

Social work field education in a global world, views from educators

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Abstract

The current neoliberal climate makes it increasingly difficult to source and maintain¹ quality field education placements, particularly for some groups of students². Informed by the experiences of field education academic staff from around Australia this paper provides practical strategies to address those challenges and argues for schools of social work and particularly field education staff to work more closely together to share information and guide the development of field education standards and requirements.

Objectives

1. Understand the challenges of supporting overseas or rural and remote placements and culturally diverse students in Australia.
2. Identify new and creative ways of working in partnership with the service providers to secure placement opportunities
3. Enhance the experience for both service provider staff and social work students on placement

Methods

Participants : 24 Field education academics from around Australia
Data collection method: World café approach. Four small group discussions, 20 minutes each then move to next table.

Topics

- Topic 1. International students
- Topic 2. Models

Topic 3. Rural and remote (RR) placements

- Topic 4. Other issues

Analysis: Thematic analysis of verbal responses collected at tables

References

1. Agllias, K. (2010). Student to practitioner: A study of preparedness for social work practitioners. *Australian Social Work*, 63(3), 346-360
2. Zuchowski, I., Hudson, C., Bartlett, B., Diamandi, S. (2014), Social Work Field Education in Australia; Sharing Practice Wisdom and Reflection, *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, in press

Results

Schools of social work– to host Rural and Remote panel to promote RR social work and share information. Facilitate development of shared student units in RR locations. Shared data base of RR placement offerings. Host website with resources for schools, field educators and students in RR placements to exchange successful strategies, tools, models.
Prepare and support student in Rural and Remote placement – Assess readiness for placement: self assessment and pre-placement interviews- manage expectations and educate about the realities of placement in RR areas. Fortnightly video/voice contact with campus.
Prepare and support Field Educators in Rural an Remote agencies- Establish good relationship, maintain regular video/voice communication, provide training about the role and expectations prior to student commencing, ensure ongoing support available during placement. Facilitate connections with others in similar locations i.e. forums, blogs.