Chapter 24
Social Workers' Understanding of Bi-Culturalism and Its Cultural Differences in Aotearoa New Zealand

Selina Akhter

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Mangere, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

The chapter attempts to review some conceptualizations developed in the literature around the topic cultural appropriateness and examines how culture interacts with child abuse and domestic violence situations of ethnic migrant community. Also, the chapter highlights specific cultural knowledge of ethnic migrant community that the practitioners from different cultures need to deal with in society. The uniqueness of New Zealand is that it takes into account the discourse of the Treaty of Waitangi, history, racism, colonization, Matauranga Maori, etc. while the major focus of the concept cultural sensitiveness developed in multicultural context is on the differences between Western and non-Western cultural values and the legacy of their cultural norms and socio-economic context.

INTRODUCTION

Around 12 percent (Statistics New Zealand, 2013) of the population of New Zealand are ethnic migrants who come from diverse cultural groups representing Asia, South East Asia, Middle East and Africa (Thompson, 1999). In order to help these groups, settle in to New Zealand society, a general understanding about their cultures is crucial for social work practitioners. Although there is a dearth of research based information in this area, experience shows that a number of migrants are not aware of the social services available in the community (Akhter & Rawlinson, 2003). Migrants are particularly reluctant to use services regarding sensitive issues such as child abuse, family violence and mental health because of cultural and spiritual beliefs and values. These sensitive social issues are perceived as personal family

matters by migrant communities and even most of them are not conscious about the existence of laws to protect children and women against abuse and violence. The chapter focuses this area.

In Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledgement of cultural values in providing social services has been a major effort since its origin as a bi- cultural nation in 1840 when Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed. Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed between Maori and Crown, the European settlers. In this vein of working towards bi-culturalism the discourse of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, colonisation, pre-European Maori society, legislative changes, Puao- te- ata- tu, Maori- cultural and spiritual values, models and Tikanga have been the major tools of analysing social issues of Tangata Whenua (Maori) and other migrants. in New Zealand (Durie, 2001). In addition, The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW)'s bi-cultural code of ethics and principles have been regarded as standards to safeguard the Maori values in social work profession. Moreover, in educational sector social work degree programme with the philosophy of Bi- culturalism in practice provides by the tertiary institution 'Te Wānanga o Aotearoa' has introduced Takepū or principles that has been a revolutionary attempt to transform social work education and practice by utilising both Maori and non-Maori bodies of knowledge (Pohatu, 2008).

The ethnic migrant communities which represent about 12 major groups (Thompson, 1999) have added another tool of analysis which is multiculturalism within this present bi-cultural discourse, New Zealand is a bi-cultural nation but the society is multicultural. In this multicultural context the interplay of within and between cultural differences and diversity is distinct. For practitioners to understand this diversity, there has been little information and literature available in New Zealand (Akhter & Rawlinson, 2003). Social work registration Board of Aotearoa (SWRB) has established cultural competence in the code of ethics to address this issue. The knowledge, attitude and skills necessary for the practitioners to work with these communities have been addressed in the code (Yan & Wong, 2005; Waver, 1999). Although the code of ethics can be used as general and abstract guidelines, there is a need to understand the specific aspects of cultural knowledge in providing services to the users who are from ethnic background different from the practitioners.

The present chapter attempts to review some conceptualizations developed in the literature around the topic cultural appropriateness and examines how culture interacts with child abuse and domestic violence situations of ethnic migrant community. Also the chapter highlights specific cultural knowledge of ethnic migrant community that the practitioners from different culture need to deal.

Conceptualisation of Addressing Cultural Issues

In the literature a number of terminologies have been used interchangeably to refer the issue of culture such as bi-culturalism, multiculturalism, cross cultural practice, cultural safety, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness or practitioner's self-awareness etc.

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The Bachelor of bi- cultural Social Work (BBSW) taught in Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is one of the Indigenous education programmes that has invited both teachers and students to reclaim their ancestors' knowledge in the context of social work in Aotearoa. Research (Akhter & Leonard, 2014; Anderson, 2011; Freeman, 2011) revealed that both students and teachers perceived the course as an emancipatory

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