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Starting the Indigenisation Process of Social Work Practice in Malaysia

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1   Introduction

Social work emerged from the voluntary work of the friendly visitors and has become a global professional programme particularly in educational institutions today. The idea of human services describes the breadth of social welfare, community agencies and programmes across the globe (Jones, & Truell, 2012; Bulmer, 2015). This explains why the profession has greater opportunities for work and as well has important role to play in community welfare and development in ensuring inclusive development within the reach of all groups and communities (Dorling, 2015; Jayasooria, 2016). The practice in social work requires skills in social networking, resource assessment and development, analysis of community needs and social-action strategies to be able to engage in effective community welfare programmes and mobilization. This results in appropriate professional services delivery and advocacy for change to enhance human well-being and environmental sustainability (Sachs, 2015; Jayasooria, 2016). The recognition of the needs to provide the necessary resources and opportunities in order to improve the quality of lives of every member of the society constitutes the mandate of social work (Wairire, & Zani, 2015). As such some tertiary institutions in Malaysia have introduced social work programmes to push social work studies and practice to higher height and the limelight of national development agenda.

The social work practice ought to be linked to the highest ideals that are constantly reshaped under pressure from professional bodies, public expectations, service consumers, political and socioeconomic forces based on interaction that transcend local and international borders. The cultural background of the theories and perspectives employed to provide services for the well-being of the people excluded certain local social divisions like race, gender and ethnicity contextually (Abramovitz, 2017; Kirst-Ashman, 2015; Payne, 2015). As such this may limit the access to social power and resources of the populations in specific localities. The limitation is linked with the profession considering the role it plays at the levels of policy and programme development. So the acquisition of funds and resources, training and support of aid workers as well as the actual delivery of services to society should be based on the worldview of the people. Wairire and Zani (2015) the skills to handle and facilitate both small and large groups levels to support poor people, health care needs and environmental sustainability are essential and should reflect the tenants of the locality. With these, the social workers are well placed in contributing in social policy on how distribution of resources should be done and with what guidelines to follow (Birkland, 2015; Hepworth, Rooney,

Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2016). The understanding of the link between the social systems and welfare policies impact on the distribution of resources is critical since delivery of those services are supposed to be done in a just and equitable manner as welfare systems are locally developed and streamlined (Birkland, 2015; Morel, & Palier, (Eds.). 2011). As with social work practice, it is suggested that practitioners engage in social policy on local initiatives, thus indigenisation of the practice (Avendal, 2015; Ugiagbe, 2015). Service to humanity, particularly in developing nations, as practice by social work professionals needs indigenisation in order to effectively attend to current societal problem. Community planning approaches are based on a top–down model involving needs assessments and rational planning processes (Lehning, Scharlach, & Wolf 2012; Greenfield, Oberlink, Scharlach, Neal, & Stafford, 2015).

Indigenisation allows peoples to self-define their situations and developmental needs within the context of local tradition and relationships thus a sort of rejecting some elements of foreign way of life as per globailsation including the educational system (Avendal, 2015; Ugiagbe, 2015). For social work to succeed and attain its goals in a multiracial country like Malaysia then the diverse cultures, traditions, belief systems, norms, values and practices need to be accommodated through interpretation of social work concepts, practices and theories in the context of those diversities. These diversities should be developed and enhanced by the educational institutions, social work educators and practitioners. The sociocultural conditions and the types of socioeconomic needs expose the limitations of a social work practice model which focuses primarily on worldview that is completely different from the locals. Studies argue that the current social work practice is ineffective in the context of developing countries and therefore suggest that social work and educators need to evaluate different values of different groups which are at odds with Western social work values (Littlechild, 2012; Ugiagbe, 2015; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo 2008). Others argue that indigenisation predates globalisation and consider it as a resistance movement protecting social relations from being undermined by modernity with the aim of transforming indigenous people to actively participate in the globalized societies on the basis of their culture and tradition (Avendal, 2015; Dominelli, 2012). For instance, Lim Chia Ying (2014) study pertaining to urban poor communities in nine urban flat neighbourhoods discovered that inter-ethnic and cross-cultural approach of social work practice is lacking because the current practice is ethnic oriented. Studies suggest that addressing these concerns requires social workers to undertake a stronger practice approach by utilising a cross-cultural social work method which is sensitive to cultural diversity (Parker, Ashencaen Crabtree, Azman, Nikku, & Nguyen, 2017; Ling et al, 2014; Lutz, 2018). As such, there is the need for indigenisation of social work theory and practices for effective and progressive social work practices in developing countries. Adopting a stronger social work approach pertaining to group work and community work in practice in Malaysian society is of utmost importance.

