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INSERVICE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION;  
AN ANALYSIS OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

A thesis presented in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Philosophy  
in Social Work at  
Massey University.

Peter Mervyn Swain.  
1983.



ABSTRACT.

The research project involved an analysis of social work education and training policies and programmes within a statutory welfare agency in New Zealand (the Department of Social Welfare).

A functionalist epistemology and methodology was used to examine the Department's inservice social work training policies and programmes. It is argued that there are four central elements to address in social work education and training: the theoretical base, the knowledge base, skills training, and personal development. It is also argued that social work education and training should be informed by empirical study of the nature of social-work practice.

The thesis states that an analysis of inservice social work education and training policies and programmes would reveal that social work training within the Department of Social Welfare is: reactive to issues of the day; comprised of a 'patchwork' of unco-ordinated elements; and is centred on meeting the needs of the agency, rather than systematically preparing social workers for practice.

It was found that inservice social work training policies and programmes within the Department of Social Welfare were not based on an explicit theoretical perspective, nor were they grounded in empirical study of the nature of social work practice. Further, the analysis indicated that the four elements of social work education were unevenly covered on training courses and that theory and practice were not integrated. These findings largely support the thesis.

I dedicate this thesis  
with my love  
to my father  
Kenneth H. Swain.  
1917 - 1983

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

This thesis is about social work education and social work educators. More specifically it is about inservice social work education within a large welfare agency: The Department of Social Welfare. The research examines inservice social work education and training policy and programmes, mounted by the Department, and analyses the social work practice these policies and programmes are intended to prepare social workers for. This thesis is about the integration of theory and practice within social work education and training.

Criticisms are made of current practices, not to score academic points, but to inform a discussion that may lead to improved practices. This present research grew out of my dissatisfaction with my own work as a social work educator and my desire to improve the quality of the training courses I offer. It is my intention to use the knowledge, skills and personal development that I have gained whilst working on this thesis to contribute in some modest way to social work education, and practice, in New Zealand.

Social work is an applied area of study which draws upon many sources for its theory and research methods. This study of inservice social work education and training draws upon Sociological theory, social scientific methods, and curriculum development models, from the discipline of Education, as well as social work theory. As such, it has an interdisciplinary flavour.

This thesis was completed only with the help of a number of people whom I acknowledge here. I recognise and appreciate the contributions of my supervisors, Professor Graeme Fraser and Ian Shirley, who enabled me to focus my thinking, refine my writing style, and helped me to complete this thesis in time. I also acknowledge the

detailed comments and help from Bruce Asher. My work with Professor Brad. Sheafor in 1982 on the Job Analysis Survey led directly into this thesis and I would like to thank Brad for sharing his project and for his enthusiasm. Thanks are also due to Merv. Hancock who supported my master's application, helped me through the first year, and believed that I could complete it. I would also like to record my debt to the Department of Social Welfare for providing a study award and making documents available. Particular thanks to Mr J. Grant, Mr Brian Manchester, Mr Raoul Ketko, and Mr Colin Haynes who have supported me. Further, thanks to the Directors of the Department's training centres, Graham Harbutt, John Groom and Warwick Jory, and the Trainers, for their help and support. Thanks to Natalie Moess for her careful and accurate typing. Finally, thanks, and love to Julie, Simon, Christopher and Maire who lived through 'the thesis' with me.

Although all the above people contributed in some way to this thesis, I take full responsibility for the work, and opinions expressed therein.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The aim of this thesis is to study a neglected facet of social work education: inservice training. In New Zealand this education occurs in two major settings: tertiary educational institutions, and welfare agencies. Whereas the role of the universities in social work education has been studied in some depth (Crockett 1977, Daniels 1980, University Grants Committee 1981), the nature of social work training within welfare agencies has remained largely unexamined. This thesis sets out to analyse social work education and training with New Zealand's largest welfare agency, the Department of Social Welfare.

Inservice social work training has been an important feature in the preparation, and continuing education, of social workers in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. A small, though increasing, percentage of social workers in New Zealand have a professional social work qualification (less than 20%, reported by Rochford and Robb, 1981), but the majority rely on inservice training to meet their educational needs. This training has traditionally been the responsibility of welfare agencies, particularly the Department of Social Welfare which has a statutory responsibility to,

"Provide for training of such persons as the Minister may direct (whether employed by agencies of the Crown or by other organisations) to undertake social welfare activities."

(Department of Social Welfare Act, 1971)

In analysing social work education a series of issues or themes are evident. The first is the integration of theory and practice. It is argued that social work training policies and programmes should be structured by a theoretical framework. Without an adequate epistemological base policy and programmes simply become reactive

to issues of the day. This is particularly true in relation to curriculum development. Consequently, I have drawn on the work of Parsons, Siporin and Teare to provide an epistemological foundation for this thesis. It can be classified therefore as exemplifying the functionalist tradition.

A second concern of this study is based on the belief that curriculum development and evaluation should be grounded in an empirical study of social work practice. Without this grounding, training policies and programmes are likely to be irrelevant to practitioners, and subject to transient fads and fashions. Alternatively, where social work training policies and programmes are based on theory and grounded in practice they are more likely to be relevant, coordinated, and systematically applicable to practice.

A significant component of the present research is the use of an empirical study of social work practice (a Job Analysis) as a means of informing curriculum planning decisions for social work education and training. This thesis is therefore grounded in social work practice through empirical investigation.

Other themes and questions that are explored include: what knowledge, skills and values to be emphasised in developing training programmes? The place, if any, of personal development activities in training courses; professionalism in social work; the accreditation of social workers; what teaching methods, materials and media should be employed in training social workers? And the question of whether the preparation of social workers for practice should be a matter of 'education', 'training' or should include aspects of both these learning processes. The ideologies of various approaches to social work education are also briefly explored.

Chapters One and Two examine the epistemological foundations of this thesis. In Chapter One the basic elements of functionalism are laid out; and the work of Talcott Parsons is developed in some detail. The influence of functionalist theory on social work practice theory, particularly through the work of Siporin, is also examined. Finally the relationship between functionalism and the Job Analysis methodology is outlined.

The central elements of social work education are discussed in Chapter Two. The arguments for 'training' and for 'education' as preparation for social work practice are briefly discussed, and the major models of curriculum development, that may be used in developing social work education and training programmes, are considered.

Chapter Three outlines the methodological issues involved in analysing social work training within the Department of Social Welfare. This chapter reports an analysis of social work training policy statements, on inservice training, from the Department and other agencies. Chapter Four analyses social work training programmes mounted by the Department of Social Welfare.

In Chapter Five the nature of social work practice within the Department is examined. This examination takes the form of a Job Analysis study using a functionalist theoretical orientation. The methodology and findings of the Job Analysis are discussed in detail.

In the final chapter the thesis is recapitulated, and an alternative model for developing inservice social work training policy and programmes is outlined.