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## LOCALIZATION MOVEMENT OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN GLOBAL AXIS\*

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### Abstract

Social work education has been one of the disciplines showing high proliferation tendency. Since the Second World War, social work education owes much to the contributions of United Nations. The main perspective was to educate manpower for social welfare sector. The decision of United Nations Commission for Social Development that it is a profession having own distinctive functions and educational requirements was a milestone in professionalization of sw. As a result of these advancements, like in many developing countries, social work education in Turkey was led by external dynamics rather than internal dynamics. Basing my ideas on these facts, in this globalized world, social work education should follow two dimensions: First, it should have international perspective educating world-scale social worker, and have local aspect meeting regional requirements which Turkey needs most now. In this study, new methods and approaches are proposed and discussed to engage students with global and regional needs and challenges.

**Keywords:** Social Work Education, Localization, Global Needs.

### Introduction

Social work shows high proliferation tendency towards social changes such as ageing, economic conditions of people around the world, which makes it born a universal character. There is no doubt that social work education together with practice should be redesigned along with the recent context of the world. Today, social work education is celebrating its 110<sup>th</sup> year around the world. During these years, the definition and aspect of social work has changed and evolved. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social work had basically born voluntariness character by seeking remedy for the poor in the USA and Europe. As a result, first activities related to social work education has started.

In 1890s, theoretical and practical courses had begun in England, and then a summer school was opened up in New York in 1898. The summer school paved the way for first social work school in Chicago called Hull House (1898). Social work reformists founded Institute for Social Work Training in Amsterdam in 1899 (İyicil, 1963:8; Koşar and Tufan, 1999:1-2; quoting Karataş & Erkan, 2002:112). Such advances in social work education required qualified staff. Thus, it is argued that these activities laid the foundation of social work education today (Sedky, 1961a: 26-27; cited by Karataş & Erkan, 2002:112).

Once a volunteer work for poor people, it was then defined as educating manpower for social welfare sector. Thanks to efforts by United Nations Commission for Social Development (UNCSD), social work has globally been recognized as a profession. In 1951, the decision adopted by UNCSD was a milestone in social work education, in which social work is defined as a profession having its own distinctive characteristics and educational requirements (Kut, 1983:4; Koşar & Tufan, 1999:2; Özdemir, 1999:23; quoting Karataş & Erkan, 2002:113). In its latest definition, main perspective is on social change and development, social security, social state, social welfare, social justice and human rights. All these terms refer to *empowerment and liberation of people* as stated in the latest definition by IFSW, accepted in 2014.

On the other hand, 20<sup>th</sup> century is the time when the first social work schools were established. Social work profession was shaped by advances in this century such as human rights, social welfare, two world wars, cold war, technological developments and of course globalization. Such advances have affected societies economically and socially, which lead to globalization. In a global world, market place, economy, production, consumption and communication is all global. This made local sources as the dependent of outer sources. Asamoah et al (1997:392) defines the case with Clinton's inaugural address, made in 1993, in which he says: There is no longer a clear division between what is foreign and what is domestic. *The world economy, the world environment, the world AIDS crisis, and the world arms race – they affect us all.* Like in Turkey, social work education is led by external dynamics (Karataş, 2002b) and the curriculum is affected by that of Social Work School in Eastern Kentucky (Küçükkaraca, 2002): basic science courses, social work ethics and values, development of social and economic justice, social welfare policy, social work research and practice,

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etc. New needs and new advances affect social work education constantly. The curriculum is also affected in the same way.

Global social problems have always affected the content of social work education and practice. Keeping this in mind the ideas in the paper are based on the perspective of *think global, act local*<sup>1</sup>. In the first part, we will focus on definition attempts of social work, and then move onto social work education. After pinpointing recent developments around Europe, we will discuss our approach of localization aspect of social work education.

### **1. Definition Quest in Social Work and Social Work Education**

There is no doubt that definition of social work is in dispute (Brydon, 2014:591). Firstly, defined in 2001, updated in 2005 and lastly revised in 2014, social work is internationally defined by IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) and IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work) as follows: *Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014).*

This raises concerns about the character of social work. For some scholars, social work is in international character (McDonald, 2006; Midgley, 2001) whereas others argue that social work should address issues to be resolved about globalization versus localization (Gray & Fook, 2004). Social work's international character affects also the extent of its practice and values. In this regard, we should define international social work to understand its extent and function. Some proclaim that international social work deals only with international issues or its activities take place at the international level (Gray & Fook, 2004; Healy, 2001). Others define that international social work is concerned with intervention on behalf of immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities (Nagy & Falk, 2000), which is defined as cross-cultural social work by Brydon (2012:592).

