

ALTC CITATION

AWARD WINNER

For making it meaningful: participatory practices in social work education

Ms BETH TINNING, LECTURER AND FIRST YEAR COORDINATOR
FACULTY OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

What does being acknowledged by JCU and your peers for influencing students' learning through your teaching practice mean to you on a professional level, and on a personal level?

Receiving an ALTC award has been a truly humbling experience. On a professional level, it reaffirmed my belief that social work education and training can be based on the same principles and belief that underpins social work best practice. Using clients or consumers of mental health services as the starting point for developing a subject and building in accountability processes to ensure they continued to be at the heart of the subject development mirrored the philosophy, ethics and practice of social work. The ALTC award recognises the value of drawing together respectful, client-centred practice with social work education. On a personal level, the award provided some much needed affirmation that as a relatively new academic, my steep learning curve is heading in the right direction. It has affirmed too my hope that teaching in a tertiary institution can 'fit' with my preferred values and beliefs for life, for social work practice and indeed for supporting the development of a new generation of workers in the sector.

In what way has student feedback regarding the way in which students experience your teaching style, informed your teaching practice?

I have used the formal evaluation tools of SFT and SFS in conjunction with more frequent, more focussed informal tools in order to support a continual reflection process on my teaching. I have ensured I have evaluated my teaching subjects every semester and been keen to identify what students find useful about my teaching style and what they see as requiring more attention. On a lighter note, the comments in the SFT and SFS materials serve as a

timely reminder each semester of how the way feedback is phrased can make all the difference in one's ability to take it on board! I now am even more careful about constructing assessment feedback for students after receiving rather blunt suggestions for improvement on my SFTs – all useful insights, I might add but ouch! Sometimes challenging to absorb immediately.

You have a rich teaching career and valuable experiences that have shaped your teaching style, but what drives you to teach well?

I think there is a lovely connection that can build between a class group and lecturer/tutor when the teaching process is experienced as interesting, relevant and maybe even transformative. That feeling, that connection is extremely rewarding. The days I experience this are the days I am so grateful to be paid to do something I enjoy so much. Working in the human service sector is a privilege and I believe it is vital that practitioners have the best possible preparation in order to work with people at their most vulnerable. I was mentored, taught and supported by some wonderful workers early in my career and I would like to pass on their wisdom and insight to a new generation of workers.

What are some of your current research interests?

My PhD study explores the effect of the Family Law Amendments (2006) on victims of family violence. My research areas include the impact of social policy on the everyday lives of women; the use of mindfulness in social work practice and finally the role of participatory processes in social work education and practice.



Ms Beth Tinning - 2011 ALTC Citation Award Winner