Localisation of Social Work in Arab Countries

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1 Introduction

Social Work is a profession that is needed in each country in the world. Its goals for social justice and equality tackle social problems and tries to prevent them at the individual and the collective level. Since social issues are always different in their context, social workers must consider those differences. Methods, approaches, and theories that are commonly known in Social Work do not work like a recipe, which one can always use in each situation. Social Work with refugees, for instance, is in many countries a relevant field for the profession. However, the needs of the clients differ due to their flight history, their country of origin, and their reasons for fleeing and to their hosting countries.

Moreover, the responsible host country contains different resources and distinctive strengths. Those circumstances create the need for Social Work to be localised in the regions in which it takes action. This does not only apply for the work with refugees but to any field of Social Work.

This paper focuses mainly on the localisation of Social Work in Arab countries, specifically in Jordan and Lebanon, since experts working in those countries established the LOSWAC project.

To clarify the need for localisation in Arab countries, firstly Social Work itself and its historical roots are analysed, to show the import of the profession to those regions. Moreover, localisation of Social Work, as such, is highlighted to a deeper understanding of this term and own concepts and debates (Chapter 2). Afterward, the Arab world is focused on the development of Social Work there and the specific needs of localisation on-site. This leads finally to the relevance of the localisation of Social Work in this area (Chapter 3). It also provides an outlook for further steps that must be taken (Chapter 4).

2 Localisation of Social Work

The idea of localising Social Work by the usage of local knowledge, resources, and data is not a new one. Since the 1960s, various practitioners search for appropriate Social Work practices and advocate for taking the contexts of the region into consideration when implementing approaches or methods. To achieve this, the education of Social Work must also be shaped, so it responds to the need for localisation as well (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008)

However, before analysing the relevance of localisation of Social Work in Arab countries specifically, the background of localisation itself and with a specific focus on Social Work must
be outlined. Therefore, an initial understanding of the profession and its historical roots are needed. With this clarification, localisation can be discussed, together with its meaning, several concepts, and ongoing debates.

2.1 Social Work

As this research focuses on the localisation of Social Work, firstly, the profession and it has, regarding principles must be examined roughly.

The International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) is an international organisation that represents the interests and concerns of social workers around the world. In 1928, during the First International Conference on Social Work, participants agreed on forming this international body. Over the decades it developed itself, and members researched ongoing to define the profession and to set regarding principles (Hall, 2013). IFSW agreed finally on the following, meanwhile commonly known definition:

“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. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.” (IFSW, 2014)

Furthermore, the IFSW outlines the core principles of Social Work as the respect for the dignity of human beings, the motto ‘do-no-harm,’ the respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice. After listing those principles, the IFSW refers to a conflict that may arise between the different principles. Such a conflict occurs for instance, if, in a particular culture the rights of special groups, like homosexuals, are violated. On the one hand, social workers must respect diversity and other cultures, and on the other hand, they may not do harm and respect the rights of each human being (IFSW, n.d.). This conflict refers to debates about the universal applicability of Social Work itself. Especially since Social Work has become more international due to globalization, several discussions have emerged about its internationalization. Experts question if Social Work can be able to establish universal theories and approaches that can fit into any context. They debate whether the globalization only fosters
Western imperialism or if it can enhance Social Work practices (Gray, 2005, p. 231). Such discussions are relevant to consider when talking about the localisation of Social Work, since professionals must evaluate what contents or theories must be localized and what principles or standards are valid regardless the location.

2.2 Development of Social Work

Understanding the historical roots of the profession is essential for understanding the relevance of localisation, since Social Work as a profession, including the respective education as we know it today, developed mainly in Europe and in the USA. Through colonialisation and missionary expeditions, those ideas were transferred to the rest of the world. This indicates the immediate need to localise the profession according to the context on-site.

