WORKSHOP

WS32

What Connects Us as Social Workers?
Innovations, Future Directions and Global Citizenship

Organized by Karen Bell, Susan Mlcek, Wendy Bowles, Cate Thomas, Charles Sturt University, Australia

This is an interactive session providing an opportunity for social workers from around the world to reflect on social work. This forum for co-operative inquiry encourages exchange as a basis for global citizenship and global social work practice. Social work is a dynamic profession that is both culturally-responsive in a fluid and hybridized world, yet fundamentally stable at its core through shared ethics and values. There is a need to affirm, confirm, and extend the above considerations in order to engage in decolonizing practice informed by blended worldviews.

Details of organizers and participating members: Workshop facilitators are academics and postgraduate students from the School of Social Work, Charles Sturt University, Australia.
Contacts: Dr Karen Bell (kbell@csu.edu.au); Dr Susan Mlcek (smilcek@csu.edu.au); Professor Wendy Bowles (wbowles@csu.edu.au).

Synopsis and workshop format:
Using a structured approach, participants draw on concrete experiences as a basis for co-operative learning. Workshops will be facilitated using the following format:

• Panel presentations - key themes - social work identity, innovations, global social work; (20 minutes)
• Self-selected sub-groups (4–6 participants) identify and discuss concrete experiences relating to three key areas –
  1. What does social work mean to me?
  2. What is innovative about social work practice?
  3. What is the future of global social work?
Sub-groups discuss their experiences of what it means to be a social worker; provide examples of innovations in practice; share ideas about the future of social work.
Sub-groups keep notes of the key points raised in their discussion; facilitator takes detailed notes to capture the sub-group discussion. (40 minutes)
Each sub-group the reports to the whole group, summarising key points about social work, innovations and the future of the profession.
From whole-group discussion, a summary of key themes emerges.
Workshop notes from facilitators and participants (textual data) collected at the end of the workshop, will be de-identified and collated post-conference.
Collated qualitative data will be organised into three broad, constructed topic codes (meanings of social work, innovative practice, and the future of global social work). Within each topic code, finer analytic codes will be identified through line-by-line coding.
The collated data will be circulated via email to all participants and consideration will be given to producing a journal paper or a discussion paper based on participants’ contributions. (30 minutes)
Implications for social work: The conference provides a rare opportunity for social workers from around the globe to reflect on social work practice, worldviews, core values and principles in particular. The gathered practice wisdom and lived experiences of social work gathered from social workers from a range of practice contexts and locations will add to the professional knowledge base on global social work and social development.
Target audience: Social work practitioners, educators, students (undergraduate and postgraduate).
Main conference themes: Education and training; Social work practice; Human rights; International Social Work.

Wendy Bowles, Charles Sturt University, Australia

Social Work – what it means to me
This brief presentation will introduce the workshop activity on key theme 1 – what social work means to me. The presentation will explore definitions of social work, different traditions of social work and social work identities. In the workshop groups, each participant will be asked to share their views on the core values, ethics, traditions, purposes and foundation theories of social work from their perspective. In addition, participants will be asked to share their original motivations for becoming a social worker as well as what keeps them in the profession.
Susan Mlcek, Charles Sturt University, Australia
Innovations in social work practice
This brief presentation will introduce the workshop activity on key theme 2 – innovations in social work practice. An overview of social work practice innovations will be presented as a basis for the workshop activity, along with an overview of issues relating to whiteness, privilege and indigenous social work. In the workshop groups, participants will share concrete examples of innovative social work practice from their local contexts.

Karen Bell, Charles Sturt University, Australia
Future directions in global social work
This brief presentation will introduce the workshop activity on key theme 3 – future directions in global social work. An overview of what constitutes ‘global social work’ will be presented. In addition an overview of global challenges will be outlined, including sustainable development goals, environmental social work.

Cate Thomas, Charles Sturt University, Australia
Facilitated whole-group discussion
In this session, the presenter will facilitate a whole-group discussion for participants to engage in an exchange of ideas with social work colleagues about the nature of social work, various definitions of social work, innovations and approaches, practice examples, new ideas, critical challenges, and future directions.

Karen Bell, Susan Mlcek, Wendy Bowles, Cate Thomas, Charles Sturt University, Australia
Collation of participants’ ideas, notes, key themes – conclusion.
The concluding session of the workshop will summarise and collate ideas from the sub-group workshops and whole-group discussion. Key themes will be noted and examples of particularly innovative social work will be highlighted and shared with the whole group. Follow-up actions will be discussed and an action plan will be developed to work towards the group’s goals (for example – co-authored publication, advocacy, future workshops, exchange visits, curriculum development, etc).