SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA: AT THE 'CROSSROADS'

EN UN CRUCE DE CAMINO: LA EDUCACIÓN PARA EL TRABAJO SOCIAL EN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

The term 'crossroads' is being used in two senses in this paper. The first refers to the Australian Government's recent *Review of Higher Education* (referred to as 'Crossroads Report') and the impact that the changes will have on the higher education sector and consequently social work education. And secondly, 'crossroads' is being used in the sense that social work education is being restructured by the changes occurring in universities. Social work programs are expected to be more 'entrepreneurial', more research oriented ('publish or perish'), and more efficient in teaching methodology (this has meant emphasis on technology, use of adjunct staff and larger classes). The profession through the professional body (Australian Association of Social Workers) accredits programs but is 'running behind' the changes in higher education. The paper reviews critically these changes in social work education, the higher education sector and 'welfare reform', and how these changes may effect the future direction of social work education.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina críticamente los cambios en la educación en Australia y las consecuencias de esos cambios en la dirección futura del trabajo social. La expresión "cruce de caminos" se utiliza en dos sentidos: en el primero, se refiere a un documento publicado recientemente por el gobierno australiano, documento que tendrá gran impacto en todo el sector de la educación superior. En el segundo sentido, se refiere a las consecuencias que estos cambios universitarios tendrán en los programas de trabajo social. Existe la expectativa de que los programas de trabajo social se vuelvan más "empresariales" (es decir, utilicen un pensar de comercio), de que se publique para sobrevivir como académico y finalmente, de que se utilice mas tecnología, mas profesores adjuntos (no titulares), y clases con más estudiantes. Desafortunadamente, la asociación profesional que acredita los programas de trabajo social esta por atrás y no en la vanguardia de todos estos cambios.

sociales, Asociación Australiana de Trabajadores Sociales, *Entrepreneurs* en la educación superior

Introduction

Social work education has a long history in Australia, with the first training courses in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was not until 1940 that social work education was located in Universities with the University of Sydney establishing the first course. Other Universities followed suit and courses were established at University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia and University of Queensland (Lawrence, 1965). By the end of 1950s social work education was well established in the University sector, however, the number of graduates from these courses was very small. For example, University of Adelaide from 1948 to 1964 produced just 114 graduates. (Lawrence, 1976).

Social work education had been heavily influenced by the US with many of the early social workers gaining their education at US universities (Rosenman, 1980). For instance, Norma Parker, the first President of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and first Professor of Social Work was educated at the Catholic University of America in 1927-8 (Parker, 1979).

By the early 1970s, social work education was located in only six tertiary institutions. The programs were small and the graduates, mainly women, tended to be in the workforce for short periods of time. Up until the mid 1960s in Australia, there was the so-called 'marriage bar' in the public sector. Women, once married, were required to leave the workforce. It was assumed that women, once married, would have children and therefore be not part of the workforce. It was not until 1974 the women received equal pay for equal work (Williams, 1988).[1]

Australia's welfare state, until the 1970s, was seen as both 'underdeveloped' and highly reliant on workforce participation to keep families out of poverty (Jones, 1990). Australia's welfare system was viewed as unique and referred to by many social commentators as the 'working man's paradise' (Castles, 1985). For most of the twentieth century Australia's wages were relatively high and highly regulated through an Arbitration and Conciliation Court. Being employed meant being out of poverty and for most of the century there was very little 'working poor' in Australia.

There were problems associated with the generous welfare provision of the time, such as high tariffs on imported goods to protect the local economy. Additionally, the relatively high wages were for men only; women were paid at a much lower rate of pay. This meant that the workforce and industries were highly sex segregated. There was a clear division of what constituted men and women's work (Williams & Thorpe, 1992). Social security was provided for those unemployed, the sick, the disabled and the aged. Payments were at a flat rate and means tested.

The last quarter of the twentieth century saw massive changes that fundamentally

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[1] The Australian social security system has always been aimed at 'poverty alleviation' rather than 'income maintenance'. It is also important to note that social security payments come out of general revenue and there is no separate or special social security tax or contribution (Carney && Hanks, 1994).

[2] The term 'School' is used in Australia to denote the various social work programs. Technically not all are

altered the social structure of Australian society. These changes typical of most of the Western world – rapid social transformation and integration into a world economic order – are still being played out today (Giddens, 1992).

