

Internationalization and Localization of Social Work Education in Papua New Guinea: The Experience from the University of Papua New Guinea

Editors Choice

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Abstract

The article discusses internationalisation and localisation as responses to, and as embodiments of, globalization and how these processes affect social work education in Papua New Guinea. In particular, the focus is on social work curriculum as principal responses to the effects of globalisation. The application of internationalisation and localisation of social work curriculum in the PNG experiences demonstrates how to operationalise internationalisation and localisation of the aspects of social work education which are common across different contexts. The main argument is that localisation and internationalisation are both important for the development and progress of a culturally relevant and strong social work education and practice globally. Internationalisation enhances international solidarity and joint action to make the social work profession visible and strong. Localisation, on the other hand, enables internationalisation to be relevant and meaningful in specific contexts. It is in this context that both local and global discourses must coexist to ensure credibility, consistency, and relevance in social work education.

Keywords: *Culture; Globalisation; Internationalisation; Localisation; Social work education; Papua New Guinea Advocacy; Compulsory attendance; Special Consideration*

Introduction

Globalisation and education play a critical role in the transfer and trade of the knowledge economy. This reflective paper discusses globalisation and education in the context of internationalisation and localisation of social work education. Internationalisation and localisation here are perceived as significant processes that respond to the effects of, and operationalise, globalisation. Given the multi-faceted nature of globalisation and its subsequent effects on social work education, the paper draws on the relevant literature on the subject and my professional experiences as lecturer in social work at a developing country university, in this case, the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG). It is in this position that I will discuss how social work education in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is responding to globalisation through internationalisation and localisation to establish a curriculum that is relevant, globally and locally.

The aim of the article is to discuss internationalisation and localisation as responses to, and as embodiments of, globalisation and how these processes affect social work education in PNG. The discussion will focus on internationalisation and localisation of social work curriculum as principal responses to the effects of globalisation. First, I will deliberate on how to operationalise internationalisation of aspects of social work education which are common across different contexts. The second theme presents a discussion on challenges for the internationalised and localised social work curriculum. Then I will discuss selected studies on what has worked in internationalising and localising social work education, including those in PNG. This discussion contributes to the increasing debates on globalisation of education and the mission to advance social work education in the Pacific and represents the voices from the global south.

Internationalisation of social work education

Internationalisation embodies the global agenda and definition of social work. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) General Meeting and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly in July 2014 presented a globally agreed definition of social work. According to the IFSW website:

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).

To realise this definition, the Global Agenda on Social Work and Social Development emphasises the promotion of social and economic equalities, the dignity and worth of people, strengthening the importance of human relationships and working toward environmental and community sustainability (IASSW, ICSW & IFSW, 2014). Understanding the internationalisation phenomenon is important because it improves academic quality and enables staff and students in less developed countries to have an international orientation

of social work education. Dominelli (2014) defined it as concerning objectives, processes, practices, policies, challenges, and strategies that link the local with the global. These policies and standards are integral to the internationalisation discourse on codes of ethics and the values and principles for the education and training of social workers (IFSW, 2005). To delve into what internationalisation is, an examination of how it is operationalised is necessary.

Operationalizing internationalisation of social work education

Research has shown that social work is widely recognised as an international profession and a professional academic discipline (Dhemba, 2012). Accordingly, the global definition of social work given earlier places human rights, respect for persons, social justice and professionalism as universally accepted core principles and standards of social work education. Similarly, there are general common themes in education and training for the social work profession. According to Sewpaul and Jones (2004), these themes include the definition, core purpose, objectives and outcomes, curriculum, staff and students, social work values and ethical codes of conduct which are, and should be, an integral part of schools of social work globally.

There is an expectation that these education and practice standards should be adapted and localised in specific national, cultural, and social contexts (IFSW, 2005). But it is the common aspects of social work that are significant for internationalised social work education and practice. According to Crisp (2015), internationalisation emphasises international collaboration to address the increasing expectations for social work schools to incorporate international perspectives to prepare graduates to understand common problems and dominant social work models. The rapid increase in the development of information communication technology (ICT) has enabled online learning and virtual classrooms that further enhanced collaborations to occur effectively and in real time across the globe. This further supports the need for the recognition of international perspectives.