Setting an exact date for the historical establishment of Social Work is complicated, as defining the creation moment of a profession is always blurring, in opposition to the precise time of the invention of a materialistic item. A profession, however, is created by using the knowledge of the generations before and their prior knowledge. Therefore, opinions differ when it comes to determining the historical roots of Social Work. Scientists either explain the establishment of the profession with the pauperism of early capitalism in the 19th century or even with the change from the middle Ages to Modern Age. Others are convinced that Social Work had its beginning with Jane Adams in the year 1898, as she is known as one of the pioneers of the profession (Engelke, Spatscheck, & Borrmann, 2009, p. 55).

Social Work was not always acknowledged as a profession, but its initial attempts appeared firstly as volunteer efforts. Those efforts were developed further, and practitioners initiated charity work for it. At the beginning of the 20th century, Social Work had reached the level of being an occupation (Stuart, 2013). In general, Social Work developed its initial fields of action in the Western world by the attempt to respond to the so-called social question that deals with the paradox of the increase of both poverty and a prosperous economy. Therefore, those fields of action concentrated mainly on decreasing debt and enhancing well-being in the respective communities. In Europe, the social movements that influenced the development of Social Work started in London, namely the Charity Organization Societies (COS) and the settlement houses establishments. Those ideas were exported within one decade to the United States. The approaches then spread to other countries outside Europe and the United States by colonialism or missionary work (Healy, 2012, p.56).
At the beginning of Social Work’s history, there was no formal education system for practitioners, so they conducted approaches without scientific-based guidelines. However, when charity organizations expanded, the need for professionalization grew with them, and the common interest in a more formal education system increased. The first schools of Social Work that responded to this interest were established in the late 1800s. Social Work schools developed since then, by creating bodies for accreditation of further schools, and by forming a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) that still aims to promote the quality of Social Work. Nowadays there are three primary levels in the education of the profession; the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral programmes (Hoffman, 2013).

The idea of Social Work education, including the establishment of schools, associations, and respective study programmes, was primarily exported from the United States to other non-Western countries. The United Nations undertook several attempts to transfer Social Work education into other countries with U.S. educators playing significant roles. Healy describes this transfer as such: “International education was primarily viewed in terms of what the world could learn from the U.S. schools of Social Work” (Healy, 1995).

The transfer of Social Work education happened simultaneously to the transfer of Social Work itself: Ideas, concepts, and approaches were exported from the Western world to the non-Western world. The necessary holistic adaption to the respective local field was missing.

The core content-fields of Social Work used to be determined by environmental factors. Finding answers to the Social Question, for instance, used to be the focus of Social Work in the Western world in the early 20th century, as the paradox of increasing poverty in an increasingly prosperous economy was at the center of attention these days. However, after the Second World War, mental health problems were concentrated on, as veterans needed respective services (Stuart, 2013). This shows the close interlinkage between the current situation and the focus of the profession.

Social Work education was spread around the world mainly due to the U.S. example, carried out by U.S. practitioners who functioned in the international field of Social Work as “expert consultant(s) in the development of Social Work education in other, especially developing countries” (Healy, 1995, p. 424). Therefore, the first curricula of Social Work were based on U.S. models, starting with Social Work courses in form of summer institutes in Chicago in 1895.
However, in Europe, there have been early establishments of Social Work training and courses as well. The first one was developed in England in 1873, even before the first course in the U.S. started. The two-year course at the Institute for Social Work Training in Amsterdam in 1888 continued this trend with a more explicit structure and several fields of education: settlement work, welfare of the poor, housing management, childcare for orphans, and Social Work in factories (Healy, 2012, p. 56). Considering these fields of education at a particular time, it becomes clearer that Social Work education adapts its content to current social, environmental circumstances.

In this context, a localised curriculum means firstly the content being localised; Western theories adapted to the local environment and concepts implemented in a way that promotes scholars to develop own theories or approaches based on local circumstances, resources, and data. Secondly, such a localised curriculum must be enforced with the usage of localised didactical methods so that scholars can adapt knowledge due to their contextual learning strategies. With a localised curriculum of Social Work, students would be able to enhance Social Work practices and researches in their regions by developing new approaches or adapt those that do not fit into the context and by gathering data on-site.

