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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BRINGING DIVERSITY AND RECEIVING DISCRIMINATION: ANTI-OPPRESSIVE AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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Abstract

International students are among the most important groups that contribute to cultural diversity within the host country, as well as the fact that international students are the motto of peace and security among nations. Looking at international students within the campus of any university in the world gives us a picture that people of all shapes, colors, languages and cultures can live in peace and security on the planet. However, we find that these students suffer from some problems related to language, adaptation, culture, economic matters, housing and leisure and thus the emergence of problems of academic achievement. All these problems can be accepted by international students and solved as expected problems because of living in a new environment. However, the discrimination and oppression faced by international students cannot be received as expected things as a result of diversity. To the extent that discrimination issues affect adaptation and academic achievement, it also affects the mental and physical health of international students. This article attempts to focus on the problem of discrimination experienced by international students and its dimensions. At the same time, it focuses on the role of social work in working with international students who are discriminated and suggests the most important points and social policies that countries should take to reduce this problem and its consequences.

Keywords: International Students, Cultural Diversity, Oppression, Discrimination, Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Discriminatory Social Work Practice.

1. Introduction

International students are among the most important sources of cultural diversity within the host country, along with the economic benefits and internationalization of education. So many countries are working and competing to bring in as much as possible from international students. However, the large numbers of international students have brought with it many challenges that have led countries to develop policies and plans to deal with this situation. Language, new culture, housing issues, economic problems, lack of facilities and services that help to assess leisure are among the main challenges facing international students in the new society. More recently, there has been an increase in academic studies on these challenges and the focus of social sciences on addressing the problems faced by international students. This may be coinciding with the growing international student movement in the world.

Looking at the historical context of the international student movement, we find that there are factors and reasons that prompted students to receive higher education in countries other than their own. Perhaps one of the most important reasons is that receiving education in foreign countries creates exceptional between peers (Akanwa, 2015: 273). There are also factors that play a role in the selection of the country and in the international student movement in general, such as cultural proximity, scholarships, the economic and political situation of the host countries, employment opportunities (Snoubar, 2015: 86). Other factors that play a role in the selection of the state, which can be mentioned in this context are the cost and the quality of education, the acquisition of international experience, the promotion of future employment opportunities (Anderson and Bhati, 2012). Consequently, these factors directly affected into the size of international students in the country and determine the international mobility to them. Many countries work to provide services that attract international students and provide the right environment for adaptation and academic success.

Many of the problems and challenges facing international students prevent harmony and adaptation and lead to psychological, social and academic problems. Where countries are looking to develop solutions to the challenges and difficulties faced by international students and this shows in the academic studies and research that address the problems of international students and propose solutions and plans. Also, facilitating access to entry visas for students and the provision of housing and offices of international student services and the development of the education system in the host country of the things that is the responsibility of the state. In addition to academic research on the problems of international students and

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state policies in addressing their issues, it is necessary to mention the need to work directly with international students to help them to overcome problems and harmony with the social and academic environment. The presence of direct services in dealing with the issues of international students are important and urgent.

International students in general are more likely to have mental health problems than local students as a result of cultural problems. Therefore, providing and accessing mental health services is an important issue in addressing the problems of international students (Mori, 2000: 137). The provision of a social services unit at all universities and their preparation to deal with international students' issues through a specialized case management team is one of the most important welfare services for international students (Snoubar, 2017a: 805). Through the unit of social services within universities and student hostels, their problems can be addressed at the individual, group and institutional levels (Snoubar, 2017b: 104). At the same time, the Social Services Unit, in cooperation with the Student Affairs Unit, the University Administration and local students, should create a welcoming environment for international students (Peterson et al, 1999: 70). Through this service unit, it can handle all the problems of international students and develop appropriate solutions. The issues of racial discrimination and persecution are among the most sensitive issues facing international students and require multi-level intervention.

2. Diversity and Receiving Discrimination

The growing international student movement has contributed significantly to creating more interaction between different cultures in the world than ever before. International students are among the most important sources of cultural diversity within countries in modern times. Diversity may also be one of the most important reasons that create competition and creativity, especially in universities. Despite the important features associated with cultural diversity, it may cause many challenges and problems in the new cultural environment. Perhaps one of the most serious problems which international students can experience because of their diverse cultural backgrounds or because they are not local people is the issue of racial discrimination and persecution.