2   Methodology

Studies indicate that indigenisation has become a popular term in social work literature recently but little empirical social work research is inspired by indigenous conceptions and methodology is available (Ugiagbe 2015; Tan 2006; Yan & Cheung 2006; Yip 2006). To substantiate this claim, combination of direct and summative qualitative content analysis research methods was adopted. Direct content analysis was adopted in the data collection and summative content analysis used in generating the research findings.

To eliminate the credibility issues in summative content analysis as highlighted in Hsieh & Shannon (2005), we spread the data collection from previous studies across prominent

educational research data bases such as Tailor and Frances, Emerald, Elsevier, Pro Quest etc. Focus and emphasis were on sorting for excellent literature on the subject matter. Key words such as social work practice, indigenisation of social work, and nature of social work in Malaysia were used in search for the relevant literature. A lot of excellent studies were searched for and peer-reviewed articles published between 2008 and 2017 were selected for major data to be analyzed.

A preliminary exploratory search was performed in order to authenticate the relevancy of the subject matter; the result showed that research interest and publications were high in certain periods. Thus, 2008 was chosen as based year for this data collection. To eliminate biasness, the breath of the search was expanded and thus, includes all categories by adopting combination of subject headings and free text terms that related to social work and indigenisation. This was followed by dedicated analysis in content and contextual purposes; thus, all opposing views were resolved through discussion.

The data collected through multiple sources and varied interpretation was analyzed in line with the research objectives. The main themes used in the study were derived from the data after several readings and analysis. These themes were generated based on the frequency of their appearances in the secondary data and information obtained from the review.

The target of the study is social work and the need to indigenise its practice through the scholarly articles which included article references and other articles citing them. The studies included in the review were also based on articles explaining the nature of social work practice in the country. Finally, selected publications reviewed for analysis includes academic journal paper, conference paper, thesis, book and /book chapter.

3   Findings

This section attempts to highlight the relevant literature on nature of social work practice and the need for its indigenisation in Malaysia. Technical assistance, self-help and conflict approaches are basically some of the perspectives to community development practice identified (Lyons, 2016; Fook, & Pease, (Eds.). 2016). Findings from the review gathered critical points of current knowledge on issue of social work practice in the country and around the globe. Malaysia is a multiracial nation, with several ethnic groups and diverse cultures, traditions, belief systems, values and practices (David, & Govindasamy, 2017; Peletz, 2018). These diverse cultures and traditions need to be considered through indigenisation of social work concepts, practices and theories. This paper is advocating for the tenets of the local people and traditions to be developed and utilise by practitioners and the institutions with social work programmes.

3.1 What is indigenisation?

The term 'indigenisation' is explained in diverse ways by several scholars. The common narrative of all the explanation allude to the fact that solutions to local problems should originate from there. Gray, & Coates (2010) explains indigenisation as a field of knowledge development that rely on knowledge, training and resources that are particular way of life of the people. From a practice perspective, 'indigenisation' is a process of adaptation by developing social work into none-western contexts in an attempt to make the imported knowledge relevant or fit local context. It focuses on social work practice to address issues that concern the culture of the people, their behaviour, interpret local people and cater for relevant cultural observation to contain their problems. Gray (2005) indigenisation is to encourage multiple participation and ways of knowing the history and way of life of particular

societies to establish a meaningful multi-cultural co-existence. Osei-Hwedie (2001)
Indigenisation refers to the thought that theories, values and philosophies of social work
practice need to consider local culture, belief system and social realities. It encompasses
processes and political viewpoint of imported knowledge to position the local intellectual and
professional, social work academics and practitioners in local context (Tsang & Yan 2001).
Ugiagbe (2015) indigenisation refers to the need for inward looking and re-examination of the
realities of developing societies and also to look at the knowledge, theories and social work
practices in relation to those societies. Indigenisation is a phenomenon in the need to look
inwardly and re-examine (Osawe, 2018) the realities of the state of societies. Indigenisation of
social work practice may transform people's lives and benefit communities throughout the
country (Parker et al., 2017). It might be correct to justify indigenisation to enhance welfare
of the people through sustainable socioeconomic development as carried out by social work in
the light of the traditions and culture of the people (Osawe, 2018; Ugiagbe, 2015; Tsui, &
Yan, 2010).

