors view and treat them. Several had encountered doctors who are arrogant and dismissive of their skills and knowledge. Generally, they report doctors being derogatory about their value in patient care processes. One respondent said 'I've worked on teams with several of them and mostly they dismiss our work - 'you're my servants' - don't tread on my turf!' they more or less say'. Another said 'You really have to think it through and not react when they are rude or dismissive - as they get quite offended if you comment or react about this'. Another respondent had considerable experience working in multidisciplinary teams in hospitals, and she has been on the receiving end of doctors' negative attitudes towards the profession. She comments about the doctors thus 'In hospital settings the doctors treat social workers with disdain. They treat nurses with similar arrogance, but reserve the worst of their behaviour for us'. Other respondents agree 'They look down their noses at us – and some treat us like we are idiots or fools'. Another stated 'They don't have much respect for our work - especially the male doctors - as they don't see

us as smart or professional - like what we do is under-educated women's work'. These comments may need to be read within the negative self-esteem frame for social work practitioners shown earlier. They see doctors as top of the heap as it were and may, through defensiveness, read insult where none was intended.

Nurses

Several of the practitioners had consistent contact with nurses, and there was a range of opinions about how this group saw social work - from positive to negative. Several respondents see themselves on the same level as nurses, and found nurses who thought the same. One said 'We are both in the lower echelon - the soft professions - women's work'. Some nurses did not necessarily share this view though. For instance, another respondent described her difficulties in working harmoniously with nurses, highlighting a competitive note in her relationships with them. 'Nurses treat us with disrespect - sort of condescending - like all we do is sit down with old people - cups of tea and so on. Nurses see it like this and then say 'I can easily do that'. They don't appreciate the difficulty of the work'. However, another saw nurses as admiring their fortitude. 'They say 'I don't know how you do it' - and look up to us for what we get ourselves into and how we deal with it'. Another practitioner emphasised her difficulties in working in the hierarchy of the hospital/health system 'Working in a hospital means we are down the ladder on ranking, and the pecking order thing operates - so the doctors peck the nurses and then they peck us - because we are on the rung below them in the hospital'.

The problem of others misunderstanding what social workers do was a continuing theme in working with most other professions, but especially in medical settings of social work. One interviewee said: 'Nurses (and the doctors) still misunderstand what we do - and they often mix us up with psychologists'. Another respondent expressed considerable frustration about the difficult jobs of the social worker not being appreciated or understood at all. 'They do not see that our work makes a real difference to the patients, or the nurses take the credit for it when it is us who have sorted out all the trouble and settled the patient's anxiety'. It appears then that despite a few suggestions of some sisterly relationships with nurses and the odd comment referring to 'a few good medicos', practitioners find hospital settings redolent with challenges for them. Other professional groups are more accepting, even though it appears many are ignorant of the roles and functions of social workers.

Psychologists

Some respondents work in multidisciplinary teams involving a range of other professionals including psychologists. One respondent said that 'At first there was some resistance to me - some negativity - from the psychs especially - but after a while they could see what I had to offer'. Another respondent working in a similar team setting said 'The psychs don't know how to make linkages to a range of areas and services. We do this better than the psychs. Once they see this – they sort of appreciate it - but it takes time to convince them'. However another respondent expressed concern that in a multi-disciplinary team other professions - like nurses, occupational therapists and others – many do not understand what social workers do,

confusing it with the tasks of psychologists. She said 'The OT's and so on - think we are trained to do some things we aren't - such as behaviour therapy like the psychologists - and then they don't see what we can do - like linking between services and our knowledge about the range of services out there'. One pointed to a source of the problem in job advertisements that sometimes conflate social workers and psychologists, as though they have interchangeable skills.

Police

Many aspects of social work, such as with homeless youth and in community corrections, bring practitioners into contact with members of the police force. One practitioner interviewed works with police in domestic violence cases. She has not found working with police difficult, nor has she experienced them as critical of her as a social worker or of the profession as a whole. In fact, she believes that police better appreciate what social workers contribute than do other professional groups. She said that 'Although police and social workers are sometimes on opposite sides, I have found them supportive and we work well together. They understand what we can do in working together - like with the homeless and those in trouble with the law - and they give us a chance to use our approach without putting us down or being negative in any way'. Another practitioner working in corrections said she spends a lot of time working alongside police and has formed positive working relationships with them. She commented 'They respect us - more than other professions do - as they know our work is tough and that together with them, we are the only ones really trying to do something about our clients - the criminals, and their families'. In general, police are seen as supportive of their work and 'simpatico', perhaps in recognition of shared concern for offenders, homeless and other groups ignored by many other professions.

Managing Professional Negativity – From Within and Without

Several practitioners are well aware of the need to take it easy and to not push themselves forward at first in working with other professions. 'It takes time before they come round. You have to take it slow and give them time to get to know you, and to see what you can do'. Respondents comment consistently on this theme - that is, of needing to learn how to manage other professionals with whom they work. It is apparent that the social work practitioner is often required to negotiate initial resistance in working with various other professions. When it goes well, there may be increased respect for the difficulty and complexity of the work. One respondent suggested that 'Once they see that we have something to offer - they eventually soften up.' But she added that 'It is important not to take it too personally - and to give it time.' One experienced worker, who had been employed in the field whilst studying, said 'I feel very sorry for young social workers who encounter resistance and the bad behaviour of some professions. You learn to manage it - but it takes a tough hide to keep believing in yourself - and the young ones often haven't had time to develop this'. So the information from these practitioners indicates that although they experience difficulty with the lack of understanding of other professions about social workers' professional roles and functions, they appear to feel positively about the contribution that they make.

Discussion

Overall, practitioners appear to feel poorly appreciated in multi-disciplinary settings and know they need to work hard to establish allies. Doctors by and large are seen as dismissive towards social workers and the respondents say that many treat them arrogantly if they notice them at all. Nurses often see themselves in competition with social workers in the tight pecking order of the hospital setting. Occasionally the nurses see social workers as sisters together, against the scorn of the medicos. Some from other occupational groups, who appreciate what social workers can contribute to client or patient care, appear to make it more worth the struggle. Many of the practitioners say they have developed personal strategies for managing prickly or distant attitudes of other professional groups, though some struggle to find resources or other support to help them in this. These skills, of managing resistance and negativity from others, seem to be required by many groups lower on the occupational pecking order, and deserve a focus in education programs for all those professions - teachers, nurses and social workers. However, many indications exist that practitioners in this study wish for better professional standing, especially in comparison with other professions they encounter in their work, even though a prevalent discourse inside academia criticises social work for attempting to claim this professional status. Other literatures discussed previously also suggest that professional status is no remedy for flagging occupational self-esteem.

Aspects of respondents' commentary reflect problems with the image of social work in comparison with other professions. All these issues - around how well appreciated and understood they feel as a profession - impact on practitioners' professional confidence and self esteem. This is especially so when they do not meet 'altruistic' expectations of the 'good' social worker, nor conform in other ways to social expectations to achieve the impossible with intransigent social problems. When a broader view is taken though, the literatures and the results discussed in this paper suggest that social work as a profession struggles to maintain its status compared with other professions. It is not alone in this though, as other professions often find themselves at the lower end of any status listing gained from by the general population.

It would seem that any occupation wishing to be considered 'professional' needs to expect to define its distinctive expertise and to have strict standards of performance and controlled entry to the occupation. Performance standards may be externally applied and monitored, especially in the newer occupational groups wishing to be considered as professions. State boards or other such regulating groups may take control over both entry to, and further performance in, the profession, thereby limiting a group's freedom to self-manage. In this sense, standards for new professions, such as the people-working groups, may be stricter and more stringently and externally applied than is the case for more traditional groups, thus delimiting the professional self-determination of the practitioner. As suggested, the older more secure professions offer few standards of conduct worth emulating for the people-working groups. But maybe a reframed sense of professionalism, focused on effective demonstration of expertise, ethics and competence, matched with transparent processes of accountability *not* based on old-boys clubs, may be a path for social work to follow.

New emphases on accountability, relevance and quality assurance may suggest a redefinition of who is a professional, raising questions about whether it is a term able to be sequestered by only a select group - particularly in current Australian society. So, if is not to be claimed as a right by only a privileged few, then the definition of what is considered 'professional' must be widened to include occupational groups not formerly considered professions. Pressure for this to occur is even more likely in an increasingly deregulated work world. For instance, despite the suggestion that the hierarchical arrangement of occupations is intuitive among the population, it is apparent that the territory of the professional is no longer sanctioned turf. Professional knowledge, expertise, power and territory are now more a matter of negotiation than a *fait accompli*. Postmodern conceptualisations of society, with accompanying reconstructions of the cultural value of work, offer little protection for elitist definitions of professional privilege. Strategies of occupational closure and demarcation, such as discussed by Witz (1992), appear to be about protecting or enhancing a profession's own status, more than they are about maintaining quality service. The people-working groups - teachers, nurses and social workers - have a right to be considered as important to society as those more readily accepted as professions, such as doctors and lawyers for instance but this will only occur through maintaining high standards of accountability.

Summary

In summary then, it is apparent that the social work profession is beset with continuing challenges to its positive professional image in several ways. Structurally in its focus and position in the human services field, social work is threatened by other occupational groups competing for space in this area of employment. As well, social work's roles and functions are poorly understood by other professionals and by the general public. There is work to be done to improve the public face of social work, knowledge about this occupation and the professional self esteem of practitioners. Accountability measures are required also, to monitor the effectiveness and competence of practitioners.

Strategic processes are required to address other pressures. To educate the general public, there is value in accurate documentaries featuring social work roles and functions and potential for creative efforts exists through liaisons between social work and media students. Social work students should be encouraged to consider themselves as professionals and to see social work as a valued profession. Professional self-esteem needs to be better promoted, with curriculum material focused on the history of professions, on encouraging cultural analysis of professional elitism and on limiting the academic discourse on 'bad' social work. This needs to be accomplished without feeding into tendencies towards elitism in comparing social work with other human service workers. As well, roleplay activities focused on negative commentary from other professions would help social worker students to develop strategies for assertively managing other professions, especially those that treat social workers arrogantly in practice. These features need to be included in coursework, especially in the final years of professional social work education. These and other creative strategies may contribute to a more accurate and positive professional image and to higher self-esteem levels among social work practitioners.

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Women and Management: Catholic Sisters in Late Nineteenth Century Sydney

Lesley Hughes

Introduction

This article discusses the management work of a group of women involved extensively in social welfare in Sydney in the latter half of the nineteenth century – that is Catholic sisters, commonly referred to as 'nuns.'[1] The background to the paper includes the recent focus on the challenges posed; by managerialism in social welfare as well as the burgeoning literature on women and social care management (Grimwood and Popplestone 1993; Ball 1998; Healy 2000; Coulshed and Mullender 2001). A concept of female leadership style (Ferrario 1994; Eveline and Hayden 2000; Eveline and Booth 2002a, 2002b) has emerged in organisational theory in recent decades. This and other recent formulations of management and leadership seem to be at odds with classic formulations which stress authoritarian, top-down management (see, for example, Bryman 1999).

In the history of Australian social welfare, the received wisdom is that there were few women involved in charitable administration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lawrence 1965; Dickey 1987). However, this was not the case. In Sydney, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Catholic sisterhoods were responsible for operating the majority of Church-auspiced charitable institutions - across all denominations (Coghlan 1902, p. 860ff.). However, the sisters' work has been obscured for various reasons (Hughes 1998a; 2002; McMahon 2003). Catholic sisters in Sydney in this period were responsible in their own right for the day to day operational management and longer term planning and development of diverse works with the poor. Aspects of the management practices of the sisters are similar to some elements of 'new leadership' and 'women's leadership', as conceptualised in organisational theory over the past decade or so. It is argued here that the sisters' management skill and leadership style were facilitated by certain features of the structure, ethos and communal nature of Catholic women's religious institutes.

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She would like to acknowledge the assistance of the archivists of the Sisters of Charity, Potts Point; the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Glebe; the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney; the Sisters of St Joseph and Mary Mackillop archives, North Sydney; and the Sydney Catholic Archdiocesan archives.

Recent Theorising on Leadership

In the past ten to fifteen years there have been significant developments in thinking about what constitutes ideal leadership. These have occurred within general organisational theory, as well as in feminist scholarship on women and business, and in the area of women in social work and community service organisations. Works on 'new leadership' have used terms such as 'transformational' leadership and 'dispersed' leadership (Bryman 1999, p. 30ff; Gellis 2001) to describe an inclusive style which incorporates the leader's central role in developing and conveying a 'vision' for the organisation; creating and fostering a strong, shared culture; and 'leading others to lead themselves' by fostering workers' development and use of abilities and skills. Amongst the identified elements of transformational leadership are: 'charisma, inspiration, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation' (Burns 1978 cited in Bryman 1999, p. 31). Bryman outlines research findings which show that 'charisma' and 'inspiration' are the leadership characteristics which are most closely related to 'desirable outcomes such as the performance of subordinates' (Bryman 1999, p. 32). However, the importance of factors other than personality characteristics in leadership is also noted, with elements such as 'resources' and 'trust' (Bryman 1999, p. 32), the 'removal of obstacles' and 'creating opportunities' being identified (Katzenbach and Smith cited in Bryman 1999, p. 33).

Amongst feminist writing on management and leadership, Eveline and her colleagues have conducted a number of empirical studies in a variety of organisational settings including large and small businesses, universities and a police department (Eveline and Booth 2000; 2002a). They have described one style of women's leadership as 'companionate'. This is leadership in which the benefits and responsibilities of leadership are shared, based on mutual trust and shared sense of purpose (Eveline and Harwood 2002, p. 10ff). Eveline's analysis of leadership is thus compatible with much of the recent general theorising on leadership. However, work on leadership and women's activism reveals that many women activist leaders do not see themselves as 'leaders', preferring not to single themselves out in a collective venture. The sense of collective purpose and the 'submersion of individual identities' were found to be very strong (Eveline and Hayden 2000, p. 5). Empowering others was said to be central to this form of leadership, and other characteristics of women's leadership included working jointly with others; and 'critical reflection' (Eveline and Hayden 2000, p. 8). It is argued here that many of these features of the 'new' formulations of leadership were evident in the management work of Catholic sisters in Sydney in the late nineteenth century.

The Sisters' Managerial Skill

Evidence of the sisters' considerable skills in administration and financial management is found in a number of indices including the size, complexity and long life of their charitable undertakings, as well as some corroboration from contemporary 'external sources. In the early 1870s, the four Sydney sisterhoods between them operated three charitable institutions – the Government's Catholic Orphan School at Parramatta, the House of the Good Shepherd Refuge for former prostitutes, and St Vincent's Hospital at Darlinghurst. By the end of the century these four groups of sisters were operating six children's institutions, two more specialist hospitals, a

servants' home and training school and an additional refuge for former prostitutes.[2] Thus over the quarter century the extent of the charitable work undertaken by the fours sisterhoods had increased in terms of the number and range of institutions they operated.

The number of people the sisters assisted also increased substantially over this period. For example, in 1880 the 'Providence' home of the Sisters of St Joseph accommodated 21 poor children and women. In 1899 they cared for 204 poor people in three institutions – an almost tenfold increase over nineteen years (Mahoney to MacKillop 9 April 1880; Burford 1991, p. 70). An increase of similar magnitude is found in the work of the other sisterhoods. In 1869 the Sisters of Charity cared for 178 in-patients at St Vincent's Hospital and 400 'outdoor relief' patients. In 1899 the figures were 1758 in-patients and 8762 out-patients (Sisters of Charity 1869, p. 3; 1899, p. 7). For their services to not only continue but to expand so substantially in terms of numbers of people assisted and in the range of services offered, indicates that the four sisterhoods were competent managers of these ventures.

The administrative expertise of the sisters which enabled the continuation and growth of their services included skills in property acquisition, financial management, employment of staff, the day-to-day operation and long-term administration of large institutions. The sisters themselves were responsible for finding, acquiring and paying for almost all of the properties which they used as convents, schools and charitable institutions. In this period the Sisters of Charity bought the properties for their three hospitals and girls' orphanage (Sisters of Charity Annals Vol. 2). The Sisters of St Joseph purchased three properties at a cost in excess of £12,000 (Carolan to MacKillop 19 August 1880; Freeman's Journal 8 October 1881, p. 15; Burford 1991, pp. 151-4). Similarly, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan spent over £9,000 on property for their charitable institutions (Sisters of the Good Samaritan Annals, pp. 89-93). It must be remembered that in this pre-suffrage era women's role in public life was circumscribed by law and by gendered norms underpinned by a widely-held belief that women's 'natural' sphere was that of home and family (Vicinus 1985; Kerber 1988).

The sisterhoods' annals, histories, surviving correspondence and account books attest to the high degree of the sisters' own responsibility for the acquisition of property. This responsibility usually included the effort needed to find a suitable property, negotiate a sale, raise the deposit, borrow large amounts, then the subsequent long hard struggle to pay off the loans. Although the sisterhoods received varying assistance with fundraising from the Catholic and general community to meet the debts on these properties, the ultimate responsibility usually rested with the sisters themselves. Entries in the sisterhoods' account books indicate that the sisters used various means to pay for their charitable works. They took out loans from banks, building societies, solicitors and private individuals, sometimes owing money to a number of sources at the one time. The sisters serviced these loans and met operational costs by the 'traditional' female means of bazaars, concerts and so on, as well as earning income in larger scale commercial activities such as laundry, needlework and lace-making, including orders for large department stores.

As may be expected, convent narratives depict the sisters' charities as operating successfully in terms of the care and assistance provided to the poor. There is

relatively little external evidence on this point. However, there is some corroboration of the competence of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan as providers of services to the poor at the Catholic Orphan School. As a government-funded charity, public records were kept and the institution was subject to inspection and reports to Parliament. Confirmation of the sisters' expertise in the management of the Catholic Orphan School is found in official government sources of the 1870s and 80s. The Second Report of the 1873-4 Commission of inquiry into Public Charities (RCPC) states that:

> The management of the School, which entirely rests with Mrs Adamson[3] the matron, is in our opinion, able and most economical. The officers assisting her are, with the exception of the schoolmaster, ladies of a religious house...Added to the efforts thus made to individualize the children, there appeared to us a vigour in the administration of the school which had a most beneficial effect on the children. (RCPC Second Report 1874, p. 93)

The high standard of management seems to have continued under Mother Gertrude Byrne as Matron (Walsh 2001, p. 94), as attested in the annual reports to Parliament by the Inspector of Public Charities, which regularly commended the care of the children, and the efficiency of administration there:

> The Roman Catholic Orphan School management deserves special mention for the very excellent results obtained at very small expense. The average cost at this institution and at the Randwick Asylum is startling by contrast. (Inspector of Public Charities 1880, p. 152)

It seems that in all four religious institutes, the sisters were competent managers of finance, property, business, and charitable administration on a large scale. In carrying out these activities they operated in the public, 'masculine' sphere, dealing with men such as property owners, estate agents, solicitors, bank managers, clients of the institutions' laundry and sewing businesses, builders, churchmen and lay supporters.

Reasons Why the Sisters Were Good Managers

There are a number of reasons why the Sydney sisters were good managers. These include the fact that the sisters had to be competent in organising their finances, given the economic context of their work – their charities were not eligible for government subsidies (Horsburgh 1975; Dickey 1985) and the local Church hierarchy could offer little financial assistance, as the Church was itself struggling to become established and had prioritised the opening of schools (Hughes 1998a, 1998b; 2002). Another reason for the sisters' involvement and expertise in management was basically that there was an expectation that they would be. The sisterhoods and the Church hierarchy alike accepted that it was the sisters' right and responsibility as members of Catholic women's religious institutes to manage their organisations and the 'socially active' work they undertook. The position of the sisterhoods within the Church, as well as their internal arrangements, were formally codified and officially recognised by the Church hierarchy. Catholic women religious traditionally had charge of their own institutes and were responsible for financing and organising their own operation and that of whatever works they undertook. They were financially autonomous entities, despite some attempts by members of the Australian Church hierarchy and

clergy to limit the independence of the sisterhoods, as also occurred elsewhere (McNamara 1996; Liedel 2000; MacGinley 2002).