When researching about the history of Social Work in non-Western countries, the beginning is mostly marked with colonialism and Social Work being transferred as a Western profession to those colonized countries. However, volunteer engagement, social services, and support amongst families, groups, or tribes existed in those countries already before their colonization, just as those existed in the Western world. Those forms of assisting voluntarily that in the Western world of the West led to the transformation into an occupation and finally a profession, are addressed in researches about the history of Social Work. However, the roots of Social Work in non-Western countries, meaning all these initial forms of assistance, are merely addressed in this researches. Summarizing these thoughts shows that while prior arrangements of assistance systems shaped the profession of Social Work in the Western world, those forms of assistance in non-Western countries have not received the chance of forming localised Social Work in their regions.

2.3 Localisation of Social Work

2.3.1 Meaning

*Localisation* is a noun that is derived from the adjective *local*. The word *local* appeared according to its etymology in the late 14th century from the Old French word *local*, and derived
directly from the Latin word *localis*, which means translated to pertain to a place (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.y.).

The term localisation itself is defined, for instance, by the Cambridge Dictionary as “the process of organizing a business or industry so that its main activities happen in local areas rather than nationally or internationally” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.y.). Accordingly, localisation would mean to coordinate an economic construct in a way that it suits to local areas as its enterprise is developed in the respective one, rather than establishing it suitable for a whole nation or even the international community. Localisation is an important factor when it comes to economics: To localise a product means the adaptation of local and contextual aspects, so it is suitable for potential buyers in the respective area. Therefore, sellers may raise their avenue by adapting to the various aspects of their customers and see the differences in their cultures as a positive resource to gain higher profits. The product must be internationally reachable and at the same time adaptable to the targeted clients (Anastasiou & Schäler, 2010). This means that internationalisation is interlinked with localisation.

Localisation is an important process not only for economics but also for the social sector. The Oxford Dictionary uses a broader definition by defining localisation as the “process of making something local in character or restricting it to a particular place” (Oxford Dictionary, n.y.). Here, the term itself is neither bound to the economic nor the social sector. Instead, it can be referred to both of them. Furthermore, the definition describes two possible ways of this process: Firstly, it the development of something in a way that has a local character, and secondly, the adaption or change of something, so it gets locally suitable. Those two concepts are called indigenisation and authenticiation.

2.3.2 Debates

International Social Work concepts appear to cause several essential discussions. The first apparent debate is one of the globalisation-localisation of Social Work. The latter raises a strong argument around the globalisation process that is likely to bring global solutions to the local context, but at the same time, a locally based solution is developed to answer the local needs (Mel Grey & Jan Fook, 2004). This globalisation-localisation debate takes us to a postmodern term, glocal, defined as “to emphasize the equal importance of global awareness and local solutions” (Mel Grey & Jan Fook, 2004, p. 627). The second debate is articulated around Westernisation-indigenisation. This debate raises concerns about the relevance of Western Social Work to the non-Western countries' contexts and issues in diverse and multiple backgrounds (Mel Grey & Jan Fook, 2004). On the other hand, the multicultural–
universalisation debate argue the universal values of Social Work and the potential conflict with non-Western and traditional cultures with collectivist values-based mostly on notions of family and communities (Mel Grey & Jan Fook, 2004). Last but not least, the universal–local standards debate sheds light on the notion that it might be acceptable to think philosophically about an international orientation of the professional Social Work education and practice without necessarily attempting to attain universal agreement on its definitions or standards (Mel Grey & Jan Fook, 2004).

Regardless of all debates, the development of Social Work in non-Western countries was imported from Western countries and have gone through different stages.

Walton and Abo El Nasr 1988, conceptualise three main stages in the development of Social Work in developing countries. The first stage is called the transmission stage, where developing countries transmitted the theories of the Social Work from the West and tried to apply it without questioning its suitability or adaptability to the local context. The second stage is called the indigenisation stage, where the developed countries start realising that the imported Social Work knowledge is not adaptable to the regional settings and start causing some undesirable consequences. Thus, efforts have to be made to modify certain imported concepts to fit local needs, values, and problems.

