

The Future of Social Work Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Social work education in NZ

- What are the **influences** at work in social work education?
- What can we do to ensure a **future** for social work education that will best serve our profession in NZ?



An Avalanche is Coming

AN AVALANCHE IS COMING: Higher education and the revolution ahead (UK)

Michael Barber, Katelyn Donnelly, Saad Rizvi (2013)

- **employability** of graduates
- gain more value from **dwindling** government financial investment in education
- **unbundling** traditional education through specialization in teaching content, assessment and recognition of prior learning, along with research and publishing
- **globalization** impacts
- **Technology** growth
- Strengthening learners and the world of **work**

Tertiary education strategy NZ 2014-2019

- Priority 1: Delivering skills for **industry**,
- Priority 2: Getting at-risk **young people** into a career,
- Priority 3: Boosting achievement of **Māori and Pasifika**,
(Maori = indigenous people of NZ,
Pasifika = Pacific Islands ethnicity)
- Priority 4: Improving adult **literacy** and numeracy,
- Priority 5: Strengthening **research**-based institutions,
- Priority 6: Growing **international** linkages.

Current state:

- **Social work programmes** located in 17 organisations: universities, polytechnics, Maori and independent providers
- **Regulator:** Social Workers Registration Board
- Shift to **4 year undergraduate** length for non university providers
- **Government** tertiary education policy focus on “strong links to industry, community and the global economy”
- **Declining resources** from government for institutions
- **Risk of disadvantaging** poorer and minority students with increased cost

Challenges for social work education in NZ

- Shaping a unique **identity for social work**, with graduates competent to practice with Maori and with people from increasingly diverse groups.
- Ensuring a diverse **workforce** including pathways for poorer students.
- An alignment with **employers** for graduates of programmes.
- **Professional development** for life.
- A dynamic **research** agenda.
- A stronger **political voice** to enhance social work education and the broader profession.

How do we get there?

- **Globalisation** – working with the diversity of students, placements, partnering with overseas providers
- **Technology** – making the most of e-learning and online resources for efficiency and breadth of learning
- **Economy** – becoming more efficient, less government money
- **Students** – higher expectations met with better use of relationship management and peer work
- **Government** – developed a sector wide relationship with government; cross sector plan with a workforce development strategy and development funding (eg mental health sector)
- **Accessibility** – equity provisions for disadvantaged students; targeting our student cohort to reflect society and the workforce we need

How do we get there?...

- **Society** – better communication about value of social work, e.g. social work in schools development
- **Social justice** – education as a public good and a means to transform society; social work education as a means to achieve this goal
- **Professional development** – clear role for social work education in lifelong professional learning
- **Degrees** – universities strengthen MSW applied programmes with non universities focusing on 4 year undergraduate programmes
- **Providers** – the diversity of providers allowing a wide range of students to access education; collaboration incl large and small..
- **Educators** – workforce development planning to ensure a mix of staff that reflect the student and clientele makeup: practice base, higher qualifications, teaching qualifications, leadership, profession and community engagement

How do we get there?...

- **Employment** – high graduate employment through responsive curriculum, quality fieldwork, marketing of profession, collaboration with government on social work role
- **Registration** – mandatory registration strengthening first professional qualification requirement and CPD development
- **Unbundling education** – more flexible teaching, research, assessment, qualification awarding, CPD options
- **Teaching and learning** – co creative process, good use of e-learning, digital resources, student peer learning..
- **Tiriti o Waitangi, Maori, Pasifika, diverse populations** – intercultural practice (SWRB and ANZASW comps) – student success targets from Government

How do we get there?...

- **Research** – research informed curriculum, active academy and practitioners, knowledge production, promote profession and societal engagement/activism
- **Fieldwork** – student units, education for agency supervisors
- **First year of practice** – UK model, internship in mental health model based on nursing
- **Community of practice** – seamless move from student, graduate, maturing practitioner, leader, cross sector, CPD, research, academics
- **International** – strong international social work bodies IFSW, IASSW, ICSW – global agenda, definition, ethics, standards, promotion, advocacy, interchange

Conclusion

We have good prospects for a vibrant social work education sector in the future if we:

- Collaborate within **social work education** – Council for Social Work Education in Aotearoa NZ
- Work well across the **social work sector** and beyond to key stakeholders: regulator, profession, employers, government
- Keep at the front edge of challenges within the **education sector**
- Promote the contribution of the **profession** to funders and wider society, with a strong research base
- Ensure **quality** practice, life long learning, a strong community of practice, and political agency



References:

- Barber, M., Donnelly, K., & Rizvi, S. (2013). An Avalanche Is Coming: Higher education and the revolution ahead. UK: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Ministry of Education, & Ministry of Business, I. a. E. (2014). Tertiary education strategy 2014-2019. from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/TertiaryEducation/PolicyAndStrategy/TertiaryEducationStrategy2014-2019.aspx>