The Importance of Social Welfare in the Developing World

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Numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have been working on a massive scale in Bangladesh parallel to the existing governmental efforts to alleviate poverty. There have been many success stories, however, more is needed and a change in approach and philosophy is thus called for. To increase efficiency of the various social welfare programs greater coordination of NGOs by the government is essential. This also calls for well trained workers in the field and Bangladesh has good training programs in social work provided by different universities. As the history of social work, as a profession, has historical roots in the Western world, the curricula followed by the different programs in the country are based on western curricula. There is growing realization, however, of the importance and relevance of indigenization of social work in a globalized world and the curricula in different countries need to be modified to suit individual local areas and populations. Additionally an element of internationalization is also required in order to better train individual workers to work with a myriad of different environments the new world offers.

Social Work in Bangladesh

Social work is a profession that is integral and interwoven in all societies. However, the extent of the type of social work in any given country is often under debate. In a densely populated and deeply impoverished country such as Bangladesh there is little doubt that the social welfare networks should be extensive and well coordinated. Bangladesh is a country that affords a far-reaching network of private NGOs, that encompass diverse urban and rural nuances, while there is little done on behalf of the government to coordinate with this private sector of social welfare and virtually little is done to offer services to those who live in extreme impoverishment.

Much of the diverse types of social welfare currently being offered in Bangladesh could be greatly enhanced with government assistance in coordinating the efforts of the thousands of NGOs that operate here. In addition to this, the government must take a step forward in creating plausible standards regarding social work in Bangladesh. These standards must address several key areas: dis-

aster management, poverty reduction, violence, and urbanization. While these are certainly not the only areas that need our attention, they are definitely the most prevalent and encompass a majority of people in Bangladesh. It is also these areas that urgently need to be addressed in order to prevent any further natural or man-made catastrophes and to establish a solid foundation on which development can proceed.

Social Work Standards in Bangladesh

The social work profession, both in education and in practice, varies in its definition and mode of operation across the globe and carries different meanings and contexts from country to country. However, the ideology and hence the very heart of social work remains central to development of services in that it is a profession targeted at interventions for social support and for developmental, protective, preventative, and therapeutic purposes. In the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the literature concerning the benefits and the costs of internationalizing the social welfare curriculum for qualifying or specialist education of social work professionals, inclusive of the value of international fieldwork placements.

Reference has been made in the most recent regulations in United States passed down by the Council on Social Work Education to the need of preparing all students for practice, which is cognizant of international influences and which has a focus on competence with the culturally diverse populations social workers serve (Carlsen, 2005). Further, a recently established benchmark in this regard was for the professional qualification at the baccalaureate level of social work in the United Kingdom which indicated a need for knowledge which is informed by international and comparative perspectives (Williams, 2005). However, there has been relatively little systematic study at the international or even cross-national level to date, that would determine how international perspectives would be incorporated and to what extent newly qualified social workers incorporate international dimensions in their knowledge and skills of professional practice.

Aside from the likely benefits, costs other problems of including international learning opportunities in qualifying social welfare programs has also been identified in current literature (Carlsen, 2005; Wilson, 2005). The accepted knowledge suggests that many social work programs admit to lacking in knowledge and confidence in the development of curricula that is appropriate for the international arena, or more often, consider that the existing curriculum is already too full of new material. Some time back, Healy (1986), advanced the idea that attitudes toward inclusion of international perspectives in social work should be mapped on a continuum from social work schools, where they are now merely tolerant, through sporadic activities and more responsive measures such as by offering courses on international issues or international field placements. From the limited studies available and other evidence to date, including the low response to a survey in 2005 carried out by Bareeta-Herman, of the International Association of the Schools of Social Work, (IASSW), it would seem that tolerance or minor responsiveness is the universal standard in social work

education. The need is a shift from tolerant to commitment where schools should have a well articulated and regular element of international social work in the curriculum. However, the situation does change if concerns are expressed in relationship to the need for intercultural learning and development of anti-oppressive approaches in the social work profession, as well as cross-cultural communication skills, cultural competence, and recognition of diversity in local populations. In these areas, social work curriculum and program content has grown. These subjects have relevance to the development of international social work perspectives and at the qualifying stages of curriculum development could mean some reorientation of what is taught and assessed rather than the introduction of new courses.

