Chapter 20
Social Work Education, Research and Practice: Challenges and Looking Forward

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Abstract In this chapter, we present a summary of key ideas expressed in this book and invite readers, social work educators, researchers, scholars, practitioners and students to deeply ponder on some of the challenges and opportunities for social work in post-COVID-19 world. By describing these challenges the social work profession faces, we provide a bird’s eye view of the possibilities and opportunities for practice in the future based on our collaborative discussions, reflections and experiences. Many factors have influenced the outcome of this book. The various kinds of social work initiatives undertaken, both, in India and Australia, especially in social work education, indicate the importance of cross-cultural learning, decoloniality and discussing the impact international collaboration can have in promoting social justice and human rights. In the context of the global challenges and disruptions presented by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, we place a special emphasis on post-pandemic response, directing readers to contemplate on the kind of work that can be done in social work education, research and practice.

Keywords Social work education · Research and practice · Challenges · International collaboration

Introduction

As we write this chapter, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact on the world. During this time of global pandemic, world
economy was crippled as quarantines, physical distancing practices and national lockdowns cause economic collapse; millions of people lost their means of livelihood; agencies and schools were shutdown; many worked from home arrangements; and tragically, a large number of human lives were lost. Almost every aspect of our social systems was pushed to the brink by COVID-19. The coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented event in modern human history, generating unprecedented challenges for the global economy and affecting every aspect of human lives. In this extraordinary time, this book project was not spared either. The coronavirus pandemic not only exposed the fragility of nearly every aspect of society, it also impacted on our project. Unlike other crises, the coronavirus or Covid-19 pandemic put everybody in a Great Lockdown, and laid bare and the horrible inequities in our society and in our healthcare system, including the racial, gender, generational, class—and a host of other political and cultural—chasms in responding to crises (Miller, 2020).

COVID-19 is a crisis like no other. We salute the perseverance and commitment of all the contributors in making this book possible. The point we want to highlight here is somewhat similar, but still, it needs to be acknowledged. The first editor of the book came to James Cook University as a visiting scholar in 2012, and since then, we have been involved in several collaborative projects and research activities. As part of his sabbatical, he had an approved plan to come to JCU in 2019 and work with a team of colleagues on a book project on Social Work Education, Research and Practice in India and Australia. Unfortunately, he fell ill and was diagnosed with primary lateral sclerosis, a type of Motor Neuron disease, in August 2019. Since then, he struggles with a lot of mobility difficulties, fine motor activities and associated problems, resulting in modification of the original plan and delay in the completion of the project. Almost around the same time, the second editor also faced a severe crisis due to the flood situation in his hometown Kerala and suffered a major setback due to flash floods in Townsville which ravaged his house completely, taking quite some time for him to resettle. Also, the challenges presented by COVID-19 lockdowns, social distancing and work from home arrangements resulted in many of our contributors unable to submit or meet the deadlines, requiring us to redesign our original plan. Indeed, this book has emerged out of the many complexities, challenges, and from the personal sacrifices, many of our team members had to make to complete this book project. We thought it is important to share this information so that readers understand the background and how this book has emerged. In spite of the challenges faced by both editors, with their inherent resilience along with mental health orientation and strong leaning towards strengths perspective of social work, they were able to constantly pursue, against all odds, the book project related works to ensure its completion.

As we finalize this chapter, the world is struggling to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, and hence, the terms that we can use here is “flexibility, uncertainty and post-COVID-19” pandemic. What has happened to our world? Will our society be the same again post-COVID-19? Will social work profession and practice be significantly affected? What are and will be the grand challenges for Social Work in a post-COVID-19 world? These are curious questions, requiring not just straightforward answers, but also further thought on finding some alternative responses that
will help us as educators, researchers, practitioners and students to see the world from, and with, a new lens. As we look towards the future, we have adopted a circle of conversations with practitioners and educators, including voices from various sectors and views for Social Work profession post-pandemic, to gauge a perspective that informs this chapter. At the same time, we have also applied critical reflections, practice experiences, anecdotal evidence and literature to support and interrogate some of the issues in social work education, research and practice.