There is no agreement about what international social work entails (Midgley, 2001:24). Healy (1995) reports that excessive number of definition emerged, and a large number of different terms are currently used by social workers. This view supports the very idea of Midgley (2001:24) that there is no standardized definition of international social work. Social work had been firstly defined as a field of practice that formalized in the 1940s and 1950s (Ibid). The first definition of social work was adopted by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in the USA in 1957 (Healy, 1995; quoting Midgley, 2001:24) in the context of social welfare activities of international agencies such as United Nations and the Red Cross (Midgley, 2001).

Thus, the quest for defining social work internationally needs to be settled. Midgley (2001) advises that the nature and scope of international social work should be defined concretely. He goes on to say that designers of social work education curricula should know the frame of the content. In addition to this, Nagy & Falk (2000) warn that unless the definition issue is resolved, this will always be a barrier for internalization of the curriculum.

### **2. Globalization and Social Work Education**

Globalization is human interaction within a one-world system and the process of international integration arising from the interchange of worldviews, products, ideas and other aspects of culture (Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989; Robertson, 1992; Estes, 1992:11; Al-Rodhan et al, 2006; Albrow & King, 1990). Globalization is not just settled on economic terms but it also has social, cultural, political and demographic effects. Having started from Enlightenment period, there is no doubt that globalization has affected countries. It has also affected social work. In the context of social work, it can be defined as "a process of global integration in which diverse peoples, economies, cultures and political processes are increasingly subjected to international influences" (Midgley, 1997:xi). Additionally, Midgley (1997:21) suggested that globalization indicates "the emergence of an inclusive worldwide culture, a global economy, and above all, a shared awareness of the world as a single place". He goes on to argue that social work has always had tendency to formulating a set of universal value principles (2001:30).

For many scholars, social work is considered to be a global profession. As mentioned before, the attempts of defining social work by international bodies supports this idea. Global form of social work means that 'it transcends national boundaries and which gives social work a global face such that there are commonalities in theory and practice across widely divergent context' (Gray & Fook, 2004:628). This means that social work has universal features and, as it was discussed above, unifying aspects. Furthermore, the

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<sup>1</sup> The original phrase "Think global, act local" has been attributed to Scots town planner and social activist Patrick Geddes. Although the exact phrase does not appear in Geddes' 1915 book "Cities in Evolution," the idea (as applied to city planning) is clearly evident: " 'Local character' is thus no mere accidental old-world quaintness, as its mimics think and say. It is attained only in course of adequate grasp and treatment of the whole environment, and in active sympathy with the essential and characteristic life of the place concerned.

profession's global aspects force to create global standards for social work education. One of the reasons for this is to 'facilitate communication between universities and to formulate common evaluation criteria for social work practice across diverse context. Some social workers such as Estes (1992; quoting Midgley, 2001) believe that it is only through the adoption of internationalism as a belief system that humankind can solve its pressing social problems. For some, however, this is an imperialistic way of shaping the profession, and they will not put global identity before their national identities.

### 3. Localization and Social Work Education

In this decade, both Italy and Turkey have become the frontline of a growing humanitarian crisis within their borders. Reportedly, in only the first three months of 2015, over 12000 migrants (IOM, 2015) have arrived on Italy shores and were registered. Moreover, more than 140.000 people registered by Italian authorities. The cost of rescue is high and in Mare Nostrum operation, Italy has spent nine million euros (NG, 2015). On the other hand, there are over 1.7 million registered refugees in Turkey as of 6 March 2015 (UNHCR, 2015). In addition, more people are coming, who are escaping from ISIS. Unofficial records indicate that the number of refugees has surpassed over 2 million. Turkish government individually has spent over 5.5 billion euros for the refugees (Hurriyet, 2015).

Once emigrant countries, both Italy and Turkey have become immigrant-receiving countries for the last decade. The immigrant crisis both countries facing has social, cultural and economic drawbacks on these countries. Governments try to take precaution against the problem. However, the services are provided on different parameters. These parameters differ from region to region, from culture to culture. In the recent case, Italy and Turkey tackle this crisis mostly individually.

Most scholars argue that social work is treated as a global discipline. In its foundation, social work is centred on social justice and human rights, which are the unifying aspects of the discipline. However, the education is provided through traditional methods, which is generalist approach. In order to educate social workers to be competent in such cases, there is a need to design curricula concerning regional differences through an innovative way. In related legislations, such as in Turkey, a person should receive a specific education within a specific time to become a social worker and to fulfil professional conditions and competences. As the education is given through generalist approach, there is a need for designing educational modules focusing on regional differences. Furthermore, social work students should acquire transverse skills for sustainable development of the self. Given the nature of the discipline, a social worker, who receive international social work education should have specific knowledge about migrants and asylum seekers and be acquainted with cultural differences to help an African or a Syrian refugee, yet, it may not be possible on its own.