Social work originates in Europe in the late 19th century and spread globally through
colonizing state agendas and altruistic impulses. The British colonialist was the first to
introduce social work practice in Malaya in 1912 through the establishment of the Social
Services Department to improve the wellbeing of migrant labourers (Jayasooria, 2016). The
need to clarify the basis of social work practice in Malaysia is an urgent issue. Studies
revealed that colonization influences the local socioeconomic formations which affect
indigenous lifestyles not only in East and South-East Asia, but also in South Asia, including
Malaysia (Jayasooria, 2000; Tsui, & Yan, 2010; Jayasooria, 2016). Since then social workers
got involved in institutions like the military, religiosity, voluntary and educational institutions.
These oppressive practices ranged from turning indigenous people in most part of the globe
by removing families and denying them their cultures (Dominelli, 2012; Gray, Kreitzer, &
Mupedziswa, 2014). The educational materials which were considered to be superior to any
existing ones were imposed by colonists with the belief in universality irrespective of
difference of local cultures (Lutz, 2018; Pete, 2015). The global fiscal depression in the early
1930s led to the closure of the department but was reestablished within the Colonial Office
years after the depression to provide social services to the communities (Parker et al., 2017;
Tsui, & Yan, 2010). Thus, a maiden structured social welfare system in Malaya as at then.
Contemporary social work and programmes are handled by the Department of Social Welfare
(DSW) in collaboration with the numerous non-governmental organiSations (NGOs) in the
country. These NGOs complement and supplement the efforts of DSW in providing social
services to the people and its accompanied social problems. The DSW and the relevant NGOs
assume the role of social workers and have become the main providers of social services
(Parker et al., 2017). Consequently, indigenisation becomes necessary as it is about how the
social work practice and principles fit local context and the extent to which social, political,
economic and cultural factors shape social work responses to the needs of the people
(Avendal, 2015; Ugiagbe, 2015). Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the need to
consider indigenisation in the context of social work practice. Thus, the need to change, refine
and localize the social work practice to reflect the needs and lives of Malaysian society.

The issue is not whether social work objectives and principles support Malaysia's social work
objectives but the issue is the interpretation of social work in the lights of Western theories
and models. The connection between these theories and models and the objectives of social
work practice are faced with problems with little or no progress insight. For social work to be
effective and relevant, it has to revise those theories and models and redefine its main focus,

knowledge and value basis in line with the sociocultural context of the people (Lutz, 2018). The concept social work is about alleviation of distress and suffering, poverty, injustice and social problems thus engage societal problems in an effort aimed at getting local solutions to them. These are fundamental issues which need to be resolved for social work to be more responsive and relevant to Malaysia social welfare development. For instance, 47 European countries called for the practice to be made flexible to capture socioeconomic problems which are traditional in nature and have been outside the confines of social work as those theories and model do not adequately conceptualise them (Dominelli, 2012). So the need for indigenisation of Malaysia social work practice is due to the gap between Western theory[1] and practice in response to local needs as can be seen expressed by these European countries. The gap exists and widens because the knowledge in social work is borrowed from a context different from that of Asia and Malaysia in particular. For that matter, social workers need to revise and reassemble the knowledge in relation to the environment for efficient and effective operation[2] (Rankopo, & Osei-Hwedie, 2011; Gray, & Coates, 2010).