The recognised status of the sisterhoods within the Church is significant for the sisters' expertise in management because, as has been argued by others, Catholic women religious were able to be involved in the 'masculine' domain of professional work because their taking of vows effectively freed them from many of the cultural gender norms which constrained other women. Nuns and sisters have been perceived as effectively constituting a 'third gender' (Marshall and Wall 1999; Nelson 2001). The New South Wales Church hierarchy, clergy and lay community recognised the sisters' 'right' to operate autonomously in a masculine domain in a way that was not open to other women of the time. It has been argued that women's entry into professional work involved the replacement of 'natural' feminine emotional responses with codified 'professional' conduct (Hearn 1982; Haggis 1996). Such a process was built-in to the structure of Catholic sisterhoods.

The Sisterhoods as Structured Women's Organisations

The sisters' exercise and development of skills in management were facilitated by the fact that their institutes had formal organisational and governance structures and processes, and clear statements of aims and operating principles - for the sisterhoods per se and for the charitable work they undertook. Women wishing to join the sisterhoods had to undergo a lengthy and structured period of training ('postulancy' and 'noviciate') with admission to full membership ('profession') being dependent on a positive evaluation by the novice mistress, and ratification by a meeting of all eligible members of the institute. The sisterhoods' 'Rules and Constitutions', which all new members had to learn, incorporated democratic governance principles, with leaders elected by secret ballot and all full members participating in making major decisions at scheduled general meetings. The governance documents also included detailed duty statements for office bearers. In social work terms, the latter's responsibilities were a mix of 'task' and 'maintenance' functions (Hooyman 1979, p. 468ff). That is, they were concerned with both the external work of the sisterhoods, and with developing and maintaining the internal 'health' of the organisation, including the well-being of its individual members. Thus the sisters' management skills were developed, retained and passed on via the institutes' formal internal structures and associated processes. Another reason for the sisters' competence in managing their charitable work was the fact that generally the sisters did not manage from a distance.

First-Hand Knowledge and Management

Late twentieth century analyses of the caring professions have noted that the effect of the separation of management from direct practice with clients or service users has resulted in a reduced quality of provision (Satyamurti 1981; Hugman 1991; Wearing 1998), and this has been seen to be closely related to the exercise of power and control within the organisation (Hugman 1991, p. 71ff.). In contrast, an examination of management in the Sydney sisters' charities reveals a marked lack of distance between management and the direct interpersonal work with clients. It is argued here

that this contributed to the sisters' administrative competence, including their efficiency.

There were a number of sister-managers who were involved in 'direct practice'. These included Mother Magdalen Adamson of the Catholic Orphan School, Mother Elizabeth O'Toole at the Manly Industrial School and Orphanage, Mother Veronica O'Brien at St Vincent's Hospital and Mother Gertrude Byrne at St Magdalen's Retreat. This 'hands-on' management is associated with the fact that in convent charities, the sisters often lived under the same roof as those they were assisting and with the fact that limited resources meant that everyone had to help with the work. For example, at the Catholic Orphan School, Mother M. Magdalen also did the dispensing of simple medicines (RCPC E 14 June 1873, p. 9), was the storekeeper (RCPC E 14 June 1873, p. 2) and did the cutting out for the making of the children's clothing (RCPC E 14 June 1873, pp. 10ff.) as well as keeping the books and dealing with a string of male officials, (RCPC E 14 June 1873, pp. 1-11). At the Manly Industrial School, Mother M. Elizabeth O'Toole, was the sole worker in the laundry from its commencement in 1881 until 1884. She rose at 4 am each morning to light the laundry boilers. She sorted and recorded the items to be washed, taught in the classroom and trained the choir which sang at Mass each week (Hanly MS, n.p.; McEwen 1989, p. 92).

So, sisters who managed charitable institutions were also involved in the basic day to day operations of their work with the poor. They themselves implemented the administrative decisions they and their communities made and their management was informed by first-hand knowledge of that which they were managing. The sisters' administration contrasted with that of many 'public charities' of the time, in which those who made the decisions were members of boards or committees, relatively remote from the daily operation of the charity (Godden 1983).

The sisters' style of management is illustrated in their correspondence. The combining of administrative roles as head of a large organisation and concern for the sisters as individuals is evident for example in the letters of Mother M. Ignatius McQuoin, Superior of the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney to other sisters. These letters were tools of administration and management. They relayed information, instructions and requests concerned with the management of the sisterhoods' internal and external affairs. Secondly, they were also a means by which the women religious could support and encourage one another. A third function was that, in an organisation which was intended to have a life longer than that of its individual members, and which was 'inter-generational' in that it had members of different ages, this correspondence served as a model of 'how' to administer a women's religious community and manage its various works. The recipients of letters from the superiors were sisters who were, or might in the future be, in positions of authority and leadership. The following note from Mother M. Ignatius McQuoin, to a sister at a branch convent reveals the former's skill in managing the organisation of which she was head:

> My dear Child,
> I missed writing to my little Parramatta branch for Easter Sunday having been ill all the week. I came over here on Saturday and found your little note but could not sit down to write.

Give my fond love and Easter blessing to your companions. I hope to pay you a visit shortly and long for you to see our lovely 'Monte sant'Angelo' which far surpasses our expectations. I have to begin to build and in three months remove all the Sisters down to St. Joseph's. The old Convent and part of the ground is sold for a good round sum - the rest is to be disposed of in a fortnight. We keep possession of the place till 1st August.

The changes have begun. Sisters M. Aloysius and Austin have crossed corners and Sister M. de Sales and Xavier will have a move tomorrow. I have had one of my bad bilious attacks and don't feel quite recovered yet - am staying in town for a few days.

You had better get your tickets printed at once – 400 at 2/- wherever you like. O'Connor would perhaps be the best.

Sister M. Magdalene's brother was to call to see her today. I hope he found her at home. I congratulate you on your successes. Ask good Revd. Father to come over to N. Shore and see both places before we remove.

Now good bye and God bless you.
Your devoted Mother in J.C.

(McQuoin to n.k 14 April 1879)

This letter shows Mother M. Ignatius' exercise of a number of the skills needed by the head of a large, hierarchical and geographically dispersed organisation. She shows an awareness of her responsibility as head of the institute to maintain its operation and the morale of its members. This is also a multi-purpose letter. It is an update on the institutes' real estate dealings, there is information about the impending move to the new premises at North Sydney, and changes in personnel within the institute. Direct advice about the organisation of a forthcoming fundraising concert at Parramatta is also given, 'You had better get your tickets printed at once – 400 at 2/- wherever you like. O'Connor perhaps would be the best.' There is expressed the motherly warmth, which the institutes' Rules specify for the Superior, 'Give my fond love and Easter blessing to your companions.' There is also the informality and familiarity of friendship, 'I have had one of my bad bilious attacks and don't feel quite recovered yet' and, 'Sister M. Magdalene's brother was to call to see her today. I hope he found her at home.'

As well as demonstrating the 'individualised concern' identified by the theorists of 'new leadership' (Bryman 1999), this correspondence reminds us that the sisters were women of their time and that the relationships between them were not always dissimilar to those existing between their lay contemporaries. In the sisterhoods, professional codification was inter-twined with feminine affection. The letter is an example of the way in which the sister-managers attended to both 'task' and 'maintenance' functions in the administration of their institutes. Direct instructions are given, but Mother Ignatius also 'uses the relationship' between herself and the recipient. The tone is authoritative and also intimate. Others have also found a similar mixture of the personal with formal, administrative content in the

correspondence of leaders of Catholic women's religious communities in the nineteenth century (Kilroy 1997, p. 61), suggesting that Mother Ignatius' style was not idiosyncratic.

The sisters' leadership: codified vision, culture, identity and individualised concern
As noted earlier, recent conceptualisations of leadership incorporate a number of characteristics including: the articulation and promotion of vision; mutual trust; individualised consideration; the establishment of a strong organisational culture, and the submerging of individual identity in a shared character and common purpose. As organisations, the sisterhoods had many of these elements built into them. Their 'Rules and Constitutions' had clear statements of the organisation's ethos and guiding principles. Other prescriptive documents (such as 'Customs and Minor Regulations' and 'Guides') spelt out how these underlying principles were to be operationalised in various areas of the sisters' lives and work. For example, one specification of the attributes and role of the financial officer states that:

> The Mother Procuratrix should be well-informed in domestic matters, prudent and economical, and by her affability apt to procure the esteem and respect of all with whom she may have business to transact ... She shall, ordinarily, be responsible for all the accounts in connection with the Convent. The Procuratrix shall keep account of all that she receives and spends, which account she shall submit quarterly to the Council. Her books shall, of course, be always open to the Mother Superioress, and she shall keep them so posted up that the Superioress may at any time know how the accounts stand. (Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1878, pp. 70-71)

In the statement of the duties of the Mother Superior, her responsibilities for the well-being of the members of the community of sisters are specified clearly:

> She is bound then as 'Mother' carefully to preserve true peace and concord amongst her religious daughters taking away from amongst them everything that might hinder it, and always ready and pleasant in receiving them, patient in listening, and anxious to console her afflicted children; but especially let her be faithful and secret in everything which they have confided in her. (Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1878, pp. 65)

Rules for the governance of the sisterhoods also included stipulations for consultations between the head and other office bearers, who constituted her advisory body. The purpose of such consultations was:

> to examine accounts and to treat of the most expedient means for promoting the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Community. She shall listen to their opinion, and shall not be offended if it be different from her own but shall show herself disposed to embrace their opinion when she shall be convinced by their reasons. (Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1878, pp. 71)

We see here the codification of accountability and consultative mechanisms in the sisters' organisations. Whilst it is acknowledged that the existence of prescriptions in an organisation is no guarantee that they were carried out, there were various safeguards to ensure this. One was the fact that Superiors were elected by sisters who

were familiar with their organisation's rules. Leaders who did not abide by the rules would not have been able to keep office. The formalised training programme for new members with its accompanying stages of membership (postulant, novice and 'formed' sister) over several years required all aspiring sisters to learn their organisation's 'Rules and Constitutions' and to demonstrate their ability to live and work in accordance with them. Whilst this ensured that only women who shared the organisation's vision and identity were admitted to full membership, it also meant that the sisters knew what duties and skills were required of leaders and could use this knowledge when electing office bearers. Such codification helped preserve the sisterhood's culture. As noted above the conceptualisations of 'new leadership' emphasise the importance of a strong, shared culture. Thus the sisterhoods' in-built structures and processes provided mechanisms which facilitated a type of leadership which enhanced the 'health' of the organisation.

Other vehicles for preserving and transmitting the sisterhoods' organisational culture and identity were their annals and 'in-house' histories (Smyth 1997). This process was also facilitated by the inter-generational nature of convent communities. As membership was usually for life, elderly sisters had many decades of experience in their institutes to share with newer, younger members.

Women's Communities

The sisterhoods required their leaders to be good managers, and their formal organisational structures and processes facilitated this. It is likely however that it was not merely the institutional structures, specified duties and set procedures which facilitated the acquisition and exercise of 'masculine' skills, but also the all-female communal environment, which was free from on-site, daily overseeing by men. Research on other nineteenth century women's work has found such an environment to have been conducive to the development of women's skills and confidence (Vicinus 1985; Walkowitz 1992; Woollacott 1998; Anderson 2000; Nelson 2001). The correspondence of some of the Sydney sisters cited earlier indicates the ways that conventual living in a women-only organisation could support individual women members in carrying out their prescribed management roles as well as their other work.

As has been noted of sisters elsewhere, 'Formal hierarchy and sisterhood organised the lives and outlook of individual sisters. Their letters and journals show affection among women whose paths crossed many times' (Anderson 2000, p. 65). The Sydney sisters' correspondence reveals that support and encouragement were given and received by the sisters. In addition, new ideas and approaches were exchanged between women religious from communities which were geographically distant from each other.

The sisters' work in managing charitable activities in Sydney in the late nineteenth century shows some of the features evident in recent theorising on 'new' leadership and women's leadership styles. However, this should not be taken as supporting either a conceptualisation of leadership as individual 'talent' or the equation of feminine gender with a particular approach to management. The evidence from the Sydney sisterhoods reminds us of the importance of structural elements and processes

in management. As organisations, the sisterhoods were hierarchical but were also quite democratic in terms of governance, and their rules predisposed to operating in ways which facilitated some of the women's leadership processes recently identified by Eveline and colleagues (Eveline and Hayden 2000; Eveline and Booth 2002a, 2002b). Also, the other contextual aspects which shaped the sisters' management skills should not be overlooked – the sisters were good managers partly because they had to be in order to survive in a sectarian, secularising society which did not subsidise their work from the public purse.

Relevance of the Sisters' Management Work to Twenty-First Century Community Services

In the current situation of attempting to maintain professional standards of service in the face of management practices and values which impede the achievement of such ideals (Wearing 1998; Hough 1999), we might reflect on the work of the four Sydney sisterhoods in the late nineteenth century. The sisters initiated and developed charitable services in economic and social conditions which were quite adverse. Some aspects of the sisters' management which may usefully be considered today include the importance of organisational structures and processes for management. Conceptualisations of 'new leadership' may be seen as suggesting that leadership is largely dependent on individual personality, talent or skills. The rules and constitutions of the sisterhoods remind us that individual capacity for leadership can be complemented or developed by the specification of the duties and stances necessary for particular roles within an organisation and the provision of formal and informal opportunities to develop the necessary skills.

The management work of the sisters in Sydney seems to confirm the importance of a shared vision and the facilitation and maintenance of a strong organisational culture. The sisters' leadership style also demonstrates the possible advantages of combining a hierarchical structure and clearly articulated roles with democratic, participatory processes - including those for election and rotation of leadership - and training members of the organisation in how to use those structures and processes. The sisters' work shows also the potential value of management being directly involved in the day to day work of the service and that 'individualised concern' for members of the organisation can usefully be part of the management role. Finally, the sisters' success as women in management suggests the importance of social 'permission' to undertake such roles, together with a willingness to provide the environment in which individual skills may be developed and exercised.

Notes

1. The first four Catholic sisterhoods to undertake work with the poor in Sydney were studied. These were the Sisters of Charity who arrived in Sydney from Ireland in 1838; the Sisters of the Good Samaritan who were founded in Sydney in 1857; the Sisters of Mercy who arrived in 1863 from Liverpool and the Sisters of St Joseph, founded in South Australia in 1866, who commenced work in Sydney in 1880.
2. There were also other charities operated by additional groups of sisters who arrived in Sydney during the 1880s.

3. This is Mother M. Magdalen of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Outside Catholic circles, the sisters were publicly known by their secular surnames, and were accorded the status of married women.

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The Professional Identity of Social Workers Practising as Counsellors and Psychotherapists

Ione Lewis

Introduction

This article examines how social workers practising as psychotherapists and counsellors construct their professional identity. This target group was chosen for the research study because of a commitment to clinical practice and a value for the contribution of therapeutic interventions to the well being of the larger community, combined with a contextual awareness of the socio-political structure within which micro interventions are placed. This analysis places the phenomenon of professional identity in its social context.

Australian social work has developed from the influences of both American and British definitions of social work (Camilleri 1996, p. 28), although the Australian context is differentiated from other countries by a much higher level of government intervention in welfare (Ife 1997, p. 5). Within Australia there were historical differences between states in how welfare was organised. For example, in South Australia and Victoria the Charity Organisation Society was more active than in other states. The Charity Organisation Society saw itself as more scientific in its work than other charities such as the Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society (Camilleri 1996, p. 29), demonstrating the early roots of competition in Australia over what is social work. Differences in the structure and philosophy of welfare service delivery are still found in contemporary arrangements in each state, and between welfare organisations.

The struggles and conflicts in the early years of professional social work are echoed today in contemporary conflicts over appropriate methods and interventions, and competing explanations for social problems. Social work writers view social work as containing many different visions of what the profession should be and do. Shoemaker sees the profession of social work as 'contested terrain' from its earliest history, characterised by 'multiple, overlapping and often competing visions of social work' (1998, p. 190). This view is echoed by other writers (Camilleri 1996; Ife 1997), yet professional identity is conceptualised in ways that emphasise consensus and shared values and goals among social workers (Bogo, Raphael and Roberts 1993). Carpenter and Platt, for example, define professional identity in terms of identification with traditional social work values (1997, p. 337). Understandings of power and conflict, an integral feature of social work theories about social relations, are not consistently applied to current understandings of professional identity.

Another example of conflict in social work is over the need for generalist training of social workers, as opposed to fostering specialisations within social work. The

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argument for the generalist view is that while some social workers do specialise in particular areas of social work intervention, a generalist approach has kept the definition of social work broad enough to be inclusive (Lurie 1980; Hartman 1980; Ife 1997). Clearly there is a fear felt by social work writers and educationalists that specialisations within social work will lead to disunity. Lurie expresses the anxiety that social workers specialising in the areas of counselling and psychotherapy will lose their identity with social work:

> As clinical social workers...become less differentiated from other professional groups such as psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical nurses and rehabilitation counsellors, they tend to become less identified with the social work profession (1980, p. 82).

The generalist approach is also seen to be strongly allied with social work's value position, in particular its holistic perspective:

> Understanding the individual in his/her social environment, which is perhaps the essence of social work, requires awareness of a multiplicity of interrelated factors: psychological, biological, social, cultural, economic, political, organisational and spiritual (Ife 1997, p: 9).

The literature shows a discomfort with the multiple loyalties resulting from specialisation. Specialisations shared across disciplines preclude social closure as described by Weber, through which other professionals are excluded from offering the same service (Pilgrim and Rogers 1993, pp. 82-83). However, what are the implications for social workers specialising in areas such as counselling and psychotherapy in belonging to a profession that needs to play down differences in order to maintain unity within a disparate group? Bogo, Raphael and Roberts argue that unity may have paradoxically created more conflict:

> The search for unity, in the face of considerable difference and distinctiveness, may account for the long standing divisiveness within the profession and in schools of social work (1993, p. 289).

The consensus view of professions emerges strongly as a theme in the social work literature on professional identity. Social work writings display a tendency to use broad, inadequate definitions of professional identity such as professional membership. Professional identity is understood to be 'a common core of agreed-on beliefs, values and interests' held by the members of a profession (Bogo, Raphael and Roberts 1993, 279). Kelly, Alexander and Cullinane emphasise the 'shared purpose, mission, goal, value system, and code of ethics, plus a sense of unity, and association' in defining professionalism in social work (1986, p. 7).

Social work as a profession is unusual in that it does not possess a theory base that clearly belongs to the discipline. An examination of social work history shows that the practice of social helping as a volunteer activity preceded the development of formal theory (Camilleri 1996). Social work has therefore built its theoretical frameworks through drawing on ideas, theories, models and skills from other professions and contexts, and reconstructing these theories to fit with social work values and practices. Milner describes the free use of ideas from other sources of

professional knowledge in social work, in particular psychiatry and psychology (2001, p. 3). Camilleri points to the significance of the social sciences for social work theory, particularly sociology and psychology (1996, p. 58). The social work profession is therefore unable to claim its own specific territory (Falck 1977, p. 36; Camilleri 1996, p. 54; Shardlow 1998, p. 23). Multiple dimensions of professional affiliations are inevitable.

