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# Postgraduate social work management education in Aotearoa New Zealand: A unique framework for the study of management

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## **Abstract**

This paper proposes postgraduate management education uniquely tailored for social work. The authors suggest that the values and practice standards of the social work profession in Aotearoa New Zealand provide a distinctive framework for management as a field of practice, which includes the bicultural perspective. This framework and elements of the content are described. The paper also explores ways in which the programme could be delivered: online learning, the existing workshop approach, and 'management practicums' using the undergraduate placement model. The authors suggest that social workers, agency managers and postgraduate students would benefit from this approach because the profession would determine its own management theory and practice rather than 'importing' external models.

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## **Introduction**

For some years, management as a valid field of social work practice has attracted interest in social work schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. Management papers are offered in postgraduate degree programmes, generally examining the theory and functions of management applied to social work. Social work managers in the field may also elect to pursue postgraduate management programmes in business schools offering general, human resource or other management specialisms. This paper offers the authors' proposal to expand what is currently available by strengthening the learning opportunities with a very strong indigenous framework for management education and training. It also seeks to validate the concept for the proposed expansion through the 'global standards for the education and training of the social work profession' adopted in 2004 by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005).

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Several tertiary providers currently offer social work and associated management programmes. These include Unitec's Graduate Diploma in Not-For-Profit Management (Unitec, 2008) which requires an undergraduate degree or appropriate experience for entry. The University of Otago (University of Otago, 2008) offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Welfare endorsed in Supervision and Social Services Management. Otago's programme may also be taken as an endorsement for the Master of Social Welfare. Building on an earlier graduate programme, the University of Auckland commences delivery in 2008 of two programmes: Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Supervision (University of Auckland, 2008). Massey University (Massey University, 2008) similarly offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Services Supervision. Pooling collegial knowledge and perspectives will clearly pay dividends for developing management programmes suggested in this paper.

The identification in 2004 by the IASSW and the IFSW of management as a 'core purpose of social work' (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005: 3) arguably constitutes compelling grounds to strengthen current postgraduate social work management education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Central to the proposition is the notion that social work values constitute a unique framework for the practice of management. In New Zealand, Treaty of Waitangi bicultural social work approaches are recognised by the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW). Although management for social work practitioners draws on United States and British social work academics, the authors postulate that the inclusion of an indigenous framework in Aotearoa New Zealand is critical to the design and implementation of enhanced social work management education. The authors put forward three propositions which underpin this proposal. First, recognition of the semi-professional status of the management of social work programmes and organisations; second, the acquisition of skills and knowledge for effective management of those programmes and organisations; and third, defining the practice of management in terms of the unique framework of social work values. They also offer an overview of potential learning modes.

### **First proposition: recognition of social work management**

The first proposition is that the management of social work programmes and organisations (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005) requires recognition as a semi-profession. Management per se may be regarded as a discipline (eg Senge, 1990); an art (Inkson & Kolb, 2002); a science (Taylor, 1967); or a craft (Mintzberg, 1985). Schein (1988) suggests that 'on several bases, management is a profession, but on several others it is clearly not yet a profession' (Schein, 1988: 60). An early management theorist, Mary Parker Follett, herself a social worker for 25 years, considered that 'management has already acquired some of the essentials of a profession' (Follett, 1995: 279). Those essentials were a professional association 'to establish, maintain, improve standards, keep members up to standards, educate the public to appreciate standards, protect the public from [deficient practice]' (Follett, 1995: 271). To provide an appropriate linkage between management and social work in Aotearoa New Zealand, envisaged by the IASSW/IFSW 'global standards' document (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005), the authors propose that management is conceptually seen as a field of practice within social work informed by the ANZASW Code of Ethics (1993) and social work practice standards (ANZASW, 1997).

Social work academics describe social work either as a 'semi-profession' (Etzioni, 1969) or refer to the 'profession of social work'. The latter is typically qualified by statements such

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as 'evolving, emerging, developing' (eg, Gibelman, 1999). Beddoe (1999) perceives social work in New Zealand as 'follow[ing] a course of professionalisation' (Beddoe, 1999: 6), but the definitive statements and actions of the 'historic' professions such as medicine and the law, eg deregistration for misconduct, cannot be matched by social work as a 'semi-profession' searching for an identity.