There has been some literature that has identified the need for inclusion of teaching in relationship to particular skills or approaches, not necessarily in the context of international course development, but which are relevant. For example, Schneider and Lester (2001) identified "advocacy" as a core area in which social work professionals should be proficient and this would fit well in a view of how social work education and practice could be developed both for regional and international contexts. Ramanathan and Link (1999) identified a range of areas in which social work education and practice could be reoriented to equip all social work professionals for work in a globalized world, including relationships to social work ethics. Jones and Kumssa (1999) suggested that international perspectives can be offered through curriculum development, the awarding of dual or joint degree programs, doctoral education, extra-mural activities and fieldwork study abroad.

Johnson (2004) described efforts in the United States to shift a social work school from responsiveness to commitment in international issues by building on experiences gained from faculty involvement to training programs in various countries, and noted the importance of establishing committees that include social work students and representatives from social service agencies to plan strategic developments and opportunities for learning about international social work. Such activities included open lectures, international awareness days, informal social events as well as more emphasis on the recruitment and integration of international students, and established fieldwork placement abroad which included international and cross-cultural focuses in their work. Social work curriculum development accordingly should include women's issues, HIV/AIDS, social and community development approaches, and theories relative to international poverty (Lyons, Manion, & Carlsen, 2006).

Healy (2001) believed that inclusion of environmental studies, peace studies, human rights studies, multicultural education, and developmental studies should be in place in social work curriculum. Additionally, Healy identified core curriculum themes as comparative and hence nice fits for international exposure, such as social policy, social development, and professional development. Healy also identified the desired outcomes for programs that have a specifically international focus in terms of attitude and values, knowledge, and skills. These included skills in cross-cultural work, knowledge of major global issues along with efforts to address them, opportunities for future learning, research, and cross-cultural literature for continued professional development in global social work.

Both Healy (2001) and Lyons (1999) identified international resources for the social work profession as including policy statements and documents periodically produced by the International Association of School of Social Work (IASSW), and the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) as well as international conventions and reports provided by the various United Nations bodies as well as the many INGOs. The potential values of attention to migration theories and policies, including references to disasters and conflict resolution work in the curriculum of professional social work education should be emphasized.

Research has supported the development of specific coursework aimed at providing international and regional as well as cross-cultural learning for social work professionals and students as a main outcome, and leading to appropriately named awards at the first degree or often at the post-graduate levels. These developments have identified essential elements of such programs. Among these are that the student groups are comprised of people from different nationalities and cultures and that this constitutes both a resource and a support system for student learning and growth. All social work students have the opportunity for learning whether through the university curriculum or through social work fieldwork, outside their home country, and that there is a scope of practice for social work students to develop particular areas of interest through a period of independent studies, project work, research, class presentations, and assignments (Lyons & Lawrence, 2006).

Katz (2001) advanced the concept of trans-local counter-topographies, suggesting that various marginalized populations, such as indigenous populations, in different regions of the world present the same issues, requiring similar needs for analysis and strategies for effective change. This concept fits very well with the growing movement of an international social work view that many social issues have international dimensions and consequences, cross over and transcend national borders, and increase the opportunities for social workers on a shared agenda and quest of knowledge and action (Healy, 2001). It is increasingly important to recognize universally relevant concepts and values as well as develop new globally relevant conceptual frameworks for social work education and practice (Healy, 2001).

The time has come to redefine the mission and forms of social work education and practice on an international level to make these more relevant to the new globalized conditions which we now face as a global society. New developments would recognize the growing importance of international civil societies and would accord with Lorenz's (1994) vision of social work educators and practice professionals as citizens committed to humane internationalism, integrating rights and obligations through collective actions. Current views of globalization are often presented in an economic worldview and do not include the concept of global citizenry, social priorities, and human rights.

Ife (2001) has identified social work education and practice as necessary to require work at local and global levels and to bring the idea of an economic worldview and global citizenry together. In this sense, international social work is no longer just a specialization but should actually be an integral part of the social work curriculum and part of day to day professional social work consciousness. This would also include a scope for development of specialized prac-

tices and knowledge as well as social work research, education, and both national and international professional associations. Each should bear some of the responsibilities for developing this new and growing area of social work education and practice, as well as identify the implications of globalization for the social work profession.

