

Preface

The editors of this book share a long-term interest in working internationally for social work education as well as locally and nationally in their respective countries and communities of practice. Each has played a key role in the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), serving in various capacities over several years. Their current roles are as co-chairs (Carolyn and Brian) and committee member (Helle) of the IASSW publication committee and in these roles they are responsible for developing publications of value to the international community that the IASSW serves.

It was in this committee that the idea of a global book on social work education began to germinate. The idea was to gather curricula on social work programs from as many regions as possible to showcase what was being taught in various cultural, sociopolitical and regional contexts. While many texts were being published focusing on international social work and the complexity of working and talking about social work across borders and cultures, there were no such books on what was actually informing the curricula in countries where social work was taught.

But we didn't want to stop there. We acknowledge that social work education theory and practice is current, relevant and transformative if it is informed by contemporary debates, critical reflections and research. That is, scholarship must reflect upon and challenge current thinking and thus generate new ideas. Here we set out to compile a collection of work by eminent scholars, which has an international focus. Our idea to do this was based on the premise that no such gathering of programs and ideas from as wide a field as we had in mind had yet been undertaken. It was an exciting project, an exciting idea.

Taking the proposal from the publications committee to the full board of IASSW was the first step in furthering this project. Given full support from the board for this initiative, we then set about forming the book's content and structure, contacting possible contributors and looking for a publisher. The IASSW global conference to be held in Melbourne in 2014 was a key point to work back from.

A clarion call across the membership and beyond yielded the current content focusing on the many elements that make up social work education. In response we have educators from Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Spain, south and east Africa, the Caribbean, Indonesia, Eastern Europe, Canada, the United Kingdom, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, Nepal, the United States of America, India and Hong Kong talking about their programs. An eclectic mix of ideas and unique identities that inform many of the social work

Global social work

programs in these countries emerged from their efforts. We are grateful for all their contributions, for sharing their ideas and salient features of their courses and the philosophical and pedagogical practices that underpin their programs.

To complement this information on curricula the editors approached eminent authors from across the globe whose work we were familiar with and asked them to submit what we called seminal ideas emanating from their long careers in social work education as teachers, researchers and scholars. Their response resulted in a wide range of scholarship.

We have organised authors' contributions into eight parts. These are: 'Theory of social work', 'Social work as a profession', 'The development of social work education courses', 'The social work curriculum', 'Social work and the welfare state', 'Social work and social change', 'Social work and political activism', and 'The past and the future of social work'. Threaded throughout these sections are discussions on the philosophical bases of social work, social work education as transcending disciplinary and professional boundaries, and salient lessons from long-term activists. In exploring these themes, *Global social work: crossing borders, blurring boundaries* addresses issues regarding commitments to human rights, social action, and the desire to challenge traditional orthodoxies and take social work discourse in new, albeit challenging directions.

We are thankful to each other for this book, which is a truly international collaboration based on friendship and cooperation. Born out of our shared belief of the importance of global interdependence, this edited collection builds on the strength of local and national practices, a respect for cultural influences, and the acknowledgment that sociopolitical contexts should underpin all our actions and theoretical understandings.

We hope you will agree with us that the depth of scholarship these authors have given us will continue to influence the current and future developments of social work programs across the globe as ideas cross borders and blur boundaries.

Carolyn Noble
Helle Strauss
Brian Littlechild