The internationalisation of social work education is a significant social work response to the effects of globalisation on people and communities worldwide. This response is beneficial for social work institutions when the commonalities are utilised for collaboration and resource sharing, including sharing of knowledge and expertise (Brydon et al., 2014). Brydon et al. emphasise collegiality and peer academic coaching for staff as important. However, internationalisation may be exploitative and extraneous in diverse and multicultural settings. Gray and Coates (2010) and Lawihin (2017) demonstrate that such arguments are prominent in the indigenisation and localisation discourses. Localisation is an aspect of indigenisation. Indigenisation is a process where locals take something from outside of their community and make it their own. This involves transformation of ideas and systems to suit local people and culture. Similarly, in the context of social work education, indigenisation means imparting and applying adapted knowledge and skill in a modified manner from western social work instead of replication of the same (Gray & Coates, 2010).

Evidence from Sullivan et al. (2010) provides comparative views on the experiences of a transnational collaboration that developed social work training in Jordan. Similar international

collaborations showed both challenges and rewarding experiences for those involved (Weiss-Gal, 2005). Sullivan et al. (2010) concluded that collaboration is productive when it thrives on the value of awareness of anti-oppressive methods and of empowering, supportive and sharing culture as key to promoting universal principles of human rights and dignity. It means recognising relationships as interdependent, where learning is mutually shared and common agendas exist across national boundaries. This situation helps develop a willing spirit to dialogue on local relevance, familiarisation with local issues and awareness of professional development in other countries. Likewise, it is important to maintain a clear and objective dialogue throughout the collaboration to achieve long-term, sustainable, cross-national partnership.

Sullivan et al. (2010) highlighted key factors of a productive collaboration that include an emphasis on *local* participation where local partners drive curriculum content. This signifies paying attention to Jordanian local culture and practices to inform social work knowledge and processes. Sullivan and colleagues indicate language as an important aspect of local culture. They reported that the workshop was conducted in English and translated into Arabic which demonstrates respect for local contexts; thus, local knowledge informs the localisation of international social work activities.

The above literature promotes commonalities of social work approaches and raises questions of concern regarding diversity and specificity. The key arguments suggest that social work shares some commonalities globally but has different applications in different contexts. There is emerging observation in the literature that balancing the local–global issues is currently not well explored. There is some promise in promoting the local–global aspects of social work through international collaborations among social work professionals and students. This literature highlights shared learning, however, emphasises a need to focus more on the local content and the participants, including attention to local language for instruction.

As an illustration of good practice and how to achieve a balance of the local–global knowledge on a small scale, Dominelli (2014) presents an examination of internationalising professional practices in humanitarian work focusing on tracing the journeys of aid providers and the empowerment of the affected local population. The key findings suggest that, similar to other descriptions of collaborations (Brydon et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2010), internationalisation proceeds through exchanges between players and residents when these exchanges are empowering, reciprocal, meet locally determined needs, and when decision-making powers are shared with the local residents. This implies that partnerships must embrace locally driven processes and power sharing between external and local organisations in order for internationalisation and localisation of practices to be culturally relevant in any context. It is also evident that the recipients of humanitarian aid prefer locality-specific, culturally relevant interventions under their control. This reinforces a common empowerment phrase that calls for international professionals to “work with the locals rather than working for them” (Dominelli, 2014, p. 1). This will enable better articulation of meaningful internationalisation by localising professional knowledge and practices when local ownership defines what the work is and how to do it.

Research (Weiss-Gal, 2005; Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008) has shown that social work as a profession and academic discipline has some core commonalities (as well as variations) globally. These studies involve comparison across 10 countries of different cultural, economic, political, and social contexts conducted at different times. Although the findings are limited to the views of Bachelor of Social Work graduate students and academics respectively from a small number of social work schools in the selected countries, the studies indicate significant common concern and frameworks of social work and its different roles and approaches. The common aspects concern participants' understandings of the structural nature of poverty and how to deal with it and the goals of the social work profession, (Weiss-Gal, 2005). Building on from Weiss-Gal's study, Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008) argued that these common themes are important for the professionalisation and internationalisation of social work education and practice. However, there are differences, largely determined by the specific circumstances of an individual country. For example, there is less emphasis on individual wellbeing in Hong Kong because its dominant culture is based on the principles of Confucianism, which focuses on family welfare and respect for others (Weiss-Gal, 2005). The main argument, therefore, is that having a clear understanding of social work's commonalities and differences across various contexts allows for better engagement with the global knowledge discourse. Such a global understanding and engagement can enable us to teach students about relevant aspects of international social work.

