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I

Introduction – The Global Growth of Social Work

The Early Days of Professional Social Work

As a formal profession, social work can be dated from the late 1800s (Payne, 2005). These early beginnings can be seen in the combination of activity to create formal education and training for the various practices that were called ‘social work’ at that time. The objectives of early social work were focused almost entirely on assistance for those people who were seen to be experiencing problems of daily life that were grounded in poverty. Whether we consider the work of the Charity Organization Societies, hospital almoners and ‘police court missionaries’ (focused on assistance to individuals and families) or the work of the Settlement Movement (focused on communities) the common factor was the impact of industrialization, urbanization and modernization on those people who were regarded as lacking resources to deal effectively with the problems that they encountered.

These main types of early professional social work can be seen to have developed at around the same time in many countries of Northern Europe, Scandinavia and North America. A significant aspect of professionalization was the move to establish education and training programmes at a university level. This has been identified as having been particularly significant given the numbers of women from middle-class backgrounds who entered social work at this time, but whose opportunities for a professional identity were limited (Walton, 1975). Different claims are made about which of the various national developments of professional social work education can be considered the ‘first’ instances of formal tertiary level programmes. For example, Riga (2008, p. 73) refers to the Amsterdam School of Social Work as ‘the world’s oldest school’ (it was founded in 1899 and is now the School of Social Work and Law in the Hogeschool van Amsterdam). In the United Kingdom, training programmes

conducted by members of the Charity Organization Society and of the Settlement House movement from the 1870s coalesced in the London School of Sociology in 1903 (Parry & Parry, 1979). In the United States, the School at Columbia University traces its origins to the New York Charity Organization Society summer course of 1898 (which led to the founding of the School in 1904) (Healy, 2008a, p. 138).

In whatever way we date the beginnings of professional social work, however, the underlying importance of such a debate is often lost in the detail. In other words, the important point to note about these various claims to the origins of professional social work is that they span many countries. For example, Healy (2008b, p. 1) notes that when the First International Conference of Social Work convened in Paris in 1928 there were delegates from 42 different countries. The Second and Third Conferences were held in the 1930s and by 1939, 75 schools of social work from 18 countries were in membership of the International Committee of Schools of Social Work (ICSSW) (Healy, 2008b, p. 4). Also emerging from the First International Conference on Social Work was the International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers, which initially represented social workers from eight countries (Healy, 2008a, p. 177). As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, these organizations grew respectively into the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). At this point, however, what is equally as important, if not more so, than considering in which country different aspects of social work first emerged is that from its earliest days social work as a profession can be seen as international.

By the 1930s social work had also spread from the advanced industrial countries of the global North to some countries of the South, through colonial relationships (Midgley, 1981). In particular, we can note that schools of social work were founded in various countries of the South through the 1920s and 1930s, including programmes at Yanjing University (now Beijing, China) (1922), the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina) (1924), the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai (India) (which was, until 1944, the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work) (1936) and the University of Cairo (Egypt) (1936) (Badran, 1975, p. 38; Viera, 1976, p. 261; Queiro-Tajalli, 1995, p. 87; Department of Urban and Rural Community Development, 2004, p. 31). Professional education was often the driving force in the growth of social work in these countries, with appropriate services being initiated to make use of the graduate workforce, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in Egypt which was founded in 1939 (Walton & El Nasr, 1988, p. 153). That these educational programmes and services were modelled on the work of, and in many instances actually founded by, social workers from the global North is not in question and this point will be discussed in depth in the subsequent chapters.

What is important to note here is that from the early decades of the twentieth century professional social work was spreading rapidly throughout the world.