The growth and development of social work as a discipline, a profession, and a social science in the developed and developing countries of Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe is the positive outcome of cooperation among both government and voluntary organizations (Ginsberg, 2001). For further development of social work in both developed and developing countries in accordance with the growing needs of the world's people, initiatives should be taken in terms of organizing local, regional, national, and international conferences, seminars, workshops, short term academic exchange programs of faculty and students, incorporation of more international perspectives into the social work curricula and scheme of distance learning as options of reaching out and bridge building of mutual cooperation. Secondly, the role of organizations including education accreditation bodies such as the United States Council on Social Work Education, the Bangladesh Council on Social Work Education and the South Korean Council on Social Work Education, as well as the United States National Association of Social Workers, the Bangladesh Clinical Social Workers Professional Organization, and the South Korean Association of Social Workers should be strengthened for technical supports and proportionate distribution of funds for necessary financial supports to ensure that global north and global south have effective and meaningful networks among social work schools all over the world (Ramanathan & Link, 2001). International supports for the profession would be the development of more universal standards for social work education globally, mutual cooperation amongst international schools of social work, and the development of minimal standards of ethical social work practice to be accepted by all global colleagues. Finally, since historically in many countries the introduction to social work has been the result of charitable efforts of government and non-government organizations, and the United Nations on an international level, their organizational roles play a key part in the process. As a result, many and varied players have major facilitating roles in the international development of social work education and the profession.

In this current era of globalization, international cooperation for the development of social work is not only crucial, it is essential. It is worth mentioning that through indigenization of knowledge and discourses based on individual social, economic, and cultural characteristics of respective societies, academicians, students, and target populations will not have confutation to accept the globalization of social work as such. Thus, it would be more meaningful and instrumental for the social work schools to meet the growing economic, cultural, and psycho-social challenges to make proper utilization of precious and often times scarce resources for improving the life situations of the developing and developed societies all over the globe.

Social Work and Disaster Management

Bangladesh is a nation that is prone to just about every type of natural disaster. In the last 50 years our nation has experienced floods, cyclones, monsoons, earthquakes, drought, war, and famine. The occurrence of these events are more likely to have severe consequences as the effects of global warming become more apparent, as the population density of Bangladesh increases, and as urbanization trends continue. It is also important to distribute resources in such a way that a variety of health concerns are looked at and so that certain marginalized groups such as women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities, are assured proper care and treatment.

The growing and unique challenges from natural disaster faced by our nation calls forth the need for well prepared professionals in social work and disaster management. In the event of a severe natural disaster, hundreds of thousands of people would meet certain death in Bangladesh. There is no doubt we must rely on well prepared professionals both internally and internationally to address the social, economic, political, and physical needs of the nation in the event of a major disaster.

Social Work and Poverty Reduction

Both the Government of Bangladesh and NGOs have worked to reduce poverty over the past three decades. The Government of Bangladesh has implemented five five-year plans and one two-year plan in order to alleviate poverty. The Government of Bangladesh has had several in-kind food assisted programs to benefit the poor. Some of these programs include Food-for-work, Test Relief, Food for Education, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF). Despite these efforts, the actual numbers of those in poverty has increased over the last two decades.

The most poverty stricken areas according to the 2010 CIRDAP assessment on development initiatives are the Barisal and Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh. These areas are often prone to droughts, floods, as well as various other natural disasters. In a community which relies on agriculture for its income, these natural phenomena can be devastating. The effects of these disasters are most prevalent in the months of March and April, when the Monga season starts. As this is a season in Bangladesh where agriculture is slow, the risks of malnutrition of the most vulnerable populations' increases.

The nation is in need for more well prepared social work professionals to address the problems of poverty, malnutrition, public health related issues, and rural to urban migration. Understanding the uniqueness of our nations climate, food chain (from farm to store), and levels of poverty is necessary to find new and creative ways of reducing famine, malnutrition, and untimely death.

Government efforts are carried out and coordinated by the Department of Social Services and the Bangladesh National Social Welfare Council under the Ministry of Social Welfare. On the nongovernmental front there is currently no unified professional body. Two professional bodies of social workers in the country exist, namely, Bangladesh Council on Social Work Education and Bangla-

desh Clinical Social Workers Professional Organization; however, their activities are not extensive. Even their online presence is limited. The absence of a professional body thoroughly involved and connected with the field outside academic circles is a serious problem.

One solution, may be, the formation of a national professional body with pragmatic leadership from the academic programs at the different universities, active membership from the NGOs and other social welfare organizations and with links to the Government of Bangladesh. Such a body should, for reasons of practicality, have strong ties with academics and professional bodies of other countries and be linked to international organizations.

Such a professional body is absolutely necessary in Bangladesh for the formulation of policy and for making need-based modifications of the academic curricula at the universities, which are based solely on UN recommendations, for the development of a program best suited to the needs of Bangladesh. Such a body, which is not disconnected from the reality of Bangladesh, is also needed for coordinating efforts of nongovernmental organizations and the government; to create synergy for the maximization of results in the field.