Lalayants et al. (2014) studied students' views on methods that make teaching international social work successful in three different universities and reveal different preferences about the content. There are common interests in gaining practical experience and exposure to real life practice of international social work shared by local and international students. This claim links well to Weiss-Gal's (2005) notions of international social work as being about common concerns and approaches. Such shared concerns create safe spaces for students of various cultural backgrounds to discuss their fears and ideas and ask questions on populations of their interest. Therefore, the study confirms that social work education should include global perspectives to match students' interests. Consequently, this will likely increase the knowledge of international perspectives on the teaching, research, and practice of social work. However, this may be limited to addressing specific and often useful knowledge and practices that are unique to particular cultures and country contexts. The perpetual interplay of commonalities and differences in social work education needs to be clearly articulated in the global social development agenda (Nikku & Pulla, 2014) and the free-market knowledge economy.

Building on the global project, Nikku and Pulla (2014) discuss key factors confronting and influencing social work education and practice in the Asia-Pacific area. This study suggests that internationalisation and localisation are complementary and are related to broader global goals. While this finding is limited to a few social work academics participating in the process of embracing the global agenda, it is reported elsewhere that social work academics and practitioners have a global commitment to promote the respect for human dignity and worth, ethical values and global standards that lay the framework for mutual collaboration (IASSW, ICSW & IFSW, 2016). Further discussion on mutually beneficial collaborations are covered later.

Next is a discussion on the challenges of international collaborations, a key approach to internationalising social work education.

Challenges for internationalised social work

Developing a common social work curriculum through international collaborations requires a sound internationalised approach. However, there is either limited research on internationalised social work education in PNG. Dominelli (2014) argued that internationalised social work is achieved when there is congruency in the content and form of the curriculum, student and staff mobility, and the university policy documents embrace global consistency and local relevance. Yet, a reflection on a collaborative project highlights the challenges in developing such a common curriculum, even when quite similar countries are involved, in this case Australia and some European nations (Crisp, 2015). Despite the successful project, Crisp (2015) concluded that the participating schools struggled to develop elements of a curriculum that could be shared. These were seen to emerge due to the issues of unequal value placed on the interplay between key aspects of collaboration in respective country settings. The notable struggles involved giving “priority to local requirements”, and different “assumptions about social work, the practicalities of implementing joint curriculum and common factors for determining content,” (Crisp, 2015, p. 7). This supports Weiss-Gal’s (2005) findings regarding different social work practices in different countries, reflecting the presence in specific fields of practice of an individual versus community focus.

Although the key argument focuses on giving priority to local requirements, this necessitates struggles in the development of a common international curriculum. According to Crisp (2015), the key learning for future similar endeavours is for the parties involved to be clear about the scope of collaboration, understanding partners and being aware of language implications. In addition, similar barriers and challenges are found to be associated with practising social work abroad. Apart from language barriers, understanding local knowledge and cultural norms, different systems and legal frameworks including what social work “looks like” and focuses on in different settings are important (Fouché et al., 2016; Lalayants et al., 2014). These factors are essential to practise effectively in a foreign setting. According to Fouché et al. (2016) there is a need for “culturally informed interventions to enable an increasingly global workforce to successfully make a professional cultural transition” (p. 2).

Furthermore, Nuttman-Shwartz and Berger (2011) identify certain motivations for educators, students and practitioners who engage in international fieldwork exchanges. For example, they found that educators are motivated to maintain professional standards and increase the recognition of their responsibility in preparing students for professional practice after graduation. Similarly, in responding to the effects of globalisation on both knowledge and practice fronts, faculties wish to help improve students’ ability in innovative practices cross-nationally and cross-culturally at personal and professional levels. Practitioners’ involvement gives them an opportunity to learn about social problems and intervention strategies from another country and to develop their ability to apply strategies back in their own settings. A practical example in PNG has proven that physical collaborations in international social work have worked.

This collaboration emphasises the significance of a social work curriculum that equally embraces local and international social work content.

What works in internationalising social work education in PNG?

