10. Student diversity as grass roots internationalisation in social work education

Marty Grace, Rob Townsend, Doris Testa, John Fox, Pauline O'Maley, Juanita Custance and Angela Daddow

School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Victoria University, Melbourne.

VU College, Victoria University, Melbourne.

Professor Marty Grace, PhD, Social Work, School of Social Sciences and Psychology Victoria University.
email: Marty.Grace@vu.edu.au

ABSTRACT

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. At Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, this diversity has prompted us to explore and develop a grass roots approach to internationalisation. This paper gives details of three projects undertaken as part of this exploration. Our approach includes some exploratory research with students, and collaborations with the university's Curriculum Innovation Unit, Language, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, and Student Learning Unit. Our work focuses on understanding and embedding into the curriculum, students' own experiences and 'funds of knowledge'. At the same time we support students as they develop familiarity with the academic and professional discourses of social work, and advance their academic and professional literacy. This collaborative work is situated within critical social work, critical pedagogy and critical literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Social work is becoming increasingly international, bringing new perspectives and some revision of definitions of social work and social work ethics (Ife 2007). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) have recently set out a framework for global social work and a social development commitment to action (IFSW 2012). This internationalisation has an impact on social work education. In addition, universities in Australia and overseas increasingly expect internationalisation of the curriculum. For example, Killick (2006) of Leeds University in the United Kingdom sees the internationalisation of the curriculum as including cross-cultural capability and global perspectives, comprising three major elements:

1. Intercultural awareness and associated communication skills;

2. International and multicultural perspectives on one's discipline area; and

3. Application in practice. (Killick 2006, p.3)

At Victoria University, Melbourne, internationalisation of the curriculum is seen in the following way:

• Includes teaching methods that are diverse, inclusive and explicit and that do not disadvantage any student

• Is broadened by an internationally comparative approach

• Develops and assesses intercultural communications skills and critical thinking

• Is embedded in curriculum, but varies according to discipline and Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) standards

• Is achieved through collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders in the development of a relevant range of resources

• Is based on a view of culture as complex, dynamic and evolving, and avoids stereotyping, generalisation and monolithic descriptions of cultures including our own (O'Rourke 2011)

In Social Work education, pressure to internationalise goes beyond professional and university imperatives. Employers want graduates with an understanding of diverse cultures and the ability to work cross-culturally. Many social work programs have very diverse student bodies, including international students, local students from diverse cultural backgrounds, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, mature age students, and students with disabilities. In this paper, we argue that student diversity provides opportunities for a kind of grass roots internationalisation of the curriculum. Our concept of grass roots internationalisation refers to the idea of drawing students' diverse experiences into the curriculum in ways that enrich and internationalise the learning of all students.

This approach is informed by both critical pedagogy and critical social work. It is based on the belief that social work education should not only transform the lives of students, but should also give them the tools and the opportunity to transform social work education and social work practice in the future.

In this article we describe and discuss three projects conducted at Victoria University, Melbourne. These three projects represent cycles of action and reflection that we are undertaking in order to develop our own practices. Before the first project, we observed particular challenges and opportunities for both our students and ourselves as educators associated with the diversity of our student cohort. The first project was a small piece of qualitative research that explored culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students' experiences with the Bachelor of Social Work program. The second project is ongoing, and is based on the findings of the first project, focussing on embedding language, literacy and numeracy support in tutorials. The third project is in the development stage and seeks to implement a 'funds of knowledge' approach within the curriculum. While we believe we have further work to do, these three projects together represent our developing approach to working dialogically with students to validate and value their own experience and funds of knowledge, and, at the same time, support their induction into the discourse of professional social work. We highlight the intentions we bring as educators to create the spaces for learning about social work theory and practice in a global context. We discuss some of the outcomes, tensions and implications of this work for social work education in diverse communities.