## **Second proposition: acquisition of skills and knowledge for effective management**

The authors postulate that the journey towards professional status must include a 'body of systematic and generalised [management] knowledge which can be applied to a variety of problems' (Barber, 1978 cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 1991: 67). Barretta-Herman (1994) comments that 'university based social work training programmes [support] social work professionalisation' (Barretta-Herman, 1994: 122, 124). The authors argue that the 'unique framework for the practice of management' requires immersion in social work tertiary study in order that management practice will be informed by a social work perspective, not the reverse.

The application of systematic and generalised knowledge must include the 'active commitment to an indigenous identity for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand' represented by the 'Bicultural Code of Practice', which 'recognises existing Māori models ... as alternatives to conventional monocultural institutions' (ANZASW, 1993, p.16). The Tipu Ake Leadership Model (Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, 2001), for example, represents an 'alternative' archetype for integration of western and Māori organisational models. Eketone (2002) presents a waka 'as a model for ... Māori organisations' (Eketone, 2002: 14). A cross cultural partnership – informed by the literature cited and by the ANZASW Code of Ethics, to which we now turn – ensures that the indigenous element is not marginalised.

## **Third proposition: values of social work as a unique framework for the practice of management**

The third proposition suggests that the ANZASW Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 1993) and social work practice standards (ANZASW, 1997) define management as a field of practice within social work in New Zealand. Thus, instead of being defined by management academics, social work determines its own management theory and practice as a distinct discipline, informed by its professional code and practices. Clearly, social work management will draw from business and not-for-profit writers, but these writers will not set the agenda for urgently needed New Zealand-based research to inform social work management systems and processes.

We draw knowledge for management theory and practice from the Code's principles, ethical responsibilities and bicultural code of practice (ANZASW, 1993), selected elements from which will be illustrated from the management literature. The authors argue that the integration of that management literature and research with the ANZASW Code of Ethics advances social work management's 'journey towards professionalisation' and thus its credibility. Such integration may be illustrated diagrammatically (Figures 1 and 2), a useful methodology to respond to such questions as:

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How can management be expressed as a function of the ANZASW Code of Ethics' principles of independence and self determination?

How do ethical responsibilities inform a body of knowledge which can be applied as a management skill?

How may we express a bicultural partnership model into management education?

Addressing these fields will enable the design of coherent social work management theory. Three sources found in the ANZASW Code of Ethics inform the description of the 'unique framework for the practice of management' which is the *raison d'être* of this paper.

### **The first source: the principles of the ANZASW Code of Ethics**

Two principles of the Code, 'independence' and 'self-determination' (ANZASW, 1993: 6, 8), have been selected as readily identifiable by social work practitioners and managers, and lend themselves to straightforward analysis and application. The authors perceive these two principles as interdependent. 'Independence' presents as the objective of social work practice; 'self-determination' represents the pathway along which the consumers of social work services travel. The concepts embodied in these principles are as applicable to good management practice as they are to social work. The notion of 'independence' is relevant to the power and control issues between managers and subordinates which any organisation is obliged to address. 'Self-determination,' as a corollary, applies to some of the most significant themes in the management literature around motivation to work, and whether or not workers are essentially self-motivated (eg, Herzberg, 1968).

#### **The social work ethical principle of independence: management 'power and control'**

Social work is based on the value of independence ... [its] aim is therefore to enable and empower all individuals and groups to handle their own lives ... and to develop autonomously and collectively (ANZASW, 1993: 6).

#### **The social work principle of self-determination: management 'motivation to work'**

Social work is based on the value of clients' self-determination [and] correspondingly on the principle of minimising the use of compulsion (ANZASW, 1993: 8)

Few issues produce more 'angst' among managers than the power and control responsibilities vis-à-vis subordinates that their jobs require them to exercise. The 'dream team' for any manager is one whose members are knowledgeable and skilled in their day-to-day work and, even more pertinently, are motivated to perform accordingly. Conversely, the lack of those attributes and abilities – knowledge, skill and motivation – aggravate the discharge of managerial responsibility. The principles under consideration may therefore be viewed as the two sides of one coin. The authors consider that a useful theoretical construct to manage issues of 'empowerment' and 'client self-determination' in an organisation delivering social work services may be found in Follett's advocacy of harmonisation of group effort and a partnership between management and workers (Graham, 1995; Inkson & Kolb, 2002). Follett contrasts with 'management by command' (Coulshed & Mullender, 2001). Follett's thinking on 'harmonisation' and a management-worker 'partnership' is apposite to the profound