The need for indegenisation is not to create the impression that current body of knowledge is of no use to the country. However, the solution for local problems should come from within and not what is drawn upon outsiders in discussing the various problems of developing countries. For the reason of indegenisation and social work practice in Malaysia, it is appropriate to look at the relationship between the way of life of the people and social work practice. There are several ways in which the way of life of the people has a bearing on social work practice (Parker, 2017; Thompson, 2015; Milner, Myers, & O'Byrne, 2015; Ling, Martin, & Ow, (Eds.). 2014). Thus, the interaction between the behaviour, perception, and material aspects are very crucial and significant. It could focus on specific perceptual or material aspects as well as ideologies or belief systems and orientations, world-views and values of the people (Osawe, 2018; Avendal, 2015). The need to restructure social work practice to comply with the problems and interests of the country is necessary because the practice is dominated by western thoughts (Lutz, 2018). Therefore, conceptions of welfare are not suitable for developing societies. This make developing countries imitative and uncritical in thinking for local solutions leading to inability to be creative and in raising original problems, the inability to devise original analytical methods and alienation from the main issues of indigenous society (Osawe, 2018; Avendal, 2015; Jayasooria, 2016). Indigenisation is a plea for self-awareness and rejection of a borrowed consciousness. It emphasises the need for an inside view to promote thoughtful analysis of their own societies to replace the existing trend of knowing these from other cultures. Indigenisation brings about alternative perspectives on societies aimed at enriching social work practice to improve the quality in order to examine society through different lenses. Indigenisation focuses on history and culture to redefine the focus of social work practice to develop dynamic perspectives on local problems (Avendal, 2015; Osawe, 2018). It is clear from current academic trends that the concern for indigenisation is spreading globally.

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[1] For instance, how will Western theory explain the Malay oral traditions and the 'shamanistic' aspects of the traditions. Details see Haron Daud (2010) Oral traditions in Malaysia - Quite apart, the mantras recited by Shamans in the execution of their role in society cannot be explained in the context of Western theory. Assuming social workers attending to some clients undergoing treatment with a Shaman, thus the need to revise and reassemble the knowledge in relation to the local context. Besides, the role of the shaman, their self-proclaimed knowledge, their economic activities, black magic, healthcare in Malay society and their role in Dayak ritual are some of the difficulty and the need for indigenisation.

[2] See Osei-Hwedie, K. (1993). The challenge of social work in Africa: Starting the indigenisation process. Journal of Social Development in Africa, 8(1), 19-30.

3.2 Why indigenization?

The increasing expectation of higher institutions of learning to incorporate local perspective of social work and prepare students to work across the country and in the context of developing nations make the idea of indigenising the discipline a necessity. Probably the rationale could be because the global social work community has also been involved in self-critiquing and revisiting of concepts and theory building (Nikku, 2012; Nikku, & Pulla, 2014). This focuses on the need for these institutions to consciously and carefully indigenise the philosophies, tenets, principles and practices of social work in Malaysia. The process of indigenisation is geared towards churning out competent social workers to cater for diversity and differences across the region and Malaysia in particular. Social work practices are influenced greatly by traditions, belief system and local worldview (Ugiagbe, 2015; Parker, Ashencaen Crabtree, Azman, Nikku, & Nguyen, 2017). According Tan, (2007), social work profession is not all that recognized in Malaysia compared with developed countries. Tan opines that social workers without formal social work education are common and that one out of ten social workers with formal social work education is being formally recruited for the role. For example, the assessment of client by NGOs is based on the knowledge acquired at various training programmes in relation to certain processes and forms of assessment that are foreign. Clearly, the clients of social workers in the country include rape victims, victims of domestic violence, juvenile delinquents, child protection, people with disabilities and older folks (McClennen, Keys, & Day, 2016; Zastrow, 2016; Tan, 2007). As such these practitioner agencies ought to conduct their assessment in order to design intervention. So the practice should be based on the local context rather than follow any particular standardized approaches designed for different foreign context. The assessment in Malaysia is based on the criteria, concepts and strategies set by certain specific perspective alien to the society. For instance, the DSW standardised assessment set for individual, family and community as well as documentations (Parker et al., 2017) like social reports, probation reports, protection reports and progress reports are done in line with global format at the expense of that of the local (Ugiagbe, 2015; Avendal, 2015; Osawe, 2018). The DSW generate these reports based on interpretations from social workers' face-to-face interviews, observation and home visits, based on foreign perspective (Parker et al., 2017). Most often the assessment is done for the purpose of documentation about intervention towards clients. Based on this, the guidelines for assessments should rely heavily on local values and perceptions, and custom demonstrated at trainings undertaken.