“Indigenisation processes happen when a recipient country has experienced discontent with the imported Western model of Social Work in the context of the local political, economic, social and cultural structures and work to adapt, adjust or modify them to improve the model’s to fit to the recipient country and culture” (Megahead, 2012, p. 281).

Whereas, the third stage is called authentication. At this stage, it is to be argued that even though social workers could adopt Western models, they have to be creative in developing strategies to address local problems (Cheung & Liu, 2004).

In fact, the two concepts of indigenisation and authentication seem to be dominant and interconnected regarding developing countries and shaped the development of Social Work in those countries. Since this paper does not attempt to solve or find a solution to any arising debates, we will only define the latter two concepts concerning Social Work.
2.3.3 Concepts

Indigenisation:

Indigenisation of Social Work was first mentioned in 1971 at the fifth United Nations International Survey of Social Work training (Cheung & Liu, 2004). It was considered that the era of indigenisation was entered, based on the needs and resources of the regarding society. Furthermore, it was agreed that the schools of Social Work must take the lead in this regard because those institutions must adapt to such new circumstances (Graham & Bradshaw, 2007).

The term indigenisation means to tailor Social Work methods to local contexts and is, therefore, one possible way of localising Social Work (Gray 2005, p. 232).

The words “indigenised” or “indigenisation” is not to be confused with adaptations associated with indigenous peoples, for some authors apply the term “indigenise” to Social Work with non-indigenous communities, while others use it exclusively to describe Social Work with indigenous people (Graham & Bradshaw, 2007).

This controversy itself derived from the localisation of the word, where the term indigenisation translated into Arabic means tawteen, a derivative of watan, which means homeland. Hence, for Arabic speakers, this would be comprehended as settling down into a local environment. Whereas, for non-Arabic speakers, the English term indigenisation is connoted to the colonialist era, where the term induces images of primitiveness and backwardness, of natives living outside of the civilised world (Ragab, 2016).

Authentication

The authentication concept was developed as a new model of Social Work to adequately fit the national, ethnical, cultural, and religious realities. This concept first appeared in Latin America in the late 1960s, afterward in Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa and the rest of the developing countries (Sorescu, 2014). Thus, the authentication in practice means that Social Work practitioners and academic researchers distance themselves from the Western model of Social Work, and create new responses to structural social problems. So far, the study and try to understand the social, economic and cultural context of social issues in the recipient country. They finally produce an official Social Work response (Megahead, 2012).

Thus, authentication is defined as the “identification of genuine and authentic roots in the local system, which would be used for guiding its future development in a mature, relevant and
original fashion” (Ragab, 1982, p. 21, quoted in Cheung & Liu, 2004). It has also been meant “to become genuine” (Ragab, 1990, p. 38, quoted in Cheung & Liu, 2004).

It should be noted that Social Work has unifying aspects, which are a must for humanity that is empowerment, equity, human rights, and social justice. However, other aspects of Social Work should be culture-oriented. The needs of Western culture and eastern culture are quite different, and ethical standards also differ. The practitioners must be able to develop local approaches. Thus, the education they receive must be balanced in terms of globalisation and localisation aspects. In other words, the context and perspective of Social Work should be relevant to any locality (O. Selçuk, 2016).

3 Localisation of Social Work in Arab countries

The historical roots of Social Work showed that the origin of the profession’s education is situated in the Western world. Its import into other countries had an impact on Social Work until today. This impact reasons the relevance of the localisation of the profession.

3.1 Postcolonial impact on the development of Social Work

3.1.1 Overview

Social Work considers social problems for where and in which context they are appearing. However, they might be considered as a problem with global roots as Jönsson (2014, p. 2) argues, “a global perspective to local problems should be included in every practices of Social Work in order to develop new methods of practices in an increasingly globalised field of work.” Problems such as destructions of local communities and forced migration reproduce global social problems and local consequences.