CONTEXT

Victoria University is located in Melbourne's western region which is culturally diverse, with about 22% of our students from low socio-economic backgrounds (DEEWR 2010). Social Work has a diverse student body with many who are the first in their families to attend university and approximately 16% of our population who are international students. International and non-English speaking background (NESB) students together make up 44% of our students (Victoria University 2011). The Social Work Unit staff is predominantly White Anglo Celtic and includes only one of the six staff members from a bilingual and bicultural background. Social work's inclusion on the migration skills list has resulted in an increase in international enrolments. Diverse student populations such as ours reflect a growing diversity within diversity, of differing life experiences, ages, responsibilities, beliefs and understandings; this, along with global families and collectivist cultures, impact on social work curriculum, teaching and field education. The Social Work Unit at Victoria University takes an explicitly critical approach to social work education, teaching critical, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory approaches to social work (Adams, Dominelli and Payne 2009), and drawing on critical educational theory, in particular ideas about critical literacy (Lankshear and McLaren 1993) and critical pedagogy (Freire 1996).

Critical social work education

The idea of 'critical social work education' encompasses ideas about critical social work (Allan, Briskman and Pease 2009), ideas about critical pedagogy (Freire 1996; Giroux 2011) and ideas about critical literacy (Lankshear and McLaren 1993). The concept of transformation is central to these approaches. Critical social work aims to transform not

only the lives of individual people, but the social conditions that contribute to oppression, discrimination, and unjust outcomes. Critical pedagogy is fundamental to democracy, and is shaped by 'pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable and willing to make moral judgements and act in a socially responsible way' (Giroux 2011, p.3). It is not unilateral but dialogical, focusing on knowledge transformation rather than knowledge consumption, and on addressing power relations and privilege. Critical pedagogy always relates 'to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources' (Giroux 2011, p 4). Similarly, critical literacy emphasises not only the functional reading of text, but the ability to understand how language works to reflect and reinforce existing power structures. Understanding social work education in this way, as an arena of intersecting critical practices, aims not only to educate future practitioners of critical social work, but to provide students with the conceptual tools to transform social work from within.

The practice of critical social work education underpins our grass roots approach to the internationalisation of the curriculum; it is not sufficient that a diverse group of students are simply represented in our classrooms, support must also be provided to foster genuinely democratic participation. Critical social work education encourages an understanding of learning and of classrooms as dialogical, creating space for all students to bring rich and varied cultural experiences to a shared construction of disciplinary knowledge. This practice is explicitly undertaken as an alternative to Western paradigm pedagogy that risks the 'othering' of non-Western students within social work programs. Walter, Taylor and Habibis (2011, p.17) suggest there is still an 'outward gaze' from social work on indigenous and cross-cultural practices, locating these practices as 'other than' mainstream social work practice. In contrast, critical social work education is situated within socio-cultural theories of learning, which argue for the adoption of academic pedagogies that recognise cultural identities and privilege a diversity of cultural, intellectual and technical expressions of learning (Jacobs 2005; Lave and Wenger 1991).

Discussing alternatives to Western paradigm pedagogy, Gonzalez and Moll (2002, p.623) maintain that effective pedagogy is connected with students' lives, their 'local histories and community contexts'. They argue that learning is a social process, sitting within larger contextual forces that impact on students' lives and identity formations. The dominant paradigms in learning environments often sit outside these contexts. Given that these paradigms are socially privileged, students sense that their own forms of knowledge are judged as lacking and deficient. This is pertinent when seeking a pedagogy that enables students to value their life-based cultural traditions and conventions: a pedagogy that avoids valorising the dominant cultural codes of the university (even as it teaches these), and invalidating previous experience and histories of students. 'Funds of knowledge' refers to the knowledge and skills used over generations to support family well-being, which tend to be ignored in the education of marginalised students. Hattam, Lucas, Prosser, and Sellar (2007) illustrate how funds of knowledge can be engaged in pedagogy by finding points of connection between students' everyday lives and their learning experience.

In this paper we describe three projects that represent our ongoing efforts at enacting critical social work education in a diverse community. The first was exploratory, asking

students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds about their experiences of social work education. The second took up some of the findings of the CALD research to embed learning support into the curriculum. While the first phase of this project is described in greater detail elsewhere (Grace, Daddow, Egan, Fox, Noble, O'Maley, Ridley and Testa 2011), here we reflect on its evolution over several teaching cycles. The third project is action research that focuses on designing and implementing curriculum and pedagogy that works with students' funds of knowledge. Please note that in reporting students' comments we have used pseudonyms.