Many studies have shown that international students are discriminated in many countries. For example, in a study conducted by Poyrazli & Grahame (2007, pp. 263-280) on international students in the United States shown that Middle Eastern students are exposed to problems of racial discrimination and oppression by American students after the September attacks. Another study suggests that Middle Eastern, Asian and African students have been discriminated in America based on religion or country of origin (Sutton, 2002, pp. 1-7). In general, Middle Eastern students are among the most international students exposed to racial discrimination (Hanassab, 2006, pp. 157-172). This issue can trace back to the problems of the Middle East conflict and war (Snoubar & Musah, 2017: 63-78). Where youth bulge in the region and exacerbate the problems experienced by young people as well as direct participation in violence (Snoubar & Hawal, 2015: 129-136). This reflected negatively on the profile of young people or international students coming from the Middle East and directly affects their exposure to issues of racial discrimination in many countries of the world.

Lack of language may expose international students to racial discrimination. For example, a lack of language may prevent students from participating in classroom talk or in meetings, which will lead them to negative assessment by teachers and local students (Taras & Rowney, 2007: 66-81). In general, students are exposed to new racism or racism in its new face which focuses on cultural differences and the country of origin rather than the physical characteristics of traditional racism (Lee, 2015: 4).

The exposure of international students to racial discrimination negatively affects the formation of deep relationships with local students (Mori, 2000: 138). In addition, it prevents student participation within the classroom and in social life (Lee, 2015: 3-5). The study by Karuppan and Barari (2010) shows that discrimination has clear negative effects on academic life and educational experience. In general, the exposure of a certain class of international students to racial discrimination negatively affects to benefit from diversity on campus (Leask, 2009). It directly affects the international students' relationship, interaction and communication with the culture of the host country, as the student finds it difficult to express himself because affected from the discrimination he receives from community members in the host country (Jung et al., 2007).

Diversity within the campus of universities in the world is one of the most important global projects aimed at thwarting the ideas of extremism and intolerance and all forms of extremism. The continued increase in the numbers of international students is an important indicator of the success of this great project. However, at the same time, the problems faced by international students require rapid solutions on multiple



dimensions and levels. In order to achieve the great benefits of cultural diversity on the campus, social policies necessary for this purpose must develop and implemented. Therefore, all obstacles that can turn diversity into conflict or a source of problems must remove. Perhaps one of the most serious and serious problems faced by international students in living in a multicultural environment is the issue of oppression and discrimination. It poses a threat to international students in terms of physical, psychological, social and academic security in the first instance and impedes the benefit from cultural diversity. It is therefore necessary to intensify cooperative efforts and services that turn diversity into an opportunity. One of the most important measures that can taken is direct cooperation with the International Students Office and working individually, groups and institutionally in dealing with issues of racial discrimination against international students.

3. Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Discriminatory Social Work Practice

Oppression, prejudice and discrimination can affect the economic and academic success of individuals. In addition, discrimination can have a profound effect on an individual's physical and mental health. The stress from such effects has been associated with chronic exposure to discriminatory actions. This may have both short- and long-term effects (Whitley and Kite, 2010: 442-443). Oppression situated in the form of social interaction between people. Therefore, oppression through the actions and behaviors of others towards others is socially constructed. In this case, the anti-oppression practice can be both personal and structural and can done through individuals and groups (Dominelli, 2002: 9).

Social work has a very important role in combating discrimination and oppression through support and enhances interventions at the individual, group and institutional levels. In the practice of social work in cases involving international students, the social worker is an active member of the case management team in the social services unit of the international student offices. Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory social work practice has emerged to support and strengthen vulnerable groups (Payne, 1997). Anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory social work practice directed to young people is the basic pillar in youth work (Chouhan, 2009).

The dimensions of suffering from oppression, prejudice and discrimination are deeply affecting the people and the society. Therefore, the social work intervention to solve this problem, which deeply affects the individual, should also realized at three levels. International students may be subject to discrimination and persecution for reasons such as religion, language, color, sexual orientation, country of origin, etc. As a result of oppression and discrimination, young students may experience both social isolation and academic failure. The level and impact of social exclusion and academic failure can vary depending on who is doing oppression and discrimination. For example, the impact of discrimination in the shopping mall or in the street on a young social exclusion and academic failure is different from the effect of discrimination by the teacher in the educational setting. Therefore, determine the effects of oppression and discrimination on student are created is the first step of intervention. In the following stages, to overcome such problems can be applied social intervention such as working with young people and the social environment (Snoubar, 2015). There are many levels of social work in working with international students who have been discriminated and persecuted. Therefore, the social worker has a role in working with students as individuals through the detection of the causes of the problem and its negative effects left on them and how to overcome and prevent it.