Social Work Internationally Post-1945

The worldwide conflict of 1939–45 had a major impact on the development of social work. Not only were individual social workers caught up in the conflict in many different ways, but the course of development of the profession as a whole was affected. Among the many individual stories of that time are examples such as that of the founder of the School of Social Work at the University of Warsaw, Helena Radlinska, whose own house as well as the School buildings were destroyed; two-thirds of her colleagues also were killed (Healy, 2008b, p. 6). These events of destruction and loss were repeated in different ways in many places. At the same time social workers also played positive roles embodying values that have come to be seen as core to the profession, such as Irena Sendler who, amongst many others, worked at personal risk to protect the lives of Jewish children in the middle of the Holocaust (Wieler, 2006).

Social work was also part of the post-war reconstruction. At a national level, in different countries, social workers participated in the rebuilding of social infrastructure. Internationally, too, social work played an important post-war role. For example, the ICSSW (as it still was until 1955) was involved from the earliest days in the fledgeling United Nations (UN). It was granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1947 and the various organizations that grew from the ICSSW and the Permanent Secretariat (IASSW, ICSW and IFSW) have maintained this link to the present time. The then president of the ICSSW, René Sand (who was both a physician and a social worker), played a prominent role in the establishment of the World Health Organization (WHO) (Eilers, 2008, p. 65), and one of his successors as president of the IASSW, Herman Stein, was very influential in the early days of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (Kendall, 2008, pp. 111–13). As we will see in subsequent chapters, the UN and its various constituent organizations (especially UNICEF) in different ways have been part of the development of social work internationally, both in the form of having key international social workers in influential roles within them and in providing institutional support for the development of the profession. (We will also see, paradoxically, that there are strong arguments in favour of the view that other entities of the UN act in such a way as to create the conditions that necessitate social work and related forms of intervention.) Significant international non-government organizations (INGOs), such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have also had a close relationship with social work since the immediate post-war era, with the same mixture of social work action in their formation and in their

contribution to the development of international social work (Healy, 2008a, p. 123).

One of the significant global trends of the 1950s through to the 1970s was the achievement of independence from colonial rule by many countries in Africa and Asia. It is in this period that an increasing concern with social development became part of the debates about international social work (Hall & Midgley, 2004). In some countries social work either emerged in this period as part of the social development movement or became associated with social development as a practice. In other countries, however, this connection was not made or else the development of social work followed a Western model of what Midgley (1981, 1997) has described as 'remedial welfare'. Thus, social work in this period has to be understood in the context of what has come to be known as 'post-colonialism' or 'neo-colonialism'.

Social work in 'post-colonial' settings has, in many instances, been part of a struggle between processes of modernization and a critical rejection of the dominance of Western influences. It is in this period that the ideas of 'indigenization' and 'authentization' came to identify a central debate in the field of international social work (Walton & El Nasr, 1988; Osei-Hwedie, 1993; Nimagadda & Cowger, 1999). The question is whether forms of social work from countries of the global North can be adapted appropriately for the national and cultural contexts into which they are introduced (indigenization) or whether it is necessary to construct a genuinely local professional model (authentization) (Walton & El Nasr, 1988, pp. 148–9; see discussion in Chapter 5). Critics of the processes by which social work spread from the countries in which it originated, especially those who consider that 'international social work' has effectively been the importation of (often individualized American models) theory and practice from the global North into other countries, have even at times questioned whether the very concept of social work itself is relevant in the global South (Midgley, 1981; also see Gray & Fook, 2004; Payne & Askeland, 2008). At the same time, the professionalization of social work has been a part of the wider processes of modernization in countries of the global South that has been embraced by practitioners and academics in the social welfare field in much the same way that it was also sought enthusiastically in earlier decades by those in the global North.

From the 1980s through to the present day we can continue to see the growth of professional social work in various parts of the world, including Africa, Asia, Eastern and Southern Europe, the Pacific Island states and South America (see, e.g.: Yuen-Tsang & Sung, 2002; Ku et al., 2005; Mafle'o, 2006; Osei-Hwedie et al., 2006; Hugman et al., 2007). The debates about indigenization and authentization continue to be central in all of these regions (Osei-Hwedie, 1993; Yan & Cheung, 2006), as do those between micro-level 'remedial' practices that focus on individuals and families and macro-level 'development'

approaches that focuses on organizations, policies and systems (Mendes, 2007; Olson, 2007). Thus, although social work is now established as a profession in 90 countries (as understood in terms of membership of the IFSW [2008b]), and social workers from around the world regularly engage in dialogue through meetings and conferences, it could be said that the understanding of social work internationally is now more diverse than ever.

