International social work student exchange: Facilitating good practice, reciprocity, and mutual benefit

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching. The views represented in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.
Our relationships
International student exchange

• *Student exchange* is a *widespread practice* across Australian schools of social work.

• Lack of *information* about *current practice*, *effective partnerships* and *processes* that facilitate *benefit* for both *sending* and *host* institutions and their *students*.
Workshop structure

Going Places – Seoul Workshop Structure [DRAFT]

Overview of project and presentation of initial findings

Presentation of scenarios

Small Groups

Small Groups

Small Groups

Small Groups

Small Groups

Small Groups

Small Groups

Report back and large group discussion

Summing up of workshop discussions. Where to from here?
So what have we done so far…

- Critical literature review
- Quantitative Online Survey with Australian Schools of Social Work
- Qualitative Interviews with Australian academics, Host organisation staff and academics, and travelling Australian students
Literature – benefits

• Great potential for student learning and transformation (Lough, 2009; Bell & Anscombe, 2012; Nuttman-Shwart & Berger, 2012).

• Learning outcomes include intercultural competence, global citizenship and development of students’ practice frameworks (Trede, Bowles, & Bridges, 2013; Yu, 2011).

Experiences need to be supported by critical pedagogical frameworks. Immersion alone risks reinforcing racism (Trede, et al., 2013).
Literature – what is contested?

• Extent of *real* “exchange” or *unilateral* initiatives? (Razack, 2002).

• Professional *Imperialism* (Gray, 2005)

• Lack of *reciprocity* is a potential *pitfall* of student exchange programs. (Gilin & Young, 2009; Nuttman-Schwartz & Berger, 2012).
Literature – partnerships

• Partnerships require mutual benefit: host and sending institutions should collaborate on curriculum design, assessment activities and research (Barraket et al., 2009; Alphonse, 2008; Razack, 2002; Gilin & Young, 2009).
Literature - observations

• Good practice guides are written from the perspective of sending agencies with a focus on logistics.

• Voices of host institutions are absent.

• Insufficient analysis of the nature of power in institutional relationships
Survey of Australian Schools of Social Work

- **30** Schools of Social Work in Australia
- **90%** completed the Survey (**27** schools).
- **85%** engaged in international exchange activity (**23** schools).

**What do they do?**
- Field placement (**20** schools)
- study abroad programs (**13** schools)
  - short-term programs (**9** schools)
Where do they go?
## Reciprocal activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Host their students for field placements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host their staff for visiting scholar activities</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host their students for a short-term study program</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative research activities</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative teaching activities</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint conferences</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint curriculum development</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (joint conference presentation)</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = 15*
What did they learn?

• Improved confidence in inter-cultural environments
• Improved inter-cultural skills.
• Greater understanding of:
  • global social work issues (86%)
  • international social work practice (86%)
  • alternative social work delivery models (76%)
  • impact of colonization (57%),
Interview themes: **Student learning** is important

• Learning opportunities:
  • *varied*
  • *unpredictable*
  • *unforeseen*.

• Contested ground:
  • What constitutes *effective learning*?
  • How is learning *best achieved*?
  • What is an appropriate level of *supervision* and *support* for students?
Relationships

• Central to exchange programs
• Based on *personal connections*
• *Occasionally Institutionally driven*

The narrative of exchange is often simplified and the work required to *maintain* relationships lacks *visibility* and *support*. 
The reality: complexity

- **Inadequate** Resourcing
- Individual ‘champions’
- Lack of resourcing negatively impacts on *reciprocity* and *sustainability*.
Reciprocity

• Reciprocity is not universally understood, defined or readily implemented.

• Descriptions of reciprocity in practice included:
  
  o sharing resources
  
  o making a contribution in the host country
  
  o two-way flow of students and staff.
Risk and safety

- **Most** interviewees raised risk and safety issues
  - Unsafe environments
  - Illness
  - Personal crises
- **Students AS risk** – significant workload for hosts.

*Long-term relationships- important part of risk management*
International student exchange scenario: starring...
1. Establishing relationships
2. Recruitment
3. Preparation
4. The exchange experience
5. Reflection and debriefing
Workshop part II: small group discussions

• What is your experience/interest in international student exchange?

• What works? What doesn’t?

• If someone is starting an exchange program, what are the three most important things to think about?
Project Phases

Feb 2015 – Jan 2016
Team formation, literature review, quantitative and qualitative data collection. Identification of current practice and lessons.

Jan – Oct 2016
Data analysis and workshops to test good practice.

Nov 2016 – July 2017
Dissemination of final project outcomes.
Want to keep in touch?

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