The Use of Western Models

In the Western world, when Constantine I legalized the Christian Church in the Third Century, the new legitimized church developed poor houses, homes for the aged, hospitals, and orphanages. These programs were often funded at least in part from grants from the Roman Empire. By 590, the Christian Church had a system for circulation of consumable goods to the poor, associated with each parish that held a diaconium, or an office of the deacon.

As there was no effective bureaucracy below city governments that was capable of charitable activities of the time, the clergy served in this role in Europe up through the 18th Century. During the Middle Ages, the Christian Church had vast influence on European society and charity was considered to be the responsibility of church members as a sign of one's piety to God. This charity was in the form of direct relief such as giving of money, food, and goods to assist those who lived in poverty. The efforts were clearly charity based and there was no work directed toward understanding the root causes of poverty or how to alleviate it. The practice and profession of social work is a relatively modern one, beginning in Europe and the United States in the early 19th Century. Origins of social work herald from several social science disciplines and is based on scientific knowledge and understanding.

It is difficult to give a date to the beginning of the social work profession. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in the United States declared in 1998 the 100th Anniversary of the social work profession. However, that year actually was the hallmark anniversary of the first social work training program in the United States. This was a summer school program that was held in the state of New York in 1898. Earlier trainings for social work did exist in England, and perhaps even elsewhere prior to 1898. The first actual School of Social Work in history began in Amsterdam in 1899. In the countries in which social work developed, helping activities began under a variety of different chari-

ties and programs. One must ask then, should these charitable works also be labeled as "social work?" Is the fact that they became secular charities rather than exclusive and controlled by religious organizations make the services "social work?" Is the fact that the programs and activities were eventually the life work of some people (such as Jane Addams and Mary Richmond) instead of one time charities or volunteer activities hallmark the start of social work?

Van Wormer (1997), reported that the first recorded employment of a social worker was the hiring of Mary Stewart, a trained Charity Organization Society (COS) worker, in 1895 by the Royal Free Hospital of London, England. Mary Stewart's tasks were to determine whether patients were eligible for free medical treatment. Some would attest that social work became a profession when those providing such social services began to systematize their efforts and to train others to provide services in a similar fashion.

The easiest dates to identify the beginning of formalized training in social work would be the earlier markers as the establishment of agencies such as settlement houses and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), founded in 1855 in England and in 1858 in the United States. Founding of these agencies represented a more organized and systematic approach to provide social services often with paid workers who devoted themselves to the services of the organization.

Several distinctive movements in the evolution of social work as a profession are evident in the development of schools of social work that emerged almost simultaneously in London, Amsterdam, New York City, and Berlin around 1900 (de Jongh, 1972). For a long time it has been thought that this was a spontaneous development but new research into correspondence and papers from her work show that Mary Richmond, a pioneer in social case work in the United States read extensively on the COS movement in England and attended committee meetings in London at which the training courses were being developed (Kendall, 2000). Formal training in the United States and in Europe was organized to meet the needs of staff providing social services that had been developed to address the human needs that were by products of the Industrial Revolution. Family services, settlement houses, and assistance to orphans, widows, immigrants, and young working women began to emerge in response to harsh employment conditions. In contrast, de Jongh stated "I do not know of any developing country in which social work education was an original product of national development; the origins can always be traced back to strong foreign influences." Thus, social work evolved in the United States and Europe as an indigenous response to the conditions of late 19th Century life, and social work was introduced later in to countries in Asia and Africa by European and American influences to address the problems of under-development. Another significant pattern which emerged after de Jongh's work is the introduction of modern social work in the countries of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, including Russia, the nations of Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam, all of which had substantial foreign influences.

Social work, as a profession, as stated above, originated in the 19th Century. The social work movement began primarily in England and the United States. After the end of feudalism, the poorest members of society were seen as

more of a direct threat to the social order of the wealthy and as such the state formed an organized system to care for them and ensure a status quo. In England, the Elizabethan Poor Law served this purpose. This system of laws sorted poor people into different categories, such as the able bodied the impotent poor, and the idle poor. This system developed different approaches of help based on one's categorization and responses to deal with their plight. The 19th Century brought in the Industrial Revolution, which was a great leap in scientific achievement for the time. This also resulted in a great migration of people from rural to urban areas throughout the Western world. This in turn led to many new social problems, which led to an increase in social activism.