The social work literature has paid little attention to clinical social workers' experiences in their professional roles, with some recent exceptions (Camilleri 1996; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Alston and McKinnon 2001). In order to listen to the experiences of practitioners within social work, 18 clinical social workers working in diverse roles of counsellors, family therapists, psychotherapists and psychoanalysts have been interviewed for this empirical study. Participants were recruited from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Participants working in rural and regional areas of New South Wales were included in the sample. The sample was made up of 11 women and seven men. The higher number of female participants reflects the numerical dominance of women in social work. The sample included practitioners trained at a postgraduate level in a variety of counselling and psychotherapeutic models of practice. Participants' professional experience as social workers ranged from five to 30 years. Participants were intentionally drawn from a variety of organisational contexts, including counselling agencies, hospitals, mental health, independent practice and practitioners working in both public and private sector contexts. Management roles were also included in the sample. Individual participants are not profiled here in greater detail as considerable personal and professional details have been provided in the indepth interviewing process. The possibility of identification of participants is a key ethical issue. For this reason, systematic descriptions of participants are avoided.

The study examined how professional identity is experienced subjectively by participants, what experiences have contributed to its construction and how social workers have managed the diversity of social work and the overlap of professional terrain with other professions. The focus of this research study fits within a tradition of qualitative research methodologies. Polkinghorne (1991, p. 63) defines qualitative methodologies as the use of 'processes based on the operations of conceptual thought to analyse data that consist of statements presented in ordinary language'. Patton similarly refers to 'pure description and quotations' as the result of qualitative methods of data collection (1990, p. 31). Qualitative methodology is well suited to the research study because it provides recognised methods of accessing data rich in detail and subjective in nature, yet able to be explored and analysed systematically to see the emerging overall patterns.

In the study, data was obtained through two indepth interviews with each participant. The first interview consisted of structured questions to obtain demographic data about the participants' professional role and training, and a semi-structured component to elicit the professional biography of the participant. Biography is defined by Berger and Luckman (1985, p. 81) as the articulation of a narrative of self through a meaningful process of reflection on life events. The second interview utilised a critical incident technique, where participants were asked to describe a recent incident from their clinical practice which seemed important or challenging, to allow for the

basis of their interventions to be explored and examined (Davis and Reid 1988, p. 306).

Systematic techniques for qualitative research were developed and established in the late 1980s and early 1990s, through the development of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Theory is 'grounded' because it is related to, emerges out of, is created through and grounded on empirical data (Sarantakos 1998, p. 200). The software program NUDIST*Vivo (N*Vivo) has been used as a method to effectively access, organise and analyse the data. Techniques developed within a grounded theory approach such as coding, memoing and data retrieval have been used within the framework of this study, to allow a systematic approach to data gathering and analysis which can be fully explicated and understood, and could be replicated by other researchers. The methodology of the qualitative study has allowed for sub-groupings of participants in terms of their professional identity. This has allowed for comparisons across sub-groupings within the sample.

The following discussion of professional identity is based on the thematic analysis. The construction of social work identity and the particular experiences that contribute to the patterning of participants along a continuum from positive to negative professional identity are mapped. It is important to map participants' patterning of affiliation and identification to understand how social workers adapt and evolve their career pathways in contemporary work contexts.

Positive Social Work Identity

The analysis of the qualitative data shows that six of the eighteen participants (33% of the sample), four females and two males, positively identify with social work. Experiences associated with positive professional identity are appreciation for the diverse career opportunities available to social workers and the capacity of social workers to work in developing areas of practice and with difficult client groups. Participants with degrees of positive identification with social work are involved in the professional development of social work students and graduates, through activities such as supervision and training. In addition to fostering the development of beginning social workers, this group of participants also describes their feelings of responsibility for promoting social work positively within their agencies and in interactions with professionals from other occupations.

A sub-grouping, two out of the six positively identifying participants, has changed career paths to social work from the professions of accountancy and volunteer relationship counselling respectively. Social work is viewed very positively by these participants because the profession offers a variety of career pathways, and is congruent with their sense of self. For example, Sharon previously worked as a volunteer relationship counsellor prior to training as a social worker. She emphasises her increased status through gaining a qualification that is recognised by employers, her colleagues and by the community. Sharon is able to draw comparisons between her lack of status as a volunteer, and her current occupational status, and as a result she feels very positive about social work.

A feature in the group who positively identify with social work is participation in social work activities and the professional association, for example in attendance at conferences and committees. One participant, Lorraine, who is positive about her professional identity, views membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) as:

> A reasonable professional thing to do, to be part of the organisation that shows support to our profession in some ways.

Another participant, Alex, shows a positive evaluation of what the professional association can offer:

> I get something back from that professional identification. There's also just the very practical thing of the insurance, it's very good value, and it's cheaper than other professional organisations.

Participants in this group demonstrate support for recent changes made by the AASW in terms of annual accreditation, although accreditation is still optional rather than a requirement of professional membership. Philip affirms the changes made to professional development requirements:

> Social work's catching up a bit with its requirement to have so many hours of professional development each year and I think that's a step in the right direction.

The data analysis revealed that a feature of positive identity is that practitioners identify themselves as social workers to their clients and other professionals, rather than using alternative labels such as manager or therapist. Lorraine states:

> I always describe myself as a social worker within this organisation.

Similarly, Alex states:

> When I'm on a plane and you have to write what your occupation is, I write social worker, on (my) tax return I write social worker and I see relationship counsellor as part of what I do. Some people call themselves family therapists and might whisper to the occasional person that they're a social worker.

An examination of the data shows that participants who find career opportunities within established social work roles express positive affiliation with social work. For example, Lorraine is a senior social worker, with control and responsibility in her work context as a manager, concomitant status and some financial reward:

> I'm a Senior Social Worker at the Child and Youth Centre, we've got three clinics in the suburbs and also a unit at the hospital and I've got a position as the Senior Social Worker in the organisation...I guess my job boils down to about fifty per cent of clinical work and I do a bit of supervision and I've also got an interest in family therapy so I coordinate the family therapy work at this clinic and at another clinic and also some administrative tasks.

Lorraine also identifies working in an agency with supportive co-workers as contributing to her satisfaction with her professional role:

> I enjoy my work here in the organisation, I quite enjoy being an organisational player...and working in a team and the different analyses that need to be considered.

Another view expressed by participants with positive professional identity is a value for the diversity of career opportunities made possible by a social work qualification. David's reflections on his professional path demonstrate this view:

> What turned out was that social work was a pretty versatile qualification that could be applied in all sorts of ways...It was a useful course to stick at and I guess most of the information and most of the skills I've got have come after the course, but it was still a useful grounding in things that were going to come in the field of work.

Sharon describes her positive view of the knowledge base of social work as a framework that was missing in her previous work as a volunteer relationship counsellor:

> A critique, that's the bit I missed in my previous life. The other thing more important than anything for me was having a framework to build from and allowing myself to be absorbed into that and to experience the gradual acquisition of that as a participant observer (student) was fascinating.

Lorraine also positively appraises the flexibility of social work. She views social workers as able to work in more unstructured, less colonised areas of practice:

> I feel like the more cutting edge areas of work are opening up, social workers tend to be employed when working with young people with drug problems, areas that are complex and somewhat chaotic (that) other professions don't want to know about and social workers are more interested in.

Those participants expressing positive views of social work are involved in fostering the professional development of others, for example in the supervision of students and graduate social workers. Participants describe positive relationships with professionals from social work and other disciplines, and feel more positively about social work roles than participants with negative or ambivalent professional identity.

Another important theme in the narratives of participants with positive social work identity is being a 'standard bearer' for social work. The term standard bearer captures the sense of responsibility for promoting social work in a positive light demonstrated by participants with a positive social work identity. Lorraine's narrative shows her feeling of responsibility for raising the profile of social work:

> I feel my job is to sort of promote social work in this organisation.

Her narrative shows the public relations aspect of identifying with a professional group. Lorraine's identity at work is bound up with the identity of the profession. The need to be a standard bearer for social work could be seen as a reaction to the

pessimistic descriptions of social workers expressed by participants with negative social work identity.

For positively identified participants, group belonging is expressed in seeking out other social workers. Lorraine describes the grouping of social workers that occurs at psychotherapy conferences:

> I've noticed there's always a bit of discussion amongst those of us there who are social workers...although it's not formally part of the conference it always happens.

An interesting feature is that these participants with a degree of positive professional identification do not necessarily seek supervision and training from within the social work profession. This may be due to a number of factors. Social work does not have a clearly demarcated boundary in relation to other professions, and borrowing from other professions' expertise is likely to occur. The fields of counselling and psychotherapy are interdisciplinary in nature, and this may also influence practitioners to seek supervision outside of social work. Accessing clinical supervisors from other professions with greater status may be experienced as increasing practitioners' own professional prestige. Participants also expressed the view that there is a lack of experienced mentors and role models for social workers specialising in clinical practice.

The next section examines the group of participants with ambivalent professional identity, and analyses the factors associated with less positive views of the social work profession.

Ambivalent Professional Identity

Along the continuum between positive and negative identity is a middle group that demonstrates some aspects of both positive and negative identification with social work. This group, seven out of 18 participants (39% of the sample), three male and four female, demonstrate a preference for other professional communities such as management and psychotherapy, and as a result have stronger affiliations with professional associations other than social work. Other networks, such as family therapy associations, are perceived to provide stronger professional affiliations and mirroring of current professional roles.

The primary factor associated with ambivalent professional identity is the perception that other professions such as psychology offer better career opportunities and have better developed skills in specialist areas such as working with children. However, a value for the systemic focus of social work that takes the social context into account when working with individuals and families, and for the emphasis of social work on social justice principles, is evident. In contrast to the positively identifying group, participants in this group do not perceive advocating for social work with employers and other occupations as their responsibility. There is a tendency to place responsibility for change onto the professional association, the AASW.

However, the three groups of positive, ambivalent and negative professional identity are not completely differentiated. The positively identifying participants also display ambivalence about their social work identity because of the lack of mirroring of their professional development as counsellors and psychotherapists. The lack of representation of clinical articles in the Australian Social Work journal is a common complaint. Lorraine's comment typifies this view:

> I've had things printed...in other places, but I'd never submit to the journal, as when I look at the articles in the journal they're not terribly therapeutic. I don't feel they're about my world very much and I don't leap to think 'Oh wow, this is interesting'.

Lorraine's reflections demonstrate her choice to seek professional mirroring and recognition of her clinical work outside of the social work profession. A lack of relevance of the journal to social workers specialising in counselling and psychotherapy may be a contributing factor.

Participants who demonstrate ambivalent identification with social work view other professions as more advantageous to pursuing a career in counselling and psychotherapy, and yet maintain their identity as social workers. Sue states that at times she would prefer her identity to be in psychology. She views psychology as a profession with more skills in specialist areas such as working with children in families:

> Sometimes I wish I was a psychologist...especially with the really specific things like helping a child break a habit...I'm actually getting supervision from the psychologist...because he's got a lot of experience with children...because I feel much more comfortable working with adults rather than children.

However, like the positively identified group, Sue values aspects of social work knowledge which she brings to her therapeutic practice:

> Other times I think they're (psychologists) missing the big picture here...my bias is towards trying to influence the system more around this child and thinking that's actually going to help the child probably more than me doing something with them individually.

The emphasis of social work on the interactions between individuals and their social contexts is a highly valued aspect of social work knowledge for participants in this study. In a similar vein, Alex reflects on the useful combination of social justice and humanist principles in his counselling practice:

> I think that's what social work brings to the therapy area...If you didn't have that multidisciplinary approach, I think that would be lost. I think there would be much more focus on the individual, the old private troubles type of issues...so I find that's worked quite well in counselling.

Participants with ambivalent social work identification work in contexts such as counselling agencies that emphasise the commonality of roles across disciplines. The major reason given by this group for joining the Australian Association of Social

Workers is professional indemnity insurance to cover private practice, rather than professional responsibility or contribution to the profession.
Participants with ambivalent professional identity perceive that there is a major division within social work between the macro level of community work and social policy, and the micro level of individual and family work. Anthony expresses this view:

> My feeling is that it reflects the basic split in social work...Originally it came out of an individual approach, that obviously took off into social policy, but the majority of social workers are employed in some kind of clinical area where they use interpersonal skills.

Rural participants view the professional association as a body too geographically distant for them to influence. One of these, David, states that his financially precarious position as a part-time worker and a single parent has been a factor that prohibited him from joining the association.

The perceptions of social work expressed by ambivalently identifying participants contain both negative and positive views. In contrast, negatively identifying social workers do not express positive perceptions of social work. This group is examined in the next section.

Negative Professional Identity

The grouping of five negatively identified participants (28% of the sample), three females and two males, is characterised by a disavowal of social work identity. Negative professional identity is conveyed as a complex phenomenon including a negative conception of social work as a profession, and a stigmatised view of social work practitioners. Participants with predominantly negative views of social work associate social work with strongly negative images, such as dingbats, martyrs and un-liberated, non-assertive women. Belinda comments of social workers:

> They're bleeding hearts, everyone knows that.

These participants report feeling alienated and disconnected from the social work profession. They perceive that counselling and psychotherapy are not valued within social work. A lack of career paths and promotional pathways in clinical practice is another reason given for their disavowal of social work. Many of these participants express a strong desire for professional affiliations that positively value their current work roles.

This group demonstrates a negative perception of social work knowledge and their related professional identity. Ross comments of social work:

> (It's) a very limited area with no real understanding of the social and political realities...Lacking in I think intellectual integrity, of saying we're about change when we weren't, and so there's the intellectual integrity problem but there's also the social control...while you can do something, it doesn't mean you should do it.

Another source of frustration is the failure of social work to achieve its aims. Simone expresses frustration with the inability of social work to implement its mission effectively:

> You know none of that's changed very much, for all the social activism that was so big at uni...when you look back historically I don't think you can say it's been very effective in changing what's happened.

David similarly critiques social work for its inability to fulfil its mission:

> You've got to be able to justify it. You've got to be able to have results.

After graduation, he worked as an aide for a politician. This experience resulted in the development of negative perceptions of social work, and using other professional labels such as community worker. This critique of social work's failure to live up to its stated goals is reflected in the social work literature (Ife 1997, p. 54). Belinda, a regional social worker, critiques social work for the contradictions between the ideals of the profession and the realities of practice:

> They talk about being non-judgemental, of course we're bloody judgemental, we judge all the time. We judge our clients, we judge the decisions we make, we judge what they tell us. We judge whether we think we're being told what the real story is or not, we've got this jargon that doesn't stand up and I think that's what stuffs us.

Belinda's comments show an intense irritation with the idealism of social work. These criticisms of social work as unable to fulfill its mission may be another example of identity politics. There is a sense in which these participants, feeling unrecognised and invalidated within the profession, return the fire by scrutinising the profession's ability to implement its mission.

A negatively identified social worker, Dan, comments on public perceptions of social work as volunteering:

> Because part of our roots was in the almonry area, that's the sort of perception that people have of us. My sister talks about the volunteers helping her as social workers and I said that we would call them family support workers. I asked her what she thought a social worker was, because she was quite surprised that I was doing counselling in this job, and she said 'well they're someone just to help you through your problems', and I understand where she's coming from, but I just find that position frustrating. I'd like to think that by the end of my working life there's some significant change in the way that social workers are perceived and I've lost a little bit of faith in whether that can occur and that sort of struggle I find tiring.

Another factor contributing to negative social work identity is feeling rejected or marginalised because of participants' identification as clinicians. Anthony relates:

> I was briefly, oh for some years...on the Social Work Faculty Board, representing the...AASW. You were just in an overview position but you

> didn't really have power at all...they were wanting a social policy focus...rather than the clinical social work approach.

There is a sense of Anthony keenly feeling the lack of opportunities to contribute his clinical expertise to the social work profession. Paradoxically, he makes a contribution to the professional development of psychiatric registrars by way of clinical supervision, demonstrating the regard in which he is held as a senior psychoanalytic psychotherapist, and the sharing of expertise across disciplinary boundaries in counselling and psychotherapy.

Maria similarly views clinical specialisation as overlooked within social work:

> If they moved in that direction and started to respect that profession and shape that specialty within social work I think that would be just tremendous, just as they might define other specialties, because my social work is specialised.

Dan comments on exclusion of a different nature. His strong feelings about the exclusion of men from some areas of social work practice have contributed to the formation of a negative social work identity:

> The issues surrounding exclusionary practice that I mentioned earlier (have) been an issue for me and I figure it's important that if one is dissatisfied with some circumstances that you do something active about it.

Maria demonstrates that the loss of affiliation with social work occurs gradually through contradictions in the work place resulting from its multidisciplinary nature:

> Increasingly, I wasn't identifying as a social worker. I was in that I was working as a senior social worker, but most professionals had a common role.

Another facet of negative professional identity is a view that the professional association is irrelevant and inactive. David, a part-time worker living in a rural area, argues that the association has the wrong agenda in not focusing on the professionalisation of social work:

> There is a glaring need for social work to set some standards for practice and to start to do some lobbying for decent wages and career structure...but somehow we've still got this volunteer ethic.

This further emphasises that a condition of affiliation is that professional associations must be seen to be personally relevant to potential members. David explains his reasons for not joining the professional association:

> It costs money which I didn't have for a long time...I saw...the potential of it being relevant, but I could see that it was largely full of academics that were arguing the point about stuff that really offered little benefit to me. So I couldn't see the point.

Simone strongly critiques the false dichotomy created by professionalisation and expert knowledge between the social worker and the client in her reflection on the nature of the social work profession:

> When I look at some of the literature...that's written to train professionals, I just get that it's a game about...'we'll now pretend that we're not them and we'll learn this stuff'...Students are only too eager to do it, to get up into their heads and get all busy focusing on everybody else and looking out there and it's very distracting from your pain...It invites a really unhelpful place for both the professional and the people they're trying to help.

Simone's trenchant criticisms of the social work profession are based on her experience as a social work lecturer and as course consultant developing social work curricula in the area of counselling. She also has contact with social workers through conducting multidisciplinary training workshops in her role as a trainer of counsellors. One aspect of Simone's critique of social work is the limitations imposed by the organisational contexts of practice:

> I think the role of the social worker in the culture could potentially be a really important one, I don't think it is, because of who becomes social workers and how they're educated, it's the whole culture of martyrdom and overwork...they're just doing impossible jobs under impossible circumstances.

Another senior participant involved in training expresses frustration at the lack of clinical skills of new social work graduates. Alice states:

> I think it's really terrible to realise that current social work graduates don't have a lot to offer clinically, and I don't acknowledge that in all circles and I think that's terribly regrettable, because I like to champion social work and will do that but I'll do it with some anxiety and bated breath because I think often they won't have any skills of the sort that I want in the places where I work.

Alice is overall positively identified with social work but expresses concerns about the current lack of focus on clinical skills in social work education. Simone has similar concerns about the lack of skills, and negatively compares social work graduates to the graduates of her entry level counselling training course:

> When you think about the number of counselling training hours the social workers have, it's less than the graduates of this course and their placement experience, it's very hit and miss...A lot of social workers have never had that much supervision in their lives and no support...they get offered to do things and I don't think they have the skills to do them.

However, like the ambivalent group, even participants with strongly expressed negative views of social work identify aspects of social work knowledge and values that continue to influence their work. Simone, while clearly disavowing a social work identity, states:

> What's become more important to me in recent years is seeing people in a social context and I think that's my social work beginnings too...the problems that a lot of people are dealing with are culturally created and are about the life-set of the culture.

Another feature of negative professional identity is that, like commitment, it is a fluid state that can shift over time. David relates:

> At times I didn't want to call myself a social worker and so initially...I was a community development worker rather than a social worker because social workers didn't often have a real good connotation for me and...I guess as time went on I felt more comfortable identifying with social work and sort of working in the welfare field.