But, assuming that such a description is plausible, is this necessarily a negative situation? Recent critical scholarship has questioned the pursuit of a unitary view of social work that embraces all countries and situations (Gray & Fook, 2004). This argument is based on the idea that any sense of the commonalities of social work around the world must, necessarily, be both broad and limited. In so far as social work theory and practice is required to take account of cultural differences then comparisons will have to focus on the ways in which social work can be authentically contextualized. From this point of view, an emphasis on difference is desirable, even if it leads to a sense that there is no one single entity called 'social work'. Against this view, as has already been implied above, is the idea that there is a sufficient degree of commonality in goals and values that unite social workers in all parts of the world for a common purpose. From this point of view, it can be said, international social work is more than simply a series of connections between particular countries but in recent years has come to represent a more thoroughly 'global' phase in the development of the profession. As is made clear in the subsequent chapters of this book, this question of similarity and difference is now one of the most critical issues in understanding international social work.

Social Work and Globalization

The similarities and differences between countries and cultures is one of the central elements in discussions of the phenomenon that has come to be known as 'globalization'. This concept refers to an analysis of the contemporary world that sees all national economic, political, social and cultural systems as having become increasingly integrated (Bauman, 1998; George & Wilding, 2002). As Sklair (1999) notes, there is not only one theory of globalization but rather this concept is a collection of ideas that variously emphasize the economic, the political, the social or the cultural dimensions of the integration between nation states. Although Sklair himself tends to favour the notion of a 'global capitalist model', because of what he sees as the importance of transnational practices (i.e., where individuals and organizations act across national borders without being tied to any one location), at the same time he also notes that political, social and cultural aspects are also important. Indeed, he argues that although there are many negative aspects to this process, to the extent that it is now inevitable

it also represents a positive opportunity if used for the pursuit of humanitarian, democratic and just ends.

As many discussions of international social work such as Lyons (1999), Lyons et al. (2006) and Cox and Pawar (2006) have noted, it is not possible to begin to analyse all the different issues that constitute international social work without grasping the significance of globalization and its impact on both social work practices and the social systems within which it is located. For example, the actions of social work are contextualized by the impact of economic, political and cultural globalization. Lyons (1999, pp. 31–5) traces the way in which various major international events of the last 50 years have established the background for international social work. These include the post-war reconstruction policies; the ‘Cold War’; the formation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the oil crisis of the mid-1970s; the evolution of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into the World Trade Organization (WTO); the breakdown of the political bloc dominated by the Soviet Union; the growth of other blocs such as the European Union (EU) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN); the influence of neo-liberal economics and the ‘structural adjustment’ policies of the IMF and the World Bank. (‘Structural adjustment’ refers to shifts within national economic policies from state to private ownership of key industries, the deregulation of markets and reduced trade barriers such as tariffs – all of which are intended to increase trade and hence national wealth.) All of these events have contributed to major shifts in the possibilities for the projects that characterize international social work.

Two particular world events serve to illustrate the way in which such events impact on social work. The first of these is the breakdown of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. The shift over the last two decades from managed economies and political systems to Western-style democracy and market economies has brought significant changes both in daily life for the populations of these countries and the opening up of possibilities for greater communication with other parts of the world. Of particular concern to social workers has been the disclosure and rise of the incidents of social needs in these countries. In the post-Soviet era, for example, there have been opportunities for INGOs of various kinds to develop projects in the countries of Eastern Europe. Some of these have involved professional social workers, while others have not. Some also can be described as having used progressive approaches, while again others have implemented projects and used practices that from the value position of professional social work can be said to be questionable (Payne & Askeland, 2008, p. 125).