Economic globalisation, like the development of global companies, which continuously increase their profits, easily leads to an increase in global inequalities and social problems if these companies are located mainly in certain parts of the world. This is blamed for having “many socio-political implications, such as increasing ethnic conflicts, re-colonisation, increasing poverty and displacement of millions of people on a global scale” (Jönsson, 2014, p. 3) A neoliberal ideology was born to promote financial globalisation, which is “characterized by deregulation and liberalization of international trade and capital flows” (Sewpaul, 2016, p. 32). Moreover, “Neoliberalism refers to a combination of socioeconomic and political discourse and policy choices (…) would promote economic growth, progress, and distributional justice, primarily through trickle-down effects.” (Sewpaul, 2016). Thus, the Nobel Prize
winner, economist, Krugmann (2009) affirmed that the role of neoliberalism isn’t secure anymore and “has definitely turned out to be even more dangerous than we realized” (Sewpaul, 2016). Therefore, social workers should be informed about the economic, political and social realities that affect their practice to adopt, adapt and localise it accordingly. Additionally, they should broaden the scope of the “curriculum so that it addresses issues that arise in the interstices between the local and the global and supports the development of locality-specific social work.” (Jönsson, 2014, p. 4).

3.1.2 Social Work: an imported profession

Although Social Work is claimed by some to be an imported profession by colonisers to indirectly, reproduce power in the colonised country and “make colonialism better to serve both the colonizers and the colonized (…) with hindsight, it can be claimed that these kinds of attempts came close to some kind of social work.” (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2011, p. 28) However, Social Work is committed to working towards justice. “Significantly for social work, despite its oppressive and exploitative character, colonialism also contained idealism and attempts to improve the situation of the colonized” (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2011, p. 28). Many social workers have been fighting for social justice and equality, in forms of grassroots associations, participatory approaches and more activist forms of social development that emerged in the 1970s. In this matter, the global and local mechanisms of producing and reproducing social problems around the world should be critically analysed. Global is seen as modern, where modernity comes along with its colonial past and its postcolonial present. Thereupon, social development programmes, social welfare programmes, and other social activities in non-Western countries are strongly connected to the Western modernity and how to achieve social progress in non-Western countries. Consequently, it could lead to inappropriate and maybe inadequate addressing of the social, economic and environmental problems affecting people’s lives. In the contemporary global context of Social Work, “this largely equals the global hegemony of so-called Western social work, its educational hierarchies and (locally established) qualification criteria. (…) thus, there are several potential dangers of cultural imperialism within social work education, such as attempts to create global/area based standards or competency requirements, usage of the same study material in different continents (attempts to unify the curricula), difficulties to adjust issues to the local culture; and studying in global instead of local languages.” (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2011, p. 34)

However, from another perspective globalisation is not only a devastating force on social development but also bears the potential solution to a range of social problems in different
contexts. “[G]lobalization brings undeniable material benefits, increases access to information and knowledge, broadens investment opportunities and is a process difficult to control.” (Ocampo, 2000). Therefore, the underlying assumptions of the globalisation project and the relationship between globalisation, development, and colonialism and, more specific, the globalisation of Western-centric modernisation programmes have to be examined and localised (Jönsson, 2014, p. 16).

Maybe it is the time to say, “Let it go!” and “Move on!”, but since the modern world derived from colonialism, slavery, wars, and mass-killing (Jönsson, 2014, p. 18) such destructive phenomena must be considered, which have influenced, and are still shaping our societies. Accordingly, the local and the global should not always be seen as thesis and antithesis, but rather as an interplay that can help us to understand and study a global world (Ife, 2000).

Many policymakers, politicians, and even academics have criticized that postcolonial perspectives and explanations concerning global social events are meaningless. Some believe that words such as `center` or `margins` used in postcolonial studies have lost their relevance in today's globalised world. They also suggest “that the end of geographic and cultural borders and paradigms indicates a radical break with the perspectives of colonisation and anti-colonialism” (Jönsson, 2014, p. 34).