Voice from a professional: Prof. Sanjay Bhatt, president of National Association of Professional Social Workers (NAPSW) in India, on Post-COVID-19 and revamping social work education and practice

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered not only a global health crisis, but it has also resulted into immense suffering for people across the globe. All nations have witnessed multidimensional devastating impacts on their economic, social and even on political life. Whilst people from all walks of life have been badly influenced in their personal and social spheres, the common psyche of the nation has received unparalleled scars of helplessness, uncertainties and vulnerabilities. The coronavirus pandemic was a unique challenge, requiring preventive measures such as physical distancing (unfortunately called social distancing) practices, restricted movements and lockdowns of public spaces to mention but a few, resulting in people facing uncertainty, insecurity, fear, depression, fatigue and increased anxiety. As the pandemic sent shockwaves around the globe, social work fraternity responded with a quick, inclusive and resilient recovery. Whilst many social workers had less preparation for COVID-19, the learning and experiences accumulated through working with people during other crises such as floods, droughts, and HIV/AIDS helped in our emergency response system. As we become more aware of the effects, damages and impacts of COVID-19 on our society’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged members, there is need to think loudly and plan for post COVID-19 society. A hard truth about social work profession vis-a-vis COVID-19 pandemic is that our responses often are quick, situational, and not planned in advance. Unfortunately social work graduates are taught less public/community health than mental health. In post COVID-19 society, the world of work, and world of relationship will definitely be different. If the nature and contours of relationship change, social work is bound to change, leading social work educational institutions (SWEI) to change their syllabi, teaching pedagogies and training methodologies. A new social worker’s role and responsibilities will be, using the five vowels in English alphabet AEIOU, in the areas of Awareness about real societal issues (communication) and virtual spaces (technology); Emergency response systems; Information about self and social life; Operationalisation of institutional arrangements and changing systems; and Upgradation of
Social Work Education

Social workers are committed to promoting social justice and advancing the theory and knowledge base for our profession that would provide solutions for social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people (Australian Association of Social Work [AASW], 2013). In the context of the devastating impact and challenges presented by the pandemic, social work educators have begun to prepare for a post-COVID-19 world and how they can to respond to the needs of students, placement agencies and communities in the new normal. This requires significant efforts redesigning and developing new ways to deliver social work education. The coronavirus pandemic is a call to action and will serve as a focal point for social work education to address new ways of teaching and engagement with students. As part of the new measures to respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19, Australia has come up with an initiative to develop and create enhanced client-focused relationships through shifting to online platforms, using technology-assisted mediums and offering relief, in the form of reducing field hours, for social work students in an attempt to provide solutions for positive transformation to several areas of need that social workers tackle on daily basis. Consequently, we see a rise in the number of students undertaking projects that enable them to work independently to assist effective responses to agency, and client, specific issues. The immediate and future needs arising from the pandemic invite social work educators, researchers, scholars and practitioners to embrace and promote the changing and new ways students learn and how what they are learning can help to respond and practice in a post-COVID-19 world.

The success of social work education post-COVID-19 pandemic is very much dependent on social work educators and practitioners recognizing these challenges
as opportunities, and responding wisely, to advance our profession. If we respond wisely, we have the potential of moving the profession forward and creating a better society through citizen empowerment and global solidarity. In her editorial for the *Journal of Social Work Education*, Nadkarni (2010) highlights the nature of social work education in Asia. She argues that social work education in Asian countries faces several challenges and opportunities:

Social work education in Asian countries also needs to address problems arising from untramelled growth accompanied by ecological destruction and climate change. Development itself has thus become a generator of conflict because of competing land use issues involving the haves and the have-nots in these countries... The recognition of professional social work and the need for quality social work education in Asia has been moving at a slow pace. (Nadkarni, 2010, p. 15)

Similarly, Chan and Ng (2004) argue that “it is important for social work teachers to adopt a holistic practitioner–researcher–educator role in their everyday practice in order to create the necessary impact to effect change” (p. 312). While there is no denying of the fact that social work is well-established in India with a large number of institutions offering social work programs at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels, quality and standards of social work training is not uniform across the board in India (Baikady, Pulla & Channaveer, 2014; Trines, 2018). Premier institutions are offering high quality of social work training with standards on par with institutions in the developed nations such as Australia. Some institutions in India offer generic social work training, stereotyped in patterns followed for an unreasonably long period, just churning out mediocre social work graduates (Baikady et al., 2014). And then, there are institutions of fairly recent origin which are notorious for commodifying social work education and offering extremely poor quality of training and sending out social workers who are ill-equipped to perform social work-related functions in whatever situations they may be in (Baikady et al., 2014; Trines, 2018). The need of the hour is for the entire Social Work fraternity in the country to unite and rally together for the establishment of councils of Social Work education at the state and central levels as soon as possible and pave the way for regulatory mechanisms to ensure the quality of Social Work education, research and practice all over the country with uniform code of ethics and standardized protocols of practice.