IASSW and IFSW adopted Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession at the General Assembly in 2004. The first output of this meeting was to develop global standards for the education. In the document, the school's core purpose is to reflect the values and the ethical principles of social work (IASSW & IFSW, 2004:4). In addition, the core purpose should reflect: *...aspiration towards equity with regards to the demographic profile of the institution's locality. The core purpose or mission statement should thus incorporate such issues as ethnic and gender representation on the faculty, as well as in recruitment and admission procedures for students (Ibid, 4).*

However, social work education should meet local needs. The standard above refers to the term "*indigenous knowledge*", which is of "critical importance of shaping social work to suit economic and cultural realities, particularly in developing countries" (Hare, 2004:415). The term "indigenization" entails "adapting imported ideas to fit local needs" (Hall, 1990:9). Hare's approach to social work in terms of *indigenization* supports my idea on *localization*<sup>2</sup> perspective towards social work education. As a result, it is quite clear that the global standard regarding the school's core purposes, and the term Hare explains closely knit together. Regarding *the standards with regard to core curricula*, it is advised to identify and select for inclusion determined by local, national and/or regional/international needs and priorities. As stated above, the focus should be on localization of social work education during globalization process.

The role of social work should also "become appropriate to the needs of different countries (Hall, 1990, quoting Midgley, 1981; Kaseke, 1996; Rao, 1996; quoting Hare, 2004:415). For example, Turkish social workers should develop a cultural competence for serving Syrian refugees. It may not be a good idea to develop a direct contact with a Syrian woman. Being in a fundamentalist country, you may not be able to contact a woman without her husband or any of her relatives. Thus, the practitioner should find an appropriate approach to treat his/her client. It may also be hard for the practitioner to participate in client decision-making and ethical issues. As a result, practitioners should have different competences towards first-nation clients (Weaver, 1999) and others.

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the term "indigenization" would be taken as synonym for "localization".

The perspective of social work should free itself from dominant models. International social work bodies, such as International Federation of Social Work and International Association of Schools of Social Work, agreed on international definition (IFSW, 2014) of social work. The definition sets global standards for social work education. However, this globalization trend raises questions about the nature of international social work (Midgley, 2001; quoting Gray and Fook, 2004:626), which may raise concern about 'professional imperialism' (Ibid) of social work. Cossom argues that social work in the developing world needs to free itself from the 'inbuilt assumptions and cultural biases of first world theories and models of practice' (Cossom, 1993:3; quoting Gray and Fook, 2004:626). Thus, there is a need for social work education to be localized in order to tackle challenges (Brigham, 1982; Campfen, 1988; Hammoud, 1988; Ife, 2000; Mandal, 1989; Midgley, 1981; Mupedziswa, 1997; Osei-Hwedie, 1995; Ow, 1991; Payne, 1990; Resnick, 1980; Rosenman, 1980; Shawkey, 1972; Tsang et al., 2000; Walton & Abo El Nasr, 1988; quoting Gray & Fook, 2004). It should be noted that social work has unifying aspects, which is a must for all humankind, that is empowerment, equity, human rights and social justice. However, other aspects of social work should be culture-oriented. The needs of western culture and eastern culture are quite different. The ethical standards also differ. The practitioners must be able to develop local approaches. Thus, the education they receive must be balanced in terms of globalization and localization aspects.

This globalization-localization debate takes us to a postmodern term, 'glocal'. Gray and Fook (2004:635) define this term "to emphasize the equal importance of global awareness and local solutions". In other words, the context and aspect of social work should be relevant to any locality.

### Conclusions

In this paper, I have examined globalization and localization aspects of social work. At first, I have analyzed the definition quest of social work in international arena, and approaches towards international social work education. It is apparent that there is widespread disagreement of international social work. This will have negative impact on international curriculum of social work education, as well. Next, I focused on localization aspect of social work in the context of globalizing trends. I have support the idea that social work education should not have global standards, but should meet local needs. Moreover, there is a need for designing new curricula including subjects respecting regional differences through innovative perspective for future social workers in order for a sustainable development in education. Social work education should not be imperialistic but be postmodern. The education should be localized in order to tackle specific problems of each country. Any standard may serve as a gap between social worker and those who in need of help.

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