From the 1970s until 2004 the number of Schools of Social Work increased to twenty-two. It is estimated that there are 3500 students in social work education with approximately 1000 graduates per year (McDonald & Jones, 2000). Yet social workers make up only a small fraction of the human service workforce in Australia. The rapid growth of this sector has seen demand for workers outweigh the graduation rate of universities. This has meant that in Australia social workers are not numerically the largest professional group in the human services. It is estimated that there are 14,000 individuals with degrees in social work currently in the workforce. Yet the sector employs over 400,000 workers and estimated to be the second largest part of the service industry (Onyx & Maclean, 1995).

AUSTRALIA'S UNIVERSITY SECTOR

The above discussion must be set against the current debate in Australian higher education, which has been characterised by the Minister for Education, as at the 'Crossroads' (Nelson, B., 2003).

The *Review of Higher Education* (Nelson, B., 2003) undertaken in 2003 outlined considerable changes to Australia's higher education system. These changes, modified to some extent through the passage of legislation in Parliament in December 2003, will have considerable effect on social work education. It has been argued that these changes will affect greatly the ability of students to pay for their education and consequently, raise question about access and equity issues in higher education (National Tertiary Education Union [NTEU] 2004).

Australia's Higher Education System is a complex system of public funded Universities, with the Federal Government providing the majority of funds for student education. Each University negotiates with the Federal Government on a triennial basis the number of students that the Government will fund. There are thirty-eight Universities in the National Unified System. Students contribute to the cost of their University education through what is termed the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). Students can pay in two ways, either 'upfront', receiving a 25 percent discount, or on completion of their studies, when they earn more than $AUS 22,000 per annum. It is estimated that students pay approximately one third of the 'true' cost of their education.

The election of a conservative Government in 1996 saw the introduction of 'domestic' full fee-paying students. Previously there were only two types of students; International students who paid full fees and local, Australian students, who had gained a place at University through competitive entry exams as part of their final School year. A quota was set by each University for its courses or programs and, on a competitive basis, students gained entry to those courses. The more demand for a particular course, the higher the entry requirements.

International students were not part of the set quotas. A rapid increase during the 1990s, saw Australia become one of the three top destinations for international students, following the US and UK. There are approximately 75,000 International students in Australia. Given that there are about 600,000 local students. Australia has one of the

highest ratios of International students.

Universities were allowed to take domestic fee-paying students into courses, and the high demand courses saw an increase in the number of fee paying students. For Universities who had taken this option, these students provided considerable income. This was quite controversial, and many questions were raised on equity grounds. The argument was that richer students could in effect 'buy' their way into a course rather than gain entry on merit. Consequently, the Government put a limit on the number of fee-paying students, authorizing no more than 25 percent for any course.

Up until the early 1990s, the Federal Government largely funded Australian Universities. During the late 1990's, the reliance on Federal Government funding dropped considerably to the point, that for some Universities, only 35 percent of their income was derived from the Government. This was a major shift in the cost of higher education: the government was no longer the major provider. Universities were exhorted to be aware of business opportunities and become more entrepreneurial.

In 1996, with the incoming Conservative Government, funding for higher education was slashed and an estimated $6 billion was taken out of higher education over the next five years. There was no salary index for academic staff provided by the Government, which meant that any pay increases had to be funded though the Universities' own cost savings or through their own entrepreneurship. It also meant that the uniform salary levels of academics and general staff was ended and, through 'enterprise bargaining', salaries were negotiated by each individual University and its staff. This has meant that salaries for academic staff differ considerably from one institution to the next.

The 'Crossroads' faced by Australian Universities were an increasing demand for courses or programs with a decreasing proportion of funding from the Government. Salaries for both academic and general staff fell fast behind general community standards for the professions. Infrastructure costs increased as many of the Universities had relatively old buildings and the world was seeing increasing use of educational technologies. Australian Universities needed access to longer-term resources but most of the resources would come from students and their families (NTEU, 2004). The shift to private resources for higher education was significant and would change higher education in Australia.