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awareness by social workers of the societal exercise of power by those who possess it and the need to address power imbalances caused by disparate access to resources. Expressed in the organisational setting, managerial power may be based on a simple Weberian construct of formal, legitimate authority associated with position in the hierarchy (Inkson & Kolb, 2002). The parallels between bureaucratic authority – and therefore power – in the organisational environment, and social work practice are perhaps too close for comfort. Practitioners are well aware that, despite their professional and ethical commitment to empowering individuals and groups disadvantaged in society, social workers' 'human factor' may affect the impartiality of their professional relationship to service consumers who confrontationally assert their rights. This relationship dynamic may even impinge on the consumers' resource entitlements. Such worker-client interactions may not be formally acknowledged, but they are the stuff of collegial chitchat around the coffee percolator. Social workers, no less than managers, have to resolve their own possession and exercise of power in relationship to disadvantaged clients, or client groups. The authors suggest that Follett's writings demonstrate an insightful realisation that power can be shared and that social work management needs to embrace that construct. Follett writes:

It seems to me that whereas power usually means *power-over*, the power of some person or group over some other person or group, it is possible to develop the conception of *power-with*, a jointly developed power... (Inkson & Kolb, 2002: 261, emphasis added).

The authors consider that Follett resonates with social workers because she has turned the notion of empowerment, which lies at the centre of their ethos and values, into a philosophy of management with which they feel comfortable.

### **The second source: ethical responsibilities in the ANZASW Code of Ethics**

The authors of this proposal advance the notion that in Aotearoa New Zealand management practice in social work organisations must be defined in terms of the unique framework of social work values found in the ANZASW Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 1993: 9-15). Ethical considerations track a 90-year history in the social work profession. Reamer (1998) notes a 1915 publication of Abraham Flexner in the United States expressing a 'widely respected assertion that a full-fledged [social work] profession should have a clearly articulated ...ethical foundation' (Reamer, 1998: 1). The Aotearoa New Zealand code promulgated by the ANZASW (1993) drew upon the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Declaration on Ethical Principles (1990). In placing ethical mandates into a management context, the authors note that social workers' consideration for ethical standards of practice far pre-date those of the private sector business world. Corporate social responsibility and business ethics would hardly have received a comment in the literature in the early 1970s (Robbins & Mukerji, 1990). Friedman's 'classical view' of business social responsibility, which articulated the notion that management's only responsibility was to maximise profitability, dominated business thinking up until the late 1970s and early 1980s (Friedman, 1962, 1970).

Codes of social responsibility and ethics in the business world have assumed significant profiles largely since events such as the chemical plant leak in December 1984, killing 3,000 locals in the city of Bhopal, India (Trotter, Day, & Love, 1989). Social work is arguably able to draw on a more considered, and as noted, lengthier history of ethical management than is business: it did not adopt codes in a reaction to industry disasters such as Bhopal or the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska (Key & Popkin, 1995).

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Citing business management writers does not imply that the social work profession has never had ethical decisions scrutinised. The Ministerial Review of Child Youth and Family (2000) [the 'Brown Report'] did not report on any specific case of abuse, but observed that its compilation occurred 'during a time when cases involving child abuse and neglect have received unprecedented media prominence and greatly heightened public concern' (Brown, 2000: 6). The authors advance a connection between these issues and the argument that the theory and study of social work management should be cast as a function of the profession's own code of ethics. The history of social work ethics represents a proactive stance by the profession to exercise transparent practice. The deficits in statutory agencies are arguably rooted in resource issues as well as inadequate management practices. In a 'new managerialist' world (eg, O'Donoghue, Baskerville & Trlin, 1999), meeting agreed outputs to fulfill Government outcomes places stress on social work managers. The Brown Report (Brown, 2000) found that reduced budgets 'translated into inadequate staffing levels, insufficient money to support families at risk, crisis management and residual service provision by the State (Brown, 2000: 12).

The authors are not offering an apologia for social work practice or management deficiencies, and the sources above are not cited with that purpose in mind. They argue that 'new managerialism' drawn from the business world and applied to social work has manifestly failed. Further, they propose that the profession takes its management theory and practice from its own unique framework of understanding, which owns a history at least as long as conventional management study which first found expression in the classical theorists in the early 20th century.

