



Democratising & Decolonising SW Education

Democratising & Decolonising Social Work Education: Opportunities for Leadership

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Whakatauki (proverb):

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi



“With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive”



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First Wave of Research

Document analysis of:

- Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession 2004 (GS).
- Aotearoa NZ (ANZ) and Australian social work education standards.

Findings:

- Equity themes: service users, students, indigenous, political, gender, culture, accessibility.
- Democratisation = promoting equity in and through education.
- Decolonisation = promoting indigenous peoples' rights & partnerships with non indigenous peoples.



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Second Wave of Research

Interviews of SW Education Leaders in ANZ:

- Questions based on equity themes.
- “To what extent and in what way do Democratisation and Decolonisation practices make a difference to SW education in ANZ?”
- 14 out of 19 SW education programmes.
- In person and online interviews.
- Theme of leadership also explored.



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Research Findings:

Democratising Practices - Students:

- Student participation: course evaluation, representatives, consultation
- Cultural practices by staff with students
- Student activism supported by staff
- Quality relationships: students & staff
- Students as service users, reflecting the community
- Student cohort engages with their differences



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Research Findings:

Democratising Practices - Staff:

- Staff participation: ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability, age, career stage.
- Staff team practice with differences, power & partnerships
- Staff knowledge for equity practices, curriculum, & external engagement
- Staff partnership with students

Democratising Practices - Activism:

- Staff as civic education experts, SW role, model for students
- Students learning activism, fieldwork, in education institution



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Research Findings:

Decolonising Practices - ANZ context:

- The Treaty of Waitangi signed 1840 between indigenous Maori & British Crown. Dishonoured, colonisation of Maori. Resistance & vision of a Treaty partnership.
- 2 Wananga programmes (Maori education institutions)
- SW commitment to honouring the Treaty & partnership
- SW standards uphold the Treaty, Kaitiakitanga Framework
- Indigenous ways of knowing, being & doing
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



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Research Findings:

Decolonising Practices - staff:

- Maori values as context for a Treaty based partnership, led by staff teams.
- Maori staff a minority, grow non Maori cultural capacity
- Maori staff hardest to recruit, 'grow your own', scholarship
- Maori expertise often informal, risk exclusion
- Maori staff support & development required
- Non Maori staff learning Maori language, culture, practices
- Hold both Maori & non Maori knowledges for SW education



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Research Findings:

Decolonising Practices - students:

- Support identity of Maori, cultural safety & places, access to Maori staff & support
- Right to Maori knowledge & practices in SW education
- Experience the Treaty partnership in SW education



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Research Findings:

Democratising & Decolonising Practices - leaders:

- A key role as education is negotiated within its institutional context
- Workforce strategy is important especially for Maori staff
- Transformational leadership style is relevant; integrity & alignment with SW values
- Lead vision of Democratising & Decolonising Practices
- Lead vision of Treaty based partnership & other partnerships
- Manage relationship with SW regulator



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Conclusion:

- Standards and a regulatory framework provide a minimum baseline for SW education
- SW aspires to the goals of equity & social justice
- Democratising & Decolonising practices can bring SW values, goals and standards to life within education
- Leadership is vital for operationalising Democratising & Decolonising practices
- SW education workforce is one of the biggest leadership challenges



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