PROJECT 1: CALD STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

A small research project undertaken by social work staff at Victoria University explored the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work (Noble, Testa and Egan 2011). Twenty-two students were identified as potential participants. Nine students, five males, and four females accepted the invitation to participate in a single, 1.5 - 2 hour semi-structured interview. Six students were completing their fourth year and three were completing their third year of the social work course. Students had migrated from Somalia, Malaysia, China, Egypt, Sudan, Vietnam, Ethiopia, and Columbia. With the exception of the Chinese student, all came to Australia as refugees.

The research explored two aspects of the CALD students' experiences. First, students were asked to present their story of coming to Australia and finding their way into the social work program, however they would like to tell it. The second question asked participants to provide comments on various aspects of the social work program. This included comments on the social work discourse and language, the course objectives, content, and use of references, assessments, and field education experiences. In relation to language, while International students who enrol in our course are generally required to have an IELTS score of at least 6 with no band less than 6, there are other groups for whom English is not their first language, and they have not in the past been required to provide the IELTS. These groups include locally born students, International students who have studied in English for at least two years, Australian citizens who were born overseas, and permanent residents who were born overseas. All of the participants in this study were migrants and refugees. Particular attention was given to comments about what teaching and learning strategies and what curricula changes would help with their study. While language was a part of this focus on teaching and learning strategies, it was not specifically foregrounded at this stage in our project.

Students described how they had left volatile and unstable political situations, typically entered Australia as refugees or in one instance had been sponsored by family to receive a western education thus ensuing greater opportunities for their families into the future. For example Abdi recounted his family's need to flee his home country:

> *When the war started, they started targeting people who were in the government. So we had to move, we were the same clan as the President and so they thought that we were really close to him.*

In contrast to Abdi, Bono travelled from his Middle Eastern village to Australia in pursuit of a better future for himself and his family:

I came here for better opportunities, there was not very much work in [home country] and there was difficulties with the government.

Participants reported that there were several elements that hindered students' participation and progression through the BSW. The most prominent of these was a lack of English fluency, for example Anita found much of the vocabulary used in readings and texts was beyond her:

I had to check the dictionary for so many words.

Nazir reported that her accent made her 'nervous about speaking' and described sometimes feeling 'undermined' describing her advocacy for a client while on field placement as discriminatory:

'There was a Chinese client and she booked her mother in or something and I was calling the interpreter service and the person was like 'what language do you speak?' so he thought the service was for me, he judged by my accent.' (Nazir)

Other barriers mentioned by participants included unfamiliarity with academic discourse:

It's a different system and a different way of learning. In [home country] you write everything and you memorise. Here you have to do a lot of studies on your own and your assignments so it's really good. Normally here, students have different opinions to teachers. In [home country] that doesn't happen. Whatever lecturer says is right. (Benahzir)

Students also spoke about the need to have familiarity with local knowledge and values:

People would all have the same response and I didn't really understand. I was like, what? Why are people feeling that, why are they feeling sad about this? I can't respond the way they expected. (Anita)

Some commented on a lack of grounding in or a conflict with Western conceptual frameworks:

Sometimes I wish they would ask us what would happen in your country … I would make all the staff be aware of students from CALD backgrounds and that we make sure all the rules are made clear. (Afrina)

It doesn't agree with the ideas in my culture. If you took some of those ideas You really need to live here. I don't know what's the emotion you should to someone in (home country) they would disagree. An example I could give is feminism. Here they fight for women's rights – they should have employment out of the home, they should have rights to a lot of things – whereas in my culture they would say, no that's wrong, because a woman belongs in the house. That's her role, a housewife, and if she takes care of the children then that's her role. I find myself in

the middle because I don't think a woman belongs in the house but at the same time I think there's a limit to how much a woman can do outside of the house as well. (Romero)

These findings resonate with the insights of socio-cultural theories of learning (Jacobs 2005; Lave and Wenger 1991) in relation to the disempowering impacts of expecting students to conform to unfamiliar academic practices. The research, although small scale, indicated that traditional, individualistic teaching and learning pedagogy implemented exclusively through the lens of a Western paradigm could further disadvantage CALD students' progress through their undergraduate studies. The findings challenge those designing and delivering the social work curriculum to question the cultural assumptions underpinning social work practice, as well as the notion that learning is an individualistic endeavour. An examination of curriculum could expose the expectations that CALD students adjust to and adopt the discourse of the dominant culture. It could also challenge curriculum designers and lecturers to integrate CALD perspectives and experiences in curriculum, thus providing alternative voices in the understanding and application of social work theories and practice. Not to do so would be a missed opportunity for social work courses intent on developing student cohorts with culturally diverse professional identities and capabilities. Undertaking such an examination affirms and values CALD students' cultural identities and experiences.