The impact of the ‘structural adjustment’ policies and programmes of the IMF and World Bank also have had a marked impact on the terrain of social work. This is most frequently recognized in discussions of social development (Midgley, 1997; Dominelli, 2007). In some parts of the world economically

driven development has led to industrial manufacturing and commercial agriculture replacing more traditional local economic activity. As markets have shifted geographically in order to provide high rates of return for international business, local populations, usually in developing countries, have then found themselves simultaneously without employment and no longer having the infrastructure to provide alternative sources of income from their own labour. At the same time, structural adjustment policies had required national governments either to cease development of, or to drastically reduce, social security systems (Deacon, 2007, p. 47). So the net effect was that, at least in some countries, large sections of the population ended up in situations of as much or greater poverty than previously, sometimes because of growing disparities in wealth despite increasing average per capita levels of income (UNDP, 1999; George & Wilding, 2002). Women and children were particularly negatively affected by the impact of these policies (UNICEF, 1999). Moreover, it should be recognized that the impact of such policies is to create conditions in which the more individual and family focused concerns of social workers are exacerbated, including problems of children's well-being and safety, domestic violence, substance misuse and other social issues that can be associated with social stress.

Over the last half-century, the longer-term trajectory of the impact on social welfare of global economic, political and cultural developments can be described as that of an increasing emphasis on state-based institutions and systems of the post-1945 period which faltered in the 1970s and then was subsequently replaced by various forms of privatization, with the drivers in both directions being economic and political in combination. For writers such as Midgley (1997) and Stiglitz (2003) this rise and fall of social approaches to human well-being must be seen as part of the impact of neo-colonialism. The demise of the 'welfare consensus' in the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was imposed more widely through institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO in ways that echo the manner in which earlier social structures and political systems had been imposed around the world through colonial administrations. For example, the policy goal of 'rolling back the welfare state' was a priority of domestic policy not only in these Western countries, but such changes were buttressed by the restructure of global aid and development as well as a concern with trade and international economic relations. Social welfare was retrenched in the domestic sphere and at the same time in relations between nation states. Indeed, the latter strategy was intricately bound up with the former. In this sense it may even be plausible to see the process as that of applying the same principle to both domestic and foreign policies: those who had come to depend on the provision of direct welfare were to be required to learn to 'fend more for themselves' (i.e., cease to rely on the support of these governments, whether of their own nation or as part of the international community).

The Nation State and Globalization

In so far as each of these definitions of international social work is based on the idea of movement between countries they assume the existence of the nation state and the political, cultural and moral authority exercised by the state. Thus they raise the question of whether it is possible to envisage a social welfare system or social work practice that is not shaped in some way by the nation state within which the system or practice is to be found. The conventional answer to this question would be to say that the history of social work as a modern profession is often articulated around the growth, or otherwise, of welfare states (compare Esping-Andersen, 1990, and George & Wilding, 2002, with Payne, 2005). Consequently, the various forms of the profession can be seen in terms of the differences between such states, such as in the extent to which social work is provided directly by state institutions, by NGOs or through a private market (Barnes & Hugman, 2002). For this reason, the form of social work that is possible in any particular location is structured by the type of welfare regime in that country. Thus it can be argued that the possibilities for social work are circumscribed by national borders and that this is the case even if we are talking about 'international' social work.

Both in scholarly analysis and popular discussions, the notion of 'globalization' has come to be part of standard terminology in the last two decades. Underlying this concept is the idea that through the rapidly increasing complexity and potential of technology, economic, political, legal, social, cultural and environmental systems have become integrated across the world (Mishra, 1999; Seitz, 2008). Some analysis argues that there is now, effectively, a single global market and a single global political system at the supra-national level (Stiglitz, 2003). Others have suggested that a single 'global' culture is developing, in the phenomenon that Ritzer (2000) has called 'McDonaldization' (in which the sameness of this fast food chain in every country serves as a metaphor for worldwide uniformity). From this point of view, even though national governments continue to exercise authority within their own countries, such authority is effectively limited by the impact of global systems and relationships, so that in economic and political matters national governments now operate as a local level to global society. This view argues that under conditions of globalization we must begin to contend with the possibility that national borders are weakening and that social, political and economic systems are becoming both more fluid and more interconnected, leading to a global homogenization of the human condition.

