Social Justice and Organisational Leadership

Strategies for Creating a Socially Just Workplace
ANZASW Webinar 20 February 2017
Social Workers as Leaders and Change Agents
m.webster@auckland.ac.nz
Welcome
Tēnā koutou katoa
Talofa lava
Malo e laumalie
Nǐménhǎo
Namaste

To this webinar:
Creating a socially just workplace
Purpose of webinar

By the end of this webinar participants should be able to:

1. Visualise and describe socially just leadership in an organisational context

2. Articulate and practically apply organisational leadership actions to implement selected core purposes of the global social work profession
3. Describe how organic systems-oriented leadership can create a collegial commitment to a socially just workplace culture and practice

4. Craft appropriate systemic questions to provoke organisational systemic practice
Summary of webinar

- Social work ethics place social justice at the heart of organisational structures.

- We will explore how social work leadership can implement its ethical obligation to implement social justice in an organisation.
The consequences of new public management (NPM) policies and practice marginalising ethical values-based leadership will be identified through a case study.
As one of 13 ‘core purposes’ of the profession, how can management and leadership implement the other 12 which are a statement of social justice?

Leadership as creating organisational culture by working with people, dealing with ‘wicked problems’ and asking questions (Grint, 2005)
Summary of webinar

EDGAR H. SCHEIN
HUMBLE INQUIRY
BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND BETTER ORGANIZATIONS
THE GENTLE ART OF ASKING INSTEAD OF TELLING
Human rights and social justice: A global framework for the profession

Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person’s physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being. (Ife, 2010; IFSW, 2004, emphasis added)
Human rights and social justice: A global framework for the profession

An organisational application

Social workers should work to create conditions in employing agencies where the principles of this statement are discussed, evaluated and upheld (IFSW, 2004, emphasis added)

“On administrative evil-doing within social work policy and services: Law, ethics and practice”
Professor Michael Preston-Shoot
Ethical Principle: Social workers challenge social injustice

Social workers pursue social change on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people. Emphasis added (NASW, 1996)
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<th>Selected core purposes of the profession (Sewpaul &amp; Jones, 2005)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. <em>Facilitate the inclusion</em> of marginalised, socially excluded, vulnerable groups of people.</td>
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<td>2. <em>Address and challenge</em> barriers, inequalities, and injustices that exist in society.</td>
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<td>3. Form relationships with/mobilise individuals, organisations and communities to <em>enhance their well-being</em> and their problem-solving capacities.</td>
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<td>4. Encourage people to <em>engage in advocacy</em> with regard to pertinent local, national, regional, and/or international concerns.</td>
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Management Core Purpose Statement
(Sewpaul & Jones, 2005)

Plan/organise/administer/manage programmes and organisations dedicated to any of these purposes
For Q&A at the end of this webinar

Using those selected core purpose statements, respond to this question: What *is* organisational social justice? And what would it *look like* in practice?
Case study: Bullying in the workplace

Work-related bullying behaviours may include:

- Personal attacks;
- Verbal threats;
- Interference with tasks and roles;
- Social isolation;
- Physical violence (although it is recognized that most workers leave prior to this occurring)

(Van Heugten, 2010, p.643)
Case study: Bullying in the workplace “Jane”

Soon after Jane’s arrival in the agency she noticed “One staff member who kind of ignored me, she is … quite a bully to new social workers.”

After about 6 months … more direct nastiness coming out like comments about obesity and … snide comments about my parenting … really mean … if I walked in … the conversation would stop straight away.”
Case study: Bullying in the workplace “Jane”

“Yeah it [bullying] is horrible. It just eats me up inside … it has just been horrible for me. I have thought of leaving I have applied for another job and I got it but then I changed my mind at the last minute because I was studying and they are funding my study so I thought I can’t leave before I finish my study.”

“I went to the manager and said ‘Look I am not sure what is going on but this is what I have noticed.’ [The response was] ‘So you are the latest victim … this person has worked here for [x] years and they have always got a victim … it is always someone who has kind of a bigger type of personality … never the meek and mild people.’”
Case study: Bullying in the workplace “Jane”

“And [management] kept saying ‘Unless you can give us really specific examples we can’t do anything about it … unless you can say on this day she said …’”

