Pedagogies for developing students’ professional identity in neo-conservative environments.

2017 ANZSWWER Symposium

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Abstract

Our presentation details changes we have made to course content to centralise professional identity in our curriculum. As social work educators it is important to ensure students develop a professional identity that can withstand and challenge dominant discourses inconsistent with a social work value base. Many Western countries are immersed in dominant discourses, especially neo conservatism, which prioritise organisational loyalty and generic roles over professional identity. This conflicts with our core values of social justice and human rights. Our endeavours at Charles Sturt University prompt students to critically reflect on the development and sustainability of professional identity, in the face of oppressive discourses. We call for further reflection and action among social work educators and the wider profession about students’ development of professional identity. There is also a need for further research to explore whether graduates emerge from university study with a professional social work identity that can not only challenge but transform dominant discourses.
Macro Challenges in Contemporary Social Work

Global and national context (macro)

- Neoconservative ideologies
  (Gregory, & Holloway, 2005; Morgan, 2011; Newberry, 2014)
  - Individualism
  - Patriarchy
  - Generic competencies
  - Technical-rational work
Organisational Challenges (meso)

Impacts of broader socio-political trends
(Gregory & Holloway, 2005; Healy, 2009)

De-professionalisation:

*Professional loyalty VERSUS organisational loyalty*

Increase in generic role titles:

*Social work positions VERSUS generic positions*
The Importance of Professional Identity in Australian Social Work

First graduate attribute:

‘…demonstrated sense of identity as a professional social worker’ (Australian Association of Social Work [AASW], 2012, p.10)
Reflecting on our Curriculum @ CSU

• Have we taken for granted the place of professional identity in our curriculum?

• How is professional identity explicitly captured in our curriculum?
A Multidimensional Perspective of Professional Identity

Beddoe (2013)

Identification with a profession (macro)
  • Knowledge, skills, values, philosophy

Membership into a distinguishable group (meso)
  • Sense of belonging
  • Distinguishable knowledge, skill, boundaries around a group
Melding the professional self of what one knows (training, knowledge, techniques) with the personal self of who one is (personality traits, belief systems, and life experience) is a hallmark of skilled practice (Dewane, 2006, p.544)
Professional Identity in the Curriculum

1. Social Work Theory and Practice Courses

2. Field Education (placement)
Professional Identity @ CSU

Theory and Practice I – Foundations (Macro)

• Global citizenship
• Topic on professional identity
Professional Identity @ CSU

Theory and Practice II – Micro level practice

• Use of self and reflective practice
• Professional identity and the social work relationship
Professional Identity @ CSU

Theory and Practice IV – Early career preparation (macro, meso and micro)

• Topic – Professional Identity
• Assessment item 3 – Practice Frameworks
• Updated learning outcome:

_Demonstrate a social work professional identity_ by arguing for a particular value, use of self, theoretical and skill-based approach
Professional Identity in Field Education

- Learning plan (macro)
- Mid-placement marking sheet (meso)
- Learning summary (micro)

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<tr>
<th>Criteria (4)</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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<td>Recognises the need to establish a professional identity</td>
<td>The student is able to illustrate in the presentation the role the social worker performs in the agency. They are able to identify specific qualities that the social worker brings to this role.</td>
<td>The student’s illustration of the social work role is not clear OR is not consistent with a social work role.</td>
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Opportunities for development

• *Map* out how professional identity is captured in other courses
Opportunities for development

Weave professional identity into Theory and Practice III (Meso practice)
Extending beyond the curriculum

Incorporating reflection on professional identity (micro/meso)
- Supervision (Moorhead, Bell & Bowles, 2016); reflective relationships

AASW supervision and practice standards (macro)
- No mention of professional identity (Moorhead et al., 2016)

Opportunities for collective (macro) action (Mendes, McCurdy, Allen-Kelly, Charikar & Incerti, 2015)
- Promote social work identity
Opportunities for further research

Educators:
• Do graduates emerge with a demonstrated sense of professional identity? How so?

Partnerships between educators and the profession:
• How can we support the identities of newly qualified social workers in the field?


References


Recent Publications – Bernadette Moorhead


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Recent publications – Karen Bell


*The text has been nominated and shortlisted for the 2017 Educational Publishing Awards - http://edpubawards.com/announcing-24th-educational-publishing-awards-shortlist/


Recent Publications – Therese Jones-Mutton

- **2015** Cooperative inquiry on *Offsite Supervision in Social Work Education in Rural, Remote and Regional Australia*. Published article May 2015 Advances Journal.

- **2011** – Published conference papers. Intensive Support and Model for Case Management at Centrelink. Also co editor for this publication which was distributed to the social work service at Centrelink (now known as DHS). Conference paper: Barton, H; Short, M & Jones-Mutton, T (2011) editors *Engaging with the Community – Real People, Real Lives, Real Stories*. Printed by CSU Bathurst. Conference paper title – *Case Management and Intensive Support Practice: The Department of Human Services Centrelink Context*. PP 62 -69
Recent Publications – Heather Boetto


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