Diversity within higher education was also seen as a major component of the reforms. It was argued by the Government that the higher education sector in Australia was too uniformed and that each of the Universities did similar things. This egalitarianism, it was thought, had lead to mediocrity and no Australian University was rated in the top 100 in the world. While there were instances of Departments and Schools being well rated, this did not translate to the institution as a whole. The 'reforms' introduced were not just about money and resources but about University management (Nelson, 2003). The use of a market approach to Universities was seen as one of the best ways to shift Universities and reward the most entrepreneurial or 'market ready' ones.

The reform package was finally passed by the Australian Parliament, and will come into effect in 2005. It includes an increase in the number of local domestic full fee paying students that each course is allowed to take in (up to 35 percent of the course quota), the identification of nursing and teaching as priority areas, and the possibility that a University may increase the higher education contribution from students (HECS) by 25 percent except for the priority areas. (Any such increase in fees is to be received by the University directly.) The reforms also include access to a loan scheme for full fee

paying domestic students, a much tighter agreement between the University and Government on what disciplines and courses they will offer. The reforms also state that HECS repayment will start once graduates earn $35,000 per annum. Provisions for equity programs particularly for Indigenous students are also included.

The Nature of Social Work Education and the Accreditation Process

Social Work Education as previously mentioned has a relatively long history of now more than sixty years. It is a profession that has grown slowly even though the human services sector itself grew at a phenomenal rate particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. It is a profession, which has not received 'state' recognition either through registration or licensing. It is a profession that has been at the 'crossroads' for some time now (Camilleri, 1996).

Australian social work education programs are relatively similar. They are all undergraduate programs either of four years length or two years on top of an already completed social science degree or two thirds of a degree (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2000). They all require students to study society and the individual in society. This content is usually covered through sociology and psychology courses either within their social work program or before starting studies in social work.

Within the social work course, students are expected to undertake studies in law, history and development of social policy, political institutions, indigenous issues, and health systems. Understanding and knowledge of the code of ethics is also a requirement. Students are also expected to undertake broad range of methods in social work practice, such as individual or casework, group work, family work, community work, social policy development, management and leadership, and research. The goal of these programs is to develop beginning generic social work skills and knowledge. Specialisation is seen as an individual responsibility that the social worker undertakes after graduation.

Field education placements are also an essential part of the social work education curriculum. Students have to undertake a minimum of 980 hours within human service agencies under the supervision of a professional social worker. These hours are to be completed in at least two separate field education placements and in different social work methodologies as well as in two separate agencies.

Schools of Social Work operate within the framework of the AASW *Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of the AASW* (2000). As noted there is no regulatory body for social work or social work education in Australia. It is a *self-regulating profession* and is able to determine its own guidelines. The *Policy and Procedures* document provide mandatory expectations of what constitutes a School of Social Work for the purpose of determining eligibility of its graduates for membership of the professional body. These expectations are that there be a recognised 'unit' within the University where the social work program is located (whether that be named a School, Department, or something else would be determined by the individual University)[2]. It is also required that the School have five full-time social work staff or the equivalent[3].

The AASW 'approves' each social work program through a review process. A panel of three reviewers is established and each program provides a submission document providing considerably detail on the history of the program; how the program incorporates all the requirements of the *Policy and Procedures* document and its location within the University

including its funding and resource base. The philosophical underpinnings, the curriculum, including field education and the academic qualifications and research and publication of the staff including all adjunct staff are also provided.

A visiting panel receives a copy of the document submitted by the school. Through its Chair, members of the visiting panel can require further information or responses to specific questions. The panel then visits for a minimum of three days. This may be extended if the program is offered in more than one campus. On the completion of the visit, the panel provides a written report to the Association, with recommendations including whether the program would be re-accredited for a further five years. The report is then sent to the University and the program has three months to respond before the recommendation goes to the Board of the Association for discussion and endorsement.

The major issue after a visit is whether a program will receive re-accreditation. The panel has three options: to recommend accreditation for five years; to recommend provisional for twelve months, only while certain issues are resolved, or not to re-accredit. Withdrawal of accreditation from a course has not occurred in the history of social work education in Australia, though there have been times when certain programs were threatened with loss of accreditation.

Members of the panel have to be trained by the Association as reviewers. Once on a list of reviewers the Association chooses two members from the list and the School can nominate a third member. The School has veto over the members selected by the Association. The panel Chair is selected by the Association and usually the panel consist of at least one academic and one practising social worker. The panel members undertake the review on a voluntary bases and each receives an honorarium. The University pays travel accommodation and honorarium to the panel members. All administrative costs associated with the review are absorbed by the AASW.