Studies reveal that the current social work models are applied in a foreign context at the expense of different social structures and indigenisation to recognize some local factors which impact on the practice (Crisp, 2017; Singh et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2017). With these models, the context and systems of the local people are not upheld and protected as expected in relation to the basic values and ethics of international social work standards. Even though it does not serve the local interest but the UN recognized social work as an international profession which should be universalist in thinking in relation to the values and practices that transcend national borders (Crisp, 2017). This cannot be possible considering the dynamics in traditions and belief systems of the world. For instance, the factors influencing government provision of services in the country consider the religious, political and cultural values which are completely different from other countries and nations. These reasons make indigenisation of social work practice in the local context laudable. Considering the global context in relation to religious and cultural diversity, assessment and practice may differ across the globe. For instance, students in the United Arab Emirates, like Malaysia, show limitations in working with clients as a result of deficit in knowledge due to religious and cultural

censorship of certain sexual and sexual abuse materials considered to be sensitive which is not same in some part of the globe (Parker et al., 2017; Ashencaen, 2008). In Malaysia, a case revealed environmental context of service users told social work practitioner to be haunted by spirit which demand intervention by a ghost buster (bomor or pawang) which might be viewed unconventional in many jurisdictions due to difference in worldview and culture (Ugiagbe, 2015; Parker et al., 2017). The belief in supernatural is a relevant knowledge for local practitioners since it represents cultural beliefs for both clients and service providers and with indigenisation may be compatible to conventional social work practice. The cultural dislocations of applying professionalised that are disconnected from the cultural context of the client and frequently the practitioner themselves (Ugiagbe, 2015; Ashencaen, 2012). The multidimensional approach is holistic and therefore more realistic in addressing the core concerns of ordinary people. For instance, studies on nine urban flat neighbourhoods revealed the need for inter-ethnic and cross-cultural approach of social work practice (Lim, 2014). It is suggested that a cross-cultural social work method which is sensitive to cultural diversity is needed in addressing, for example, concerns of the B40 community especially the urban poor (Kathleen 2015; Lim, 2014; Ling et al., 2014). Adopting a stronger social work approach pertaining to group work and community work practice in Malaysian society is of utmost importance. To address the concerns of high-risk youths in Malaysia's B40 neighbourhood level especially family-based issues like drop out from school with anti-social behaviour need to be analysed in the context of the family and the local communities they live in (Jayasooria, 2016).

Social work assessment, even though complex, is viewed as the cornerstone of good professional practice. Despite this, the purpose for assessment and the various ways it is conducted are without or with minimal local context which may make moral purposes questionable. Most often the assessment does not reflect those assessed as the broader needs, values and the belief systems are often left out presuming their universality due to glolibalisation (Crisp, 2017; Parker, 2013; Parker et al., 2017). Indigenisation is essential guide as future interaction between the social workers and the clients in order to achieve certain benefits thus practice in the context of acceptable way of life. The practice has to be in recognition of theoretical and ideological underpinnings with the local community who constitute the beneficiaries of social work services and interventions (Parker, 2015; Munro, 2011). The current theoretical approach does not adequately address the local concerns since those theories address other worldviews. Several studies corroborate Midgeley (1981) assertion that social workers in developing countries yield the indigenous forms of social work that consider localised assessment models (Parker et al., 2017; Ashencaen 2008). Dominelli (2012) suggests engaging stakeholders to come up with new concepts and models to develop specific and locally relevant responses to the major environmental and social problems. With this, social work needs to examine some pertinent challenges like optimizing local lives and resilience in distress situations by incorporating training related to human rights, public education and social rehabilitation in the context of the catchment area (Ugiagbe, 2015; Sim, Yuen-Tsang Woon Ki, Quen, & Dong, 2013). The challenges of understanding and utilizing the local information adequately in certain interventions and response strategies may curtail the good intentions of the practice thus may not be relevant to the local contexts and can create problems for the recipients. Social work practice needs to capture diverse beliefs and socioeconomic positions considering the multicultural nature of Malaysian. Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) indicated that the local environment is important for social work practice and education. Hence, indegenisation of social work

practice is therefore essential since it is focused on the well-being of the people by helping the vulnerable in society within the social context.