The tension and challenge in this work is to draw subjugated knowledges into the academic space, and at the same time assist students to participate in the discourse community; to reject a deficit model while assisting students to improve their English language skills for professional social work practice. In responding to the findings of the CALD research, we drew on Northedge's (2010) work suggesting that academic support structures should be discipline specific and concentrate on the development of the discourse, language and sensibility rather than be decontextualised and generic. Not to offer such support thwarts rather than facilitates CALD students' engagement with social work education. The question then becomes how to provide targeted, well-resourced support that pays more than lip service to notions of access and equity for a group of students whom Universities have actively sought to enrol in their courses.

PROJECT 2: EMBEDDED LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND NUMERACY SUPPORT

At the time when social work staff were seeking to respond to the findings of the CALD research project, we had the opportunity to participate in Victoria University's Language, Literacy and Numeracy pilot Strategy (LLN Strategy). The LLN Strategy has the following aims:

- To build the language, literacy and numeracy capabilities that underpin students' Victoria University course achievement and which provide a foundation for further learning and for future careers and life choices.

- To build the capacity of Victoria University teachers, curricula developers and LLN support mechanisms to identify and address the LLN development needs of students.

- To evaluate and document the impact of interventions, enabling sustained growth.

This project's partnership builds on the long standing relationship between social work and the Student Learning Unit (SLU). Since the 1990s, the SLU has worked with social work academic staff to deliver some in-class content on topics such as essay writing and avoiding plagiarism. In addition, students have the opportunity to make individual appointments for learning support consultations with SLU staff members, and to attend academic skills workshops offered generally to students in the Faculty. The utilisation of individual support services has been limited. It has often seemed to social work lecturers that the students most in need of personal assistance are those least likely to seek out that assistance by making appointments to see specialist staff.

In the first semester of 2011 the LLN staff member consulted with social work academic staff, and reviewed students' work. She found alarmingly low levels of academic literacy among CALD students, particularly those coming to us from private Registered Training Organisation (RTO)-delivered Diplomas. In response to her feedback, rather than simply advise these students to make individual appointments with the SLU, a decision was made to adopt more of an outreach model, bringing the support to the students instead of sending the students off to find the support. Additional weekly tutorials were offered to students who had failed, or nearly failed, their week 5 assignment. Four of these specific academic skills tutorials were delivered, with approximately half the students invited attending these tutorials.

The 50% attendance at academic skills tutorials was better engagement than we had achieved with the previous referral method. Feedback from students who did not attend suggested that these students struggled to attend additional classes. Following reflection, our next cycle of action towards integrating academic skills building into the curriculum took place during the Winter School unit of study where support was embedded by extending the length of one of the unit's tutorials by an hour and having that tutorial jointly taught by both the regular tutor and learning support tutor. Students at risk of failing were directed to attend this tutorial, although lecturers were somewhat concerned about possibly stigmatising CALD students. We decided to work with this issue rather than avoid it by failing to take any action. While some students were initially reluctant to see themselves as requiring support, by the mid-point of the unit of study, students from other tutorials were requesting transfers to the supported tutorial. Clearly, directing students to supported tutorials has the potential to create both resistance and stigma. However, it is possible to work with these issues, and this is necessary in a funding environment where intensive learning support cannot be embedded in every tutorial.

Student feedback indicates that these 'outreach' models increase students' confidence in seeking assistance. Students report that the ongoing relationship developed with SLU/ LLN staff, together with the latter's familiarity with the unit content, make for a greater uptake of their services. It also operates to reduce any stigma, or at least the influence of any stigma, on their seeking help. It has relieved students of having to self-identify as needing help, as interaction with the SLU/LLN staff is part of the everyday interaction in class. The embedding has, in itself, helped relieve some of this burden as its transparency and prominence have normalised the need to strengthen a wide range of literacy skills for all students.