At the same time, many of the analysts of globalization have also questioned the limits of this process. Bauman (1998), for example, challenges the extent to which globalization is to be seen as having succeeded in weakening national borders, as opposed to having reconfigured the relations between states. Some

states may have been brought closer together, such as in the EU or ASEAN, but these remain groups of states with separate national systems and identities. Indeed, as Asad (2000) notes, the causes of the international movement of capital that characterizes economic globalization come precisely from the capacity of nation states to manage their local economies differently. The movement between countries of various industries including clothing, motor vehicles or computing and other high-technology equipment occurs precisely because countries can compete with each other on the basis of labour costs that include business taxes as well as local wage rates. However, Asad (2000) also qualifies this understanding with a recognition that states are equal in terms of political sovereignty but are not equal in terms of the types of power that they can exercise. This is seen not only in classic colonial relationships, but also in contemporary neo-colonial linkages through economic and other forms of dominance by certain countries over others. Stiglitz (2003) likewise argues that the argument for a single global system is overstated, pointing to the dominance of economics in such an argument and noting that not only in areas of society and culture does greater technological and communicative integration highlight *difference* as much if not more than commonality, but also that dissent (including terrorism) has increased along with trade and economic integration. George and Wilding note that such differences are almost always in the favour of the global North as against the global South (2002, pp. 110–12), which may serve as an explanation, at least partially, of the globalization of violent dissent and terrorism.

This is not to suggest, however, that there is not a widespread agreement among theorists that the contemporary world is marked by highly integrated economic, political and cultural systems. What happens in one part of the world impacts on many other parts and the extent and speed of such effects has been increased greatly by the ‘new’ technologies (Sklair, 1999; Seitz, 2008). These have not only enabled previously existing forms of information to be transmitted more quickly, but have also provided the basis for the development of new forms of economic or political structures. The spread of international financial institutions (which in themselves combine previously separate sectors such as banking and insurance) and the formation of new supra-national political entities such as the EU and ASEAN are examples of this. In the political realm the management of populations, for example in the control of population migrations, has been expanded through the use of technology in tracking the movement of individuals across national borders.

The effects of these more recent developments of globalization can be seen not only in relation to economics and politics, but also in the realm of social welfare. Examples of issues that are particularly relevant for international social work that can be seen in these terms include health and human services, education, social security and poverty, work and (un)employment, housing, migration,

crime and so on (George & Wilding, 2002; Deacon, 2007). As we will see in subsequent discussion, dialogue and action between nations now concerns not only trade, security and other issues that previously had been part of global relationships, but also matters of social policy such as access to social services and social security by people moving between countries. As part of this, the increasing connections being made by some governments between trade and aid and development policies have seen a shift from the dominant neo-liberal policies of the previous 20 years. This is illustrated, for example, by the commitments made regarding the alleviation of worldwide poverty by the G8 Summit of 2005 at Gleneagles in Scotland. Notwithstanding the limited impact of action by some countries following from the summit (Deacon, 2007, p. 115), it was notable because of the way in which globalized communication was used to mobilize widespread popular debate and pressure on national governments towards conclusions that were favourable to social democratic rather than neo-liberal policies. The positive actions of many countries following this particular meeting should also be recognized, although it is as yet somewhat early to reach conclusions about their impact.