Issues in Social Work Education

1. The process for accreditation of social work programs is not without its difficulties. As a *self-accrediting* profession, it relies on graduates wanting to join the Association. It assumes that Universities want graduates to be eligible to join professional associations and that employers are willing to hire those graduates because eligibility is seen as an indication of competency and skill.

2. The generic nature of the educational process has been a source of debate. Social work programs are required to teach similar material. Many small Schools are stretched to provide the expertise for the various social work methodologies. The ability of Schools to 'market' themselves as 'distinct' and to have a particular 'brand' attached to them has not been possible. Schools of Social Work in Australia are not known as having particular concentrations or specialisations, for example, Research, Family Work, Child Welfare, Indigenous Studies, Policy or Clinical Social Work.

In positioning themselves in the market, social work programs lack a 'brand' that can

separate Schools; many are incorporated into larger organisational units.

[3] The term 'staff' is used to refer to University academic teaching members rather the North American term of 'Faculty'.

[4] In Australia the term 'Vice-Chancellor' is equivalent to the President or Chief Executive Office of a

be presented to new and emerging markets. This creates considerable tensions within the Schools and Universities as they balance the demands of the profession with those of the University (Jones, A., 2000).

3. The requirement that the undergraduate level be the only pathway into the profession also creates considerable tension. The Schools that offer two-year programs for individuals who already have an undergraduate degree are continually under pressure from prospective students who want to know why they should do another undergraduate degree when they already have one. In the past, Universities have offered these programs at Master's level, but they were relatively short-lived. The professional association has only wanted 'one pathway' to a professional qualification rather than multiple entry points.

There are clear arguments on both sides of the debate. Having a simple but clear pathway into the profession avoids the difficulties of the former situation in the UK where social work education ranged from one year Masters' to four-year Bachelor degrees in Universities to diploma level to two-year programs in Colleges of Higher and Further Education. For the profession in Australia, a single pathway appears to provide more 'control'.

In Australian Universities, it would be attractive for both domestic and international students to have a Master's level pathway into the profession. This would offer a way for students from other undergraduate programs to enter the social work profession and it would better reflect the present reality. For in fact, two-year programs are taught at the postgraduate level.

4. The tension around the acquisition of technical/rational skills and 'educating for uncertainty' (Fook, Ryan & Hawkins, 2000) is not easily resolved. I have previously argued that social work programs have to do both (Camilleri, 2001). The multiple demands from students, employer, the profession itself as well as the University require Schools to develop a curriculum which both challenges and provides the necessary skills, knowledge and values to work in the social work sector. As Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) argue, social work works with 'uncertainty' and new graduates need intellectual and analytical skills to make sense of what the welfare system is and may become.

5. The 2000 AASW *Policy and Procedures* incorporated for the first time a requirement that social work programs have material in the curriculum specifically addressed to Indigenous issues. While this was a welcome acknowledgement of the centrality that 'welfare' has played in the lives of 'Indigenous' people in Australia, it must be pointed out that 'welfare' has mainly been to the detriment to Indigenous people. There is general recognition that the Indigenous population has more contact with the welfare system that any other group.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Indigenous people of Australia) make up less than 3-5 percent of the Australian population yet have appalling health conditions with averaging life expectancy twenty years less than the average Australian. Their housing conditions are dismal. They are likely to live in poverty and are likely to be imprisoned more than the general Australian population even for similar offences.

In the twenty-two Schools of Social Work Indigenous people make up a small handful of academic staff and there has not been an appointment of an indigenous person at the level of Associate Professor or Professor in any School in Australia. At present there is no specific social work program aimed at Indigenous people. Australia has not followed the lead of Canadian Universities in developing specific outreach social work educational

programs for Indigenous people. Too many indigenous people are 'clients' rather than social workers.

6. The *Policy and Procedures* provided for the recognition that a social work program has to be located in a specific unit often referred to as a School or Department. However, over the last decade there has been a dramatic shift in the way Australian Universities are organised. This has been most evident in the structure of the academic disciplines. Universities have created larger organisational structures in which a variety of grouped disciplines are located. As a consequence, the single School of Social Work has virtually disappeared across the country.