In post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreaks, all members of our profession need to incorporate into their work innovative ways of teaching and training, encourage well-informed citizens making their own decisions, and be willing to work together with governments and invest in global knowledge sharing. It is important that we expand and act on a broader and long-lasting solutions to build a new evidence base for our profession and what helps students to gain the knowledge, skills and values needed to meet social work practice standards, and practice in accordance with the professions’ code of ethics towards promoting social justice and human rights for all.
Voice from an educator: Prof. Ramaniah on Post-Covid-19 and social work education

With the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, every sphere of life is reset and optimized for effective functioning. In almost every sector of the society, the mechanics of operation have changed completely. Today, most of the business houses and educational institutes are going virtual and remote as a mitigation plan for continuity. Every form of education is disrupted by the crisis and will continue for some time. In fact, Educational institutes were quick to shift gears to e-learning platforms which in a way is helping students cope with the challenges. However, educational institutes will be made to rethink with the new pedagogy of learning like online education, experiential learning. Even the assessment of students with proctored systems will soon be a reality which will move beyond traditional assessment. Social work education is taught and delivered in a different way as compared to other disciplines. The curriculum comprises of 3 essential components: Theoretical subjects, Field work experience and Research work. Post-COVID-19, some of the fundamental changes that are expected in social work education include:

a. Changes in Social work curriculum as per the prevailing situation.

b. Research-oriented curriculum will be administered online to collect data and subsequent analysis rather than direct contact with respondents.

c. Traditional paper-pen assessment will be slowly replaced with Computer-based test using proctored systems.

The course curriculum set for social work education cannot be imparted exclusively on e-learning platforms. In the long-run, physical classroom lecturing cannot be eliminated since most of the activities for students are taught in a physical setup like role-plays, presentation skills, interpersonal skills, etc. However, 10–20% of the course material can be developed and delivered as online learning. The other aspect of social work education will be to take a close relook at mental health as an intensive course to be imparted for all students. The amount of distress to deal with such a fast spreading pandemic has not been experienced before which calls for change. Social work education primarily encompasses the psychological well-being at individual level and community level at large which is highly relevant in the present scenario. The likelihood of getting affected by such a health hazard brings out fear and adversely affect the health, safety and wellbeing of both individuals and communities. Therefore, the mental health component of social work education will require more thrust since pandemics like this require more counseling and guidance like none other.
Internationally, there is a strong movement in social work towards developing practice more firmly grounded on empirical research (Fook, 2003; McCrystal & Wilson, 2009; Simpson, 2020; Williams, 2016). The implication of this movement for social work education is the need to prepare social work practitioners and students for the twenty-first century through building the competencies fundamental for both research and professional practice. In Australia, social work students are trained to value and understand the relationship between research and practice. However, social work in India has been overly preoccupied with quantitative research and advanced statistical techniques than concentrating more on in-depth qualitative studies that would expand understanding of human problems in its different shades and contexts.

The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic are opportunities to promote effective interventions for social workers to address several of the challenges affecting our quality of life. There are multiple ways that schools of social work, educators, scholars and practitioners can advance a strong scientific base for our profession. We can provide fuller engagement through the teaching of research methods in both undergraduate and qualifying social work education programs, and the development of doctoral degree, in social work education. Social work students need to be engaged with research training as a valuable component throughout their professional training (AASW, 2013). AASW (2013) supports the undertaking of research that is applicable to social work practice, better health and wellbeing.

Research is key to the continued development of theory and solid knowledge and scientific base of social work practice, influencing and shaping the profession. This means that producing research that informs practice is key to building and maintaining the mission of the social work profession (AASW, 2013). In a post-COVID-19 world, there is need for social work researchers and practitioners to conduct high-quality research that brings effective change and use evidence in our practice (Williams, 2016). This depends, as Williams (2016) explains, on the “quality of our scholarship, our ability to collaborate with allied disciplines [and within our discipline], and the ability for translation and implementation of research to practice and education” (p. 68). The challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic give us opportunity to build bridges and collaborate within and beyond social work.