Deacon (2007) identifies five ways in which the processes of globalization have implications for social policy in general and which for the purposes of this discussion raise questions about the impact on international social work. The first of these implications is that the globalized economy potentially creates a competition between countries producing what Deacon refers to as a 'race to the welfare bottom' (2007, p. 9). By this, Deacon is referring to the argument that in order to secure inward investment from international business, countries are under pressure to reduce the costs of the provision of social welfare (including health, education and social security). However, as Deacon notes, this has not necessarily always been the case and he refers to recent evidence that there are differing impacts of those countries where welfare states were already relatively well-developed (mostly in the global North) and those where they are not (mostly on the global South).

The second policy implication of greater global integration is that the international quasi-governmental organizations, including those associated with the United Nations, as well as the IMF and World Bank, have entered national debates (Deacon, 2007, p. 9). This has in some cases led to the prescription of specific policies for certain countries, usually illustrated by reference to the 'structural adjustment' policies of the 1990s (UNICEF, 1999). However, this process is not monolithic, and even between entities of the United Nations there are differences of policy advice and emphasis. Examples include the defence of social expenditures to promote social cohesion and develop human capital by the International Labour Organization (ILO) or the promotion of redistributive policies by some parts of UNICEF (Deacon, 2007, p. 25).

The third can be seen in the emergence of social policy debate at the supranational level, particularly in regional groupings such as the EU and ASEAN. For example, a distinctively Asian approach to social welfare policies has been identified by some commentators (Kwon, 1998). Whether or not this is in fact the case, or whether a similar phenomenon might be ascribed to Sub-Saharan Africa is open to debate.

Fourth, globalization has created an international private market in social provision. This can be seen in health and human services, education, social insurance and even in criminal justice (such as the provision of private prisons). For example, the last decade in Australia has seen the development of the private provision of some prisons and the whole of the (largely now discredited) immigration detention centre system (Briskman et al., 2008). Similarly, services such as health care in many countries are provided by multinational firms, while university and secondary school education has also become a major transnational industry. These types of developments particularly benefit those who are already advantaged within national economic and political systems.

The fifth area of the impact of globalization and social policy identified by Deacon is that it has encouraged the global movement of people, both individually and in large numbers. Such movements present challenges to national welfare systems. This includes both of those who migrate ‘legitimately’ within the laws and treaties that apply between countries (in that they have prior authorization, such as obtaining visas) and those who shift as asylum seekers (George & Wilding, 2002, pp. 144–6; Cox & Pawar, 2006, pp. 267–74). The former may be welcomed, or even actively sought, by national governments whereas the latter have increasingly come to be perceived as a threat to economic prosperity and political stability. Bauman (1998) makes an ironic distinction between these two types of migrants, respectively, as ‘tourists’ and ‘vagabonds’: the former travel freely while the latter are actively excluded by processes of ‘border security’.

Is Social Work ‘Global’?

In relation to these debates about the reality of globalization and its implications for social policy and social welfare systems, it is necessary to consider the extent to which international social work might be considered ‘global’. As we will see in more detail in subsequent chapters, organizations such as the IFSW, IASSW and ICSW could be said to be ‘global’ in that they seek to bring together all social work from around the world. It is even possible to see international social work as part of the process of globalization within the profession, as both cause and effect. Increased movement of social workers and transmission or exchange

of practices and ideas in social work, it could be argued, lead to an increased homogeneity of the profession between regions and countries. Indeed, in so far as ‘social work’ is now identified as a profession in 90 countries, including on every continent (IFSW, 2008b), the view that there is a common core which unites such a body should at least be given some consideration (Hugman, 2009).

However, at the same time we may conclude that the international movement of social work (however this is understood – this point will be developed further in Chapter 2) is also reflective of the capacity of nation states to manage their welfare systems according to local needs, practices, resources, customs, values and so on. As we will see in more detail in subsequent chapters, even if we accept the idea of a common core to social work it may still be argued that the emphasis in different countries is so diverse that we should reject the idea of integration that is contained in the concept of ‘global’. This argument does not discard the idea of globalization in its entirety but, as with other critical analysis, questions the extent to which the process it describes must be understood as all-embracing. At the same time, such a position can continue to regard (international) social work as part of the web of relationships between countries, even those that are made increasingly more complex through processes of globalization, and to think in terms of the variety of relationships between different national forms of social work.