Although the term post-colonialism can be critical, because it indicates the end of colonialism, it is still an appropriate term to use to frame of what is usually called ‘the West’, that continues to dominate the world by old and new means. Supposing that former colonial powers left many colonised countries, the former colonial powers continue to benefit from their impact. Loomba (2005) explains the modern colonialism by saying, “the modern colonialism, in contrast to the pre-modern colonialism, did not only occupy a country and take their lands and resources but also restructured their economies in accordance to the economic needs of the colonisers.” (Jönsson, 2014, p. 34). It is also said that “a continuing form of imperialism is the neoliberal appropriation of age-old cultural practices” (Sewpaul, 2016, p. 32).

However, there are many controversies around post-colonialism and globalisation being differentiated from each other. Critics consider globalisation a new era in human history, while other scholars consider it as an outcome of capitalism and modernity. Postcolonial studies provide important knowledge of the colonial legacy and its consequences on underprivileged people. Theories of both postcolonial and global developments lead to a better understanding of the mechanisms of reproducing inequalities. The continuing influence of colonial powers in
former colonies is reinforced within its structures, as Kothari argues “where colonialism left off, development took over” (Jönsson, 2014, p. 35).

Social Work practice needs to combat social problems, othering, marginalisation, and increasing inequalities in a globalised world. For colonialism, social workers should decolonise the profession of Social Work so that educators give a clear understanding of colonisation including the current cultures and issues of indigenous peoples. Tamburro (2013, p.12) argues, “[an] important key to decolonizing Social Work curriculum is the inclusion of the cultural inheritance and voices of Indigenous peoples”. Pinar (2004) believes that the inclusion of personal stories into the curriculum is an effective way for educators to sensitize students to the issues of social justice and helps creating cultural change (Tamburro, 2013). For instance, students can increase a superior comprehension of colonization through indigenous centric stories, for example, those in Strong Women's Stories (Anderson and Lawrence, 2003), which furnish understudies with bits of knowledge in an extremely close to home way, in view of lived encounters.

3.2 Postcolonial impact on Social Work in the Arab region

For most Arab countries, just as for most non-Western countries, the post-independence period did not mark the end of colonialism. Thus other forms of domination are still to be found. Eid (2002) describes the movement towards modernisation after war as “cultural colonisation,” which was initiated by ruling elites, so they emulate the West in technological and economic developments. Thus, norms and values of non-indigenous people were imported. The influence on the culture’s behavior leads to identity crisis among Arab societies.

“This process of "cultural colonization" was particularly acute within limited circles of elite groups, who often indulged in the blind mimicry of Western modes of dress and social behaviours, considered by many to be contrary to traditional Arabo-Islamic values and practices. This situation resulted in a sharp gap between the rulers and the ruled, a gap exacerbated by pronounced class differences related to the unequal distribution of economic wealth, and by the generalized corruption prevailing in state institutions.” (Eid, 2002, p. 9)

Other forms of cultural colonisation followed, “in the late twentieth century what followed has been re-named as ‘epistemic violence’, ‘colonisation of the mind’ and ‘cultural imperialism’” (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2011, p. 27). Modernity and ways of thought, therefore, are Western and
associated with it on the Middle East. The late Edward Said identified colonial structures of the
West in all practices and attitudes with the non-Western world as Orientalism. Besides that,
colonial governance worked through “producing statements, official views and descriptions
about the Orient and its inhabitants” (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2011, p. 27). On the other hand, “secular
regimes in postcolonial Arab and Persian states are best described as modestly successful, and
the rise of political Islam has been a powerful form of anti-imperialist sentiment. The region
continues to reel from centuries of foreign control” (Graham & Al-Krenawi, 2014, p. 2).

Those impacts on Social Work become visible when analysing Arab curricula. Those were
mainly imported and could not develop freely. While the content of Social Work education in
the Western world adapted itself to environmental circumstances, education in non-Western
countries were transferred without this adaptation to the local context. The evidence-based
practice (EBP) provides one example of this import. The EBP is an approach for the Social
Work profession to work scientifically, with, as the name suggests, the practice and methods
being based on evidence. The idea of this approach is to learn from former cases to improve
further work with new situations. Mary Richmond developed this approach and published it
1917 in her publication Social Diagnosis in the Western world before it then could be
transferred to other non-Western countries. Several universities in Arab countries have
implemented EBP courses in their curricula. However, since Social Work education was
introduced to Arab countries through the transfer of American experiences, the Western world
directly influences these courses. Often, respective courses and curricula have not been updated
nor changed, and universities have continued its implementation without adaptation to the local
field. Furthermore, an additional challenge is the lack of databases, so practitioners have to
work with the data of the US instead of their own (Helal, 2017). This again hinders social
workers to research and work adequately in their local fields.