Discussion

This article has charted the interactions evident in participants' descriptions of their work between their social work identity and later professional affiliations and loyalties built up through specialising in counselling and therapy. The findings of the study suggest that professional identity is a complex phenomenon, as many experiences contribute to its construction and expression. Social work has a heterogeneous identity that is quite robust and dynamic, and includes definitions of social work that differ depending on practitioners' experience and political viewpoints.

The analysis of participants' patterns of affiliation, identification and career decision making has implications for educators at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This section discussing the study's findings will draw out these implications.

Social workers share aspects of their professional identity with other helping professionals because of the profession's multiple knowledge bases and interventions. The very diversity of social work, a dimension favourably received by these participants because of choice of career paths, makes it less likely that the profession can be a homogenous group. Recognition and valuing of specialisations such as counselling and psychotherapy is important to retain experienced practitioners' identification with social work.

Evidence for a stance of devaluing clinical specialisation can be found in the writing of Bogo, Raphael and Roberts, who emphasise the need for the profession, in particular academics, to defend 'traditional practice' in social work against practitioners interested in therapeutic practice:

> Social work education should be the 'guardian' of the traditional social work paradigm and thus must not simply respond to the influence of the occupational environment and the individual career interests of current students (1993, p. 291).

A lack of validation within the profession and by educators for counselling and psychotherapy as legitimate career pathways may contribute paradoxically to what is

most feared, more positive affiliations with other professional associations and disciplines. Such a view ignores the reality of contemporary human service arrangements, in which casework and counselling comprise the majority of work carried out by social workers (Costello 1995, p. 29). In particular, a view of counselling as individualising and pathologising devalues the career aspirations of many women within social work, and is therefore a form of indirect gender discrimination (Lewis 2004).

Participants show a patterning along a continuum between positive and negative identification with social work. The relevant factors in developing positive, ambivalent or negative professional identity are participants' experiences within organisations such as opportunities for professional development, and the ways in which clients and professionals from other occupations working in the field respond to practitioners from social work backgrounds. Continued advocacy for structured professional development opportunities within human service organisations by the AASW and Schools of Social Work within universities would therefore assist in maintaining positive professional identity for social work practitioners.

This study has found that participants with a positive identity are more likely to see congruence between their post-graduate training and social work, and to be able to find areas of intersecting knowledge and values. These participants express a commitment to the values and ideals of the social work profession. In contrast, the professional association is viewed in a reified way by participants with ambivalent identity, as a separate entity who should 'do' something to ensure social work is on an equal footing with other professions. This suggests that the work of groups such as the AASW and Heads of Social Work meetings to promote the profession and maintain parity with other professional groups needs to be better publicised. Dissemination of information through the AASW national and state newsletters is unlikely to reach social workers with ambivalent and negative professional identity. Access to departmental and community organisations' electronic newsletters may increase awareness of professional activities among disaffiliated social workers.

One outcome of negative professional identity is non-participation with the professional association, as it is viewed as irrelevant to participants' current work roles. The association of social work with negative images of practitioners and their work contexts, such as martyrs working in pressured work environments with high caseloads, is a feature of the narratives of participants with negative social work identity. These perceptions may be more about image than reality. Interestingly, if this view of social work was shared by Australian communities, it would be more likely to result in a greater value for the social work profession. The way social work practitioners view the profession is not necessarily related to community perception.

Moreover, educators in schools of social work may not be members of the AASW or alternative associations such as AASWE. The relevance of professional membership and associated responsibilities such as ongoing professional development and contribution to the profession may not be modeled for students in the early stages of professional development. Future research could examine the affiliations within social work schools with relevant professional associations and the influence on students of their lecturers' and field educators' professional identity.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to understand and respect career decision making by participants. There is a need to develop a new conceptualisation of professional identity that is able to include diverse pathways of career development. This view allows the building of an understanding of professional identity as a web of fluid connections between people that may alter over time as a result of negative and positive experiences. An analysis of the social work literature has provided some evidence for the view that more senior members of the profession have adopted a some what prescriptive view towards social workers specialising in clinical practice. The experiences of participants in this study also demonstrate a sense of exclusion within the profession on the basis of their work as counsellors and psychotherapists.

Contemporary human service arrangements require the development of new understandings of interdisciplinary practice. It is important that social workers continue to contribute to all areas of the human services as they develop, rather than be restrained by identity politics within social work. An understanding of the experiences that contribute to social workers maintaining or disavowing identification with social work in their work environments is important for the future of the social work profession.

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Innovative Social Work Education Across Distance: Community Focused Learning

Darren de Warren and Joanna Mensinga

Introduction

This paper elaborates the model of social work education delivered from the School of Social Work and Welfare Studies at Central Queensland University (CQU). The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree is delivered in an approach called Community-Focused Learning (CFL). The template for the analysis in CFL is outlined, in Figure One, showing the detailed steps that guide the analysis, research and reflection on the social work cases and projects required for assessment. Three models of problem-based and experiential learning were influential in the construction of CFL. The strengths of each approach and their influence are identified. The process of CFL is initiated at on-campus meetings but continues across distance using a mix of information and communication technologies, increasingly referred to as 'ICTs' (Rafferty 1997, p. 959). Social work educators have been comfortable with the use of information technologies for research and social inquiry, but reluctant to experiment with new modes of communication technologies in undergraduate programs. This paper concludes that CFL provides flexible delivery of social work education with the purposeful use of ICTs in decision making across distance. Participants in BSW at CQU can replace the time they would devote to on-campus travel and teaching sessions with an immersion in the social contexts that resemble their future workplace: remote rural properties, home towns or neighbourhoods.

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This paper is dedicated to the late Associate Professor Frances Killion who established the Bachelor of Social Work degree at Central Queensland University.

Thanks to Associate Professor Jane Maidment for her assistance with the preparation of this paper. The foundation staff who designed the curriculum, Denise Travers, John Hills, Marilyn Leeks and Renee Huntley are also acknowledged for their dedicated work.

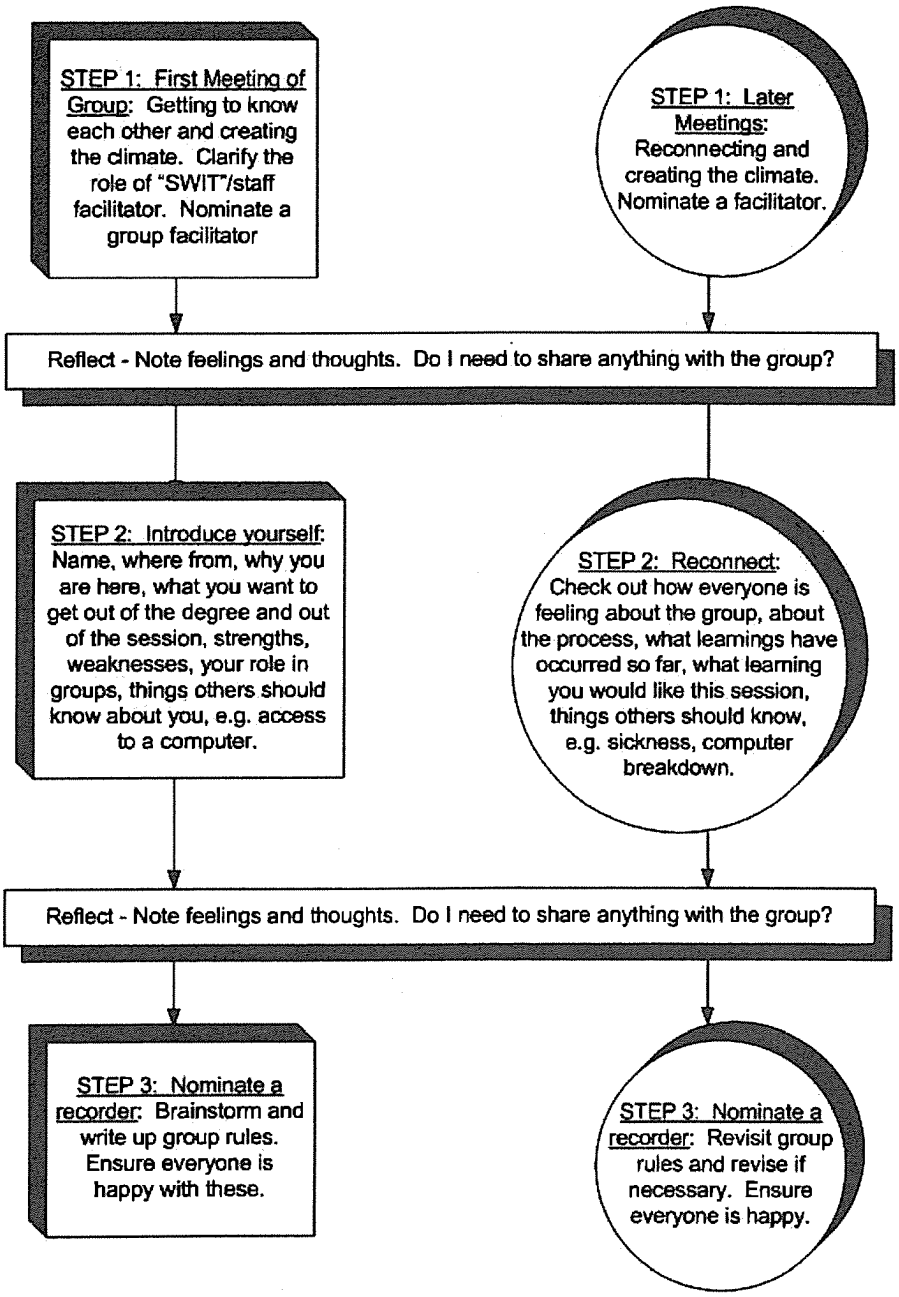
Figure One

Community Focused Learning Model

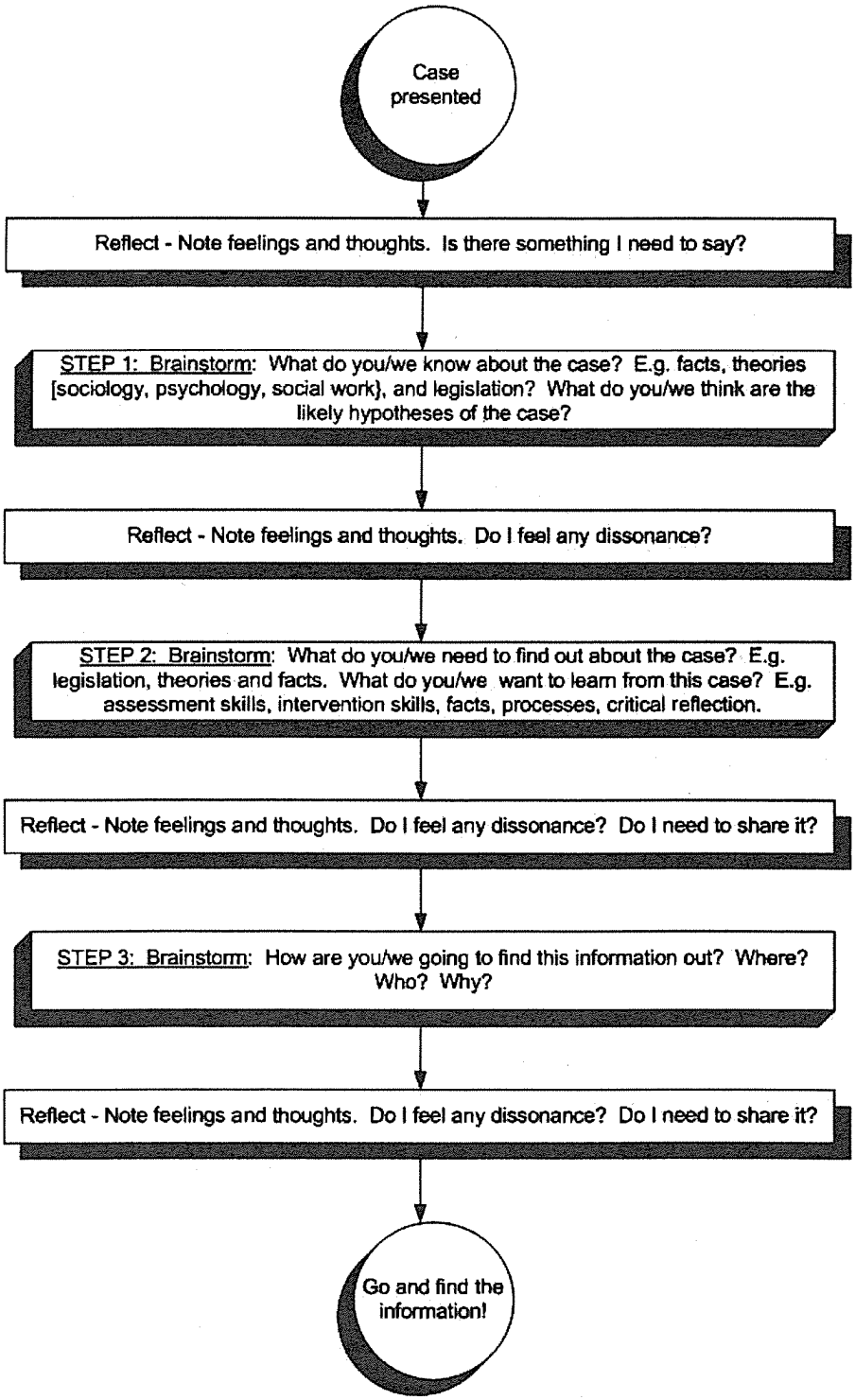
Joanna T. Mensinga, School of Social Work & Welfare Studies [CQU]

[Based on Barrow's model (1985) and Kiser's Integrative Learning Model (2000)]

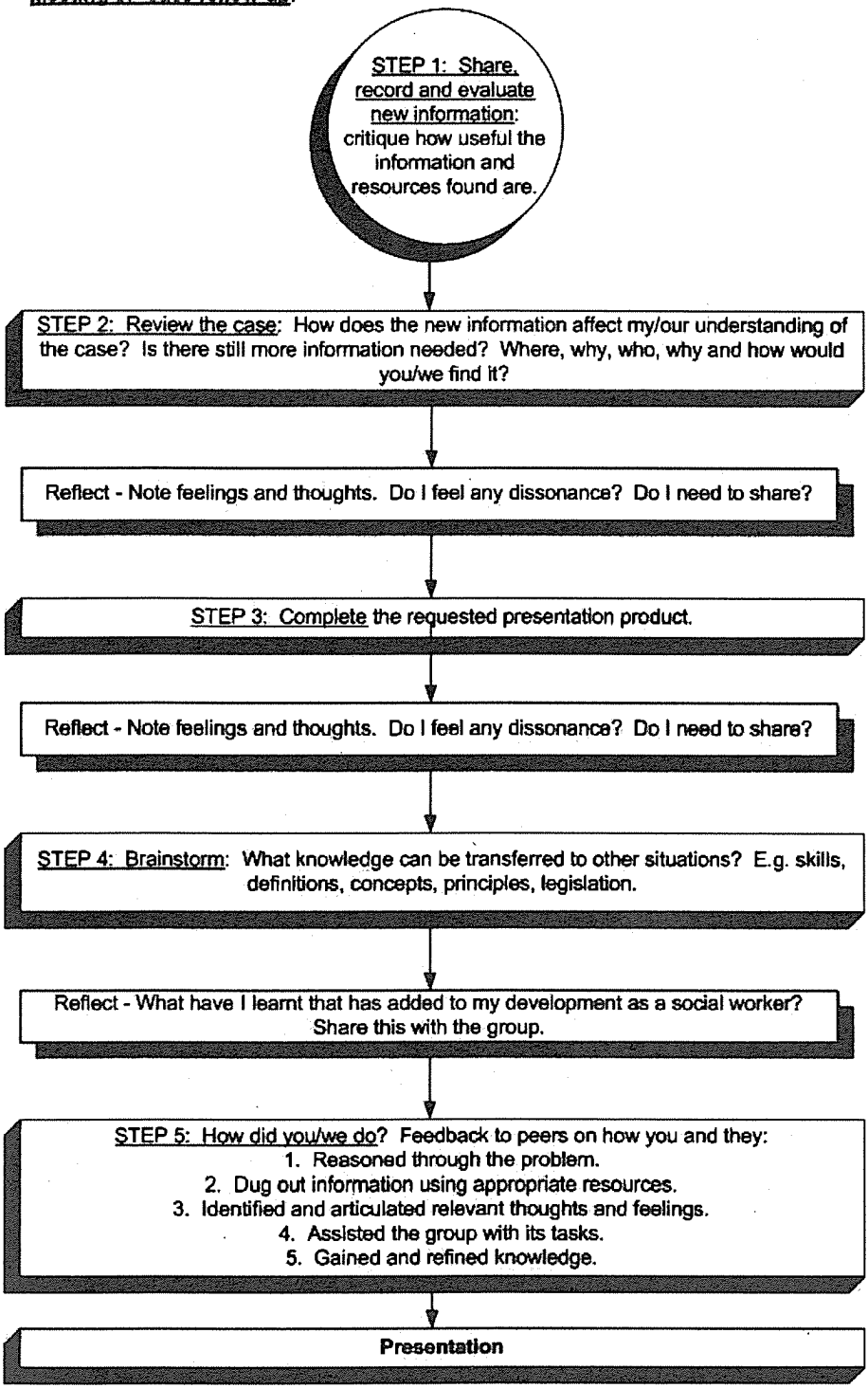
Meeting 1: Creating the climate:



Meeting 2: Beginning a new case:



Meeting 3: Case follow-up:



Community Focused Learning

The BSW at CQU offers participants a wide range of academic and professional experiences. The program reflects a mix of educational philosophies offered from a range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, management and the health sciences. Methods of assessment in these courses range from examinations, assignments and on-line tests. The social work courses offered from the School of Social Work and Welfare Studies are distinguished by a commitment to an experiential professional education.

CFL aims to bring experiential social work education to people who require a flexible characterised by a commitment to an experiential professional education. Experiential professional education is based on approach to professional qualifications acquired across distance. The approach is based on the presentation of case studies and projects that simulate social work practice. These social work scenarios then focus and shape the acquisition and application of social work knowledge, values and skills that fulfil the learning objectives of the curriculum. The analysis of social work case studies and projects is initiated on campus in learning teams with staff supervision and continues across distance to completion and presentation. This decision making across distance is facilitated by negotiating a mix of ICTs appropriate to the accessibility, knowledge, skills and dynamics of the group. The approach was named as community-focused because the majority of assessment requirements in the social work program require assessment to be contextualised in place, prompting the exploration and analysis of the communities in which participants reside. These undergraduate experiences allow all participants to develop sophisticated reflection and methods for social work practice across distance.

All participants completing courses in social work theory and practice attend on-campus residential workshops for a block of five days, twice a year. On-campus attendance remains a requirement for approval with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). Residential workshops involve the formation of learning teams comprising eight to 12 people. Team memberships change at the beginning of each year. The learning team works with one staff member toward the completion of a range of individual and team based social work projects. Each staff member works with their learning team for the full academic year. Three to four members of staff facilitate between four and five teams each.

The staff who facilitate CFL are required to negotiate several roles and their appropriate timing throughout the academic year with their learning teams. The first role involves the authorship of case studies drawn from each staff member's interests and experience in social work practice. The construction of case studies and projects were designed in close proximity to the Australian Social Work Competency Standards for Entry Level Social Workers (1994). The competency standards of some projects were provided as resource materials for some projects with the expectation that they be integrated into the assessment product. Academic staff interpret and critique the requirements of the national association and translate them into practise scenarios which form the platform of social work education in CFL. Participants are referred directly to the web site of the AASW <http://www.aasw.asn.au> to recover documents that could inform the completion of case studies and projects. The content of experiential assessment for assessment and on-campus residential programming is

reviewed annually to ensure a diversity of social issues is included. But case studies and projects are often designed in such a way as to also permit space for negotiation between staff and their team members on the focus of content the and presentation of assessment products. The case studies and projects required are also sequenced in the curriculum to facilitate a progressive development of team work skills across distance.