Indeed, developing high-quality social work research to inform what works in practice is clearly advantageous in social work practice and policy initiatives and advocacy on the contemporary challenges (McCrystal & Wilson, 2009; Williams, 2016). Commitment to quality social work research can help us evaluate the effectiveness of social work education and teaching, inform social work practice and meet the needs of practitioners or clients (Teater, 2017). Social work research can inform our professional practice through: (i) assessing the needs and resources of people in their environments; (ii) demonstrating relative costs and benefits of social work services; (iii) advancing professional education in light of changing contexts for practice; and (iv) understanding the impact of legislation and social policy on
the clients and communities we serve” (Teater, 2017, p. 549). As social work practice involves the implementation of interventions with clients, there is a need for social work practitioners to commit to advancing a strong knowledge base for the profession through research (Williams, 2016). Fook (2003) argues that social work research must: (a) deal simultaneously with individual, collective and institutional aspects of life and practice; (b) use multiple methods; (c) recognize the importance of researcher reflexivity; (d) utilize the research process as intervention; (e) focus on the vulnerable and oppressed; and (f) enable collaboration of the researched (p. 50). The importance, we attach to research in social work in post-COVID-19 world, reflects, among other things, the demands for better quality and outcomes, greater transparency and professional accountability in practice (AASW, 2013; Chan & Ng, 2004; McCrystal & Wilson, 2009). Social work researchers need to focus on current realities and prove the efficacy of social work methods and intervention strategies in dealing with problems.

**Voice from a researcher: Frank Baffour, James Cook University on research and COVID-19 impact**

As a young career researcher, my focus during the past three years has been on developing my research career. This has seen me attending at least a conference in every calendar year since the commencement of my PhD study in March 2017. The year 2020 was not going to be an exception as I had already submitted three conference papers for oral presentation considerations in Australia and abroad at the end of February. By the end of March 2020, the organisers of the three conferences had written back to me (this time it was not about rejection or acceptance or a request for additional information) indicating their intentions to suspend the conferences indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These responses from the individual conference organisers were novel experience to my research career, which I did not take lightly in the early stages, even though I have now come to value the importance of such decisions. Also, the strains associated with the pandemic have had indirect impact on my research activities. With the COVID-19 outbreaks across the globe, Ghana, my homeland, had its share of the pandemic. COVID-19 caused enormous fear and panic among the Ghanaian population and the diaspora. As a researcher studying in Australia with thousands of kilometres separating me from my immediate family (both in Ghana and abroad), I was anxious. This has to do with sudden increase in the number of calls I received day and night from family and friends in Ghana and other parts of the globe. Given the time difference of Australia and most parts of the world, Ghana, Europe, and the United States of America included where most of my relative live, some overnight phone calls disrupted my sleep, impacting my efficiency to work on my doctoral thesis during the day. I must say, given the high mortality rate of the COVID-19, every call I received was important. The COVID-19 pandemic is
phenomenal and concerted efforts are needed, through research, collaboration and scholarship, to understand and contain future pandemic.

Social Work Practice

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we find that various professionals and cadres of workers within our discipline and across other disciplines, for example, health care, criminal justice, education, environmental science and even volunteers, are appreciated by the public and government in across the globe. In India and Australia, all types of media including social media glorify frontline workers of all sorts for their humane efforts and selfless services during the global crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic brought humanity’s attention to an appreciation of courage, kindness, empathy and compassion, which are core values in social work practice (Stickle, 2016). While this is heartening, it is very unfortunate that the massive cadre of professional social workers in India is not commissioned to work alongside the frontline workers. Despite the number of professionally trained social workers working in hospitals and contributing in different capacities and in a variety of indirect ways in India, social work has not been publicly recognised as a helping profession. Even though social work profession has been in existence for over eight decades in India, the profession does not get its due recognition. Right from 1936 when social work education was introduced in India (Baikady et al., 2014), there has been an exponential growth in the number of social work schools and graduates. The profession’s trajectory of growth has evolved into various shades of professional identity. Professionally trained social workers with a master’s degree in social work can work in many sectors, contributing significantly to the wellbeing of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. While enormous contributions have been made by professional social workers in the fields of community development, medicine and psychiatry industry in general and more particularly, in specific areas such as rural development, mental health, including human resource management, disaster management, it is ironic that higher education authorities, at the apex level, have brought forth announcements to the effect that the social work program is not a ‘professional’ course, much to the dismay of the entire social work fraternity in India. University Grants Commission (UGC) does not consider Social Work as a profession (Sehgal, 2019).