This latter perspective supports Healy’s assertion (2008a, p. 7), based on her wide review of the definitions of international social work, that it is most helpful to differentiate ‘international’ from ‘global’. One of the major questions that will be addressed in this present analysis is that of the extent to which social work might be said to be the same or different in all the countries in which it has developed as a profession. An understanding of globalization as a complex phenomenon embracing economics, politics, culture and society, and as highly complex in that it has both negative and positive features, therefore provides one thread from which such an inquiry can be woven.

Healy (2008a) explains the difference between ‘international’ and ‘global’ in the following way:

[...] *global* means pertaining to or involving the whole world, whereas *international* can mean any of the following: between or among two or more nations, of or pertaining to two or more nations or their citizens, pertaining to the relations between nations, having members or activities in several nations, or transcending national boundaries or viewpoints (Healy, 2008a, p. 7 – emphasis original).

So to put it simply, for Healy what distinguishes international social work is that it involves any aspect of social work in which there is some relationship between two or more countries or nations. This is a very useful approach, because it

allows a lot of flexibility in considering a variety of practices and structures. It enables the discussion to include, for example, a situation in which a social worker goes from one country to another country in order to practice, or in which there are exchanges between social work academics at universities in two countries, as well as circumstances that affect many or all countries in which social work is practised. (The implications of this definition will be considered in much more detail in Chapter 2.) For the purposes of this discussion, therefore, we can begin with a recognition that ‘global’ (as in the issue of ‘globalization’, for example) is a particular aspect of ‘international’ in relation to social work, implying some degree of integration across the world as a whole.

The Framework of this Book

From the discussion so far, it will be seen that the question of the extent to which social work can be regarded as a globalized profession remains open. This book is partly directed towards providing an answer to this question, along with addressing various other matters concerning the dynamic nature of the profession internationally. So we will return to this point in the final chapter.

The question about the global nature of social work depends, as the starting point, on the way in which we understand international social work. Mention has already been made of the different ways in which international social work can be defined, and so we turn to this particular crucial point in Chapter 2. This chapter articulates the various ways in which international social work can be characterized and the implications that follow from each particular part of the definitions that have been developed by key writers on the subject. The chapter examines what it means to say that social work is ‘international’ and considers who are ‘international social workers’.

In Chapter 3 the analysis focuses on the international issues with which social work is concerned. Existing literature has identified the most crucial of these areas: refugees and forced migration; famine and drought; other natural disasters; poverty; human trafficking; the impact of rapid industrialization, including economic migration within and between countries (with implications about the way in which economic globalization has impacted on local social structures) (Lyons, 1999; George & Wilding, 2002; Hall & Midgley, 2004; Cox & Pawar, 2006; Lyons et al., 2006; Dominelli, 2007). The discussion here examines the opportunities and challenges presented for social work in terms of both programmes and practices. In particular, this chapter is centrally concerned with the role played by social work in responding to these various issues and the way in which social workers act in doing so.

One particular issue that affects many parts of the social welfare field internationally is that of the co-ordinated attempt to deal with poverty in many

countries, particularly developing nations. This can be seen not only in specific events such as the G8 summit of 2005, discussed above, but also (perhaps even more so) in the preceding formulation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2000a; Hall & Midgley, 2004; Deacon, 2007). Very little has been written about the relationship between the MDGs and international social work. Therefore Chapter 4 examines the nature of the MDGs and looks at their implications for international social work. It also then examines the contribution that social work can make in responses to the MDGs and the challenges that they pose for international social welfare.

One of the most long-running debates about the nature of social work, stemming from the earliest date of professionalization, has been the question of whether social work should focus on social issues and human needs at the micro- or the macro-level. As has already been noted, this debate not only continues in those countries where social work first developed, but it is also highly relevant in considering the growth of professional social work in other parts of the world. For example, is a different focus for social work necessary in developing countries compared to those that have advanced industrial structures and well-developed social welfare systems? Or, is the nature of social work such that practices which emphasize working with individuals and families are applicable in any situation? In order to provide answers to these questions, Chapter 5 looks at the variety of forms of social work practice and their relationship to international social work. It also considers ways in which social work in different national contexts can be informed by an international comparative view of the nature and identity of professional social work.

