

# Ngā Roopu Awhi:

Integration in social work education:

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# Ngā Roopu Awhi : Why we wanted to do it

Currently siloed systems of knowledge delivery within neo-liberal managerialist commodity driven context (Bogo and Wayne, 2013).

Educators must have a critical understanding of the implicit learning transmitted in this context (Bogo and Wayne, 2013).

Ngā Roopū Awhi direct counter providing rich, decolonising, multi level experiences in an environment of reciprocal learning.

# Ngā Roopu Awhi : what it is

- Roopu Awhi is central site for coordination of learning in Wintec Bachelor of Social Work involving closed facilitated small group tutorials 1 hour per week for all year groups and changing each year for integrating learning.
- Group members develop and review contracts collaboratively each new group per year
- Integrating practice with theory, personal lives with academic learning, intrapersonal and interpersonal different learning styles
- Content and process equally important
- Closed group - when tutor away groups remain and are given instructions – groups don't merge with others - important
- Tutors weekly reflective process to plan next week – responsive not planning ahead – foregrounds a tutor student exchange.
- Ngā Roopu Awhi – name gifted by Wintec Kaumatua, delivered every year since 4 year degree began

# What happens in Nga Roopū Awhi:

- **Content:** whakawhanaungatanga, contract setting and review, integration activities , reflections of whakatauki, application of theory to every day activity ie new rubbish system Hamilton, reflection on volunteer work and learning from week, practice of mihi, waiata, karakia, reflection on experiences on placements (years 3 and 4).
- **Process:** check in and reflection rounds, drawing activities, brain storms in pairs/whole group, individual and group reflections, music, creativity, fun, courageous conversations, experiential activities, on line activities.



# Ngā Roopu Awhi : Theoretical underpinnings

- Methodology involves Māori ways of knowing and being Māori, weaving complex combinations of realities, understandings and experiences (Rameka, 2021)
- Concepts of āta noho and āhurutanga (Pohatu, 2004) important so learning and exchange can flourish
- Team teaching principles of Ngā Roopū Awhi - tutors maintain critically reflective stance needed in social work today (Fook, 2012)

# Research Background and Objective

Preliminary research in 2018 – findings of professional development for tutors and other benefits. Anecdotally observed benefit to students current research project began in 2019.

Objective:

To understand the impact of Ngā Roopu Awhi through students' and recent graduates' perspectives

# Methodology

Qualitative research project

Ethics approval from Wintec HERG - Identified as low risk, approval number : WTLR58191119

