Just Practice an educative paradigm for social change

Gavin Rennie, Craig Tunnicliffe

grennie@unitec.ac.nz
c tuna cliffe@unitec.ac.nz
Our context

- From Aotearoa NZ.

- We both have backgrounds in sociology
  - Both undertook social work education after studying sociology
  - Provides tools of social analysis to identify sites of resistance

- The traditions of academic sociology that resonated with us were that social change is both possible and desirable

- As educators this idea of social change is one that we communicate to our students.
What is Just Practice?

- The final paper in a 3 year social practice degree.
- It is also a framework for practice (Finn and Jacobson, 2008)
  - It is also a model of analysis.
  - We also use it as an assessment framework.
- Above all else it is the concept that social justice should inform our practice.
What is required for social change.

- An awareness of self
- An awareness of structure
- An awareness of power

- These are awareness and knowledge(s) taught throughout the social practice degree
- They are affirmed and centralised in the just practice paper.
Critical Reflection

An awareness of power

Meaning

An awareness of self

History

An awareness of structure

Context

Power

Adapted from Finn & Jacobson, 2008
Meaning

- A capstone for the Degree:
  - uniting and reweaving the threads of the Bachelor of Social Practice
    - Counselling, Social Work, Community Development.

- Moving from the liminality of “student” to “practitioner”

- Reinvigorating students for their original passion for social justice and social change.
history

- Developed in 2001 by David Epston, Ksenija Napan and Gavin Rennie

- experience and intuition (practice wisdom) as much as theory

- Located an aligned theoretical framework (Finn and Jacobson)

- This framework has been reordered in consideration with the teaching of this course.
85% women, age ranges between 21–56

Ethnically diverse
Maori = 11
Pakeha (nz) = 28
Samoan = 9
Tongan = 4
Fijian = 2
Tokeleau = 1
Cook Is Maori = 1
Chinese = 7
Korean = 1
African = 3
Other = 7

Life rich
Context: the taught component

- Provides exemplars of just practice.
  - Guest speakers who have demonstrated just practice in their own work
  - This includes many change agents.

- We introduce the just practice framework and deepen students' understandings of critical theory.
  - Critical theory unifies modern and postmodern social theory with its explicit agenda of theorising for action.
Provides the opportunity for students to identify their own positionality.

To articulate a vision of where social justice resides in their future practice.
power
Power is omnipresent.

- As Foucault (1991) identified both explicit (visible) and implicit; both constraining and productive

- An essential dimension of practice and of practice contexts that needs to be acknowledged, analysed, and contested.

- Power is present in education, teaching and assessment.
The assessment: an invitation

“Tell a story about how you have come to your commitment to making a stand for Social Justice”

What has been your inspiration and who stands behind you?

What does this mean for your future practice?
Potential: the future ahead

- The aim is for students to learn
  - Tools of analysis
  - Tools of engagement
  - The valuing of diversity
  - The ability to question dominant discourses

- And ultimately to be able to work toward transformative socially just practice
Just Practice is an ongoing journey
Critical Reflection

- Possibility
- Meaning
- History
- Context
- Power

Adapted from Finn & Jacobson, 2008