Of the twenty-two 'Schools of Social Work' recognised by the AASW there are only five that have Social Work as their only title. It is now more common to be a *School of Social Work and Social Policy*, a *School of Social Sciences*, a *School of* the *Built Environment* and so on. The new schools are in effect, 'mega' schools with anywhere from thirty to fifty academic staff across many disciplines. These schools offer a range of programs of which social work is just one and often not the major program. Many of the Heads of these Schools are not professional social workers.

Even the schools that are still just 'social work' offer a range of human service courses as well as social work. The influence of social work academics may well be 'diluted' in these large mega schools and those remaining as just social work have to broaden their funding base.

This dramatic shift has been brought about by Universities aiming to develop maximum efficiency and effectiveness and to bring down costs. The entrepreneurial requirement, placed on Universities by the Federal Government because of its lack of funding, has made Universities administrators 'push' academics to 'bring' in more resources whether that be through research grants, funded Industry training programs or consultancies.

Social Work and Welfare Work – A 'Story' of sibling rivalry

The contested nature of the human services sector has seen the 'rise' of many new occupations many claiming the same 'domain' of practice as social work (McDonald & Jones, 2000). The most contested relationship has been between social work and welfare work. Murray (1989) provided the most strident critique of this relationship. As a social worker himself but a teacher in welfare courses he argued that social work refused to acknowledge welfare workers through membership in the professional association because of the inherent class distinction between the two. He presented data that seem to demonstrate that welfare workers overwhelmingly came from poor and working class backgrounds and social workers typically from the middle class. This indicated that the profession was in fact 'elitist' as working class people could not afford to go to University. Welfare workers, he stated, also tended to be older women and had domestic and family responsibilities and also worked part-time whilst studying.

However, in her study on social workers, Thompson (1997) indicated that many have had experience *being* a 'client' before and during their studies. This was often the motivation to become a social worker – personal experience of abuse either as a child or adult, alcohol or drug problems, etc. There well may be little difference in terms of class and life experiences between the two groups. Kennedy (1985) suggested that social workers were daughters of the 'bourgeoisie'. There is no doubt that social workers are no

longer the 'daughters' of the 'well-to-do' 'doing good'. Social workers today come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Yet Murray's critique still 'rankles' as it has not been effectively 'dealt' with by the profession.

Welfare work was effectively introduced into Australia during the late 1960s (Murray, 1989; Blanchard, 1989), when the demand for workers increased and the small social work programs were not able to respond quickly enough. Each State in Australia developed strategies to suit their particular circumstances. There was not a uniformed approach. However, the common theme in all the States experience was the development of 'quick' training programs that would suit the needs of the employer.

The Two Tier System of Professional Education

In Australia, a dual system of education exists beyond the secondary school system. On the one hand are the Universities, which are governed by statute, but self-accrediting, with little government interference in the running of the institution. Although Government provides resources, the Universities have considerable 'academic freedom' to do research and publish. The 'so-called' higher professions – law, medicine, etc., are all located in the universities, where the emphasis is on 'education'.

The second tier is known in Australia as the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. This sector provides a range of vocational courses aimed at immediate or concurrent employment in trades and associated industries. This sector trains the plumbers, electricians, hairdressers, builders, etc. Courses are much shorter than in Universities and are taught at a less rigorous level. At this level, the emphasis in Australia has been on competency training and assessment, focused on completion on agreed competencies for the particular industry. The TAFE sector is run by the State as another government department, consequently it is under the umbrella of the state and as its focus is on 'training' and not research, it does not have a culture of 'academic freedom'.

They are quite distinct sectors. Yet a number of Universities – RMIT, Charles Darwin University and Victoria University have both TAFE and University in the one institution. The Australian Vice-Chancellors[4] Committee has agreed to an articulation arrangement between TAFE sector and Universities. Depending on the course, between twelve and eighteen months' credit may be granted to a TAFE graduate undertaking a course at the higher level in a University. This has implications for social work courses as those with four-year programs may give credit to these TAFE courses that are directly relevant to social work.

The TAFE sector in most states of Australia began offering certificate and diploma courses in welfare work the 1960s and 1970s. This sector grew considerably as programs were 'tailored' to meet the specific demands of particular government departments.