As noted above, attempts to create international organizations in social work date back to the early part of the twentieth century. There are now three major organizations that bring social workers together from around the world and which have a major influence on knowledge, skills and values. These are the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). In addition, there are linked organizations, such as the International Consortium on Social Development (ICSD) and the Commonwealth Organization of Social Workers (COSW). Semi-autonomous regional groupings also exist within some of these organizations. Chapter 6 examines the work of these organizations and the contribution that they make to international social work. In particular, the chapter looks at the way in which the function of these organizations can create a tension between a universal view of the nature of social work and the national and local particularities that shape social work in each setting. It also considers the place of other organizations, such as INGOs and the UN sector in international social work.

Two particular issues are of importance in considering the relationship between the international professional organizations and social work in different

parts of the world. These are education and training and professional ethics. In many respects, it might be argued that the growth of social work is being driven increasingly, at least in those countries where it is relatively new, by a concern for appropriately high levels of education and training for practitioners in the social welfare field (compare, e.g., Namdaldagva, 2004; Osei-Hwedie et al., 2006; Hugman et al., 2007; Tsang et al., 2008). Alongside this, social work is sometimes defined as much by its value base as by particular sets of skills and knowledge (Payne, 2005). The international professional organizations have for a long time played an active role in the development of both these aspects of social work professionalization. In 2004 the IFSW and IASSW approved documents to establish international guidelines for education and training and to revise extensively their previously existing statements on ethics (IASSW/IFSW, 2004; IFSW/IASSW, 2004). Both of these documents have accelerated an already existing debate about the way in which thinking about social worker should be sensitive to cultural and national differences as against notions of commonality (Gray, 2005). Chapters 7 and 8 respectively examine in detail the international statement on standards for education and training and on professional ethics, looking particularly at the critical questions that arise from them in relation to notions of difference and similarity.

Following on from a consideration of education and training, and values and ethics, Chapter 9 revisits Midgley's (1981) now classic critique of 'professional imperialism'. This work firmly established the debate about the extent to which the internationalization of social work hands essentially being the transmission of skills and practices derived from 'Western contexts' into other parts of the world. This discussion extends themes that have already been introduced concerning the importance of diversity, with the implication that social work internationally would better be understood as a set of different practices, compared to the possibility that there is a common core to social work. The chapter raises the idea that those parts of the world in which social work is or may be a product of colonial or neo-colonial relations, namely the global South, have much to contribute to thinking about the profession in the global North.

In conclusion, Chapter 10 draws together the themes of the book with a particular focus on key debates: between micro- and macro-theories and practices, between universal and particular understandings of social work and concerning the dynamics of professionalization internationally. This chapter looks not only at the ways in which international social work might develop in the future, and overcome problems of 'professional imperialism', but also the contribution that a critical understanding of international social work can make to a wider understanding of social work as a whole.

Throughout this discussion there is one particular underlying debate that appears in several forms, namely that between a universal perspective on social work practices, theories and values and that based on the differences between

cultures and societies. This debate can be seen especially in Chapter 5 in relation to different forms of social work and the questions of ‘indigenization’ and ‘authentization’, in Chapters 7 and 8 concerning social work education and professional ethics and in Chapter 9 in the analysis of ‘professional imperialism’. However, it lies behind all the issues that are explored here. In the concluding discussion this debate is highlighted as a central contemporary question that must be grasped in order to understand international social work: it is, in many ways, the central theme of this analysis. But first we must set out the scope of our field of inquiry and, therefore, in the next chapter we start to examine the question of how international social work can be defined and the various elements that have been suggested as important aspects of this phenomenon.

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