Negotiating and establishing collaborations on face-to-face and virtual platforms, between and among different countries to further internationalisation, can be both challenging and rewarding. The project outlined by Crisp (2015) acknowledges the differences in social, political, economic, cultural and institutional development contexts emphasising teaching, policy and leadership as critical components for further collaboration. Indeed, a meaningful model between universities for enhancing social work education has developed that builds on commonalities in both countries (Weiss-Gal, 2005). This model of internationalisation promotes the professionalisation of social work in specific cultural contexts such as in PNG through the process of localisation of global social work definitions, values and standards.

An edited publication by Ravulo et al. (2019) of a recent collaborative project, involved social work educators who have either indigenous or institutional links to Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, PNG, Samoa and Tonga. The project has two primary objectives. First is to enhance Pacific indigenous knowledges and ways in our social work teaching and second, to bridge the gaps between Pacific social work education, practice, policy, and research. UPNG has two of its social work lecturers participating in this collaborative project.

The Moana Cooperative Inquiry is the principal approach used in our collaboration. This is a Pacific indigenous research methodology that epitomises the value of relationships and narrative culture that define the meanings and identities of Pacific peoples. In the Moana project, the approach is action-oriented, where co-researchers who have shared interest collaborate in developing innovative ways to understand situations and act to drive positive change. The Moana project involves social work educators collaborating to bridge gaps between Pacific social work education, practice, policy and research. Moana refers to Pacific approaches that create a dynamic community across nations and institutions. In the project, each participant worked on different projects and shared reflections in monthly online meetings over a 12-month period. These reflections are utilised to support social work education that meets the needs of diverse local communities in the Pacific. This regional collaboration has been positive and successful.

The success of the project has been attributed to continuous, monthly reflections in the form of written journals and meetings face-to-face and online of the collaborators. The publication is a significant success indicator of this collegial collaboration of Pacific social work educators. The book is now an important resource that is utilised in the teaching of social work at UPNG and elsewhere. Participants are empowered because we are claiming the indigenous Pacific space in social work education and building a dynamic community of Pacific social work educators (Ravulo et al., 2019). The connections built during the project are active as we endeavour to build indigenous social work knowledge and ways in Pacific social work education, research, and practice. The experience from this collaboration signifies the value of transnational and

inter-institutional collaboration that supports indigenous social work educators and promoting indigenous knowledges for a more diverse and dynamic social work future.

Brydon et al. (2014) described a collaboration between social work academics from Australia's Monash University and PNG's UPNG that has worked well. Participants deemed this collaboration as successful because it provides opportunities for mutual learning to enhance local practice, as well as promoting the social work profession bilaterally and internationally. The main success indicators of this collaboration have been evident in the activities undertaken to achieve project objectives. Monash University academic staff were involved in guest lecturing at the University of Papua New Guinea. A graduate volunteer program was established which saw two graduates from Monash University providing specific input into field education at UPNG for one semester. Furthermore, UPNG staff have also presented at Australian conferences. A significant success relates to the production of a documentary (Rose, 2013) focusing on the strengths and skills of social work in PNG. The research and publication portfolio of UPNG academic staff has also improved as the result of this collaboration. Joint publications focus on the collaboration, issues of internationalisation as well as on localisation and on joint research interests.

I also utilised this collaboration to study and gained my Master of Social Work qualification from Monash University in 2017 (Lawihin, 2017). This collaborative relationship continues now, despite external funding ceasing in 2012. One of the primary reasons for the success is the commitment from people and institutions involved in this collegial academic and research partnership enabling access to international social work resources and perspectives, joint publications and cross-cultural learning that have been empowering and proven to be positive.

Indigenising and localising social work: continuing the debates

Indigenisation and localisation are inseparable in the globalisation and internationalisation discourse. In fact, localisation is an aspect of indigenisation that includes similar elements such as "integration, creative synthesis, adaptation, realignment, appropriateness, genuineness and authentication, cultural appropriateness and relevance, and balancing the local and the foreign" (Gray et al., 2008, p. 16). Thus, indigenisation and localisation present similar perspectives that emphasise the development of a locally relevant social work incorporating local knowledge and strategies and using these to inform the broader social work profession.