Each staff facilitator is then responsible for the construction of resource packages that support the case studies and projects in their courses. These packages contain a range of readings and audio-visual resources to assist in focusing initial reading and research. The staff facilitator becomes an interpreter of the resources contained in their packages. Among many other complex roles, staff also model the role of group facilitator, team supervisor and assessor.

At the orientation residential staff begin teaching and facilitating the process of CFL. The flow chart contained in Table 1 represents the process of CFL in action. It guides the analysis of social work case studies and projects. The process is designed for three meetings of a learning team:

- Meeting 1 focuses on building the safety of the group through the discussion of introductions, roles and group agreements. CFL also encourages the communication of assumptions, thoughts or feelings about participant's immediate reactions to the social work case study presented for assessment.
- Meeting 2 aims to initiate the analysis of the social work case study. The careful reading of resources provided, the use of key language, social work concepts and relevant social theory occurs in this phase. There is an emphasis in this session on assessing the knowledge, values and skills that team members already possess in relation to the social work case study. This session concludes with the negotiation of the first waves of research. Several sites on the University campus or in the wider community are often accessed in the pursuit of further information and knowledge. The team negotiates who will gather the knowledge. Time-lines for fieldwork and re-meeting are also negotiated.
- Meeting 3 involves posing critical questions to the information and knowledge gathered and its application to the social work scenario presented. The process then guides the team through a number of tasks toward the construction of a final presentation. The presentation of the team's social work response to the case study presented, includes both the content learned and an evaluation of group processes. Each team presents learning outcomes in the presence of all the teams and the staff of the School.

The template for CFL and its application to a social work case study or project is first experienced face-to-face in groups at on-campus residential workshops. Participants are then encouraged to transport the template into other learning contexts. The process of CFL can also guide the work of individual projects. Input from other team members is organised informally and flexibly. The template is often superimposed on the design of on-line bulletin boards <http://www.eboard.com>. It can also guide the process of transforming on-line chat into a facilitation of discussion. By the final year of the program, individuals and their learning teams are expected to take greater responsibility for facilitating the analysis and research of case studies, as their skills in the process of CFL become more sophisticated and implicit.

Experiential Assessment: The University Open Day

A range of creative experiential projects are completed in the BSW at CQU using the template for CFL including:

- a community education display on the profession of social work in Australia at the University's Open Day and Multicultural Fair;
- a response to a local community group/association requiring a guest speaker on the profession of social work;
- a one act play or street theatre on the history of social work;
- a co-authored committee response to a complaint of social work malpractice; and
- a report to the Federal government on the capacity of local communities to resettle refugees and immigrants.

The first project encountered in the program requires a learning team to participate in community education on the profession of social work at CQU's Open Day and Multicultural Fair. Using a mix of face-to-face facilitation and on-line communication each team negotiate both the content of the course and process of teamwork across distance. The project prompts reading and research around the knowledge, values and skills of the profession; the ideas they want to present to the public; thoughts and feelings about inequality in Australia; knowledge of multiculturalism and the protocols of diversity. For example, one first year team member raised their discomfort about placing the images and texts of gay men and lesbian sexuality in relation to Christian and Muslim symbols. This question raised considerable debate in the team which required them to assemble more abstract symbols for the representation of diversity than the stereotypes they had proposed.

The staff facilitator is also responsible for assisting with the process of learning for both individuals and their teams. The Open Day project prompts learning about who is creative; who could build things; who could set up; who could talk on their feet with the general public; who could film for audio-visual communication; who could construct slide shows on lap tops and who could pack up. Finally, every group nominates a photographer who snaps a few digital photos to send to the other members unable to attend. Staff members and participants practise evaluating the process of their learning in teams at on-campus residentials. Some evaluations are also facilitated in teleconferences, email or bulletin boards. The outcome in CFL is a shift away from the roles of lecturer and student. Margetson (1994, p. 11) suggested that problem-based learning (PBL) is a collaborative and reciprocal approach to education, in which adults are no longer referred to as students but 'colleagues who are novices.' In CFL, the knowledge and talents that all participants bring to every project is assumed and made explicit before embarking on the research required.

The Open Day project is also contextualised in a large regional bureaucracy. Each team presents a proposal for their display to the staff of the School using videoconferencing networks across four campuses in the first quarter of the year. Nominated facilitators in the learning team monitor information about changes to the logistics of the day as information unfolds throughout the year. The course co-ordinator attends on-campus meetings and relays information to each of the first year teams via e-mail. The school secretary uploads relevant information such as health

and safety to the school website. These sources of information must be monitored by the team through time, so that the final assessment product adheres to all of the constraints placed upon this project when actualised in the community.

This section has elaborated the delivery of CFL. The template for analysis was presented. It was suggested that this process could be transportable to other learning contexts in the program. An experiential project in community education was then chosen to demonstrate the way in which the content, process and outcomes of the work simulate social work practice across distance. The following section articulates the influence of problem-based and experiential models of professional education on the construction of CFL.

The Evolution of CFL

Consultation with The Australian Association of Social Work (AASW) encouraged the establishment of a BSW degree in Queensland with an experiential philosophy of education. The delivery of several social work curricula across distance were studied. Two degree programs in Australia had explored experiential social work education at University level. Vinson, Leu, Smith and Yamey(1986), and Heycox and Bolzan (1991, p. 191) reported positively on problem-based learning (PBL) in the first year of the BSW degree at the University of New South Wales. Vinson, Leu, Smith and Yamey (1986) suggested avoiding the ad hoc development of PBL courses in existing social work curricula as there were many philosophical and human resource issues to be changed. They suggested that it could be considered a paradigm for the construction of new social work curricula. English, Gaha and Gibbons (1994, p. 279) extended experiential social work education across four years at the University of Newcastle. The educational experience and scholarship of social work educators who had experimented with experiential approaches, informed the initial orientation of the BSW degree at CQU.

The method of CFL was built from the strengths of three models of problem-based and experiential education. The McMaster Model of PBL was the first framework to be used at residential workshops. Developed initially for the education of medical practitioners at McMaster University, Ontario, Canada (Birch, 1986). The model was designed for the education of medical practitioners in clinical decision-making contexts. While the McMaster approach was experiential in its educational philosophy, it relied on a positivist epistemology of knowledge. In other words, it was based on the construction of professional practise that relied on scientific fact and deductive analysis (Woods, Hall, Eyles and Hrymak, 1996). Although social workers rely on scientific facts in some parts of their practise, but the latter requires several kinds of knowledge (Hudson, 1997).

The second model integrated was Barrows' Model of PBL which adopted an interpretivist-constructivist epistemology. The approach required the delineation of assumptions from fact at the initiation of a professional analysis. Writing of experiential education in multi-disciplinary contexts, Barrows (1999, p. 2) captured the spirit of case studies required for social work education, 'you must give the learners the actual, ill-structured, open-ended and messy problems, or simulations of the problems, they will encounter in their careers'. His epistemological and

pedagogical assumptions recognise the unreadable, dissonant and irresolvable information and knowledge encountered in social work practise. The model prompts reflection on the interpretation and construction of knowledge itself, questioning the (non)existence of facts in subjective circumstances. This analysis prompts the assumptions that participants in CFL have assembled around a social work case study before embarking on a particular avenue of inquiry. Barrows' model of PBL instils a critical analysis of the construction of knowledge and its application to social work practise.

The third model of experiential learning that informed CFL was Myers-Kiser's (2000) Integrated Processing Model. Myers-Kiser's framework was designed for the analysis of experiential learning in fieldwork. Logically, frameworks for fieldwork education became useful when thinking about the experiential design of on-campus residential workshops and on-line facilitation. The two most prominent contributions to CFL are the reflexive work of values and the articulation of dissonance in learning.

Myers-Kiser (2000) understood that professional field education involved the provocation of a student's personal values at certain turning points in a professional relationship, as new information arises through time. In her model, a series of questions facilitate the clarity of an individual's values with the social work project at hand:

- How does the situation touch upon your own values?
- How does it relate to your personal history or similar experiences that you might have had?
- What thoughts and emotions does this situation trigger in you?
- What assumptions are you making about the situation?
- What assumptions are you making about the people involved in the experience, including yourself?

Myers-Kiser (2000, p. 63) also urged the articulation of dissonance in learning. She identified five forms of possible disequilibrium interpreted to be:

- The dissonance of self: when thoughts and feelings may not match as expected.
- The dissonance of knowledge: when the adversarial findings in scientific and social scientific knowledge compete for truth.
- The dissonance of context: when the context of everyday life produces contradictory or incongruent social relations.
- The dissonance of perspective: when the beliefs of a profession, self, family or society may be incompatible and uncomfortable.
- The dissonance of theory and practise: when a theory is determined as limited in its support of professional practise or vice versa, where professional practise has limited knowledge and little theory to guide it.

Values and dissonance are an ongoing experience in field education (Myers-Kiser 2000). The main tools used for reflexive practice in fieldwork practise, namely the learning journal (Cullen 1981), and face-to-face facilitation, together with new modes

including team based emails and eboards, become necessary in complex relationships of professional education that unfold over time.

Each of these models contributed to the evolution of CFL. The McMaster approach to PBL provided a beginning template for experiential education in action. It also provides a tidy framework for social work practise that requires high levels of social scientific knowledge and deductive logic. Barrows (1999) presented a more congruent model of problem-based learning that emphasises the need for 'fuzzy' logic in social analysis. Myers-Kiser (2000) stamped the approach with a social work sensibility, encouraging ongoing reflexive practice on the construction of values and the evaluation of dissonance in learning.

A Constructivist Social Work Education

CFL requires the assembly and reconfiguration of knowledge through time (Margetson 1993, p. 48) as it is applied to an assessment project or case study. Information considered irrelevant in a first meeting for a team may become critical in later stages of analysis. Nueman and Blundo (2000) and Gray and Gibbons (2002, p. 282) argued that a degree program assembled from a constructivist epistemology, will prepare graduates for contemporary social work practice. Referring to social work knowledge, they concluded that an experiential social work education gave students 'a sense of its ever-changing quality and the need for a life-long approach to learning' (Gray and Gibbons 2002, p. 283). The contexts of social work practice change by the minute, according to the information practitioners are integrating and disregarding. CFL gives participants four years of experience with becoming professionals who experience information and knowledge in a flux.

CFL presents many case studies and projects that need to be constructed in the local places where participants reside. Consequently, the same assessment product is constructed while immersed in diverse and unique communities. For example, in the final year of the program when a focus is placed on international social work, participants construct a document on their community's capacity to resettle refugees and immigrants. Submissions for the project can be immersed in communities as diverse as Bamaga to the suburbs of the Gold Coast. Meanwhile, participants also build an extensive community profile. Contextualising the assessment in this way offered the richest context in which to learn and apply social work theories and their practice.

Barrows (1999, p. 7) suggested that a successful experience in PBL was derived from the design of case studies that require knowledge to be gathered from a range of sources. Participants also have the opportunity to construct knowledge about other places including metropolitan, regional and rural experiences of the same social issue. The tradition of encountering a suite of lecturers across a range of discrete University courses, was decentred in CFL in preference for a model that focused on the community as incubator for the novice social worker. The model fits with Fook's (2001, p. 21) vision for the BSW degree in Australia as she argued that 'it takes a whole context' to educate a social worker. These features create a social work education that is community focused. Logically, when a profession articulates the ideas of communities and the unique social relations that comprise them, a

constructivist approach to University education will prepare graduates for realistic and effective practise because all communities evolve.

The Application of Information and Communications Technologies to CFL

Social work educators have encouraged the use of information technologies for decades but have lagged in their analysis of communication technologies. Information technologies refer to electronic equipment that broadcast data. They are socially non-interactive and include television or personal computers comprising data bases. Communication technologies refer to technologies that allow for the exchange of information. Communication technologies include the telephone, teleconference, facsimile, on-line chat room, video-conference, email, group list or bulletin board. The last three modes of communication have extended the capacity for 'asynchronous' discussion and decision making because it does not require everyone to be present in time or place (Rafferty 1997, p. 959). All previous communication technologies, and newer modes like on-line chat rooms, teleconferences or videoconferences, still require 'synchronous' communication where all people need to be present in time but participating from different places (Rafferty 1997, p. 959).

The literature of social work education has indicated that many degree programs require students to interface with information technologies. Cnaan and Caputo's (1990) survey of 710 schools of social work in the United States and abroad, found technologies concentrated in courses devoted to research methods. Finn and Lavitt's (1995) survey of 279 of the 400 accredited social work degree programs in the United States, also reinforced the presence of technologies in social work research education. Similarly, in Australia, Hayhoe and Dollard (2000, p. 23) reported that six representatives of the 13 schools interviewed indicated that the internet and email were taught in their curricula. Of that teaching, 77% of the content focused on ICTs was presented in courses for social work research methods and social inquiry. Therefore, as Finn and Lavitt (1995, p. 48) wrote, 'when computers are used primarily as super-charged calculators, students are missing the real impact of the information society revolution.' Social work educators have been comfortable with students using technologies to access information on databases and for the calculation or interpretation of data. But they have been reluctant to experiment with the place of communications technologies in professional education.

Smith (1984) and Cnaan (1989) urged schools of social work in the United States to produce graduates who could interface proficiently with the personal computer and its development. Caputo and Cnaan (1990) suggested that the curricula of North American schools needed to be proactive about the placement of technologies. Yet, however, Finn and Lavitt's (1997, p.44) survey of 279 schools in the United States showed that 59% of degree programs could allow graduates to complete with no computer literacy. Several social work educators in the United States have suggested that the low uptake of ICTs in their curricula was linked to the strong presence of on-campus education and the tardy development of distance programs (Jennings, Siegel and Conklin 1995; Blakely and Schoenherr 1995; Thyer, Polk and Gaudin 1997).

In Australia, Ryan and Martyn (1996, p. 19) analysed the literature of social work education published in two Australian international journals. No facet of their

analysis touched on the relationship of social work education to ICTs. Hayhoe and Dollard (2000) interviewed spokespeople for 13 of the 18 BSW degrees in Australia. The authors interviewed representatives of each school and measured the extent to which technologies had been integrated into the curricula of social work programs. Three respondents reported that the extent to which ICTs were integrated into the curriculum was high, five assessed a medium level of integration, four indicated a low level and one school indicated none at all. Six schools indicated that it was necessary to extend the inclusion of ICTs in their curricula, considering the reliance on ICTs for the storage and exchange of information in many organisational contexts of social work practice (Hayhoe and Dollard 2000, p. 24). Surveys by Nurius, Hooyman and Nicoll (1988) and Humphries and Camilleri (2002) supported this position suggesting that social workers interfaced with technologies in their workplace often without sufficient training. Yet they also suggested that those workers often managed to deploy sophisticated problem solving skills to keep pace of bureaucratic and organisational demands that they interface with technologies. In seemed logical therefore to develop the knowledge and skills of ICT for social work practise through problem-solving skills.

In CFL it is important to frame the use of ICTs purposefully. Therefore ICTs are not experienced in CFL as a lecture transposed onto a web page or a chat session run like a class. ICTs are encountered experientially. Participants learn to use technologies to build working relationships with peers and staff facilitators across distance. Various modes of technology mentioned below are negotiated and contracted between the staff facilitator and each other member of the team.

CFL encourages the purposeful development of knowledge about ICTs and their limitations in effective working relationships across distance. Social work educators have encouraged a critical inclusion of ICT in the curricula of the profession, suggesting an ongoing analysis of 'how and where it is used' (Nurius, Hooyman and Nicholl 1988; Sapey 1997; Hick 1999; Hayhoe and Dollard 2000, p. 26). In CFL, some members in teams scope new developments in software and hardware, trialing, assessing and evaluating its place (or not) in the process of team communications. Graduates have acquired critical and ethical reflexive work on the place of specific technologies such as teleconferences, emails or face-to-face meetings in regional social work practise. Critical experiences with the analysis of ICTs and their application to social work practice, minimises the risks associated with its misuse and harm (Giffords 1998, p. 244). All participants learn how ICTs fit the values of social work, how the power relations among people deploy strategies through communication technologies, while negotiating the technological inequalities that exist within their own learning team.

CFL allows participants to plan a process of acquiring knowledge and skills for ICTs. By the final year of the degree program, participants have opportunities to:

- (co)facilitate teleconferences with their teams;
- facilitate meetings in videoconferencing facilities;
- host and facilitate videoconference seminars;
- participate in workshops from multiple videoconference sites (see Mensinga 2003);
- design, manage and visit eboards where information is shared and critiqued;

- send and receive email for the facilitation of team decision making;
- send and receive Word files to all members of a team as a 'live document' resulting in co-authored reports;
- construct and facilitate discussion in on-line chat rooms for the discussion of group projects;
- assemble audio-visual equipment for clinical supervision; and
- undertake the role of communications manager/facilitator rotated within the team.

Kelley (1993, p. 63) encapsulated social work educators' responses to the use of technology as a fear of experiencing 'sterile technocratic teaching'. The staff were keen to avoid these assumptions and test the capacity of ICTs to deliver complex outcomes in social work education using electronic networks. The staff facilitator has one week in residential workshops to consolidate safe and engaged working relationships with their team of participants. The evaluation of CFL have suggested that there is a strong relationship between the quality of face-to-face relationships with staff facilitators and other team members at residential workshops, and the motivation to make ongoing use of ICTs across distance. Similar assessments were reported by Kelley (1993), Kantambu Latting (1994) and Finn and Lavitt (1995) who evaluated social work classes delivered on-campus and via videoconferencing and chat rooms. Rather than personify the hardware and software of ICTs with human qualities like social control, described as 'technological determinism' (Hick 1999, p. 67), it is the quality of relationships between people that will determine how ICTs will be deployed across distance. The challenge in the curricula was to strike the right kind of balance between on-campus and electronic education.

Access to ICTS and Social Work Education

Inequality of access to ICTs was an original concern of the foundation staff (Barlow 1997, p. 4). The inequalities of ICT have been raised between social work academics and practitioners (Sandell and Hayes 2002, p. 91) and between rural human service workers and their clients (Chenoworth and Stehlik 2002, p. 15). However, Brauns and Kramer (1987, p. 131) argued that social workers should not leave the deployment of ICT in everyday life to 'blind technolatory.' Similarly, Wilkinson (1999, p. 76) argued that social workers are well versed in the analysis of how global power structures and their impact on personal lives. She argued that the analysis of ICT as a global movement and its impact on local life, is the domain of social work analysis and action. Consequently, the social work team responsible for the construction of Australia's most recent BSW could not consider a new degree that overlooked significant structural changes to human communications at the close of the twentieth century. The foundation staff engaged the debates about social work's relationship with ICTs in preference to ignoring their impact on the profession and its degree programs.

The BSW degree at CQU has been delivered through CFL since 1998. At that time, Barlow (1997) offered an optimistic analysis of regional community development in Australia as the nation was networked by electronic communications. Barlow (1997, p. 5) urged rural communities to be proactive in their influence on the presence of electronic networks of communication. He argued that the uneven and unequal

privatisation of the personal computer across Australian society would be subverted by public sites of access. Barlow (1997, p. 6) believed that information highways would emerge with many 'entry ramps' to electronic communications networks from many locations including schools, libraries, medical centres, community centres and information kiosks. In his view, access to ICTs would be facilitated by a mix of sponsors in local places including philanthropic individuals; community service groups and associations; corporate sponsorship and government subsidies. His vision encouraged the initiation of a BSW constructed through networks of electronic communications as private and public access to ICTs became more widespread.