In semester 2, 2011, we continued the embedded support model and had both the SLU lecturer and the LLN Strategy project educational developer participate in the planning and teaching of the tutorial. Student participation in the extended portion of these tutorials was optional. A small number took advantage of the opportunity. Evaluation of the strategy through student surveys and reflection on learnings from the project led to refinements. In particular, we learned that many students had limited strategies and opportunity for critically reading academic materials, and gaining meaning from them. Improving students' engagement with the recommended readings was a major concern for social work academic staff.

In semester 1, 2012, we continued the embedded model, with an emphasis on developing reading strategies, and implementing further refinements based on student feedback and an analysis of student work. Our primary focus was to encourage engagement and extend the advantages of the normalisation of learning literacy skills. In particular, we made:

• The process of reading and related skills the central focus of our work in tutorials;

• The discussion of difficulties in reading (Salvatori 2002) an essential part of student presentations , together with a discussion of the manner in which those students overcame those difficulties; and

• characterised the unit as a 'learning community' with particular emphasis on all of us – staff included – being 'learners', making mistakes, and having the capacity to overcome those mistakes.

The work on promoting reading skills included tutorial activities that explicitly focused on critical reading strategies, such as:

• Working overtly with the epistemological implications related to engaging with the unit's readings (Lea and Street 2006);

• Concept mapping;

• Contextualisation strategies such as 'skimming and scanning' and linking content to prior knowledge (Munro 2002)

• Paragraph structure analysis (specifically, 'Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence and Link back to the central question');

• Discussing how authors critically integrate sources; how this technique is used to advance an argument and how students can use these methods to make clear their own views and raise their own voices

• Studying the vocabulary of critical analysis;

• Focusing on reading behaviours and reading with purpose; and

• Sharing reading strategies.

Students' survey feedback indicates that they benefitted from an explicit focus on reading and critical reading strategies. In response to the question 'what (if any) change have you experienced in yourself as a reader during this semester?' students responded in this way:

> *At first I was very much struggling with the reading as I felt it was too long, hard and complicated in terms of language and structures. But now with the help of different ideas and techniques given by our tutor it is much easier to know the reading structure and what it is about. I have definitely improved my reading ability.*

> *I'm understanding the readings, I find myself reading for meaning and not just reading for the sake of it.*

Another student suggested she is now:

> *More aware of bias and motivation and writer's intentions and not accepting everything I read as the absolute truth!*

In order to encourage students to remain for the additional hour the content-focussed aspect of the tutorial, together with the work on literacy, were integrated into the entire length of the I read for meaning now, even if it means I read it several times tutorial and the coordinator remained for the first half hour of the additional time. It was hoped that the coordinator's continued presence would promote continued participation, given that many students had previously left immediately after the coordinator's departure from the tutorial room. The SLU/LLN staff then provided an additional half hour of support after the coordinator's departure, tailoring their activities to individual advice or small group exercises and discussions, depending upon what the remaining students desired. Examples of this work include modelling the use of a range of graphic organisers as tools for ordering, summarising, synthesising ideas, and also using writing templates as a way to transition into writing in an appropriate academic style. Some student responses to specific activities of this sort include:

> *I like to be part of this class because I have learnt a good number of techniques such as the use of concept mapping and the formulation of questions during the tutorial based on the readings*

> *I take this knowledge and share it with my friends and family as it is the reality and many people are not aware of it.*

Students could also seek individual support with the SLU/LLN staff.

In order to gain a better understanding of students' response to this focus on deep engagement with texts, surveys with both specific questions and open questions were conducted, along with focus groups. The next phase of this data gathering and reflection will be semi structured interviews with volunteer student participants. The staff participating in these tutorials have observed a much higher level of disclosure around reading difficulties and greater confidence in dealing with those difficulties, as compared with previous interactions. For several students who regularly participated, the coordinator reported an improvement of the quality of assessment of up to 10% over the second half

of the semester (that is, between the mid-and- end of semester assessments) In general as students grew more confident in grappling with the ideas and sharing difficulties, they engaged as a community of learners who together could build knowledge. In addition to participating in the embedded support, a significant number of students met with the SLU/LLN staff on an individual basis. In some cases, this involved several meetings in relation to each assessment.