The 19th Century brought on a greater push from Protestant missionaries, some of which were urban based and attempts were made to resolve the problems inherently found in larger cities, such as poverty, prostitution, and disease. In the United States, workers known as "friendly visitors" were given stipends by churches and other charity organizations to work through direct relief, prayers and evangelism to alleviate poverty. In Europe, chaplains or almoners of the churches were appointed to administrate to the needs of society's poor (Parker-Oliver & Demiris, 2006).

Further, the 19th Century brought about rescue societies that were initiated to find appropriate methods of self support for women involved in prostitution. Mental asylums began to mushroom in urban areas as a means of taking care of the mentally insane. A new philosophy of "scientific charity" emerged during this time which stated that charity should be secular, rational, and empirical, as opposed to sectarian, sentimental, and dogmatic (Huff, 2008).

By the late 1880's, a new system to provide assistance for the social ills of society came into being. This was known as the Settlement House Movement (Huff, 2008). This movement focused on the science of poverty through the three Rs: Research, Reform, and Residence. Settlement Houses provided a variety of services including educational, legal, and health services. These programs also advocated changes in social policy. In an effort to understand the root causes of poverty, workers in the Settlement House Movement immersed themselves in the culture of those they were helping.

In the United States, the various approaches emerging for social work led to a fundamental question, "Is social work a profession?" This debate is traced back to the early 20th Century through debates between Mary Richmond and her Charity Organization Society Movement and Jane Addams through her Settlement House Movement. The essence of this debate amounted to whether the problems of society's poor should be approached from the traditional, scientific method such as the Charity Organization Society, which focused on efficiency and prevention, or should social work be immersed in the Settlement House Movement's identification of the problem, but blurred lines between practitioner and client (Parker-Oliver & Demiris, 2006).

Even as many schools of social work began to open in the United States and formalized processes for social work began to be explored, discussed, and developed, this fundamental question still lingered. By 1915, at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Dr. Abraham Flexner spoke on the topic "Is Social Work a Profession?" Dr. Flexner contended that it was not a

profession because it lacked specialized knowledge and specific applications of theoretical and intellectual knowledge to solve human and social problems (Flexner, 2001). This in turn led to the professionalism of social work as the champions of the movement began to concentrate more on case work and the scientific method.

Prior to the settlement house model of the 19th Century, the focus of social welfare was most prevalent in addressing issues public health. When epidemics would occur, quarantine facilities were built to prevent the spread of disease and contamination. As populations in cities grew, Almshouses were built to house vulnerable people with no other means of financial support, including people with long term illness or older people without families. The first recorded Almshouse was built in 1713 near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by William Penn, and was only open to Quakers. A second Almshouse was built nearby in 1728, this time with publically funded money. By 1736, New York opened the Poor House of the City of New York, later to be known as Bellevue Hospital and in 1737 New Orleans opened the Saint John's Hospital to serve the poor of the city (Gelhert et al., 2006). Over the course of the next century, the face of charity began to change. The precursors to modern hospitals began to form on the grounds of Almshouses, while the Almshouses themselves focused more and more on vulnerable and impoverished people.

Modern social work in the United States has its roots in the mass migrations of the 19th Century. Many of the migrants landed in New York and moved to other eastern cities, where massive overcrowding lead to social problems and ill health (Dillard, 2007). Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell was the United States' first female doctor who set up the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children in the 1853. The dispensary was run to assist the poor communities of New York City's infamous East Side, and it soon diversified beyond a basic pharmacy, providing social assessments and support to local families. In 1889, Jane Addams was a young medical student who set up Hull House in Chicago to work with poor and immigrant communities. The house was both a community service centre and a social research program. Precursors to modern social work arose in Blackwell's infirmary and in Hull House as health professionals began to work with social determinants of poor health (Elston, 2004).

Conclusion

Much of what the world defines as social welfare today has its original roots in Europe or the United States. Bangladesh has adopted much of the Western world view in its development of social work and welfare. While this may provide an educational framework for the development of social work in our nation, we have a definite professional responsibility to redesign the social welfare model to fit within the context of our nation's societal problems and needs.

As our country continues to suffer from the unique social problems of overpopulation, pollution, severe and persistent poverty, and public health ills, we continue to struggle with the financial means to become a more developed and prosperous nation. The need for well trained professionals in social work has never been more pressing. While our nation has lagged in international devel-

opment, the importance of taking a more proactive approach in the international arena of human development is a means to establishing our place in the world and its scarce resources.

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