The concept of indigenisation was first introduced into the social work discussion by the United Nations in 1971 with reference to the inappropriateness of American social work theory in other societies (Yunong & Xiong, 2008). Although Yunong and Xiong's arguments are not based on empirical research, their review of the relevant literature and their professional knowledge and experiences in the field provide sufficient merit for their discussions. From the critical social work perspective, Indigenisation is a response to the oppression of colonialism led by local professionals and agencies from former colonies. Gray (2005), for instance, refers to indigenisation as the extent to which social work practice fits the local context and how this context is shaped by local social, political, economic, and cultural factors, which mould and

define local social work responses. In addition, indigenisation emphasises that, “social work knowledge should arise from within the culture, reflect local behaviours and practices, be interpreted within a local frame of reference and thus be locally relevant to effectively address culturally relevant and context specific problems” (Gray & Coates, 2010, p. 3). In the context of this article, indigenisation refers to a process where indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing and relating are integrated into the formal educational, organisational, cultural and social structures. Therefore, the purpose of indigenisation in this discussion is to (re)develop and make social work education, research and practice fit the PNG’s local context, bearing in mind that the “local” coexists with the global community.

Localisation, then, is the process of adapting and modifying universally acceptable values and principles to fit specific local contexts and guide local action. This position is consistent with current efforts (Lawihin, 2018, 2022) to adapt global social work education standards for the development of culturally relevant social work education in PNG. In a scholarly discussion, Yip (2006) provides an international perspective on the indigenisation and localisation of social work discourse. Although the paper is descriptive, based on the author’s conceptual understanding of the topic, it shares some useful insights into the issues of indigenisation and how to address them. According to Yip, “indigenisation of social work practice is challenged by the globalisation of economies, technologies, diversity of cultures, traditions and religions across the world” (2006, p. 45). This leads to tensions in social work practice, where globalisation of the economy and Western and migrant cultures clash with indigenised needs, indigenous cultural traditions, and local culture. Yip’s assertion is for social work professionals to be aware when practising in non-Western cultural contexts that these have their own specific indigenised values and interventions. Furthermore, social work education needs to emphasise both international and contextual content and intervention models to develop students’ abilities to recognise, respect and practice within their clients’ indigenised cultures. Although these are scholarly ideas and opinions, the observations and informed reflections highlighted important complexities and issues in the local–global social work knowledge. For example, Crisp’s (2015) reflection on how to achieve the right balance between the local and the global is now understood and creates tensions.

According to Yunong and Xiong (2008) indigenisation acts against the dominance of Western social work philosophies and that education, research and practice must be shaped by the local context. The argument is the centrality of local culture and history as the basis for social work globally and locally. For example, they emphasise that “indigenisation in social work criticises professional imperialism, questions Western values and theories and affirms the importance of indigenous social and cultural structure” (Yunong & Xiong, 2008, p. 616). The researchers then conclude, based on their literature review, that social work should be made to fit local contexts, which is an implicit requirement of the profession. This perspective is summarised as “the inherent expectation as social workers are to integrate social and cultural knowledge and sensitivity with skills for appropriate and effective helping practice. This would mean emphasising social work as an achievement of human civilisation to improve social work practice, education and research” (Yunong & Xiong, 2008, p. 620).

Gray and Coates (2010) extended the debate on indigenisation, not just as a movement as alluded to in Yunong and Xiong (2008), but as a field of knowledge. They argued for the development of indigenised and culturally appropriate social work knowledge, unrestricted by positivistic Western worldviews. They further argue that indigenisation is a movement that promotes research and practices of cultural and local relevance to develop respected indigenised social work knowledge. In their view, indigenisation is a way to develop indigenous social work knowledge based on culturally and locally relevant and problem-oriented research. Furthermore, indigenisation and internationalisation are perceived as complementary, with indigenisation being a naturally occurring process in social work knowledge development. These arguments were later counter-debated by Yunong and Xiong (2011) because in their view, local cultures and contexts are everywhere; indigenisation is therefore inherent in the social work profession. This means the application of social work through practice or educational programs should embrace local and indigenous knowledge and cultures.

Principles of indigenisation and localisation

Despite a lack of strong empirical evidence, there is scholarly discussion outlining key principles of indigenisation. Early discussions of this issue by Cheung and Liu (2004, cited in Yunong & Xiong 2008, p. 614) tend to reflect arguments against the infiltration and implantation of Western models of social work which have occurred through colonisation, and localising Western-based models of social work education and practice. Atal (1981) therefore identifies four strategies for localisation: firstly, using local language and materials in teaching; secondly, having insiders conduct and share research; thirdly, determining research priorities and finally, reorienting epistemological and methodological approaches for local knowledge development and learning (Yunong & Xiong, 2008, p. 612).