Voice from a practitioner: Dr. V. Sayee Kumar on Indian Social Work Post-COVID-19

COVID-19, obviously, has made its huge impact on every dimension of psychosocial functioning, redefining the role of every one. Post Covid-19, Indian
Social workers have a lot of things to learn from the coronavirus outbreaks and implement for timely and best practices. The pandemic laid bare the horrible inequalities in our society and the reality that no one is immune from its threat—all became equal under COVID-19 and experience similar anxiety, stress and fear. In the light of COVID-19 disaster, I can discern the following trends in Indian professional practice and services post pandemic:

1. **Extensive integration of technology into professional social work:** Planning, organising and offering social work services will be conducted in digital platforms.

2. **Capacity and skill building:** Capacity and skill building: Continuous learning and development of new skills that can be dynamically used in uncertain times for human care through technology like webinar, video conferencing etc.

3. **Building public health:** Professional social work will use more of its time tested macro methods like community organisation, social policy, social welfare administration, social legislation.

4. **Social work research:** Unimaginable human experiences have led to the phenomenal experiences of various human and social distress. There will be more research on responding and managing pandemics through qualitative research.

5. **Documenting new Indian models of social work:** Covid-19 has defied logic and rules in Indian population on many aspects. This is also to do socio-cultural factors. Western models of practice have not been found to be effective in the crisis. So obviously our Indian practitioners have got overwhelming experience in every front and field of practice. This will be documented from all schools of social work and practitioners across India, calling for decoloniality in social work.

6. **Collaboration with cross functional teams:** The time has come to leave professional bias, prejudice and rivalry to work towards the common goal of client welfare. We will be working and learning a lot with fellow professionals within our discipline and across disciplines like psychology, healthcare and many others.

7. **Assertion of professional identity:** Covid-19 has attracted everyone to offer care and services, leading to multiplicity and duplication of work and interventions. This will get more organised only by greater level of assertion through professional identity. The already dead locked licensing-registration work in India may pick up speed and momentum.

So in essence, we will witness a sea of change in the way we work and deliver professional social work services in India and beyond.

Social workers are trained in the basics of mental health and community development. In post-COVID-19 world, social work training needs to have a paradigm shift from massification to slowing down and focusing on quality practice and standards.
With needs on the rise, social work training curricula need to incorporate essential subjects such as public health, epidemiology and disaster management to equip students with skills needed for practice. We are more likely to witness a sharp increase in mental health problems post-COVID-19, some of which could be easily handled by social workers with their training in basic counselling. Social work practice in post-COVID-19 times requires schools of social work training to shed their differences and come together for revisiting, reassessing and redesigning the curricula and pedagogy for a more effective social work practice. The components of the social work practicum need to be strengthened with rigorous supervision and the highest possible standards of practice. There is also need for a more evidence-based practice with a focus on solutions with a strengths’ perspective.

In addition, social work practice has to shift its gears after this global crisis by revisiting age-old intervention strategies, examining their efficacy and wherever necessary, replace them with creative, innovative and effective interventions for social workers to address needs affecting our quality of life. Just like how the field of medicine has undergone a sea of changes during the past four to five decades, social work practitioners need to come up with newer strategies. For example, traditional medical practices have moved from manual activities at a personal and one-to-one level to a more automated methods such as telemedicine. While human interaction is very important and uncompromisable in the social work practice, given the circumstances, it may be necessary for social workers to use more, and be supported by, modern technology in tackling the needs of their clientele.