While the debate in social work considers the profession as a product of modernity in Western culture, indigenisation is seen as postmodern. There are still issues with professional identity in Malaysian society due to lack of definite definition of social workers and their roles. As such, the Malaysian Association of Social Workers and the Malaysian Association of Schools of Social Work campaign to educate the general public to view social work as professional services in people and community development (Jayasooria, 2016). The concern includes modifying and redefining the Western worldview, concepts, theories; methodologies which dominated the social work practice thus to respond to diverse social, cultural and spiritual perspectives of the people in the country. The purpose of indigenisation therefore is to make social work education, research and practice fit local contexts. According to Ben-Ari and Strier (2010), social work needs to respond effectively to diverse lives, ethnic backgrounds, religions, social classes in a manner that values the individuals, families and communities to protect the dignity of the members. This is only possible in a multicultural society like Malaysia if social work practice is indigenised. This idea is based on the fact that the current body of knowledge does not work adequately in Malaysia context due to differences in the structure, nature and cultures of ethnic groups in the country. There is a need to take into consideration of socio-political, economic, religious and cultural realities of Malaysian people (Littlechild, 2012).

4   Discussion

The indeginisation of social work practice in Malaysia ought to be within the social, cultural, political and economic context. The suitability of current social work theories and practice would have to be evaluated by considering certain socio-cultural and political dimensions in Malaysia. It is a fact that social problems in the country are totally different from those of the Western countries which make identifying different fields of practice and roles for social work practice are imperative. The existing theories have led to the lack of fit between traditional social norms and Western processes of social welfare, resulting in qualitative changes without social equity. In corroboration, studies indicate that the concern of indegenisation is about this dominance in social work and seeks to define and respond to local culture, social and economic development of the people (Gray, & Coates, 2010; Gray, 2010; Tsui, & Yan 2010). As can be seen, the country focuses on the major social issues, the development of human capital and the needs of women and the youth. As such, the current and future role of social provision are assessed and projected. Social work assessments are carried out in many forms with diverse service users or clients across the country. Studies describe assessment as the cornerstone of good social work practice as well as a collation and analysis of relevant data pertaining to problems and identified needs (Parker, 2013; Parker & Bradley, 2014). Therefore, social work objectives and principles ought to support the social development needs of Malaysia in particular and Asia in general. Understanding the function of social workers is critical to the moral foundations of the practice so it is indegenisation that will enable social workers to function in the socio-political contexts in which they operate. Despite the strategic plans and the objectives of social work practice, the profession is still faced with problems. It is believed that social work plays important role and needs to shed its foreign character and redefine its central focus, knowledge and value bases in order to be effective. It has to capture the realities as well as the cultural heritage of the country. It is observed that differences in styles of governance may have different welfare arrangements even in countries that are often considered to have similar forms of political culture (Ugiagbe,

2015; Crisp, 2017). The delivery of services by both government and non-governmental
organisations varies considerably among countries (Kreitzer et al., 2012).

To address the crucial poverty, inequality and unsustainable human environment problems,
international social work bodies are committed to work with the UN. The profile of social
workers is strengthened to make contribution to policy development after the design of The
Agenda (Jones & Truell, 2012). On this, indegenisation bridge the gap between the global
trends and realities in response to the local process making it community initiative. In support,
Gray et al. 2013) indicate that indigenous social work examines local cultures, beliefs, values,
and practices as central to dewesternisation of the practice. In another development, Nikku,
(2011) suggested the need for local as well as regional social work definition in line with the
diversity, need and aspirations of the people (Nikku, 2011). Apart from that, even with the
linguistic affinity and similar political and cultural traditions among Anglophone countries
like Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and New Zealand the
difference in practice and need for practice in the local context cannot be underestimated
(Kreitzer et al., 2012; Crisp, 2017). So issues that call for indigenisation of social work
practice in the country is the gap between the existing theories and practice in response to
local needs. For example, recent studies indicate that language and cultural differences is
often forgotten in social work education as most of the key concepts have been framed in
English which make adoption in other languages difficult (Liedgren, 2015; Crisp, 2017). By
implication, the genesis could be the strong social science knowledge borrowed from a
context different from that of Malaysia and Asia in general. For social work practice to be
relevant, then it needs to reassemble the issues about the local environment to make the
practice effective. However, Mapp (2012) thinks that social work curricula are usually full,
additional demands for compulsory material can make it difficult to find space for material of
a more optional nature.