In Samoa, parables have been utilised to define the Samoan ontological and epistemological position for learning and building theoretical knowledge that should be of equal significance in the modern social work educational context (Faleolo, 2013). Most importantly, Faleolo also identified three principles to achieve culturally relevant social work education. First is to establish a curriculum where cultural and local content is strongly represented and locally relevant to the local context and population. The second principle calls for the incorporation of cultural knowledge and practices into the assessment of cultural competence in social work practice. Finally, Faleolo argues for incorporating local knowledge into social work curriculum, where there is systematic development and application of such knowledge and practice models locally. In this way local knowledge, models and practices are acknowledged and given equal standing in the professional social work education and practice in a globalised world.

Faleolo's arguments further supports the findings from Sullivan et al. (2010) highlighting the importance of translating English concepts to Samoan language which students find helpful in understanding compared to what was said in English. This is also consistent with the Lawihin's (2017, 2018) and Yishak and Gumbo's (2014) studies. Lawihin's studies focus on building culturally relevant social work curriculum in PNG whilst Yishak and Gumbo's is on indigenising social work curricula in Ethiopia where the use of local languages as the medium of instruction is key to supporting the indigenisation and localisation approach.

Faleolo's principles of developing a culturally relevant social work education also strengthens the earlier suggestions by Atal (1981) and Yunong and Xiong (2008) that localisation of social work education has a high chance of evolving when locals are engaged in theorising and insiders participate in research and knowledge development in social work.

Similar ideas about localisation shape the guidelines proposed by Cheung and Liu (2004) as cited in Yunong and Xiong (2008, p. 614). The first proposal is to build an indigenous foundation, such as a philosophical basis, theories, working principles and approaches, in social work education. The second is to address social problems and develop strategies within an indigenous social and developmental context. The third is to redefine the central focus, knowledge and value bases of social work practice from Western countries and develop indigenous conceptual frameworks and methodologies. The fourth is to acknowledge the historical and cultural experiences and realities of indigenous peoples. The fifth is to conduct social work practice from the perspective of local community expertise and resources (Cheung & Liu, 2004; as cited in Yunong & Xiong, 2008, p. 614). Yip (2006) also suggested five components of indigenisation in social work practice, including the adaptation of Western social work practice, implementation in the local context, a local indigenised criticism of the impact of professional imperialism and colonialism, and a re-engineering of both skills and techniques.

The main arguments presented in the literature on indigenisation and localisation is responding to the inappropriateness of the direct application of Western social work ideas in non-Western contexts. Therefore, efforts have to be made to include local knowledge and theories to give equal credit to local realities to inform the training and practice of professional social work rather than the direct adaptation of Western social work ideologies to fit non-Western settings. Such local realities include language, cultural theorisation, culturally valid assessment methods and teaching styles, a stronger participation of insider researchers to build and share local knowledge for teaching and learning. Above all, indigenisation and localisation call for the development and application of culturally relevant social work theories and practice models, regardless of whether the locality for practice is Western or non-Western. The following section is dedicated to a discussion on the application of ideas on localising social work education.

Localisation of social work education: practice examples

To give meaning to the internationalisation and location debates, this discussion seeks to present examples on how to localise. These examples were chosen from countries with some similarities in geography, location, development status and culture to that of PNG. Lan et al. (2010) discuss the development of social work in Vietnam while Costello and Aung (2015) recently focused on Myanmar. Following this is a presentation of some research in the African context and then PNG-specific examples.

Given that social work in Vietnam has its historical roots in French social welfare ideologies, Lan et al. (2010) focus their discussion on moving from an imported Western model of social work education to a more indigenous Vietnamese model.

However, the key challenge is how to effectively diverge from the curriculum that is mostly dominated by Western social work knowledge, international texts and global standards and include a strong Vietnamese content. Such a challenge is heightened by Vietnam's lack of qualified researchers and academics, lack of institutional capacity, training materials and facilities. Having identified these, it is important to focus on developing these areas to facilitate the localisation of social work education. With strong government support for the profession, the authors' (Lan et al., 2010) suggestion for the development of indigenised education and training materials by local practitioners and educators, is a positive direction to develop culturally relevant Vietnamese content. It is emphasised that "it is time to consider and address the question of developing an indigenous social work approach that is sensitive to Vietnamese culture and relevant to the context of Vietnam but consistent with international and regional social work standards" (Lan et al., 2010, p. 853). This statement is clearly a call for localisation, however, there were no suggestions provided on how to do that.