The practice of social work in anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory is a dynamic process based on changing the complex patterns of social relations. During this process, the social worker must focus on anti-oppression principles that provide the basis for assessing social work such as "Social difference, linking personal and political, power, historical and geographical location.reflexivity/mutual involvement" Understanding these principles facilitates the process of assessing the case and thus leads to the desired change Clifford, 1995., Burke and Harrison, 1998: 132-133). "a person centered philosophy; and egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies on their interaction and the work they do together" (Burke and Harrison, 1998; Dominelli, 1994).

At the level of working with the group in the practice of social work we find that this method can address a wider range of social and personal problems. Working with the group can include "achieve personal change (i.e. changes in attitude or behaviour), achieve social, environmental or political change, foster relationships/gain support, pool resources, facilitate learning" (Trevithick, 2012: 86). The social worker works in a group manner through open and closed groups of international students who have



experienced the same problems of discrimination and oppression. The main objective of these groups is to create psychosocial support and legal awareness and to develop methods to overcome the problems of discrimination and oppression and thus positive change. Through the groups, social worker gives students an opportunity to explain the problems of discrimination, listening to other students experiences, and how they deal with the problem. Through groups, the social worker also focuses on teaching international students how to overcome discrimination issues and where to file a legal complaint.

The social worker also works to combat discrimination against international students at the community and institutional levels. Where he develops programs and activities aimed at promoting the idea of diversity and its importance and focusing on diversity as enhancing the social and academic environment. It also plans to create cooperation between institutes, colleges, university administration and international student offices in developing solutions to problems of discrimination through the preparation of programs, seminars and conferences. As such, social work with issues of discrimination and persecution is multi-intervention at all levels.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

This article focuses on the importance of diversity within the state and within the campus. At the same time, the most serious problem that international students are expose to because of this diversity reviewed. Where the problem of discrimination and oppression is at the forefront of these problems, which require solutions at the level of the individual, community and society. The issues of discrimination faced by the international students require cooperation at various levels to overcome this problem. Through academic literature review, we find that academic research on the discrimination faced by international students seems to be less despite the seriousness of the problem, this perhaps the sensitivity of this problem is the reason. Through this review, it can noted that the social work profession is one of the most important professions dealing with this sensitive problem and works with students who are exposed to discrimination and persecution at many levels. Through the role of social worker as case manager in the unit of social services in the office of international students are detected cases of discrimination and oppression and the development of multi-dimensional solutions. The intervention of social work in this case is one of the most important interventions through which to work with international students as individuals and groups and transfer their problems to the institutional and community level. This problem requires from the social worker to have many skills, information and knowledge in foreign languages as well as his ability to develop cultural activities and many support and promotion programs. In general, through this study of this serious problem can developed several recommendations and proposals that can contribute to alleviate this problem and can be a starting point for future studies on this issue. These suggestions can summarized as follows:

Focus on the need for a social services unit for international students or an international student office at all universities that attract international students. It is the primary reference and the first place where international students can apply to when they face problems of discrimination and oppression.

It is necessary the International Students Office of educating students about discrimination and oppression issues and informing them about legal and clinical services and activities organized through the means of communication.

The need for a specialized team within this office capable of managing the cases, providing psychosocial support programs and enhancing international students.

The need to focus on activities aimed at harmonizing international students with the new society and strengthening friendly relations with the citizens of the host country.

Focus on the role of social work in dealing with issues of discrimination and oppression and support and promotion of students at all levels.

Cooperation between universities and the community on diversity issues and the importance of international students in promoting cultural diversity within the country and the need to move away from ethnocentric thinking.

Work to sensitize the institutions that international students deal with directly about necessity to avoid the practice of discrimination, persecution and prejudices and the seriousness of these issues.

The importance of conducting academic research on the problem of discrimination faced by international students and the development of appropriate solutions from the perspective of many disciplines.



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