5 focus groups drawn from each year level and 1 group of graduates

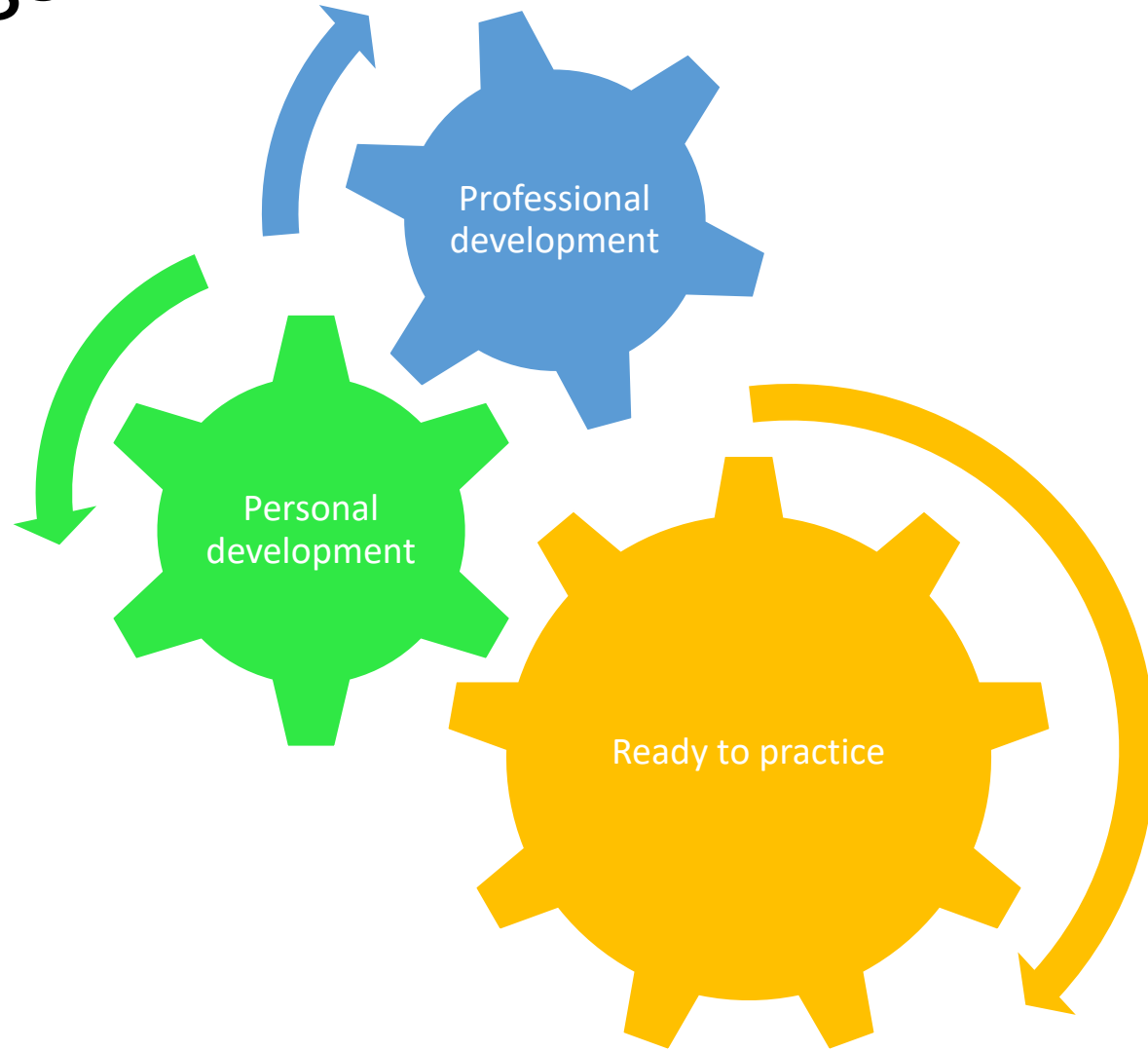
Years 1 (15 students), 2 (2 students), 3 (5 students), 4 (6 students) and recent graduates (2 students).

Students invited to participate in research through independent process not via social work tutors to lessen “captured subjects” dynamic. Also independent focus group facilitators – sessions audio recorded with consent and transcribed independently also to maintain participants anonymity – participants informed of this.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis



# Major Findings



# Major findings: Personal Development

- Provision of safe respectful group environment - space provided so group members can participate and learn from each other (Pohatu, 2004 as cited in Lipsham).
  - *I think a strength would definitely be getting out of your comfort zone. I notice obviously towards the end of the year people who never spoke up at the beginning are so talkative, and it's so cool because I'm just like, wow, that person actually says something. (Year 1)*
- Learning gained from insights provided when multiple and diverse perspectives are expressed by group members, once members feel safe to share their views.
- Gaining understanding of how evidence from multiple sources: qualitative and quantitative, implicit and explicit – including indigenous knowledge – can be used to inform micro, meso and macro level practice (Ballentyne et al. p. 32).
  - *Like because you hear so many different points of view, you actually hear them. Do you know what I mean? You get to hear people properly, so it helps you understand that more in depth. And people's life experiences, that's maybe what they don't share in class. (Year 3)*

# Major findings: Personal Development

- Foregrounding use of relational practice and use of the self in partnership with service users, often in contested or potentially conflicted situations (as cited in Beddoe and Adamson, Badger, Royce and Craig, 2008; Russ, Lonne and Darlington, 2009; Jack and Donnellan, 2010).
  - *I think learning to be a bit more aware of the way you approach people, just like what you were saying. Being a bit more empathetic towards people's needs. Well, not needs, but towards the way they react and the way they take things. That was a big learning for me. (graduate)*
- Opportunity gained to be deliberation, use patience and tolerance, giving space to listen. It requires the conscious participation of all senses, the natural inclusion of the values of trust, integrity and respectfulness (Pohatu, 2004 as cited in Lipsham).
  - *It has helped me just to sit back and listen because it's the quite people that want to be heard. And when the quiet people speak up, wow. It's like wow. It's inspiring actually. (Year 3)*