Once employed, individuals upgraded their skill and knowledge levels and the TAFE provided courses for those in the workforce. They could study and continue their employment. This made the courses very attractive for employers as well as for the workers.

The growth of the TAFE sector for welfare studies has been more spectacular than the increase in social work programs within Universities. The articulation arrangements have not been closely monitored and there is no data on the movement from welfare study graduates into social work.

To complicate the dual division with the human services between welfare workers and social workers, from the 1980s onwards a number of Universities developed programs

in welfare studies. There are eight welfare studies programs in Universities. These are three-year degree programs, and of the eight programs five are located within Schools of Social Work. This seemingly contradictory position can be explained through the need of Universities to 'market' themselves and consequently develop courses that have wider appeal. Social work is often viewed quite narrowly as being focused on individual casework or counselling. For Universities these welfare studies courses also offer advantages as they have less restricted course requirements because they are not covered by the AASW *Policy and Procedures*. And of course there are unique circumstances for each institution and the history of welfare services in the various States of Australia has had an effect on these developments.

A Tale of Two Social Work Associations

The challenge from welfare work programs or courses has been dealt with differently by the two social work associations: the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and the Association for Social Work and Welfare Education (AASWWE). It is the AASW, which is the only association that accredits social work educational programs and is the 'gatekeeper' into the profession.

The AASW was established in 1946 and has remained in continuing existence since. It has had a very complex relationship to welfare work. There have been attempts to bring the two occupations together but these have been 'bitterly' fought by many social workers. In this section I will provide a very brief outline of these events.

In the early 1970s at the height of the 'deprofessionalisation' movement (Weeks 1988), the more 'radical social workers in the AASW sought to have the association open up to all those working in the human services' (Vicary, 1991). What was unique at that time was that the AASW was also a Union registered with the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in the 1955 (Lawrence, 1976) and the 'deprofessionalisation' movement wanted to open the Union up to welfare workers. A referendum was held and the AASW split into two separate organisations: the professional association of social workers that kept the name ASSW, and the Australian Social Welfare Union (ASWU). The union continued unto the 1990s but never attracted large number of workers and was eventually absorbed into a much larger trade union.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the then Australian Government embarked on a 'training agenda' as a mechanism for 'multi-skilling' its workforce for a more open economy. Workers were encouraged to undertake further training, employers were offered incentives for training their workforce and training institutes looked at closer cooperation with industry needs. There was also a move to 'competencies' so that each 'job' could be broken into its components, the skill needed for each task identified and training programs developed for these skills. There was also to be articulation between the various courses so individuals could advance through training programs to gain certificates, diplomas and eventually degrees.

At the same time the Australian Government was interested in developing competencies as a way of measuring overseas qualifications. Funding was made available for each industry to undertake projects involved in developing competencies. In the human service sector University

the national Office of Overseas Skills Recognition funded both the AASW and the welfare workers association to undertake a joint project. Government hoped that there would be one single project for each industry. But there was considerable hostility between the two associations and the project was divided into two components – social work and welfare work (Murray, 2001). There were two reports undertaken and both provided considerable overlap between the two occupations (Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers [AIWCW], 1996).

The issues were never resolved as the new incoming government abandoned the training agenda set by the previous Labor Government (a social democratic party). It was very controversial as many on the 'left' felt it was 'narrowing' very complex issues into technical-rational sets of skills. For social work this project became the *Competency Standards for Entry Level Social Workers* (1994). However, this document was not used as standards of practice or a 'benchmarking' for social work courses in Universities.

The association for social work academics started in 1967 as the Association of Social Work Teachers. In the mid 1980s there was a 'push' from teachers in the welfare work sector who wanted to join the association. By this time the association had changed its name to the Australian Association for Social Work Education (ASWE). Many Schools initially resisted this. After much deliberation, in 1987 the membership decided to expand and change its constitution to include welfare education. By 1989 it became formally know as the Australian Association for Social Work and Welfare Education (AASWWE).

The two associations dealt with welfare work quite differently. For the professional association, the AASW, there was no agreement that welfare work and social work shared common aims, training and education, or work activities. The membership of the AASW was reluctant to change its requirements for membership. For many welfare workers this was an indication of the social work profession's continuing 'elitist' attitude (Murray, 1989). For others, it was a sign of the need for clear 'pathways' into social work so that the professions' claims about itself could be clearly demonstrated.