At the inception of CFL, it was anticipated that the accessibility of people to effective and reliable ICTs, regardless of their geographic location, would be uneven and unequal. This experience frames the first year of the program which is focused on the analysis of inequality and the role of social work role in Australian society. Communicating, assessing and negotiating the inequalities of technologies in the learning team itself, become the first experiential challenge in the program. Each team must find a mix of technologies that will be inclusive of all members despite the distances that distinguished them.

A Flexible Social Work Education

Condliffe (1991, p. 14) wrote that technology posed new dimensions of flexibility for social work education in regional Victoria. The BSW at CQU has aimed for a flexible social work education assisted in part by advances in regional ICTs. The degree program offers flexible delivery and learning. Flexible delivery refers to the way in which educators make knowledge accessible. The delivery of knowledge from a range of sites enhances the choices about learning, hence there is greater flexibility in the process. Flexible learning refers to the choices that participants have when planning how and when they will access, acquire, consume and reproduce that knowledge (Taylor 1999). A degree program can administer flexible delivery, meaning that content is made available in a diversity of modes. Yet learning can be inflexible if diverse sites of knowledge are assembled into learning products that are non-negotiable in content and assessment outcome. Vice versa, learning can be flexible, as it must be in education based on problem-solving over time, but if there is only one site that triggers analysis and discussion in a group, such as an on-campus meeting, then delivery is inflexible.
The BSW degree at CQU is designed to accomplish both dimensions of flexibility: delivery and learning. Delivery is flexible because participants can access social work knowledge, values and skills from several sites including:

- residential workshops programmed over five days with between 25 and 55 participants, team taught by all social work staff;
- staff facilitators who negotiate diverse contracts for communications with participants;
- resource packages containing hard copies of journal articles, book chapters, magazine articles and audio-visual tapes
- electronic 'classrooms' <http: webct.com>and<http://blackboard.com> that provide links to resources;
- peers in their learning teams; and

- consultations with social workers and representatives of groups in local communities who offer time and information.

This range of 'trigger' materials (Vinson, Leu, Smith and Yamey 1986, p. 3) and trigger people, permit a flexible approach to determining which site will initiate learning. CFL encourages participants to discover the most effective 'concrete experiences' that provide impetus for adult education (Thompson, Osada and Anderson 1990, p. 11). Further, as it was suggested in the section on the CFL template, all case studies and projects have non-negotiable and negotiable facets to submission.

The delivery of social work content in CFL is flexible but so too is learning. Teachers of problem-based learning have described it as 'just-in-time' education because the most sustainable, retrievable learning occurred at a critical moment when information was sought by a student (Barrows 1999, p. 2). This makes CFL an inherently flexible process of learning, as the latter will only occur when participants have mobilised themselves into posing questions for their next search. When and where this questioning occurs is dependent on the learner's management of their time in collaboration with others.

The staff responsible for learning teams decide how they will manage just-in-time learning. The approach requires a paradigmatic reorientation to the way in which higher education is delivered. Just-in-time education requires educators toalso maintain high levels of skill in group facilitation and time management. Alternatively, when staff are not able to be 'on-call' for questions posed through a range of technologies in a working day including telephone, facsimile, voicemail, email, chat room or snail mail, they can negotiate their availability with their teams in blocks of time, in or out of business hours. The model allows opportunities for more flexible and autonomous managements of teaching and research demands each term. However, this increase in flexibility requires an increase in the complexity of negotiations required with learning teams through the academic year.

Evaluations

Since the inception of the program in 1998 the staff of the School, undertook the evaluation of CFL from five angles. First, every social work case study or project requires both verbal and written evaluations of the content and process of CFL. At residential workshops, evaluations are undertaken face-to-face with the team. Evaluations of CFL also occurred on-line in email or bulletin board. These evaluations include discussion on the role of the staff facilitator and their effectiveness. Second, anonymous feedback sheets assess the content and value of learning on each day of residential workshops. These evaluations usually prompt (de)briefings and discussion at the beginning of the next day. Third, surveys were administered to 58 participants in 1999 and 2000 seeking an evaluation of CFL and their use of information and communications technologies. The concepts of 'competence' and 'confidence' in social work practise were evaluated (English, Gaha and Gibbons 1994, p. 281). In relation to the management of technological hardware and software in social work education, 52% of respondents indicated that their competence and confidence had increased. The remaining 48% reported no change to

mid to high levels of competence and confidence, or no response. Fourth, generic evaluative survey administered by the University to assess a range of pedagogical approaches, have reported that respondents in the social work degree program report some of the highest measurements of 'connectedness to the University campus', despite their wide dispersal across distance.

Conclusion

The elaboration of CFL as a model for social work education was the main aim of this paper. This experiential approach to social work education has been delivered across distance using a mix of ICTs. The template used in the analysis of social work case studies and projects was first presented. The template is presented in the first orientation residential workshop and all participants are encouraged to transport it across the remaining four years of study to assist with several learning contexts. The template facilitates learning in three contexts: content knowledge for the completion of case studies and projects, knowledge of group dynamics in formal learning teams and the reflexive analysis of values and dissonance. CFL evolved from the three models of problem-based learning and experiential education used in the School of Social Work and Welfare Studies. Together they have formed an experiential curriculum suited to contemporary social work practise. The degree program at CQU is unique because the analysis of experiential assessment continues among participants over distance with the critical integration of ICTs. The constructivism of CFL and advances in the regional development of ICTs, create a social work education based on both flexible learning and flexible delivery. CFL adds to the diversity of educational approaches for the BSW degree in Australia. The program also expands the range of programs accessible in social work education across distance.

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Global Social Policy: Expanding Social Policy Ideas in Social Work Teaching in Australia

Ruth Phillips

Introduction

Like most fields of learning in human services, social work is open to influences and effects of the processes and understandings of globalisation. Globalisation has also altered the context for social work practice (Ife 2001, p. 17; Asamoah 2003, pp. 1-2; Hokenstad 2003. p. 133). The impact of the dominance of economics driven policy and governance is pervasive and, according to some globalisation theorists, irreversible (Beck 2000, p. 11; Scholte 2000, p. 8). The worldwide trend to reform and transform welfare states and the impact of borderless global social, economic and environmental conditions means that many social problems that social workers will strive to address are linked to these conditions. As asserted by Healy, social work has not entirely embraced issues and structures of 'global interdependence' or indeed 'seized available opportunities' for ongoing international engagement in professional action (2001, p. 2). Although international social work scholarship engages with core global social policy problems, it is, as with development scholarship, more preoccupied with state-to-state or cross-national relationships than global responses and global institutions (Healy 2001, p. 5 & 13; Healy, Asamoah and Hokenstad 2003).

The idea of global social policy is gaining strength and, as well as offering an alternate global paradigm to the dominance of neo-liberalism, offers a pedagogic paradigm for key aspects of contemporary social policy in social work education.

This paper explores ways that the relatively new field of global social policy may be incorporated into teaching international perspectives in social work education. The discussion of issues around its inclusion in social work teaching has arisen from the evident lack of presence units of study on international or global issues in most social work programs in Australia, particularly at the undergraduate level (as evidenced by a quick survey of courses on offer). This will be achieved by pinpointing key areas of interface between globalisation and economics, global social policy scholarship, local effects of globalisation on the social work practice context, the pervasive impact of a polity dominated by economics and the practical expansion of social work practice into the global arena.

It is proposed that there are four good reasons to include a global social policy perspective in Australian social work teaching. They are:

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- The re-orientation of social policy at both the state and Commonwealth levels in Australia and the impact of this shift on the welfare state and how that relates to the globalised context.
- The importance of understanding influences and effects of economics on society and its central role in globalisation.
- The impact of global social and economic issues on local communities (ie poverty, work, disease, human rights, adoption, refugees, environment).
- The increasing job opportunities for social work graduates in a rapidly growing internationally active non-government (NGO) sector, global social policy mechanisms and for socially responsible multinational corporations (MNCs).

Given the use of globalisation or the global economy as a rationalisation for reforms to social welfare and broader economic and employment reforms, social workers should be equipped to understand the structural shifts that will affect their work context and also the global pressures that emerge as key policy issues. Learning about global social policy requires engagement with a world perspective on social movements, international institutions (such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation), global economy and global social issues. It also makes important links between development, poverty, health, human rights and environment and how social work is positioned as a profession on key social issues.

A range of strategies for including global social policy in social work education could be engaged. These might include: the introduction of basic economics linked to its importance in globalisation; the notion of globalisation and its impact on individuals, communities and Australian social policy; emerging demands for and the growth in global social policy; the expanding role of the non-government organisations (NGOs) in poverty work, aid and development; developing perspectives on global poverty; and raising the relevance of the global perspective to social work jobs.

By exploring links between gender, poverty and development, as an example of a core global social policy issue this paper will also demonstrate the development of perspectives on global social policy in teaching social policy as social work practice as well as highlighting the key players in global social policy. This includes social movements, NGOs, states, international institutions and the range of areas of scholarship such as development theory. The focus on gender, poverty and development as an area of study in global social policy is explored because it reflects how what are now core social work considerations have been responded to historically and by feminist and development practitioner/theorists. Feminist theory (gender analysis) had a significant impact on development in the postmodernisation theory era of the 1970s (Leonard 2003, p. 77), at a time that social policy was also being transformed by feminists in Australia. It also demonstrates how social policy thinking can have a global impact and suggests why it may be viewed and addressed by a global social policy approach.

Globalisation and Economics

Globalisation has become part of our everyday discourse. It has multiple meanings and multiple implications. For example, George and Wilding refer to it as 'the

increasing 'transnationalization' of the world economy that has come about during the second half of the twentieth century as a result of advances in technology, and the adoption of an individualistic market ethic' (2002, p.3).

A grass roots (NGO) perspective on globalisation suggests that 'globalisation means that our choices affect people we've never met, in countries we've never been to:

> The rules of globalisation are being written by a tiny elite – the wealthiest people in the world's wealthiest nations. Poor communities are losing out again...Yet, globalisation gives us the opportunity to unite, and try to rewrite those rules' (Simpson 2002, p. 10).

Theorists such as Beck (2000), Scholte (2000) and Falk (2000) all agree that globalisation has many definitions and that it is a means of describing new sets of economic, social, technological and social conditions. However, the single discussion that emerges most strongly from the body of literature on globalisation is its transnational, trans-territorial configuration and its impact on the nation state. As Nash points out it:

> involves the flow of goods, capital, people, information, ideas, images, and risks across national borders, combined with strong social networks and political institutions that constrain the nation state (2000, p. 47).

This understanding, like the idea of global interdependence put forward by Healy (3000, pp. 105-125), in her discussion of international social work, reflects a number of forces that can and will increasingly affect social work. Strong links are also made between the emergence of globalisation and the development and role of the welfare state, by it creating the stability required for integrated and sustained world markets in the post Word War Two period (Rieger and Leibfried 2003, p. 13).

In a discussion of a 'postmodern economy' Hinkson (1997) implies that globalisation is so pervasive in the contemporary world that it has transformed the very notion of the subject. This occurs through what he terms 'the call of the commodity' and a clearly commodified lifestyle. He draws parallels with a notion of new class formation or as he calls it 'new forms of social division' and the question of the differential distribution of commodities (Hinkson 1997, p. 86). The importance of this observation in the context of a discussion about how to understand globalisation for social work is that commodities, including previously understood societal processes such as welfare, education and, communication, are now transnational. They are the real currency of globalisation as opposed to the 'virtual' financial market. This leads to a saturation of contemporary life with globalisation. For many poverty and other social movement activists it is also the global elevation in value of commodities over communities and spiritual values that is perceived as the most threatening impact of globalisation (Gorringe 1999, pp. 21-42).

As observed by Prigoff (2000) and Healy (2001, p. 110), it is important for social work students to understand basic theories of economics. This is because of the increasing links between social and economic problems and in a discussion of globalisation it is a crucial link with the dominance of neo-liberal thinking which, in turn, dominates social policy. The links that can be made, such as increased corporate

ownership of resources, effects of international trade, environmental resource issues, exclusion of poor people from decision-making and resource allocation, can be viewed in the context of globalisation. Many issues that directly affect who will become unemployed, have good health care, have access to good educational resources, face extreme health risks or face violence are being forced by or can be attributed to the processes of globalisation. As noted by Prigoff:

> Social work is a profession dedicated to maintenance and enhancement of the social functioning and health of individuals, families, and communities. Exclusion from access to material resources or from participation in productive economic processes are understood by social workers to be forms of structural violence, which result in both physical and psychological trauma (2000, p. 2).

Globalisation can also be seen, from the broadest perspective, as a form of structural violence. Globalisation processes heighten the impact of loss of food security, human dignity, shelter and rights to safety, all core issues that must be dealt with prior to casework on interpersonal or familial interventions, sites where social work practice often begins and ends from a student point of view.

The loss of the notion of the social wage and the watering down of the welfare state are also manifestations of the reach of globalisation (Beck, 2000, p. 3; pp. 96-97). Amin notes that this represents a key failure in globalisation as it has, he further suggests, the effect of increasing inequality and negates the state's capacity to intervene 'so as to palliate the negative affects of globalisation' (1997, p. 33). The erosion of welfare and social protection is one of the most significant, popularly recognised effects of global neo-liberalism by NGOs and activists concerned about the impact of globalisation and should be a key area of interest for social work. A parallel between the capacity to provide appropriate social protection to citizens domestically is easily drawn with the failure to do so internationally and is therefore seen as both an effect and a strategy of globalisation. Simply put, globalisation is seen as further 'disempowering' the economically weak and increasing the power of the economically strong.

A key belief of neo-liberalism, based on its adherence to neo-classical economics, which is evident both at the national and global levels, is the idea that state intervention is undesirable and a sign of market failure therefore the 'pure' free (unregulated) market is good, or in perfect equilibrium. For neo-liberals globalisation is primarily a model of the free market (Scholte 2001, pp. 34-35). This is a core ideological position within neo-liberalism and should be understood by social work as a powerful oppositional force against key social justice objectives. It is also at the centre of anti-globalisation movements and resistance to its overwhelming dominance and social effects (Goodman 2002, pp. viii-xxv).

Globalisation is, however, more than an economic and ideological arrangement and does offer some positive opportunities and outcomes. It is the first period in history when individuals (such as social workers) and NGOs can engage in information exchange at the same rate as international corporations or governments via the internet. It is also the first period in history that cultural products can be displayed, events presented, news broadcast and entertainment enjoyed simultaneously around

the globe. In these ways, globalisation can be seen as a positive force for social change. Democracy theorists, for example see opportunities for global citizenship and NGOs, increasingly important players in globalisation, are already forming partnerships with international institutions and corporate players to address global problems, utilising globalisation networks. Amidst these positive processes is the growing idea of global social policy, a field where social work's traditional links to economic and social justice can be possibly played out.

Global Social Policy

Global social policy is a growing field of scholarship and could be considered as central to an international social work perspective. As mentioned above, it is distinct from international social work scholarship, as it describes not international relationships and collaborations but global analyses, organisation and responses to social issues. It can be viewed from two positions. First, it can be seen as an organised, cooperative response to global welfare problems, where we see collective, joint responses to key social issues. This is primarily driven by the key concerns of social policy that are associated with national welfare states, but also with concerns that go beyond states and affect many countries and populations (Deacon 1997, p. 2). One example of this was the recent World Summit held in Johannesburg in 2002, where OECD countries, developing countries and multinational corporations came together and talked about strategies to address world poverty, resulting in strategic commitments as set out in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN 2004, p. 1). Second, it can be seen as a global perspective, taking a particular interest in transnational actors and analysis of global welfare issues, many of which are seen to be indicative of globalisation but are also affecting domestic social policies or welfare states. It is also a site, or discourse, that lends itself to strategic discussions for reform or responses to the dominance of neo-liberalism. A key argument put forward by Deacon, for example, states that although there are some current, desirable institutional reforms being asserted that should be implemented at the global level and that 'there is a struggle to shift global policy from its neo-liberal character to something more socially responsible' much of the focus of action in global social policy is centred on networks (2003, p.1). These networks encompass research centres, international advocacy and service organisations (NGOs) and key institutions including governments and globally active players such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organisation.

As with social policy in domestic welfare states, how global social policy issues are viewed and dealt with is determined by the ideological position of those addressing it. Based on current poverty data, it is evident that modernisation and globalisation have not ameliorated world poverty and although there has been some economic growth in various regions of the world's less-developed nations, areas such as sub-Saharan Africa show negative human development indicators throughout the 1990s (UN 2003, p. 35 & 68). There are many different views on why globalisation has failed to alleviate world poverty and how it can be addressed. For example, for Marxists, globalisation, seen as the triumph of capitalism over socialism, is a major cause of perpetual poverty in developing countries and increasing levels of poverty in developed countries. Corporate power, global exploitation of labour and resources, control of governments and the globalisation of culture through commodification are

seen as disempowering and impoverishing of millions of people who are subject to both absolute and relative poverty. They see social life under global capitalism as increasingly dehumanising and devoid of any ethical content (George and Wilding 2002, p. 11).

Pluralists see globalisation as an inevitable process that is driven by diverse forces. They also see it as less overwhelming than Marxists, with a view that it is creating greater reflexivity and cultural resistance. This position also acknowledges that the processes of globalisation, create greater risks (eg AIDS, environmental disaster) but may even offer opportunities for better strategies to address issues such as poverty and democratisation and it is both a unifying and fragmenting process (see George and Wilding 2002, pp. 12-15).

Alternately, some neo-liberals see globalisation as being thwarted by the interference of global institutions, NGOs, governments and even responsible corporate citizens and believe that if globalisation (ie the global economy) were allowed to proceed unfettered by interventions then everyone will benefit in the longer run (see Rugman 2000, pp. 35-52; Henderson 2001).

One of the most obvious reflections in a global social policy for social work approach is that globalisation has direct links and effects on specific welfare states and their capacity to offer social protection to their citizens. There is also an argument that without the infrastructure of welfare states globalisation would not have emerged as an economic paradigm. As Rieger and Leibfried observe:

> as the history of the second half of the twentieth century shows, structures of social policy and the policies pursued with and through them, constitutes a variable that strongly influences governments' foreign trade policy (2003, p. 15).

and, therefore, the country's entry into the processes of globalisation. They also suggest that the social policy of different countries, that is their welfare states, influences what international institutions (such as the UN or the WTO) do, thus contributing significantly to the formation of global social policy (2003, p. 15). In other words, 'welfare states themselves, by virtue of their domestic policies, are the major providers of order in the world economy' (2003, p.13). Therefore, the strength of a welfare state is crucial to a country's capacity to control the level and impact of globalisation because the social protection of its citizens is a key capacity for economic growth and prosperity within the system of globalisation. For students of social work the role and objectives of welfare states, through comparative understandings, is essential for social policy practice. Therefore a global social policy perspective, which examines collectivities of responses to transnational social problems, can be equally valuable in social policy as social work practice that establishes links with globalisation.

Clearly, the current economic rationalist reforms of the Australian welfare state (in health and education in particular) can be attributed in part to pressures of the global economy. Australian governments often assert a need to be part of the global economy to maintain economic growth and status, citing it as an urgent reason for governments to spend less money on welfare and adopt economic rationalist

approaches such as 'user pays' and privatisation. A common analysis of this effect is that the role of the nation state is diminished (Scholte 2000, pp. 134-138). This means that policy is made not so much in response to its citizens as to the demands of a global economy and the rules of neo-liberalism as set forth by powerful world leaders and the institutions they dominate such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund. This provides an interesting area of debate and convergence for social work as economic rationalisation pervades every level and field of the social work practice context. Students of social work can benefit from understanding the impact of broad, macro-economic policy decisions that determine the annual Federal Budget and reflect on how this will affect welfare service delivery.