Attendance for the full duration of the supported tutorials has remained a challenge. In the current semester, students have been encouraged to attend through a variety of measures. They have been informed of the constructive impact of the tutorials by both the teaching staff and students who participated in last semester's tutorial. To promote informed decision making, the coordinator has reminded students that extensions on assignments' due dates and the exercise of other discretions will take into account attendance at both lectures and the extended tutorials. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this has secured a higher level of attendance, although a significant proportion of those students most needing help continue to attend inconsistently.

It appears that to some degree the difficulty in securing attendance is a reflection of the complexity and diversity of the students' lives. Having regard to the first semester 2012 surveys and experience in this current semester, many students appear to find it difficult to regularly attend lectures and tutorials of the standard length. Many travel considerable distances to university. Many have substantial personal and community commitments, including employment and caring responsibilities that limit both the times they can attend university and how long they can spend on campus. These demands also impact on the time they have available to prepare for classes and undertake assignments when off campus. Responses to surveys of time spent in reading prior to class showed that a number of students allowed less than a few hours each week for reading and some read for a much shorter period while travelling to the tutorial.

It appears that embedding literacy learning in the usual structure of tutorials is an appropriate response to the increasing diversity of social work students and their commitments. It may be that it will also require us to limit the duration of those tutorials. To do that, however, would take us to a fresh frontier. It will raise issues as to how both the social work specific learning as well as the literacy learning can be addressed in or at about the same time. This has, to a significant degree, been achieved by the process of embedding and focussing the literacy learning on the readings assigned for the unit. The literacy activities are time consuming however, and there is a real risk that the social work specific learning could be compromised by the reduction of time spent on it. We continue to work towards finding that balance. However, when students come to university with limited experience of academic literacies their engagement with the complexities of the issues and learning encountered in the curriculum is limited. Without intervention they remain disadvantaged in their ability to participate in and, most importantly, to contribute their own voice to the discipline's discourse.

To conceive the two streams of learning as separate or competing then risks missing an opportunity that is central to the anti-oppressive endeavour we are engaged in. The anti-

oppressive tradition of social work has drawn deeply on the work of Freire and others who have continued his work of pedagogy as a critical project (Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Lankshear and McLaren 1993; Luke, O'Brien and Comber 2001), a project that supports students doing 'a "reading of the cultures" around, behind, underneath, alongside, after and within the text' (Luke et al. 2001, p.113, italics in original). Our approach equally seeks to value the knowledge and skills students bring with them, especially in understanding the dynamics of privilege and oppression. We share Foucault's belief in the emancipatory potential of the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges' (cited in Pease 2002, p.135, p.141). The diversity of our students' backgrounds offers much to build on, if the appropriate environment for the sharing and exploration of that knowledge is created.

PROJECT 3: FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE ACTION RESEARCH

In exploring curricular and pedagogic practices that seek to subvert academic, sociocultural and socio-economic stratification, the Social Work Unit has partnered with the University's Curriculum Innovation Unit to undertake an action research project that intentionally designs and implements curriculum and pedagogy to access students' funds of knowledge (Hattam et al. 2007) and enables them to traverse the multiple literacies required for success in their academic and professional lives. Harnessing the intersection between the familiar world of the non-traditional student and the new world of academia and disciplinary knowledge is the pedagogic challenge explored by this action research. Students who have not had prior access to privileged academic discourse or literacies can be disadvantaged in their participation and progress in tertiary education (Northedge 2005). Wheelahan (2010) refers to the socially differentiated access to knowledge and education that arises when some students have the privilege of congruence between their middle class home and education environments and others do not. Delpit (1993, p.122) argues that the codes inherent in predominant linguistic forms –ways of talking, writing and interacting – are supported by a 'culture of power' in learning environments. Furthermore, 'success in institutions is predicated upon acquiring the culture of those who are in power'. Some students from diverse backgrounds have not necessarily come from life-worlds that carry the cultural codes selected for and perpetuated in the university system and its disciplinary worlds. Collier and Morgan (2008) report that many students from low socio-economic backgrounds do not know that the unspoken requirements of these codes even exist, let alone their consequent need to understand and then respond appropriately to them. This lack of tacit knowledge can hinder their success and achievement at university. Delpit (1988, p.283) is clear that 'if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier'.