Social work educators had a very different response to the 'challenge' of welfare work. Many schools had developed during the 1980s three-year undergraduate programs in 'welfare work' (the title of courses varied enormously, Examples were, Community Service, Community Welfare, Welfare Studies, etc). Those Schools saw little difference either in curriculum design or in academic levels.

The profession and the educators have in effect agreed to disagree about 'welfare work'. The imperatives of each group were drastically different and this affected how they responded to the 'challenge'. The issue of 'welfare work' is not easily going away particularly with the blurring of the academic location of the two occupations. 'Welfare work' training is mainly undertaken in the TAFE sector; the Universities that provide educational programs in welfare work blur the distinction between that and social work. This issue will emerge again in the next decade and it will be interesting to see how 'social work' its in broadest sense deals with it.

ISSUES FOR THE PROFESSION AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

For a profession with approximately 1000 new graduates per year the AASW's membership has hovered around 6200 members over the last three to four years. Membership is purely voluntary and there is no penalty or sanctions if a social worker

is not a member. More problematic for the profession is that the use of the title 'Social Worker' is not protected by the State or any legislation, and that anyone can call himself or herself a social worker without receiving any sanctions or even having social work qualifications. The 'failure' of the profession to get state recognition through registration or licensing is a continual source of concern. However, registration or licensing is problematic for the association, not necessarily for the profession. Registration may see membership dramatically decline as the costs for practitioners will increase, since in Australia the Registration or licensing boards require annual fees and for many practitioners they will have to choose between the professional association or the registration board.

Most problematic for the profession has been the contested nature of human service employment. Social workers are employed in government departments, including health care facilitates, income security, correctional services, child and family welfare. They are also employed in non-profit organisations providing a range of community services. Many of these positions are advertised as requiring generic qualifications for example a degree in the behavioural sciences. Also many people are employed in human service agencies because of their life experiences. It is a large but crowded employment scene and social workers are only one of a myriad of occupations contesting the terrain. The profession has not been able to get employers to agree on what 'constitutes' work specifically designed for social workers. While attempts have been made (Burgell et al, 1990), these have not gained industry endorsement.

The relationship between Schools and the profession will be further tested over two key issues. These will both have to do with 'pathways' into the profession. The pressure on Schools to internationalise their curriculum offerings and make them more attractive to International students will put on the agenda the Master of Social Work as entry into the profession. Secondly, the graduates of the three-year programs do not get accelerated entry into the two-year social work courses. The AASW *Policy and Procedures* essentially treat them as the same as other Arts or Social Science graduates. The accelerated MSW programs for BSW graduates that are common in North America are not the same in Australia. The tension will remain as the cost of University education continues to increase in Australia.

Field education is an ongoing issue for the profession and for the Schools. Finding suitable placements has become an issue, as many agencies are under enormous financial pressure and do not have the resources to have students. Field placements are based on a voluntary agreement by both the agency and the social work course and as restraints are placed on agencies many are opting out of taking students.

The personal cost of the placement of students has to be seriously considered. To undertake a minimum of 980 hours in at least two separate field education placements puts considerable strain on the budgets of students, since more and more students have family responsibilities. The notion of an 'internship' after graduation may need to be thought through, this would have implications on how many hours would then be expected to be undertaken in any field placement.

CONCLUSION

This paper has drawn the threads of the history of the profession of social work and of the Schools of Social Work emphasizing that social work is at the 'crossroads' in Australia. The Schools of Social Work are being incorporated into larger and larger

organizational units and their identity as 'social work' may be disappearing. The emphases on developing more diversified revenue streams and resources are putting enormous pressure on schools.

The International context has reached immense importance. All economies are now much more integrated and more aware of social and political developments. 'Welfare reform' has been a major theme of the agenda of Australia, New Zealand, North America and Europe for over a decade. Social work education is part of the 'welfare reform' mix and what happens in one country to some extent influences what happens in others. The internationalisation of the curriculum is embedded in Universities as they see themselves reaching beyond the current national borders. For social work at a time of change, this has important implications. The approval by the AASW of Monash University to provide a distant education course in social work is an important development for 'global social work'. Yet, the various currents have not yet blended into a coherent picture. The future of social work is still unclear.

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