Students of social work can also witness the effects of economic rationalist welfare reform, such as the mutual obligation driven changes to Commonwealth government social security benefits, and observe that such reforms can cause more poverty for those already at the bottom of the economic heap. It is not difficult to link this 'global to local' policy process to how it might affect demand on wider welfare services, particularly in the non-government sector.

One key, although contested argument (Hirst and Thompson 1996, pp. 1-17), for developing global social policies is that because governments have to comply to certain economic rules they can no longer make choices about how they support their citizens' needs (Beck 2000, p. 108; Ife 2001, p. 15). Therefore, global social policy offers a global welfare state equivalent response, rules, and organisations to address the impact of complying with economic rules.

Just as the world summits of the environment have made steps toward addressing the problem of global warming, institutions such as the United Nations are developing collective international/global responses to social problems. An example of this is the wide-ranging United Nations Millennium Development Goals (a Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty). It sets out a global social and economic strategic plan for addressing economic and social disadvantage, having arisen out of a declaration of nations, corporations, NGOs and other international institutions, it reflects a global social policy approach (UN 2004, p. 1). Collective responses are also evident towards the global spread of HIV AIDS, and are sometimes seen in cases of catastrophes such as extreme famine, floods or as with Afghanistan and Iraq, the impact of war.

One of the important effects of a world dominated by neo-liberal thinking is that foreign aid has been largely replaced by economic restructuring and private sector investment. This means that money that flows into developing countries from the richer developed countries is less and less likely to come from government to government but rather from corporate investment in exchange for resources and profit (UN 2004, pp. 146-148). Foreign aid programs of all major official donor countries are steadily diminishing, falling on average from 0.33 percent to 0.22 percent of gross national income (GNI) between 1990 and 2001 (UN 2004, p. 146). One of the UN Millennium Goals is to see the world's wealthiest nations bring their official aid back up to 1969 levels of 0.7 percent of GNI (UN 2004, p. 146). One key outcome of the neo-liberal impact, that is parallel to changes in Australian welfare services delivery, is that increasingly the work that official foreign aid and assistance did is being conducted and financed by NGOs or not being done at all.

As mentioned above, this century has seen little diminution of a central global social policy issue, world poverty. According to United Nations data, 1.2 billion people live on less than a dollar a day and 2.4 billion people lack basic sanitation (McClosky 2003, p. 178). This, as McClosky (2003) observes, represents an indictment of global financial and governmental structures, raising key questions about globalisation as a process that can assist with the amelioration of extremes in global wealth and resources distribution.

Gender, Poverty and Development

Goal three of the abovementioned Millennium Goals is aimed at 'promoting gender equality and women's empowerment' (UN 2004, p. 7). Implicit in such a goal is the recognition of the overly gendered nature of global poverty and the important role women play in the struggle to overcome poverty. Women's disadvantage is reflected in their globally low participation in education, their greatest likelihood of being a sole parent and their generally poorer health, employment and economic status. The current acknowledgment of gender as a key issue in social policy is a result of the historical engagement of feminists with development, employment, education, social justice and health policies. It is for this reason, that 'gender, poverty and development' is proposed as a field of social work interest that is a good vehicle for teaching about global social policy. Further, it embraces the need to keep feminist theory alive in such courses. The following discussion suggests how this policy area might be approached.

Approaches to development of 'the third world' were most challenged by feminist analysis of the 1970s. Prior to then women were rarely mentioned in development literature or politics and, as Leonard observes, the role of women in economic growth and change was ignored (2003, p. 77). As they were not mentioned in the development process before it was assumed that they had been excluded from it. This resulted in a flurry of activity by the international development community to include women. For example, assumptions were made about the relationship between overpopulation and women's exclusion from work - it was thought that if women's socioeconomic status was raised, they would have less children (Mies 1998, pp. 121-125). As Hoogvelt comments:

> the international aid machine revved up to combine family planning programmes with income generating projects for women, whether in rural cooperatives or urban slum communities (1997, p. 55).

Socialist feminists were critical of these moves as they saw them as increasing the exploitation of women's labour in the informal, non-organised, non-protected sectors. In other words it did not address the already entrenched exploitation of women's labour, but merely facilitated it further. This approach missed out on recognising key structural and cultural issues that maintained women's secondary citizenship status.

The liberal feminist response to women in development in the 1970s and 1980s reflected similar problems to those that occurred everywhere with the liberal feminist movement. It tended to see women as a unitary, analytic category - all women were uniformly oppressed by patriarchy. Postmodern feminists challenged this idea. The

question of assuming women are the same the world over was raised. Further, what would white middle class women in Australia or the US and factory workers in Indonesia or Mexico have in common? Although it may have been, or is, true that men's subordination of women is universal, the way women experience it is different. However, if this universal principle of feminism were taken away it threatened a common political agenda for feminists in the international arena. Some argue that this absence of a common agenda was compounded by first world racism. As Maria Mies puts it:

> whereas western consumer housewives are encouraged to breed more whites, the colonial producer housewives are encouraged to produce more and cheaper and to stop breeding (cited in Hoogvelt 1997, p. 55).

What resulted from this shift away from a singularly patriarchal analysis of gender in women in development was a more empowering politics for women. The postmodern turn resulted in a shift away from the homogeneous category of 'women' to a focus on relations between men and women as they are socially constructed, recognised as various in their cultural and historical contexts. In some countries, for example it must be recognised that women head up households and that work is divided differently. Things like land tenure, inheritance, legal entitlements, marital obligations and social protection vary widely. These, it was recognised, had not been taken into account in many development projects, designed supposedly to liberate women (Mies 1998, pp. 6-11).

Two important advances were made in approaches to women in development. First, through gender orientation in development, feminists from developing countries found their voice. They had the power of cultural knowledge that western feminists lacked. The inappropriateness of the emancipatory agenda of western feminists in the day-to-day lives of impoverished women in developing countries was learned. Second, was the insight that outsiders should not set the agenda for oppressed women's struggles for equal citizenship. If women are facing abject poverty, trying to ensure food for their families, labour issues or political rights seem irrelevant. Western conceptual baggage had to be discarded to embrace understanding and empowerment of women in the developing world to take control of their own lives (Mies 1998, pp. 6-22).

Currently, the women's movement is growing faster in developing countries than in developed countries, where it is easy to observe the women's movement appears to be at a low ebb. In keeping with a generalised growth in grass roots NGOs, women from developing countries are increasingly involved in grass roots activism, working at the very local level to address structural issues such as gendered poverty (Leonard 2003, pp. 86-91). As George and Wilding point out, in many ways women have benefited from globalisation (2002, p. 113). They mention the impact of a globalised women's movement that has challenged many patriarchal structures and freed women from traditions of second class citizenship (George and Wilding 2002, p.114-115). However, liberal feminist critiques of citizenship suggest that many of the achievements of the women's movement can be measured in symbolic rather than actual change. This means that we can count the number of women in parliaments in each country and say that it is a measure of improved women's citizenship, but it does not mean that less women are in poverty, nor does it mean that governments have

policies that assert women's citizenship generally. For example in the largest international policy comparison of domestic violence policy in developed countries, Weldon (2002) found that many countries that had good women's representation in government did not necessarily have good domestic violence policies. However, one effect of the global or international women's movement has been to place key issues of women's oppression on the global social policy agenda. Through organisations such as the UN, women have criticised western, patriarchal interventions in development. More recently (1980s-1990s) the addition of international women's groups at conferences contributing to the UN agenda on human rights, environment, population and development and global social policy has raised the profile of women in global politics. The abovementioned inclusion of gender issues in the UN Millennium Goals is further evidence of the acceptance of a feminist analysis of the specific problems women face.

Key reasons for gendered women's poverty in developing countries relate to failures of those states to provide fundamental welfare that support women's citizenship. Education, health, rights to control their own fertility, access to resources, access to work and nutrition are the primary aims of many women living in poverty in both advanced and industrially developing countries. However, key issues for women as citizens are clearly linked to their human rights. Violence against women is still systematically sanctioned in many societies. The private sphere of the home or family and the public sphere of the state continue to perpetuate and harbour violence against women. Mies (1998) observes that in the age of dominance of capitalism, a system that claims a civilising effect, a liberation of the individual if operating with some form of democracy, having banned all direct violence in the interaction with a state's own citizens, there lies a powerful contradiction. As she observes that:

> in spite of all the highly praised achievements of civilisation, women under this new system are still being raped, beaten, molested, humiliated, and tortured by men (p. 27)

then many serious questions remain.

Global Perspectives for Social Work Practice

A further strategy for the introduction of global social policy perspectives into social work education is to engage in accessible practice dimensions. It is at the site of practice that international social work scholarship and global social policy meet most clearly. In her outline of the meaning and the core purposes of international social work, Healy (2001) highlights the important interface with global social policy issues. She proposes that the main reasons for international social work are related to how social work is 'enmeshed in global processes of change' (Lorenz as cited in Healy 2001, p. 2). Her emphasis on the movement of populations, the transnational nature of social problems, the overlapping effects of domestic policy on other countries, and the enhanced opportunities for 'international sharing and exchange' (pp. 2-3) are the same arguments that can be made for linking global social policy to social work practice.

Also, social work has its own international structure via the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) which has 77 member countries. It provides very direct links with international social movements and organisations and offers, in its philosophy a direct cross over with development practice and global social policy engagement. Its definition of social work reflects this:

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW 2003).

Reflecting its preparedness to expand and enhance the notion of social work, this international definition of the social work profession replaces the IFSW definition adopted in 1982. It is understood that social work in the 21st century is dynamic and evolving, and therefore no definition should be regarded as exhaustive. The revised definition was adopted by the IFSW General Meeting in Montréal, Canada in July 2000.

The Federation also promotes the idea of social work as a global practice, linked to easily transferable values and ideals and sees social work as having grown out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, driven by equality, worth, and dignity of all people. As with most grass roots social movements in the developing world, human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action, promoting political solidarity with the disadvantaged peoples of the world, striving to alleviate poverty and promote social inclusion. These are fundamental values and objectives for Australian-based social work and therefore the internationalising or globalising of social work education will not create tensions at a theoretical or philosophical level. It is a highly compatible direction for social work pedagogy.

There are also fields that international social work practice can consider that are not discussed in detail in this paper. This includes ideas of global civil society where the centrality of the role of NGOs is in countering issues such as the impact of state conflict, war crimes and labour exploitation. Social work students can be encouraged to engage in international social work via the global social policy paradigm as they are through international social work.

This kind of opening up of the perspectives of social work practice in social work education is very much the essence of the International Federation of Social Workers and is a key link to professional identity and potential for students. It also clearly introduces pragmatic links between global social policy as a learning context with exciting and challenging workplace settings for future practitioners.

Conclusion

As Prigoff (2000) argues, in order for social workers to work effectively as 'partners of communities, to analyse, plan and implement strategies that help fulfil human

needs' (p. 152) in the context of globalisation, it is important for them to develop an awareness of economic principles and processes. This paper has proposed that including the field of global social policy encourages engagement with relevant economic concepts, ideas and processes via the need to understand the breadth and impact of globalisation. Some key areas of application for this type of knowledge are links made between poverty and gender, environment and food security, aid and development with local community development, and the increasingly important role of an internationalised non-government human services and welfare sector.

As mentioned above, it is also clear that links are easily made to practice issues via the expanding availability of jobs that have clear parallels with domestic Australian practice. As social justice gains increasing global dimensions, as a principle of social movement activism, and as human rights are increasingly included in our discussions of issues of poverty, gender, race and citizenship we are already witnessing the merging of ideals between local knowledge and global knowledge in social work (Ife 2002, pp. 117-119). This approach sits well with international social work education and the collaborative and comparative work done in that field.

The global social policy literature and emerging scholarly discipline offers a domain of contestation of the overwhelming neo-liberal constraints on the field of social work practice via a discussion of globalisation and as Deacon states is the following challenging and no doubt contestable ideas:

> Globalisation is rendering the territorial basis of citizenship obsolete. Identities are increasingly cross border and solidarities arise as much within professional groupings and ethnicities as within secular states. This raises the issue of international citizenship rights, entitlements and duties (2003, p. 2).

Issues of citizenship rights, entitlements and responsibilities are core issues in current social policy debates and reflect how the pre-occupations of social work policy practice are already current in global discourses. Social justice, citizenship and human rights drive social work principles and are the essence of visionary solutions to a world that needs to think globally to act locally. Global social policy provides a framework for making key connections between local social policy and the increasingly relevant issues that are attributed to globalisation. It is an important perspective to add to social work teaching in Australia and provides considerable appeal to students who are, inevitably, children of a globalised world culture.

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Transforming Social Work Education to Respond to the Challenges of the 'New Economy'

Carolyn Noble

Introduction

Major shifts in political, economic, information, cultural and social organisation are unsettling traditional notions of social work practice and education (Powell 2000; Hugman 2001). Large downsizing of the welfare state, an almost universal adoption of managerialism and economic rationalism in service design and provision, declining resources and greater accountability in public expenditure has resulted in a return to a residual form of welfare (Ife 1997; Dominelli 2002). As a result social work is increasingly operating in a context that undercuts previous ways of knowing and being, impacting on the way both practice and professional education is understood. The conventional, 'eclectic' and arguably universal construction of social work as an autonomous profession committed to collectivist values of social justice, empowerment for powerless and disenfranchised peoples and championing their rights to partake in civil society equally is, as Ife (1997) argues, in retreat, with many espousing these ideas being regraded as dinosaurs of the past.[1]

The world is now agreed to be too fragmented and uncertain, with the range of views too wide and the diversity of concerns too differentiated to have general agreement about a unified social work theory and practice discourse (Flannery 1995; Healy 2000). Social work scholars such Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000), Healy (2000), Napier and Fook (2000) and Hugman (1996; 2001) in Australia and Parton and O'Byrne (2000), Powell (2001), Dominelli (1996; 2002) and Adams, Dominelli and Payne (2002) in the United Kingdom all agree that social work education if it is to continue to have currency in the new emerging economy must subject itself to vigorous debate, scrutiny and criticism if it is to survive in the next century. How social work responds to this challenge will, it is argued, determine the nature of its future role as a legitimate profession. The ontological and epistemological base of social work will be undermined if social work educators do not take up this challenge.

This article, then, discusses the tensions, challenges, uncertainties and ambiguities that affect social work's educational project in the new economy. An educational paradigm incorporating tenets from a critical postmodern discourse is highlighted as a way forward and issues for further research are identified.

Social Work Education

Social work education distinguishes itself as a professional project by valuing the integration of knowledge, skills and ethics as the basis for practice (Ife 1997). It is

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more than a technical, competency-based activity. Social work education reflects the complexities of professional practice and is based upon a rigorous and systematic research into theories, concepts, concerns, issues and problems related to the preparation and practice of professionals. Demanding a reflection on the history, origin, purpose and value of social work practice as well as the conditions for services users that those practices set up and how they reflect or interrupt the larger social, cultural and political mores are core concepts (Phelan 2001). It encompasses critical analysis, creative thinking and seeking alternatives towards a 'better' society defined by its own normative stance (Ife 1997). Incorporating theories from the social sciences, philosophy and the humanities social work education invites students to take a broad view of what presently constitutes the profession, where it takes place, and what it might be in the future.

One of the most important aspects of social work education is that it operates within a context of professionalism. The educational arena is where 'would be' professionals explore the 'ought', the 'how', and the 'why' of professional practice in which questions are asked about what is the issue, what is worth doing and what's not, and how any action might express itself within a sound knowledge base informed by a lively and reflective praxis defined against other similar or competing professional interests (Noble 2001; Phelan 2001). In this view, social work education is conceived in broad terms and includes university education, fieldwork and a generalist approach to practice. Strongly intertwined with concepts of what constitutes professional practice, engagement with concepts and theories for practice, partnerships between educators, practitioners and service users and notions of identity, values, ethics, intentions and history, social work education locates itself clearly within the social, economic, cultural and political contexts that frame it (Noble 2001; Phelan 2001). Various approaches to methods, such as casework, group and family work, community action, and social policy and research are explored to mobilise people's potential and competence to empower themselves to reclaim and 'redefine whom they are and how they want to act' (Parton 2002, p. 243).

How this project is explored incorporates different approaches from the traditional, the practical and the critical. The traditional or 'mainstream' approach to social work education, popular up to the early 1980s, focuses on the provision of services within the context of a clearly defined professional relationship supported by a strong welfare state as the mechanism to meet the needs of its citizens, as a matter of right, to bring about a fairer and more just society (Ife 1997). The integration of theory, practice and skills informs its practice base. The practical is informed by a concern with the development of attributes defined according to competencies required to perform that activity. While the critical approach, post 1980s, emphasises the importance of identifying and examining societal and ideological constraints on professional education with a view towards more equitable and socially just practices (Ife 1997; Phelan 2001; Mullaly 2001; Adams, Dominelli and Payne 2002). While these various approaches can be discerned in many programs across the nation, overarching each program is the professional accreditation body's requirements to comply with specified guidelines, standards and regulations, where the focus is on harmonizing differences among educational practices so as to ensure sameness in graduate attributes.

The new and shifting intellectual terrain is destabilising each of these approaches as previously 'fixed' knowledges are being opened up in favour of exploring a more dynamic and diverse approach to social work's educational discourse. Further, changing structural conditions in the workplace are influencing the way social workers think about themselves as practicing professionals, impacting upon the educational landscape. As a result current approaches to professional education from the traditional to the critical are no longer in step with the momentous contests that now beset social workers in the new economic order (Klein 1996; Healy 2000). What these challenges are informs the next section.

Challenges, Tensions and Ambiguities in Social Work Practice

Major organisational changes in the delivery of social services such as privatisation, contracting out services, competition between service providers and diminished funding have undermined welfarism and transformed social work activity over the last 30 years. The way many social workers have unquestionably accepted the demands of economic rationalism by going along with the gradual privatisation of the delivery of social services has resulted in the abandonment of its historic mission to the care of the poor and oppressed for the pursuit of therapeutic individualism and professional survival. Hugman (1998) describes the introduction of this therapeutic individualism resplendent with the language of the market: choice, product, and the new consumer as reconfiguring welfare with social workers as entrepreneurs in a privatized welfare system. This changing landscape is widely perceived as the apotheosis of social work's humanitarian and social justice dreams (Powell 2001) resulting in a crisis of confidence and legitimacy.

While the globalisation of resources and commodities has resulted in a booming global economy and the growth of a global capitalist class it has also seen changes in national boundaries and conditions undermining the authority of the nation-state to provide even a basic safety net for the disadvantaged members of society (George and Wilding 2002). These dramatic social and economic upheavals have resulted in a different social topography for social work activity.

The dismantling of the welfare state and the reduction of services has created an uncertainty in social service provision impacting on social work practice and beyond. Over this same period public confidence in social workers as competent professionals has seemed to wane. Highly publicised examples of poor practice in both Australia and the United Kingdom over the last decade especially in child protection, mental health and the care of the aged and people with disabilities have dented public confidence in social work's professionalism (Healy 2000; Dominelli 2002). Concerns about social workers professional probity, doubts about its ability to significantly address social problems, linked with questions about its financial sustainability in a resource depleted welfare state have created reservations about the ability of social work practitioners to continue to play an active and important role in the human services. This crisis is further complicated by the changing nature of the workplace in which social work is practiced.