### **The third source: the bicultural code of practice in the ANZASW Code of Ethics**

The authors assert that social work management needs to incorporate the profession's bicultural code of practice, which 'represents an active commitment to an indigenous identity for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand [and] recognises existing Māori models and initiatives as alternatives to conventional monocultural institutions' (ANZASW, 1993: 16). How might this 'active commitment' be expressed in management terms? The authors suggest that the concept of 'managing diversity' in the organisational literature (eg, Fulop and Linstead, 1999: 55) represents a starting point.

Thomas (1991) makes a case for managing diversity by asking a 'fundamental question': in a homogeneous workforce, would productivity and morale be as high as a diverse environment? A negative response, argues Thomas, invites 'the solution to substitute positive for negative aspects. That means *changing the system* and *modifying the root culture* (Thomas, 1991: 26, emphasis in the original). The social work profession's commitment to change unjust structures in society must also result in changing *our system[s]* and modifying *our root culture[s]* (Thomas, 1991) where organisational inequities exist.

Managing an ethnically diverse workforce in social work agencies embodies some potential fishhooks in the New Zealand context. Some of these are cogently identified in Jones, Pringle & Shepherd's (2000) examination of 'managing diversity' in New Zealand. These academics argue that 'the discourse of "managing diversity" [in] US management literature cannot be simply mapped on to organisations in other cultural contexts' (Jones, et al.,

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2000: 364). As noted elsewhere, management texts used in social work study programmes are arguably over represented by US and British writers, but it is commonly accepted that the academic discipline of management largely emanates from the United States. Thus, United States approaches inform most management models taught to undergraduate social work students. The need for a 'multi-voiced discourse that would focus attention on local demographics, cultural and political differences' (Jones, et al., 2000: 364) coincides with the approach to management thinking identified in the abstract that it is 'critical ... to develop an indigenous framework currently lacking in Aotearoa New Zealand.'

The authors observe that increasing tangata whenua representation among social work practitioners, managers and in academia presents the opportunity to advance that indigenous framework. The increasing use of Te Reo Maori in social work practice and exposure to tangata whenua cultural protocols add to growing understanding and acceptance of the insights afforded by indigenous organisational models such as Tipu Ake (Te Whaiti-Nui-a-Toi, 2001) to which reference has already been made. The authors also note that a solid body of judicial precedents relating to 'the principles of the Treaty' adds a bicultural dimension to social policy, which in turn informs social work practice and management. The 'multi-voiced discourse' identified by Jones et al (2000) is becoming a reality in Aotearoa New Zealand. This article argues that the social work profession is obligated to place that discourse into a coherent body of management theory and practice.

### **Postgraduate social work management education: potential learning modes**

The authors' proposal constitutes their contribution to postgraduate social work management education, and specifically to the development of research, teaching and a partnership between tertiary educational institutions, the industry and Māori. Mixed methods of delivery could include online education (Palloff & Pratt, 1999) and a continuation of traditional social work classroom teaching. A third learning mode is offered through 'management practicums', addressed in the following section.

#### **Management practicums**

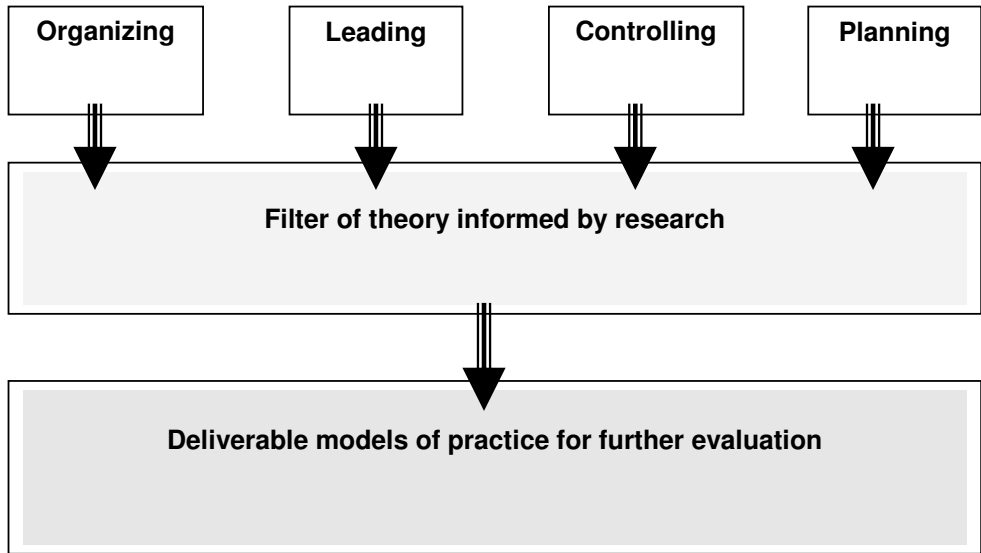
Undergraduate social work students are required to undertake two agency practicums. Mor Barak, Travis and Bess (2004) observe that 'field practice is the heart of social work (Mor Barak, et al., 2004: 22). Practicums therefore present as one potential model for postgraduate social work management education. The authors note that Unitec's not-for-profit management programme incorporates a practicum elective.