Myanmar has an emerging democratic governance system and the development of social work is suitable given its intrinsic values of human rights and social justice. Costello and Aung (2015) described the development of social work in Myanmar as thriving on these core social work values. The emphasis on these values for social work is reflective of Myanmar adopting the Western social work model of training and practice. This would present an eminent challenge for Myanmar as a collectivist society when attempting to devise culturally relevant intervention approaches for dealing with conflicts and problems affecting individuals and communities. According to Costello and Aung (2015), there is also lack of qualified local social work teachers and resources for field education.

Problems such as lack of resources and skilled locals appear to be consistent across developing countries (Dhemba, 2012; Lawihin & Brydon, 2013). What seems to be encouraging for social work in Myanmar is that there is potential for growth in the field, as indicated by the government's plan to train child protection case managers (Costello & Aung, 2015). However, the challenge is for a contextual consideration for such individual casework approaches to be applied effectively in communities governed by social and political structures favouring group work and community development approaches. While current social work responses to Myanmar's problems are evidently Western-oriented, there was no clear assertion by Costello and Aung (2015) as to how localisation or indigenisation of social work in the country is or can be implemented.

African scholars such as Mungai et al. (2014) write about *ubuntu* as a helpful concept to guide the development of professional social work relevant to African contexts. Similar to the Melanesian culture in PNG, *ubuntu* places emphasis on collectivism and reciprocity of relationships in the holism of society. In order to enable learning and participation by locals, relationships have to be established. In Ethiopia, Yishak and Gumbo (2014) in their study critically analysed policy documents related to indigenisation. To promote a genuine approach to indigenisation, the authors recommend a standardised and stand-alone indigenisation approach that facilitates intercultural dialogue and blending of the local and the Western social work ideas.

The standardisation approach is where the government regulates what and how social work curriculum is designed and delivered through legislations and policies. A standalone approach calls for a curriculum to be built on indigenous foundations and theories, principles and ideas from the local culture (Yishak & Gumbo, 2014).

To develop a truly indigenised social work curriculum, there is a need for reconceptualising the indigenisation approach in educational policies and strategies to ensure the relevance of the curriculum meets the structural and sociocultural context of the country. Gray et al. (2014) continued to defend the notion of indigenisation and its relevance to African social work by critically reflecting on the importance of the Association of Social Work Education in Africa's (ASWEA) efforts to decolonise the profession in the African continent. This indicates the significant role regional and national local social work organisations can play in moving away from Western traditions and developing approaches to professional teaching and practice appropriate to local contexts. Indeed, the absence of such leadership has been noted by others for having negative impacts in countries where social work is developing (Nikku, 2010; Sullivan et al., 2010).

Gray et al. (2014) argued that indigenisation remains an ethical imperative for social work in Africa as it continues to seek locally relevant solutions to changing social problems. Indigenisation in Africa can thrive by interactive teaching styles and case studies, role plays, group work, planning class sessions that actively engage students in learning and methods of fieldwork evaluations. Similar to others attempting such developments, it was learnt that attempts to indigenise the higher education social work curriculum were hindered by a shortage of local educators, a situation that was also reported in Vietnam (Lan et al., 2010) and confusion surrounding Western social work, and inadequate funding. This confusion is caused by issues noted earlier in Crisp's (2015) reflections on the challenges regarding assumptions about social work. The literature regarding internationalisation and localisation so far suggests that there is no...

...contradiction between advocating more internationalisation in social work education and at the same time emphasizing the importance of contextual social work. More internationalisation through comparative social work is very useful, though it is important to be aware of the pitfalls and reflect upon how social work ethics, values and broader standards can be applied in different contexts. (Lynstad, 2012, p. 400).

However, Lyngstad's findings do not highlight how to effectively promote both contextualisation and internationalisation paradigms in a social work curriculum. Therefore, if localisation is given prominence in social work in PNG to strengthen its cultural relevance, what do we know about the current social work situation in the country?

PNG-specific studies and publications on social work

Research on social work and social work education in PNG is still lacking. However, in three studies (Brydon & Lawihin, 2014; Flynn et al., 2014; Lawihin, 2018, 2017) conducted recently, the present author played a central role in these projects. These publications drive the vision

of building culturally relevant social work education in PNG and acknowledge local–global connectedness as an opportunity to internationalise social work knowledge from PNG.

