Social work kete: Designing social media use in Aotearoa New Zealand

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The project: Social workers and social media in Aotearoa New Zealand

- The questions: How do social workers use social media professionally? What are their opinions of social media in the context of social work? What is their knowledge of social media, and what are their views about the need for new knowledge?

- The research participants: survey, key informants, focus groups.

- Themes: Identity and knowledge

- This presentation: **The social work *kete***

Kete

Kete **is a traditional Māori concept used widely in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. In English, it means basket or kit, is traditionally flax woven, and symbolises a vessel containing knowledge,"important stories, principles and practices that can guide us in our mahi and in our lives"** (Eruera, 2012, p.12).

- **Both symbolic and practical**

- **Relationship between the kete as a vessel (its weave, shape, integrity), and what it contains.**

Social work *kete*

The ***social work kete*** represents the toolkit of the profession and is a metaphor commonly used by social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand to describe that which informs practice and reflects professional identity.

The relationship between how the kete is woven for its purpose (identity), and what it contains (knowledge/skills).

I think we can rely on our social work knowledge, the methods that we use, the philosophy and the practice. So we can go back to our social work theories and think about working with person-centred approach or think about strengths-based social work and apply that to our social media. We have those tools there in our *kete* already, it's how we apply them, I guess, into a new way of working, to social media. (Focus group participant)

What we carry in our *kete* – 4 subthemes

- **Technical knowledge** – of how social media works, its tools and structure

- **Critical skills** – to analyse the impact of social media on individuals and society

- **Interpersonal skills – to** promote human relationships on social media

- **Ethical knowledge & skills** – to manage professional boundaries, issues of safety and human rights

What we carry in our *kete* - uncertainties

- Participants wondered whether new tools should be added to the *kete* to support competent social media use, and about the need for professional leadership in this regard.

- Participants also expressed fear about 'shiny' new social media tools assuming an unwelcome place in their *kete,* replacing core interpersonal skills so important to the profession. For example, face to face practice (*kanohi ki te kanohi*) and relationship building (*whakawhanaungatanga*).

Social work identity

Is our social work *kete* 'fit for purpose?'

- Participants expressed frustration with their colleagues and with themselves for not using social media, and wondered about the need to re-examine their social work *kete* - our identity as social workers and our professional mandate.

- The social work *kete* is not a "one size fits all" concept – participants recognized the need for the kete to be resilient, to change its shape and what it carries according to the practice context.

The *kete* of mastery

So if the definition of social work is to be kaitiaki alongside people in their pursuit of wellness in social relationship and purpose, then social media has got to be part of the *kete* of mastery if we want to maintain a relevant presence. (Focus group participant)

kaitiaki - guardians

Summary: Responding to changing contexts

- By using the concept of the social work *kete* to enrich understanding of social media, participants highlight the value of everyday cultural concepts/metaphors, and how we use them to create new meaning for changing contexts.

- By doing this they were "remaking and reaffirming fundamental guiding values which form the bedrock of practice" (Fook, 2012, p. 179).

Thank you

References

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He aha te mea nui o te ao
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

What is the most important thing in the world?
It is the people
It is the people
It is the people

Conference themes

ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY | HUMAN SOLUTIONS IN EVOLVING SOCIETIES

- Ensuring the sustainable and ethical use of technology in human services

- Relationship-based practice: promoting the importance of human relationships

Social media & social work

Social media means many things to many people. For the purpose of this project it was more what it came to mean, which is really about how we use modern internet technology for the purposes of professional communication.

"Some say that all media are social because they are part of society and aspects of society are present in the technological artefacts we use" (Fuchs, 2017, p. 4).