

Editorial

Collaboration for innovative practice

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The creation of social work knowledge takes place through collaborative work, nurturing change and honouring multiple perspectives. There is a great need; to acknowledge new innovative methods in teaching and practice, recognise culturally sensitive interventions and incorporate new recommendations into the social work curricula (Adamson et al., 2014; Thompson 2020). *Advances* continues to actively provide a space for researchers, academics, students, and practitioners to share their insights and thoughts about social work education and practice. This general issue includes a range of articles that tackle thought-provoking subjects relevant to culture, diversity, pedagogy, and social work intervention. The articles provide an understanding of the influence of gender and socio-cultural context on social work education and practice. It was a pleasure to read the articles and explore the enriching perspectives of the authors who share a wealth of knowledge with the readers.

Our Editor's Choice article by Yayoi Ide, Liz Beddoe, and Michael O'Brien from The University of Auckland in New Zealand investigate cultural competency development among social work students. This is considered one of the focal points in social work education. Learning about culture is seen to be linked to developing awareness for future practice. The qualitative study fills a gap in social work research on the training of cultural competencies. The authors highlight the centrality of cultural education in developing competencies among social work students. The development of awareness and attention to knowledge are the main elements in cross-cultural future practice. The different stages of the development of cultural competency were explored by interviewing participants who talked about their experiences. The authors call for more research in cultural competencies education to equip students with the knowledge, and skills needed for quality practice.

Charlotte Chisnell and Sarah Elliott both lecturers from two different academic settings in Aotearoa and the UK are introducing child sexual exploitation (CSE) which is a form of child abuse. A subject that hasn't been enough acknowledged by policymakers or practitioners. The authors explore the problem in Aotearoa. They challenge the concept of blaming the victim, the lack of awareness of the issue, and the lack of professional response to the needs of those who are impacted by the problem. The authors argue that there is a need to raise awareness of the issue among social workers and organisations in Aotearoa. Some of the strategies recommended were related to conducting research exploring the point of view of social workers about the subject and developing more effective policies to assist in responding to the CSE. The central point presented by the authors was to collaborate in providing support for young victims affected by the problem.

Deo Mshigeni, Moosgar Borieux, and Elisa Shepard from California Baptist University are exploring aspects which are influencing decisions taken by welfare social workers when working with clients. The social workers interviewed for the study indicated different aspects that impact decision-making in relation to child protection. Some of these points were the nature of the clinical practice, organizational culture and sociopolitical considerations. The authors attract our attention to some organizational culture, stresses, traumatic events, and sociopolitical challenges that influence confidence in decision-making among social workers.

Kelly Smith from Columbia University, Melissa Indera Singh from the University of Southern California, Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, and Nicole Pearl, Missouri Sierra Club explored collaboratively the role of education in responding to environmental injustice and racism. The authors who come from diverse backgrounds are dedicated to addressing injustice and committed to including the voice of students in the development of curricula. The authors focus on their research on the role of social work education in responding to underlying inequity caused by the environmental crisis in The United States. In the paper, the authors share the students' and practitioners' perspectives on the need for more incorporation of environmental issues into the curricula. The authors are calling for equipping future social workers to respond effectively to injustice environmental problems.

Sharlotte Tusasiirwe from Western Sydney University and Iris Silva Brito from the Federation University of Australia worked on decolonizing the concept of self-care in social work. Self-care is explored in relation to different cultures and perceptions. The authors call for exploring new meanings for self-care and considering other diverse perspectives. The authors challenge the concept of self-care that emerged from the western individualistic views introduced for practitioners. Having a unified understanding of self-care has proven to be problematic in a class where there are diverse students who might not necessarily have the same perception of good strategies for self-care

The challenge of teaching for the first time was explored by Jack Makolewski and Karen Lok Yi Wong from The University of British Columbia. This is an area that hasn't been addressed by instructors and social work researchers. The authors reflect on their collaboration in teaching and share important points that they found to be key points in enhancing the teaching experience. Some of these components are related to collaboration with students, encouraging reflections and critical thinking and organising priorities. The authors assert that teaching for the first time provided insight into the need for flexibility, openness and continuous reflection and learning.

Jaimie Barry talks about the challenges associated with undertaking placement during COVID-19 and reflects on other restrictive elements which contributed to the educational journey to being a social worker. Jaime then explores the inspirational experience of carrying out a virtual placement and how it helped in overcoming seclusion and building connections and collaborations nationally and internationally.

In reviewing the book *Offla's Children: A Family Memoir* authored by, Helena Wilson, Paul Ban and Liz Ban, the reviewer Professor Dorothy Scott described the account to be “powerful and poignant”. The subject of the book is about the struggle of a father who was suffering from mental illness while trying to provide care for his children after the loss of their mother. Dorothy, put emphasis on the role of the social worker in supporting the family and the change that has been made to the future of children. There is also a mention of the connection social workers have to the story and the experience of their clients. The similarities between the story of the social worker and the clients bring personal painful memories and trauma. Similar experiences need to be understood and reflected upon by social workers. Dorothy recommends the book be incorporated into social work curricula to raise awareness among social work students of the lived experiences of those who are affected by trauma.

References

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