

Chapter 2

Social Work and Its Complexity in Aotearoa New Zealand: The Need for the Infusion of Indigenous Practice Frameworks

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ABSTRACT

The Social workers need to call on a broad range of sources of bodies of knowledge and respond to the complexity and its chaotic nature of situations arising in social work profession. There appears to be dire need to consider the use of (a) the theoretical knowledge into practice by being more caring and supportive with the aim of (b) disentangling the various elements of a complex system and enhancing the resilience both of the people involved and the social and organizational systems that they are intertwined with people lives. The current acknowledgement of the bi-cultural framework by the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) is no doubt a positive move towards infusing indigenous practice frame work into dealing with the chaotic nature and complexity of the social work profession in New Zealand but still remains to be seen in actual social work practice .The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to explore the potential of infusing Indigenous bodies of knowledge into practice against the background of the complexity nature of the social work profession in a developed world like New Zealand.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization of the political economies and the powerful role of supra institutions like International Monetary Fund (IMF) / World Bank (WB) and world Trade Organization (WTO) drastically changed the lives of people around: Many countries are witnessing a huge unprecedented dramatic transformation of bodies of knowledge anchored from a euro-centered interpretation framework and per-

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Social Work and Its Complexity in Aotearoa New Zealand

spective. Some of the advancement and the transformation of the bodies of knowledge witnessed in the domains of biotechnology (genetic and biotechnological discoveries), electronic revolution (information and communication) applied social sciences and medical sciences have increased tremendously in forms of theories and models of practices. The process of transformation of euro-centred bodies of knowledge have resulted and profusely redefined and influenced the (way) bodies of knowledge can be owned, delivered and shared, with market price tag on it, in the society. As a consequence the transformation of bodies of knowledge have influenced, manifested and redefined the international movement of Capital / labour and technology commonly known as globalization. And the transformation of these bodies of euro-centred knowledge has created a highly rigid paradigm especially within the developed countries. In the context the application of euro-centred bodies of knowledge in the domain of social services were detrimental to the indigenous people mainly due to the ignorance of their cultural background.

Many times the outcome of the social policies has failed to improve the requirements and aspirations of the indigenous people especially in the developed countries since they had to face the negative fallout through the application of the euro-centred bodies of knowledge such as in the domain of Nursing / Clinical Assessment and Intervention/Social Services / Justice and Education. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the economic history of the colonized countries which had undergone a rigorous assimilated inclusive polity where the dominate colonizers (Crown) had out rightly rejected the traditional bodies of knowledge and practices frameworks. This led to the steep decline and neglect of indigenous beliefs and social support systems and practices existing within the indigenous societies all through the millennium. The very nature of market driven policies especially and imposition of Euro centred (western) social work education had drastically altered the social work practices. For instance, as Graham (2002:62) argues that the “Prescribed dominant helping approaches as universally applicable in concepts and methods.....the knowledge base for these approaches is located in expert knowledge which is inextricably bound to Eurocentric, male understandings of the world as the source of explanatory theories and therapeutic ideas. This knowledge has been shaped by one-dimensional experiences, values and view of the world as the standard for all human beings”. Further Graham reiterates that the ‘conventional traditional social work practice framework models’ have been ineffective in addressing the needs of those who are not members of the dominant culture. Which had proved to work and reinforce the patterns of discrimination and disadvantage towards the indigenous people? Because these social work theories, models of practice and textual content and intent were mainly driven by the euro-centred paradigms which tend to stigmatize the indigenous and its culture. The mainstream academia being selective in ignoring the indigenous community’s past histories and cultural / spiritual experiences and practices and labelling them backward and traditional with no scientific validity.

The resulting inherent nature of ‘colonization’ polity had deteriorated the socio-political and economic fibers of the Indigenous people with in the mainstream society. The appalling statistics in the developed countries reveals the involvement indigenous community either in crime or being part of the State beneficiary. In regards to the social services domains, the overall effects of the euro – centered bodies of knowledge being applied social sciences was not being effective in its application and purpose. The stark reality of the colonised history of the indigenous peoples tells oppressive nature of inclusion and assimilations policies of the Crown towards them in past. Which had led to the gradual ‘marginalization’ of these traditional indigenous people especially with in the developed countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Sweden in the domains of health /social services /education and justice in comparative terms. Since the indigenous people’s culture being relegated in background, many of the indigenous community day to day lives became more difficult and their world view not properly

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