# Major findings: Personal Development

- Opportunity to participate in important group work processes such as participating in a respectful group environment, developing and reviewing group contract collaboratively
  - *I think for me, personally, I have found it really, really beneficial, and I've learnt that not everyone learns in the same way. And also the fact of not everyone handles things the same way and everyone has their own way of doing things and they're only thinking about something, so your opinion isn't the only opinion in the world; you have to think outside the box. (Year 2)*
- Collaborative development of contracts practice, value and purpose of contract setting in groups and in supervision gained
  - *For year three and year four, I really enjoyed them because it taught me how to safely and professionally set up a kawa which I've used in my practice more than I thought. (Year 4)*

# Major findings: Professional Development

- Making active use of supervision so confidence and capability develops in eight professional capabilities is identified by Ballentyne, Beddoe, Hay, Maidment, Walker & Merriman's in an evidence informed, industry agreed professional capabilities framework developed between 2017 and 2019 in Aotearoa/NZ (2019).
  - *I had sorted out everything I wanted, this is how I want my supervision, this is what I want to get from it this time, everything. It sort of just prepared me. (Graduate)*
- Developing enduring reflective practice social workers can creatively and consciously combine 'thinking, doing and being' when working with individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations, and when undertaking research (Pawar, 2015).
  - *It made it a lot easier for me to actually reach out and, now that I'm working, be able to ask other members, like "What do you think of this? I'm not too sure. This is what happened and this is what I think. What do you think?" It's almost a little bit more easier to be able to get feedback, to get feedback too off other colleagues. Well, I believe it came from that, from ngā roopū awhi. (Graduate)*



# Major findings: Professional Development

- According to University of Minnesota (2013) Integrating theory and practice refers to the process whereby connections are made between the social work knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom and the practice experience individuals are facing in field (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2013 as cited in Carelse, S. & Dykes, G. ).
- Ongoing continuous experience of Roopu Awhi over 4 years - multiple opportunities and ways integrate theory and practice. Schon's (1983) formulation of how professionals engage in 'reflection in action' by thinking about their experience and what they are doing while they are doing it and afterwards using 'reflection on action' to think about and link their practice to knowledge (Redmond, 2006 as cited in Ferguson).
  - *I think for me, personally, I have found it really, really beneficial, and I've learnt that not everyone learns in the same way. And also the fact of not everyone handles things the same way and everyone has their own way of doing things and they're only thinking about something, so your opinion isn't the only opinion in the world; you have to think outside the box. (Year 2)*
  - *I think also getting a collective understanding within your group. You have everyone's different opinions and different ways of implementing that theory, so I think you can also pick up on what other people have learnt and put that into practice as well. (Year 2)*

# Major findings: Bringing the Professional and Personal Together

- Ready to practice – professional and personal development integrate involving ready to engage in supervision, ready to engage with clients and colleagues, ready to engage in diverse complex relationships
  - *It's helped my skills in assessment, like it's not as black and white as you think it is and I think those groups sort of put it out there in so many different ways that you know that you need to explore it more in ways to... there's so many ways to see something that's happening. (Graduate)*



# Major findings

- More attention to examples of theory integrating with practice
- Purpose of sessions and Roopu Awhi overall more explicit
- Consistent approach used by tutors between groups that is cognisant with philosophy and pedagogy of Roopu Awhi
- Facilitator tutor role is key – support, focus, manage dynamics, ensure safe environment maintained
- Examination of differing cultural perspectives
- Exploration of some specialised practice activities eg managing conflict, de-escalation
- Size of groups vital to maintain
- Throughout 2021 and 2020 RA continued including tutor process on zoom – even more opportunities to capture for learning as well as support
- Needs formal inclusion within degree and accreditation process





# Conclusion

- Ngā Roopu Awhi departure from modular siloed traditional existing within today's neo-liberal climate
- Space is provided for āta noho (Pohatu, 2004) where students experience processes that allow learning from and with one another over an extended period upheld by respectful relationships. Tutors who facilitate sessions participate in a parallel reflective process that supports the integrity and ongoing nature of this practice
- Students and graduates have shown direct link between experiences gained in Roopu Awhi and personal and professional development and readiness to practice of graduates.
- Specific areas of development include learning to participate in supervision, integration of theory and practice, experience of group participation, developing relationships, diversity and reflective practice
- Critical to success of Roopu Awhi is the size of groups, effective and consistent facilitation of sessions by tutors who have planned and prepared sessions together.

# Conclusion

- SW educators must keep both content and process of learning in the forefront of awareness as they prepare and deliver learning through Roopu Awhi to ensure students are “practice ready”.

“You don’t even realise how good it’s going to be until you get in there and do it.” (year 3)

# Ngā Roopu Awhi



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