Mor Barak, et al. (2004) surveyed 200 US social work managers with an average of 20 years' post master's experience in order to 'assess the extent to which field practice experiences prepare social workers to be competent managers.' They found that:

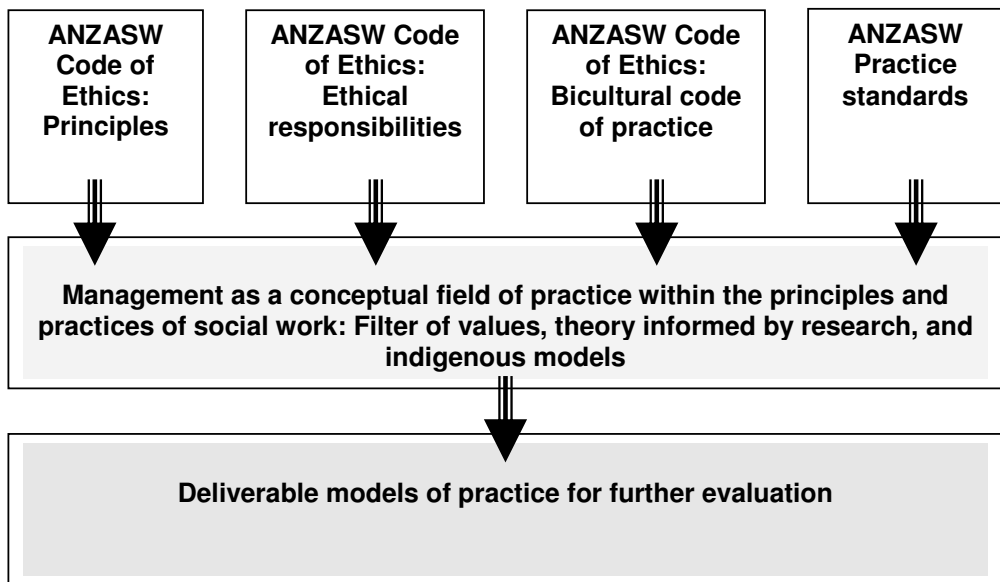
...for those interested in careers in management ... the availability and quality of student experiences that adequately prepare them for ... employment may not be as well developed [as social work field practice]' (Mor Barak, et al., 2004: 22).

Ezell, Chernesky and Healy (2004) found that 'anti-management attitudes and comments' directed towards administration students was a factor in declining enrolments in that specialism (Ezell, et al., 2004: 57). These cautions require appropriate design features in postgraduate management programmes.

**Figure 1.** Management construct using Fayol's four functions (Fayol, 1967).



**Figure 2.** Management construct using ANZASW Code of Ethics values and social work practice standards.



**Conclusion**

The concepts in this paper represent an initial exploration of a potential process to develop an indigenous framework for postgraduate social work management education and thus strengthen current programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. The authors argue that a unique



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framework exists to plan and implement this proposal, based upon the integration of tangata whenua models with western social work management theories and practice. Critical to the process would be 'in post' managers' focus groups to inform and critique programme design predicated on the idea that the values of social work constitute a unique framework for the practice of management. Social work will inform theory and practice of management, not the reverse.

Research streams to inform this proposal would need to include, first, examination of the applicability of the principles, ethical responsibilities and bicultural code of practice cited in the ANZASW Code of Ethics (1993) and Practice Standards (1997) to social work management. Second, indigenous organisation models referred to in this paper (Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, 2001; Eketone, 2002) and their integrative potential to western social work management constructs require exploration. The western constructs embodied in Follett (Graham, 1995), diversity management (eg, Jones, et al., 2000), and management practicums (Mor Barak et al., 2004; Unitec, 2008) represent sources for an initial investigation. Construction of the 'unique framework' for social work management proposed in this paper represents a field of theory and practice which carries significant potential for the education of current and future managers in the profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. The authors look forward to collegial evaluation of the concepts put forward.

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