The research project acknowledges that literacy is not a singular skill that is easily transferred from context to context. Prior research indicates that university students are required to switch between many different types of written text and oral genres in disciplinary and workplace settings, juggling different department and academic staff expectations (Lea 2008). 'Multiple literacies' refers to the meaning-making systems (print and non-print) that are deeply enmeshed in culture and everyday lives of people (Gee 2000; Kist 2005, cited in Perry 2006). These include both visible and 'hidden' literacies. The visible literacies that are privileged in university education, and are often expected

of university entrants, include academic reading and writing, digital library research and textual literacies, to name a few. 'Hidden literacies' are the unrecognised and unknown literacies students bring with them to university based in their values, interests, cultural backgrounds and world views. These influence how they read the world and then read the word (Freire and Macedo 1987).

The collaborative action research project aims to design curricular and pedagogic practices that access these less privileged literacies and funds of knowledge, and in doing so, form a bridge to the more dominant literacies that students require to succeed at university and in their professional worlds. The project is currently designing curriculum for two units of study in the Bachelor of Social Work (to be taught in 2013), which will be researched and refined for implementation across semesters one and two. It is hoped that the research findings, which will be published in a peer reviewed journal, will inform the Bachelor of Social Work program as well as influence broader reflections on university curricular practices in the internationalised environment; particularly in valuing the 'hidden' literacies' and diverse 'ways of knowing' of diverse students.

This project, along with the other two we have described here, outlines our work in accounting for Killick's (2006) elements in the internationalisation of curriculum; awareness, diverse perspectives and adapted practice. We have taken up these elements, worked with our university to make our own teaching methods diverse, inclusive and explicit (O'Rourke 2011) and at the same time engaged with the rich opportunity for grass roots internationalism our students offer. This dialogical work is ongoing.

CONCLUSION

Within social work and within universities there is considerable political will to move towards internationalisation. However, both social work and social work education have a tendency to be Western-centric. Transforming social work and social work education involves undermining privilege, and being prepared to challenge our own practices (Pease 2006). A certain amount of change can come from people currently in positions of privilege, but this change will have all of the limitations of any top-down approach. We suggest that grass roots internationalisation of social work and social work education can be facilitated by practices that embrace understandings from critical social work, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy. Our work in this regard is always dialogic, always a work in progress, and in this paper we have discussed some of the outcomes, tensions and implications of working with students to improve their academic literacy and at the same time respecting, supporting and valuing their life circumstances, multiple literacies and funds of knowledge that they bring with them to social work education.

REFERENCES

Adams, R., Dominelli, L. and Payne, M. (eds) (2009) *Critical Practice in Social Work*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Allan, J., Briskman, L. and Pease, B. (2009) *Critical Social Work: Theories and Practices for a Socially Just World* (2nd edn.), Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.

Collier, P. and Morgan, D. (2008) '"Is that paper really due today?" Differences in first-generation and traditional college students' understandings of faculty expectations', *Higher Education*, vol.55, pp.425-426.

DEEWR (2010) *Institutional Performance Portfolio:* Victoria University, Australian Government, Canberra.

Delpit, L. (1988) 'The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol.53, no.3, pp.280-298.

Delpit, L. (1993) 'The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children', in Weis, L. and Fine, M. *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race, and Gender in United States Schools*, State University of New York Press, New York.

Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Fairclough, N. (2001) *Language and Power* (2nd edn.), Pearson Education, London.

Freire, P. (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, London.

Freire, P. (1998) *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to those who dare Teach.* The Edge, Critical Studies in Educational Theory, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.

Freire, P. and Macedo, D. (1987) *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Bergin and Garvey, South Hadley, MA.

Gee, J. P. (2000), 'Identity as an analytic lens for research in education', *Review of Research in Education*, vol.25, pp.99-125.

Giroux, H. (2011) *On Critical Pedagogy*, Continuum, London.