Lawihin (2018, 2021) is a publication from my Master of Social Work (Research) thesis (2017). This study examined social work field education in PNG, including the role of global social work field education standards, from the perspectives of social work educators and students. The study findings show that a culturally relevant social work curriculum is strongly linked to a notion of localisation that focuses on global–local connectedness and makes a significant contribution by generating some understanding of localisation as the key approach to developing culturally relevant social work education in PNG. The central theme of the importance of connectedness emerged from this research, highlighting three key areas to ensure the development of a culturally relevant social work education curriculum. These are: through connecting global–local issues; connecting global–local policies and standards; connecting universities and local communities; and connecting contemporary and local teaching and learning approaches (Lawihin, 2018). In general, the study found that we stand a greater chance of creating a culturally relevant social work curriculum in PNG if we pay balanced attention to both the local and global aspects of social work. It is this kind of social work that is likely to prepare social work professionals to practise globally.

In Flynn et al. (2014), a survey was conducted with 23 third-year students about their experiences in social work field education and their perceptions of preparedness for fieldwork. The study was a collaborative engagement between the Monash and UPNG staff. They examined the skill sets developed through social work field education, and the local–global issues of social work and international standards as key areas of the localisation paradigm. The emphasis on skills of advocacy and social development is consistent with PNG’s Melanesian oral and communal tradition and broader social work skills. One of the main findings from this study is that there is limited integration of both the local social work knowledge and global social work values and standards in the social work curriculum at UPNG.

The present author also undertook a separate study on field education in PNG and the findings focused on challenges and opportunities and the implications for the development of new models (Lawihin, 2012; Lawihin & Brydon, 2013; Brydon & Lawihin, 2014). The findings from Lawihin and Brydon (2013) show limited compliance with national and international standards to deliver social work field education. However, opportunities exist in PNG’s culture of kinship and connectedness that was utilised to re-develop the field education program to conform to international standards and local conditions; in particular the PNG (Melanesian) way of life. In addition, this study (Brydon & Lawihin, 2014) also confirmed that there is promise for the redevelopment of social work in PNG that is informed by the local Melanesian culture and global standards. This can be done by embracing and contextualising international social work training standards and development of PNG-specific minimum standards of social work education.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted that internationalisation and localisation are both important for the development and progress of a culturally relevant and strong social work education and practice globally. While there is continuing debate on the strengths and limitations of both discourses, there are some general elements of compatibility between internationalisation and localisation. Internationalisation is important for the development and progress of a globally competitive and quality social work education. Both internationalisation and localisation processes have been seen to emerge as major responses to the expansion of Western ideologies, now perpetuated by increasing globalisation and its related events. The internationalisation discourse as shown in the discussion of its application and PNG-specific studies emphasises quality standards, universal values, interdependencies and interconnectedness, cooperation, international institutions, and intercultural competencies. Therefore, the main argument from the internationalisation debate is for the enhancement of international solidarity and joint action in order to make the social work profession visible and strong.

In the article, I argued that internationalisation and localisation are key responses to, and epitomes of, globalisation and that these processes affect social work education in PNG and globally. That is the reason I focused on internationalisation and localisation of social work curriculum as a principal response to the effects of globalisation. The article also demonstrated how internationalisation has been operationalised through the delivery of social work education, which is common across different contexts. Although, there are challenges to achieving a strong internationalised and localised social work curriculum, it is notable that studies have shown some success in efforts concerning internationalising and localising social work education in PNG and elsewhere. I hope that this discussion contributes to the increasing debates on globalisation of education and the mission to advance social work education in the Pacific and represents the voices from the global south.

Therefore, my position in this discussion is that, although social work is a global profession, the practice is largely conducted in local settings. As such, I prefer to advocate for internationalisation of social work that acknowledges the promotion of consistent and relevant social work education, practice and research, which balances the local and global knowledge economy simultaneously. It is apparent that most proponents of both localisation and internationalisation of social work do not take a purist stance. While they debate the strengths and limitations of both discourses, they all generally see some elements of compatibility between localisation and internationalisation. It is also my position that both local and global discourse must coexist for a credible, consistent, and relevant social work education, practice and research to evolve.

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