“She [the bully] is really smart so she is very clever about it. It’s an issue that has never been dealt with … everyone is aware of it but [management] just doesn’t deal with it.”
You are a frontline or midlevel social work manager in a multidisciplinary health setting. “Jane,” an experienced social worker of 20+ years, is in your team. Jane sees social work leadership as predicated on respect and believes that leaders should advocate for service consumers—and if necessary, challenge organisational players. She believes that transparency and accountability to the people being led are required and are demonstrated by vulnerability, consistency, collaboration and quality as central to core social work values. In addition, truthfulness about levels of organisational resourcing is called for. In brief, integrity with the intention of the betterment of the client, or worker, is required.
Scenario for discussion

Jane reports that she has experienced workplace intimidation, explicitly:

- Verbal harassment and put downs by the perpetrator
- Silent treatment by perpetrator and others
- Unfounded accusations about her racist attitudes by the intimidator (who is of another ethnicity)
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<th>Scenario for discussion</th>
<th>Jane also informs you that there is evidence from her professional supervisor of a systemic problem with this bully affecting others over the last x years.</th>
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<td>Jane asks you: “Why is this allowed to go on?”</td>
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<td>“Why do you just keep saying, ‘Oh that is just her, that is just what she is like, and giving me strategies to handle her?’ ”</td>
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<td>She asks you what action will be taken.</td>
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Scenario for discussion

Exercise

1. In terms of the “core purposes” statement, what is the accountability of leaders and managers in such a situation? See next 2 slides.

2. How will you respond to Jane’s request?
Selected core purposes of the profession (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005)

1. **Facilitate the inclusion** of marginalised, socially excluded, vulnerable groups of people.

2. **Address and challenge** barriers, inequalities, and injustices that exist in society.

3. Form relationships with/mobilise individuals, organisations and communities to **enhance their well-being** and their problem-solving capacities.

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NPM: Influences on social work leadership

- NPM: a focus on measuring outputs as the default model for social work organisational leadership thinking?
- Managerialism: a “plague” on social work? (Chu et al., 2009)
- Outputs: policy advice, administering legislation, direct service delivery eg child safety
- Outcomes: results in society sought by government eg reducing child abuse, to which outputs contribute
- Government uses policy advice to prioritise its selected desired outcomes and opts for appropriate outputs (Boston et al., 1996)
NPM: Influences on social work leadership


“Shift of accountabilities from professional values …to organisational and bureaucratic accountabilities” (Burton & van den Broek, 2008)

Quality of interventions may be measured by filling in computer fields (Webster, 2013)

But … NPM is not going away and its focus on accountabilities may work to advance commitment to stakeholders including staff
“Problems, problems, problems” (Source: Grint, 2005, p.1477)

Increasing uncertainty about solution to problem

- WICKED
- TAME
- CRITICAL

Increasing requirement for collaborative compliance/resolution

- COMMAND: Provide Answer
- MANAGEMENT: Organize Process
- LEADERSHIP: Ask Questions

- COERCION/PHYSICAL Hard power
- CALCULATIVE/RATIONAL
- NORMATIVE/EMOTIONAL Soft power
What are “wicked problems?” (Grint, 2005)

- Complex, novel, often intractable problems to which there are no unilinear solutions or “stopping points”
- Apparent solutions often generate other problems
- No “right” or “wrong” answers but better or worse alternatives
- Huge degree of uncertainty involved: a leadership not a management issue
“Wicked problems:” the role of leadership (Grint, 2005)

The leader’s role with a Wicked Problem is to *ask the right questions* rather than provide the right answers because the answers may not be self-evident and will require a collaborative process to make any kind of progress.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmzcmeXTDb8
Leadership creates culture by asking questions (Attwood, Pedler, Pritchard & Wilkinson, 2003)

1. How can I best use my [leadership] position to assist us all to make sense of what is going on, so that together we can contribute to sustainable change?

2. How do I lead this organisation so that we can make the best possible contribution to the improvement and well-being of those we serve?
Leadership creates culture by asking questions (Attwood, Pedler, Pritchard & Wilkinson, 2003)

3. How can I *share* my ideas and emerging goals in ways that do not *stultify debate* but assist learning about the *‘bigger picture’*?

4. How do I ensure that *we* implement plans that *we have agreed with partners*?

(Attwood, Pedler, Pritchard & Wilkinson, 2003, pp.31, 32, emphasis added.)
Group Exercise

1. Your group is the management team in the multidisciplinary health setting discussed earlier.

2. You are concerned with the systemic workplace bullying problem which has affected others over the last x years.

3. Your task is to create a set of questions to address the wicked problem in the workplace to which bullying has contributed.

4. In creating those questions the management team is committed to organisational social justice and the core purposes of the profession.
References


References