Voice from a practitioner: Vicki O’Brien from Mental Health Social Worker, Queensland, Australia on Social isolation and increased familial tensions

As the world continues to manage the biological impact of COVID-19, social workers have not lost sight of the social and psychological impact of coronavirus outbreaks on people’s lives. As social workers, we remain deeply connected with and to understanding the diversity of human experience in these anxious times. Social isolation and increased familial tensions resulting from home confinement, combined with the trauma and loss of hundreds of lives every day, present an unprecedented mental health challenges, children, individuals and family’s emotional health and well-being. The isolation brought to us by COVID-19 caused some to become crowded with their own thoughts of grief, loss, crisis, trauma and uncertainty with no convenient or easy way to avoid them. When methods of coping fail, people will confront moments of deep introspection while alone examining wounds buried deep within. It can be painfully difficult for people to sit with themselves. COVID-19 has revealed a collective stressor that the global community has faced, at the same time, leaving many feeling anxious, uncertain and afraid. How COVID-19 will change us is yet to be explored and our social work practice should begin to adopt a COVID-19 lens so we can explore in our practice how deeply humanity and individuals
have been changed. There is also an important need to adopt and apply a gender lens to our work due to the many women who have effectively been forced into isolation with an abuser. We must consider the heightened risk of family and domestic violence for women and children now and in the post pandemic future. Now more than ever, social work needs to shine as the profession of hope and our collective hope is vitally needed in chaotic and uncertain times. To do this work requires our courage, commitment, persistence, compassion, kindness and flexibility. Adopting a growth and resilience mindset supports our ability to flourish in the face of great challenges. Difficulties are expected as part of what we do, yet, we are profoundly fortunate to experience a connection with people despite the truth that we are often operating in a space of having to navigate uncertainty. We willingly enter this space and listen deeply, hold people’s pain without being overwhelmed and bear witness to the social realities which surround us. We do this while maintaining our commitment to supporting the most disadvantaged and marginalised by providing them with access to quality information and supporting them to navigate in making meaningful decisions about their own lives. We maintain a still and settled mind that orientates us to engage mindfully while our strength, resilience and equanimity are precious resources for the people we support. We trust that when we are calm, grounded and connected to people that skilful questions, statements, actions, nonverbal communication and heartfelt interventions will arise. Our strength signals to the people we support that they can explore their deepest thoughts, feelings, circumstances, hardships, fears, triumphs and stories with us while we remain grounded, and our strength provides a foundation for us to enter the unknown together. We draw on crisis intervention skills to prioritise needs and safeguard those who are at greatest risk and most vulnerable during times of need and crisis. Acceptance, mindfulness and open heartedness help us to effectively engage in positive strength-based partnerships with people. Social workers everywhere are finding ways through chaos, adversity and complex challenges to support and help the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We willingly enter uncertainty knowing whatever arises is workable.

## Conclusion

Social work is a profession focused on wellbeing, social justice and human rights. In this chapter, we have reflected on the challenges and opportunities of the social work profession in India and Australia. The COVID-19 crisis seems to have affected practically every sphere of our lives, changing, fundamentally, social work education, research and practice. In Australia, social work educational programmes quickly shifted to online platforms, and offered relief, in the form of reducing field hours,
for social work students. India responded also by introducing virtual platforms for learning and meetings. Indeed, the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has, and will continue to have, on social work cannot be overstated. Without question, COVID-19 necessitated change. It has changed the way we teach, research, practice and go about our daily businesses, including the modalities of our work and social engagements. In responding to COVID-19, the social work education, research and practice landscape have fundamentally changed. Although physical (social) distancing practices and rules seem to be altering human relationships and communities almost everywhere, as social workers, they have also expanded our services to new clients and compelled us, no matter our practice area, to embrace difference. Technology has become necessary to all areas of social work practice. While people from all walks of life are preoccupied with the feeling of how their personal, family and work lives are going to change after this global emergency ends, we propose that the wellbeing, particular needs and challenges of our immediate society, and families should not limit our capacity for collaboration, empathy and compassion. “If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is this: Business as usual is not, and will not, be sufficient. Moving forward, the way we practice, educate, and research must evolve in a way that not only responds to things that happen, but in a way that anticipates what is to come” (Miller, 2020). We need to be focusing on the possibilities as a result of the COVID-19 challenges and looking forward rather than going back to what we saw as normal. Writing on the COVID-19 world we are living in, Arundhati Roy (2020) reminds us, “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway, between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging our carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.” This pandemic has caused one of the largest paradigm shifts in social work education, research and practice in history, and we must adapt in ways that align with social work values.

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