Changes in the social, political and economic landscape over the last 30 years have impacted on all professional groups, not just social workers and many, especially

health professionals, have been ready to adopt and redefine existing practices to fit the prevailing ideologies (Ife 1997) and changing workplace conditions. However, social workers are seen to be losing more ground as other professional groups assume ascendancy in previously defined social work roles and functions. Formerly identified social work jobs are increasingly being reconfigured as interdisciplinary, where generic qualifications are listed resulting in fierce competition among different professional groups (such as nurses, psychologists, counsellors, welfare workers and social scientists) as each struggle for territory, ascendancy and meaning (Freeman, Miller and Ross 2000; Phelan 2001). Overall, then, the downsizing of the scope of the welfare state, the partial privatisation of welfare services, the refocusing on individual change over community advocacy work and the interlinking of social work jobs and roles with other health professionals makes it increasingly difficult for social work to remain central to the provision of socially necessary services, let alone advance the course of welfarism more generally (Powell 2001). In this challenging arena social work is facing an uncertain future. This uncertainty and crisis in confidence in practice is also evident in academe.

Challenges, Tensions and Ambiguities in Social Work Education

In academe, discipline/professional boundaries are also blurred as restructures, course rationalisations and the move to interdisciplinary education dictate the way social work education is administered and taught. Traditional concepts of education (ie educating for professional practice) are being contested as new cultural and political forces integral to the new economy impact on the way professional education has previously be understood, unsettling common assumptions about its ontological and epistemological foundations (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Healy 2000). Questions are being asked about the appropriateness and relevance of disciplined based professional attributes, knowledges, and ways of organising professional education, requiring a paradigm shift in the way educators and practitioners think about professional education (Freeman, Miller and Ross 2000; Phelan 2001).

Challenges to the use, value and legitimacy of discipline-based knowledge is compounded by the explosion in the dissemination of information through mass media that enables what once were specialised knowledges to be available to all fracturing the connection between knowledge and the role of the 'expert'. Social work education's focus on acquiring its 'own' discrete skills and knowledge is no longer relevant as other professional groups mimic similar attributes and the lay community has access to previously closed expert knowledges. The desirability of pursuing and educating for an idealised notion of 'the professional' is being questioned. Standardising knowledge in discreet codified ways is rejected in favour of creativity, innovation, collaboration, and adaptability (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000). For example defining discipline-bound traits and characteristics to describe professional activity is regarded as outdated as educationalists are encouraged to regard professional practice as contextualised, flexible, engaging with uncertainties and transferable across disciplinary/ professional boundaries. More and more social work educators have to teach along side other professionals in a interdisciplinary context which potentially undercuts the taken for granted assumptions upon which its professional identities and ethos were based (Parton and O'Byrne 2000; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Phelan 2001). Social work educators are being asked to manage

knowledge rather than create knowledge potentially undermining the teaching focus on creating an expert and autonomous practitioner (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000).

Moreover, social work education must begin to make differences in gender, 'race', ethnicity, religion, age and sexual orientation central to the everyday concerns of professionals in terms of understanding 'otherness' within the profession itself and the impact of professional practice on different groups and whole communities of clients and students (Razack 2002). Social work education must now be more a question of:

> which identities, which knowledges, and which practices might be offered, in whose interest, to what end and at what cost (Eraut 2002).

Challenges to the cultural hegemony of western knowledges by indigenise and multicultural voices is also unsettling previous ways of knowing, creating uncertainties in practice and adding further challenges to the professional base of social work as previously absent voices are finding their way into the professional discourse (Noble 2003). If social work education is to find a voice in the changing intellectual domain then notions of educating for the traditional professional must be opened up and new dimensions explored. One of the reasons social work has found itself unresponsive to the changing conditions of the new economy is its slowness and/or ambivalence in exploring new or alternative forms of educational practices, which can still make sense of its historical mission to advocate for social justice and social change.

Social work, now, has to wrestle with the postmodern world of uncertainty, polarisation, fragmentation, and radical relativity (Healy 2000, Hugman 2001) questioning the continued value of traditional/rationalist ways of knowing and the legitimacy and currency of 'expert' knowledge as well as the authority and dominance of the 'traditional' professional practitioner model of education. The undermining of the reliance on generalist notions of social work attributes, knowledge, structures, ways of organising professional education and what constitutes the 'public good' in which social work is located are further off shoots to this dilemma.

A plethora of questions emerge: Who am I as a professional? What has my university education and my practical experience prepared me to do? Who can I be? What must I know? What must I be able to do? Who are these others with whom I have to collaborate? What does social work stand for in this changing climate? Which knowledges, which identities and which practices are relevant to organising structures in teaching and learning? Which voices are left out of the professional project? And, what is the continued role of government, public policy and the welfare state in supporting and locating social work activity? (Phelan 2001; Korthagen 2001).

These are important questions facing academe. The future of social work education depends on how these questions "are taken up and creatively resolved" (Phelan 2001, p. 2). The challenge is to develop and offer a convincing educational response that can be spontaneous and reflective, creating fluidity in approaches to teaching, learning and work. If social work education is to take up these challenges and begin to reconceptualise the professional project by regarding expert knowledge as transferable across disciplinary/professional boundaries then ways need to be explored that open up the homogeneity and uniformity of core curriculum by

exploring a critical postmodern pedagogy for professional education to respond to these challenges (see McLaren 1995; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Noble 2001; 2003; Phelan 2001).

There are many who would view these developments emanating from the new economic conditions of a postmodern world positively. An epistemological challenge can just be the catalyst needed to promote lively and critical debates with a view to challenging (and potentially transforming) dominant (redundant?) educational and professional discourses as a means of providing new ways of talking about social work education (see Healy 2000; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Parton and O'Byrne 2000). While others would be critical of any challenge or epistemological repositioning if it meant any further abandonment or diluting of social work's commitment to human rights, social justice and social change (Ife 1997; 2001; Mullaly 2001). Despite the fear of losing ideological ground in engaging with the new 'post' discourse it is increasingly difficult to ignore its impact, and as other professional groups begin to mark out their position in the new economic landscape, social work academe needs to be part of the conversations. To this end proponents of the 'postmodern habitat' (Bauman 1992) argue that important elements of this critique can provide the 'tools' for the re-examination of both practice concerns as well as the educational problems confronting social work in the new millennium (McLaren 1995; Flannery 1995; Parton 2002).

Social Work's Response: Developing Capability in Education

While the term postmodernism is comparatively new to educational research it is becoming a preoccupation with critical educational theorists ushering in new and innovative approaches to educational scholarship, especially for the professions directly effected by the climatic challenges of the new economy (McLaren 1995; Schon 1991). The capacity of critical postmodernist education to contribute to moving education and practice forward is possibly one of the most important developments to emerge in current educational literature.

The postmodern critique presupposes a juncture in earlier ways breaking down previously drawn disciplinary borders and genres in favour of cultural difference and new emerging subjects (McLaren 1995; Parton 2002). Softening the certainties of the philosophical base of professional education this postmodern critique is questioning the focus on individual action and certainties in knowledge exploration in favour of a more open-ended exchange and dialogue with previously silenced and absent voices. Applied to social work education a postmodernist critique problematises and undermines previously held theories, practices, values and ethics underpinning social work demanding, as a result, pedagogical changes in the way knowledge exploration is conceptualised and taught (Harris 2001; Hugman 2001).

Advances in **conceptual/complexity** approach is one prominent response to the challenges posed by the rapidly changing economic, intellectual, social and political landscape which can inform the development of new educational approaches (Parton and O'Byrne 2002). In this approach learning is assumed to take place in the zone of complexity where relationships between items of knowledge are not predictable or linear, but neither are they chaotic (Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001). Learning takes

place in the context of real life situations where learners adapt to ever changing situations moving from individual competence to personal capability (Schon 1991). Building capability takes place when individuals engage with uncertain and unfamiliar contexts in meaningful ways. Reflection is important. Learning evolves as feedback about the impact and vision of actions is then incorporated in the learning process. Reflection on the feedback encourages changes in patterns of behaviour and demands responses that require intuition, creativity and imagination (Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001, Parton 2002).

Experiential learning also shares some similarities with educating for complexity. Privileging experience, experiential learning involves the creation of knowledge directly from practice for translation across contexts (Schon 1991, Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000). Valuing knowledge from below opens up spaces to explore theory from practice, democratising the learning process as well as creating new ways of knowing. Social work students are well placed to explore these concepts in field education as they move between agencies and between agencies and university (Flannery 1995; Harris 2001).

In summary **complexity** and **experiential concepts** (adapted from Flannery 1995; Schon 1991; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001; Parton and O'Byrne 2002) useful for social work education are summarised as:

Education: assumptions

- the world is complex, messy; unique with context embedded problems/issues.
- context and social interaction are regarded as critical components of adult learning.
- students need to know why they need to learn something and if it is of immediate value and relevance.
- neither the educational or work system nor its external environment are, or ever will be constant.
- individuals within the educational system are independent and creative decision-makers, and
- uncertainty and paradox are a constant part of the educational environment.

Practice: assumptions

- the world is complex, messy, and unique with context embedded problems/issues;
- problems that cannot be solved can nevertheless be 'moved forward';
- effective solutions can emerge from minimum specification;
- small changes have big effects;
- human attributes of imagination and intuition are valued more highly than technology;
- practice is privileged over theory;
- processional learning is privileged over static lineal approaches; and
- theories should be built in and from the context in which they are practiced.

Using these concepts to form the basis for a re-positioned educational project will shift the more traditional, professional-bound basis underpinning social work education. Several examples of how developments in **conceptual/complexity** and **experiential** educational theory are being applied in social work education are discussed in the literature.

One such example is current work on re-exploring the nature of cognition in professional practice (Flannery 1995). This involves building theories of how practitioners think and act 'professionally'. Exploring how decisions are made and planned and the relationship between social discourses (ie larger patterns of thinking) and individual beliefs and actions within desired outcomes is seen as a way of identifying practices and knowledges in professional development and its impact on the changing nature of social work education (Flannery 1995). Other examples include Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) and Napier and Fook (2000) who have elaborated on the way professionals think critically about their practice in order to breakthrough 'old' thinking with new conceptual and practice stances. Grounded in reflection, embracing uncertainty in knowledge and practice paradigms and using artistry and critical moments in practice a new understanding of the practising professional is emerging. The (re) valuing of the importance of detailed and critical analysis and of the meaningfulness of language and narrative between social work students and service users to construct change (Noble 2001; Parton and O'Byrne 2000) can also be grouped here. This constructive approach, developed by Parton and O'Byrne (2000) emphasises the relational quality of knowledge by focusing on dialogue, listening to and talking with the 'other' ie service users and students, now partners in the professional and educational projects. While others are encouraging border crossing (ie interdisciplinary dialogue), story telling and exploring similarities within differences as alternative approaches to traditional education (McLaren 1995).

All of these approaches challenge the notion of traditional education, which in addition to being criticised as discipline-bound is also accused of reducing groups of students (and we can add practitioners as well) to a single uniform cultural identity unprepared for the complexities and ambiguities in the workplace and the professional world at large.

An extension of these complexity and experiential concepts is what is called **educating for capability** (Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001). In addition to core concepts already listed for conceptual/complexity and experiential theories, educating for capability includes; commitment to professional development and life-long learning; quality improvement and organisational learning being built into educational practices; including evidence-based practice and information and knowledge management as part of the educational experience; and; inter-professional working in contrast to discipline-based knowledges (Schon 1991; Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001).

Translated into teaching for social work academe by Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) and Parton and O'Bryne (2000), amongst others, various educational processes have been identified that build on the conceptual/complexity and experiential approach. Important concepts include transferability of expertise, changeability, reflectivity, responsiveness and capability. These practices involve the ability of the educator (and subsequently the practitioner and vice versa) to adapt to change, generate new knowledge in a constantly changing environment and continuously reflect on and

improve performance. Other components such as; other-directed learning; collaborative and community-directed learning; and other ways of learning that people in different cultures use are valued and built into all interactions (Flannery 1995). To give voice to multi individuals and cultures new learning strategies must also understand the changing social, economic and historical constructs that silence and influence them (Flannery 1995). Thus, educating for professional competence around the notions of expert knowledge, skills, attitudes and values is replaced by educating for capability to ensure professional education keeps up with its ever-changing context. Universality is thus avoided.

Educating for capability is also readily transferable to field practicums enabling students on placement and supervisors to work effectively in unfamiliar contexts. Reflecting on the work at hand students and supervisors would be encouraged to utilise strategies such as; staged learning (ie learning is designed as students experience the professional world); adopting critical and reflective stances (ie uncovering unintended assumptions to bring in line with intended theory) and; valuing and privileging artistry, curiosity and imagination in the leaning process. Focusing attention on the use of processional knowledge that is transferable across domains enables students to explore all aspects of the situation and identify all the players at same time redevelop practice theory in light of these reflections. The development of participatory and experiential learning processes will expose differences and diversity which can draw attention to the complexities and tensions at the local level of practice and lead to an openness to new visions of being and doing (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Napier and Fook 2000; Healy 2000; Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001).

Educating for capability in addition to privileging relational concepts, non-linear processes and imaginative dimensions (Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001) prefers the use of minimal structures and the use of reflection and feedback are encouraged. Attention to reaction and relations between pieces is highlighted; and seeing the whole instead of the various parts becomes the focus of learning. Intuition, curiosity and imagination become valuable attributes in education (Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001). Specific examples in the literature are; critical incident techniques; critical reflective approaches; story telling; use of narratives; theorising critical moments; case-study research; peer group support groups; and exploring a constructive perspective (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000; Parton and O'Byrne 2000; Napier and Fook 2000; Noble 2001; Fraser and Greenhalgh 2001). Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) and Parton and O'Byrne (2000) have elaborated on the way to distil and elaborate many of the above educational approaches, by way of introducing these concepts in social work education in order to bring these developments into the educational domain.

The use of the above *process* techniques is the crucial distinction between learning, which has a flexible and evolving content, and learning that is didactic, static and unresponsive to challenges in the present socio-economic political uncertainty. Given the nature of educating for an idealised concept of 'the professional' is now uncertain these approaches encourage a fracturing of fixed core concepts with the view of freeing up new ways of teaching and learning. Current research by educational scholars referred to above are leading the way in these techniques, pushing new boundaries of knowledge and frameworks for exploring the changing nature of

professional praxis. By introducing or re-introducing notions of capability these scholars are attempting to reframe social work knowledge and skills so that individual practitioners and educationalists are able to transfer these meaning-making systems between contexts (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000, p. 244).

In addition to the use of process techniques outlined above the following questions are offered for social work educators eager to follow up these developments to further re-position their teaching methods in response to the challenges imposed by the new economies: a check list if you will. This will provide additional guides for educational researchers to continue to break through old established ways of knowing and continue to open up more creative spaces for professional education. In engaging with students and preparing courses, the educator might ask (adapted from Lather 1991, p. 84 in Flannery 1995):

- Have I questioned the textual staging of knowledge in a way that keeps my own authority from being reified?
- Did I focus on the limits of my own conceptualisations?
- Did I go beyond critique to help in producing pluralised and diverse spaces for the emergence of subjugated knowledges?
- Did I encourage ambivalence, ambiguity and multiplicity or am I imposing structure and order?
- Have I closed or restricted the boundaries of what can be imagined?; and
- What voices, experiences and positions have been muted, suppressed, unheard in the way I have constructed the learning?

Changes in the way social work academy approaches professional education will depend on how educators incorporate this work into the educational process. Such a reorientation is needed if social work education is to move forward.

Discussion

Re-positioning traditional 'truths' of practice and education can lead to more uncertainty and create further anxieties in an already fragmenting reality. Jettisoning traditional practices for educating for professional practice in favour of a more fragmented and contextual exploration of a critical postmodernist educational framework may further marginalise social work's professional position. Some may argue that accepting this postmodern turn as heralding a permanently changed political, economic and social landscape is premature (Ife 1997). To the already over burdened, burnt-out activist educator and practitioner a critical postmodernist stance in education might signal a further abandonment of social works' critical stance to find solutions to ending discrimination and disadvantage and creating a society free from oppressive practices (Parton 2002; Dominelli 2002). Some may be fearful and argue that it is too high a price to pay to make this shift away from established pedagogies and ontological assumptions about social work's educational practices and refuse to explore this new direction. These concerns may all be true and, of course may not. Postmodernist critique is itself contextual and changing and draws attention to the fact that nothing is static and will last forever. This is true for educational paradigms and practice contexts alike.

What we do 'know' is that the previously held beliefs about the nature of social work and professional education that prepares practitioners is changing. New economic, social and political contexts are emerging that are drastically unsettling traditional notions of education and practice. The workplace is characterised by a reduced role of the state in service provision, temporary and interdisciplinary job descriptions and competencies and moves towards (back?) individually based problem solving and service provision.

What were once well-defined professional boundaries for social work are being contested in many areas of practice. Social work is experiencing a major change period and we can no longer plan an educational approach based on a 'ideal' image of what a social worker does. Interpretations of identity, knowledge and practice are also being contested. The charge is that professional education is no longer in step with the changing times. We can also identify scepticism in the present model of social work in being able to respond to these changes. In this respect improved dialogue about innovative and reflective responses is timely. Tenets from a critical postmodernist educational framework are presented as a way of responding to these challenges and to ensure social work's educational project has currency in the new millennium. Current research into process techniques including educating for capability and theories of conceptual/complexity offer a convincing educational response that can be spontaneous and reflective, creating fluidity in approaches to teaching and learning thus providing a new vision for social work education, which is responsive to challenges created by the new economy.

But educators need to keep the dialogue ongoing. In this last section I identify issues for further research relevant to social work education that emerge from these developments that will ensure these innovative responses are built upon and made contextually useful in educating for professional practice.

Future Research Questions for Social Work Education

As highlighted above increasing interest is developing in how social workers make decisions and plan their work and the relationship between these actions and the larger social discourses as well as individual beliefs and actions and how these are explored in the educational arena. A new vision of professional expertise, responsive to challenges created by the new economy is emerging. New educational approaches are linked to these developments. This work is innovative, proactive and challenging, as it demands vulnerability to practice and educational processes previously unexplored. Academics and scholars are beginning to engage in a more critical inquiry about their educational practices, however in my opinion, this is just the beginning. More educational research and deconstruction of existing practices and concepts are needed.

While trying to avoid a prescriptive process that would undermine or stifle the re-positioning of existing knowledges in order to identify further ways to uncover phenomena not yet explored educators and students still need to consider how process theories and capabilities and conceptual/complexity theories inspired by a postmodern context fit into the changing educational context in ways that create new thinking and praxis. This will require further explorations of the education/practice discontinuity

as well as re-exploration of such concepts as empowerment, power, professionalism and (critical) emancipation in light of new economy. Further exploration of what actually is the contextuality with regard to multiculturalism, gender, age, class and ability (Noble 2003) as well as what are the cultural biases implicit in the dominant understandings of professional ethics in professional education programs and texts are needed. What are the influences of market forces and de-professional movement and its continued relationship with education? And finally, although not exhaustive, how does the exploration of innovative practices in program and curriculum development help the relinquishing of old ways and create new innovative responses to the changing landscape are all new areas to be explored.[2]

Conclusion

The cornerstones of social work professional education have been expert knowledge, ethical self-regulation, and public service within an emancipatory and egalitarian framework. The new and more increasingly complex institutional, political, social, economic and cultural context in which social work is taking place is posing a real challenge to the core assumptions of what constitutes professional knowledge, ethical practice and the public good. This challenge impacts on the nature of how to educate for professional practice. Current research into professional education, using tenets from a postmodernist educational perspective is leading the way but more re-theorising is needed in the context of the questions raised if the academy is to take up the challenge posed by the new economic landscape.

Notes

1. It must be stated that social work has never been comfortable with a single definition and any generalisation will be regarded as an over simplification of competing definitions. This summary characterises elements of the critical tradition popular in the UK and Australia from 1980s onwards.
2. Work on developing these questions was done in collaboration with members of the Professional Education Research Committee (PERC) at the University of Calgary of which I was a member as Visiting Professor, Fall 2001.

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