

1. Editorial

It is amazing to find we are in June 2013 already! This is the first edition for 2013, and our first edition of *Advances* collaborating together as Editors. In this Special Edition we feature papers from the successful Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators (AASWWE) Symposium held on 27th –28th September 2012, at Magill Campus, University of South Australia, Adelaide. The theme of the conference was Cultural Diversity: Social Work and Human Services Education: Working with difference. A second edition for 2013 will continue to feature papers from that conference.

As social work and welfare educators in Australia, New Zealand and beyond, our quest is to prepare students for work in a sector characterized by difference and diversity. As professionals we seek to understand and work effectively with people regardless of our differences including age, gender, ability, sexuality, nationality, culture or ethnicity. In recognition of the cultural diversity encountered in social work and welfare education and practice the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators (AASWWE) invited academics, field educators and students to share their experiences of working with diversity. We have a unique selection of articles to offer you here informed by original research, and drawing on critical pedagogy and critical social work.

The first article by Pukepuke and Dawe describes a holistic, collaborative student retention and success initiative, designed for first-year social work students at Unitec Institute of Technology in New Zealand. Next Gordon and Zufferey look at the political context of the universities we work in, to identify the implications of working with diversity in the current neoliberal environment. Examining the topic of gender and differences, Dunk West sought to understand participants' gendered experiences through the lens of sexual scripting theory.

Zuchowski, Savage, Miles and Gair report research exploring the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work and welfare students in field placements. The findings identify racism and Eurocentricism in practice and reveal the disregard of Aboriginal cultural ways of helping, and the potential for disempowerment.

Lennette and Ingamells report on an educational initiative with group of overseas skilled refugees and migrants. This article reports the benefits that accrue from the students progressing as a cohort and being supported to “bend” the curriculum to their own needs and community involvements. Again, focusing on working with diversity, Wache and Zufferey identify the needs of students from new and emerging communities enrolled in higher education in an article that reports on a small study of the experiences of African students.

Two papers focus on the challenges of ensuring excellent supervision for social work students. Hosken argues that in order to reduce discrimination supervision needs to be shaped by humility rather than the more popular goal of competence. Supervision can create the capacity to challenge discriminatory policies and practices as they are normalised through social work systems and the broader society. Zuchowski explores the impact of the increasingly common practice of external supervision for social work students on placement, where suitably qualified supervisors are not available on site. This article reports the experiences of students often ‘caught in the middle’ of the complex set of stakeholder relationships that can accompany external supervision arrangements.

Grace, Townsend, Testa, Fox, O’Maley, Custance and Daddow note that the internationalisation of social work education is driven by student diversity as well as by employer demand, the profession internationally, and by universities. Students from diverse backgrounds bring with them their own distinctive cultures, knowledges and ways of being and their article promotes the concept of grass roots internationalisation —drawing students’ diverse experiences into the curriculum in ways that enrich and internationalise the learning of all students.

Lastly, Buchanan identifies that Australian students may enter university with individualised perspectives, often subsequently challenged by the community based principles held by students from other cultures. Teaching critical thinking can be challenging and the paper explores the establishment of tutorials that create a communicative space where educators and students may explore concepts of critical thinking and embrace knowledge creation as a shared pursuit that addresses issues of power and difference.

We also continue to welcome submission of papers at any time that align with the aims of the journal. We welcome three kinds of papers: papers for full refereeing (7000 words max); “Practice Reflections” and contributions to “Other Voices” (2000 words). “Practice reflections” and “Other Voices” should focus on recent events or current topics of interest to the journal audience of social work, welfare and may provide a different perspective for practitioners, educators and students. We also will welcome books for review and will from time to time commission reviews of books we feel will be of interest to our readers. In this issue Matt Rankine reviews “Critical Reflection in Context: Applications in Health and Social Care” by Jan Fook & Fiona Gardner (2013).

Please feel free to e-mail either of us to discuss a paper you may be considering for submission and we welcome your feedback. We look forward to working with many of Advances’ readers in future and take this opportunity to thanks the many reviewers who have contributed very useful feedback to our authors.

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