Gonzalez, N. and Moll, L.C. (2002) 'Cruzando el Puente: Building bridges to funds of knowledge', *Educational Policy*, vol.16, pp.623-641.

Grace, M., Daddow, A., Egan, R., Fox, J., Noble, C., O'Maley, P., Ridley, C. and Testa, D. (2011) 'Blurring the boundaries: A collaborative approach to language and learning support for Social Work students', *Multiculturalism Perspectives from Australia, Canada and China Conference*, 21-22 November 2011, University of Sydney, Australia, pp.74-80.

Hattam, R., Lucas, B., Prosser, B. and Sellar, S. (2007) 'Researching the "funds of knowledge" approach in the Middle Years', *The World of Educational Quality*, April 2007 AERA Annual Meeting and Presentation, Chicago..

Ife, J. (2012) 'The new international agendas: What role for social work', *Inaugural Hokenstad International Social Work Lecture Council for Social Work Education San Francisco*, October 2007, Retrieved 30 August 2012, from International Federation of Social Workers website, <http://ifsw.org/statements/the-new-international-agendas-what-role-for-social-work/>

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2012) *Agenda for Social Work*, retrieved 30 August 2012 from, <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/agenda-for-social-work/>

Jacobs, C. (2005) 'On being an insider on the outside: New spaces for integrating academic literacies', *Teaching in Higher Education*, vol.10, no.4, pp.475-487.

Killick, D. (2006) *Cross-Cultural Capability and Global Perspectives. Guidelines for Curriculum Review*, retrieved 30 August 2012, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds.<http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/worldwidehorizons/Cross_Cultural_Capability_Guidelines.pdf>

Lankshear, C. and McLaren, P. (1993) *Critical Literacy: Politics, Praxis, and the Postmodern*, State University of New York Press, Albany.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Lea, M. (2008) 'Academic Literacies in Theory and Practice' In Street, B. V. and Hornberger N. H. *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd edn.), Vol. 2: Literacy, pp.227-238.

Lea, M. and Street, B.V. (2006) 'The academic literacies model: Theory and applications', *Theory into Practice*, vol.45, pp.368-377.

Luke, A., O'Brien, J. and Comber, B. (2001) 'Making community texts objects of study' In Fehring, H. and Green, P. *Critical Literacy: A Collection of Articles from the Australian Literacy Educators' Association*, International Reading Association and Australian Literacy Educators' Association, Canada.

Munro, J. (2002) 'High Reliability Literacy Teaching Procedures: A means of fostering literacy learning across the curriculum', *Idiom*, vol.38, no.1, pp.23-31.

Noble, C., Testa, D. and Egan, R. (2011) 'Multi-cultural curricula: How can social work meet the challenge?', paper presented to 21st Asia Pacific Social Work conference, Tokyo, 15-18th July.

Northedge, A. (2005) 'Rethinking teaching in the context of diversity: Supporting social participation in a knowledge community', in Shaw, G. *Tertiary Teaching and Learning: Dealing with Diversity*, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, NT, pp.13-31.

O'Rourke, M. (2011) Internationalisation of the Curriculum, Victoria University, Melbourne, retrieved 30 August 2012, <http://tls.vu.edu.au/portal/site/intercurr/intercurr_what.aspx>

Pease, B. (2006) 'Encouraging critical reflections on privilege in social work and the human services', *Practice Reflexions*, vol. 1, no.1, pp.15-26.

Pease, B. (2002) 'Rethinking empowerment: A postmodern reappraisal for emancipatory practice', British Journal of Social Work, vol. 32, pp.135-147.

Perry, T. (2006) 'Multiple literacies and Middle School students', *Theory into Practice*, vol.45, no.4, pp.328-336.

Salvatori, M. (2002) 'Reading Matters for Writing' In Helmers, M. *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms*, Routledge, New York, pp.185-206.

Victoria University 2011, *Victoria University 2011* Annual Report, retrieved 12 December 2012, http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/mcd/pdfs/VU%202011%20Annual%20Report%20web.pdf

Walter, M., Taylor, S. and Habibis, D. (2011) 'How white is social work in Australia?', *Australian Social Work*, vol.6, no.1, pp.6-19.

Wheelahan, L. (2010) *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum*, Routledge, London and New York.