

TUNING IN TO THE LEADERS

IN THE PROFESSION



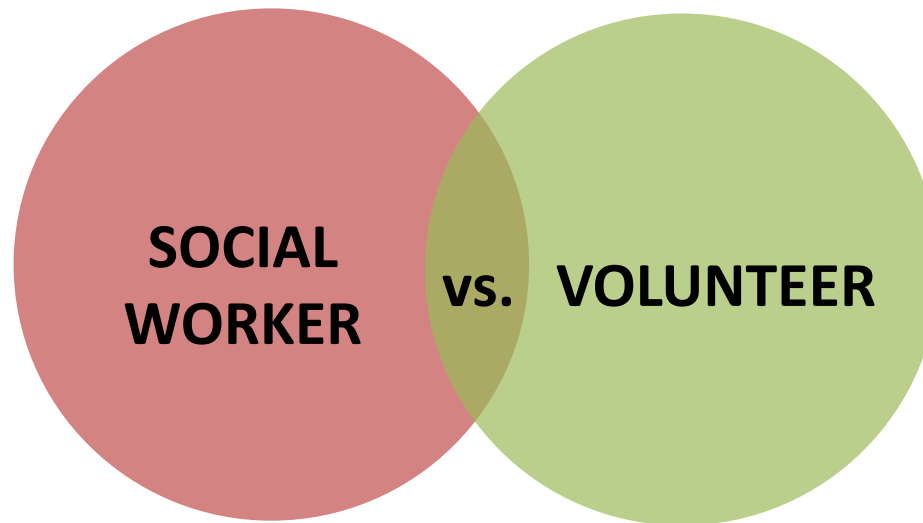
MS WU MEI LING

*Executive director
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about

Ms Wu Mei Ling has been a social worker for more than 18 years with 13 years of them spent working closely with schools to reach out to and support students as a school social worker. She has contributed to the alleviation of Singapore school social work practice to the international scene by presenting papers at the ASEAN seminar for school social work. Currently, she serves as the executive director of Student Care Services and the Chairperson of the school social work chapter under the Singapore Association of Social Workers.

KNOWLEDGE of a



- Social workers look at things at a more holistic level due to the knowledge of frameworks. This guides their interventions and leads them to ask questions differently.
- Social workers learn different concepts
- Different execution of skills
 - Skills of assessment differ between social workers and volunteers

What I learnt as a social worker

1. Systematic to Systemic

- A realization that practice in the field requires much more than just remembering theoretical knowledge.
- As a social worker, you are required to think *deeper layers* such as considering the person in the environment and the person in the family or school system.



What I learnt as a social worker

2. From knowing to not knowing



- As a young social worker, you may feel an innate need to know everything that you are doing to feel a sense of competence and confidence. You may feel that you owe it to your clients to know what you are doing.
- However, sometimes it is okay not to know and in fact, at times it may be more helpful not to know.

“It takes a village to raise a social worker”

What I learnt as a social worker

3. From thinking to thinking about thinking

- Thinking is already tough. In social work practice, a lot of thinking is required during assessments, planning and review.
- But thinking about thinking is also important. It is important to think about why clients are not ready or whether the use of a label is appropriate.



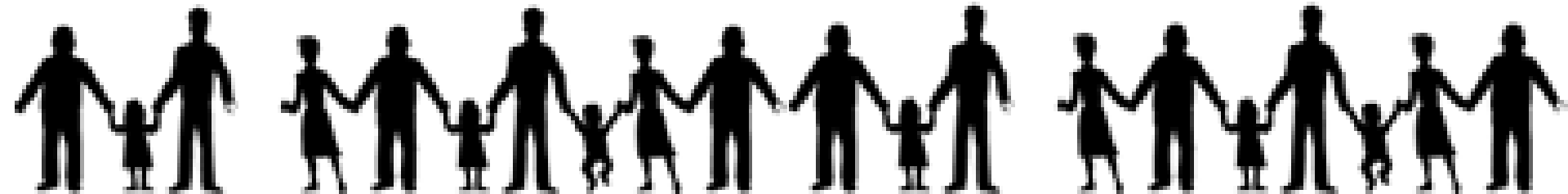
Pains vs Gains

PAINS

- Peer comparison
- Parental/family expectations
- Personal time or clients' time?
- Feeling incompetent

GAINS

- Knowing self better
- Appreciating others' pain
- Inspired by the resilience and giving nature of clients



Your Questions

For young social workers, is the move to the management track a choice or a natural progression? What should they look out for and how should they prepare themselves?

If a social worker wants to eventually impact the community and society, we should allow doing management work as part of a natural progression. This is because management work allows you to look at the bigger picture while still holding on to your sense of mission. At the same time, you also learn skills needed to engage people at a macro level.

Social workers should not close themselves but should be open to either. In the end, it comes down to what kind of difference and what level of difference you hope to make as a social worker.