The social work training must be based on knowledge from the field out of which theory and
the core of social science knowledge emanate. Thus, the outcome must be the reflection of
local inputs and processes in relation to what is learnt from outside. According to Hugman et
al. (2010), the recognition of social work profession as migratory has exposed the implicit
expectations that social workers should be able to work in communities outside where the
professional training is done. Indeginisation is necessary despite the fact that nations are
interconnected in terms of tradition with Western countries whose intellectual activities and
insights still dominate over others today without end at sight. Studies suggest that these
efforts are directed towards building scholarship to decolonize social work practice and
develop indigenous social work curricula and training targeting the local context (Gray et al.,
2010; Nikku, 2010). It is incontestable that in order to develop the necessary skills, outlook,
philosophies, theories and so on, must come from the locality by identifying the problems and
requirements, available resources and skills and processes and procedures to be adopted from
others. So practice in the local context develops the knowledge and skills necessary for
effective and efficient sustainability. The function of social work includes but not limited to
weighing and evaluating settings, circumstances, people and events in a broader discourse of
need, and values which reflect a possible legitimacy of the people involved (Parker et al.,
2017). Therefore, the practice of social work needs to be subjected to critical and theoretical
analysis in the context of the country. For example, the current noted challenges of social
work environment in Malaysia include analysis of social needs being reduced to the micro
level at the individual and family levels. Besides much emphasis on casework, the
government social welfare officers focused on eligibility for service rather than

comprehensive assessment of the needs and issues in order to come up with intervention strategies. Often, a community - based approach is neglected due to shortage of staff and resources (Jayasooria, 2016). Therefore, the need to conceptualize and redefine social work practice appropriately in the Malaysian context is very essential thus consider the indigenisation. The interaction of the people with the environment must be viewed as a response to the emotional, spiritual, economic, social and political contexts. It is then that social work becomes holistic, comprehensive and effective. In this vane, the social work profession will be able to identify problems of society and coming out with solutions based on the world view of the people concern.

Social work professionals need to revisit the basic process of the practice in order to develop cumulative knowledge to refine practice skills in Malaysia. For instance, the practice of social work range from those within government departments seeking to standardise, regulate and control services to enhance the lifestyles of certain groups like parents, young offenders, people with mental health or capacity problems (Jayasooria, 2016; Parker, et al., 2017). Compared with counterparts across the globe, social workers are increasingly pressurized to provide more services in an environment of inadequate resources. The available resources are expected to be prudently used for effectiveness of the process. Parker, (2015) emphasized the recognition of theoretical and ideological underpinnings, and the importance of teaming up with the beneficiaries of social work services. As such, indeginisation of the practice should be more adaptive to the context and specific needs and more open to users requesting for services based on the needs of the people as indicated. Besides, the differences in countries as to which issue to consider entirely a private concern (domestic violence in Malaysia) for that matter individual responsibility or a public issue to be addressed at a societal level (Singh et al., 2011; Crisp, 2017). Thus, in turn may be associated with varying stigmatisation between countries for service users of some welfare programmes (Ugiagbe, 2015; Barner & Okech, 2013). So interpretation and solutions to those issues considered private has to come from the local context if they were to be handled effectively and efficiently by social workers. Social work practice in Malaysia is underpinned by factors like the influence of Western models, economic considerations, and public perceptions of social problems. In the case of Western model, cultural and religious excuses are offered to explain why the principle of universality is inapplicable to all.

5 Conclusion

The expert knowledge and skills of social work professionals in mobilising, linking and coordinating resources, services and people in attempt to provide hope to the hopeless will come to fruition if done in the context of their clients. The issue of indigenisation is about addressing the person-environment interaction to improve people's lives, facilitate transformation and growth through locally designed interventions. For social work to be relevant there is the need to observe certain specific social, cultural and historical factors when carrying out assessment in order not to complicate conditions of recipients of the services. The observation is that social work needs theories that contain local cultural elements that could be employed to address the needs of both the people and their environments. It is clear that the nature of social problems in Malaysia is totally different from those of the proponents of the current social work theories as well as the fields of practices and roles for social workers. The main concern is that such a multiracial society requires rigorous studies to cater for the local traditional tenets of these multicultural groups within Malaysia. The emphasis on indigenisation of social work in Malaysia is based on the realisation that the practice has not adequately and appropriately respond to the major social

problems in the country. So, adequate attempts should be made to ensure that the practice fits
into the social, economic and practical environment of the catchment area.

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