This example of a specific approach, being transferred to non-Western countries from the
Western world as well as the outlined obstacles with its implementation, demonstrate the need
for localised curricula and sensitivity in its implementation in non-Western countries according
to their context. This need is furthermore commonly agreed on amongst researchers of Social
Work (Selcik, 2016).

3.2.1 Special focus on Jordan

Jordan has a significant geographical location in the Middle East. Nowadays it is bordered by
three countries with political conflicts namely Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. Accordingly, Jordan
is the host community for a big number of refugees and displaced persons from different
nationalities. Since its independence in 1946, Jordan has been witnessing massive changes in its social fabric along with other changes in other areas e.g. economic, political and cultural changes.

Social Work in Jordan is recognized as both a profession and an academic discipline. The first Social Work movement in Jordan started with trible system that supported the charity work. Religious organizations were also playing a major role in providing social assistance to the community. (Cocks et al., 2009). After gaining its independence, Jordan’s Social Work movement started to flourish mainly by volunteering with charitable organisations (Al-Makhamreh & Sullivan, 2013). After this, there were four major refugees, and forcibly displaced persons influxes that contributed to the development of Social Work in Jordan. First the Arab–Israeli War in 1948, second the Six-Day war in 1967 (Palestinian influx), third the first Gulf war in 1991, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (the Iraqi influx. Final the Syrian crisis in 2011 (Cocks et al., 2009). The increased population, and the need for services called for the attention of national and international non-governmental organizations.

The development of Social Work in Jordan was mainly represented by establishing academic university degrees for Social Work, and by creating more job opportunities in the market with services providers. As for the former, the first programme for Social Work was established in 1965 at Al- Balqa’ Applied University with both theoretical and practical courses. Then, it was followed by two other programmes at the University of Jordan and the Hashemite University. Queen Rania Center for Jordanian Studies and Community Service started to offer a diploma degree in Social Work too, in collaboration with American institutions. The presence of NGOs and INGOs led to giving a lot of job opportunities for Social Work graduates. UNHCR which is the main stakeholder for services provided for refugees and forcibly displaced persons in Jordan, is seeking to provide protection, registration, education, and health services to the vulnerable groups by conducting home visits mainly by social workers (UNHCR, 2019). On a local level, the Ministry of Social Development was established to provide the Jordanian with services according to the needs. Basic services explained to cover child, women, and mental health services too. Al-Makhamreh & Sullivan (2013) adds that:

”Further legislation, such as the organisation of Zakat (Muslim charitable tax 1978), the National Assistance Fund (1986), the Employment and Development Fund (1992) and the Disabled Welfare Law (1993) was passed. Non-governmental voluntary national organisations such as the Queen Alia Fund (1979), Nour Al-Hussein Foundation (1985) and the Higher Board for Social Assistance (1995)
The awareness of Social Work both as a profession and as an academic discipline was increasing. This awareness was represented by conducting conferences and by establishing the Jordanian Association of Social Work.

This emerging field is facing crucial challenges. The curricula design is lacking practical courses to support the students to practice Social Work as a profession. In some universities the academic major of Social Work is merged with the major of Sociology, by this students in such programmes get less Social Work-related courses. Another big dilemma for Social Work in Jordan is that the academic major in the universities does not have any prerequisites for students applying to study it, or even a selection process for admission. This is leading to enrolling students who have lower grades for admission in academic majors like Social Work (Al-Makhamreh & Sullivan, 2013).

Furthermore, there are only a few academic programmes in a few Jordanian universities that teach Social Work as an independent academic discipline. Both the University of Jordan, and the German Jordanian University are offering Masters’ degrees in Social Work as an example. Other Universities like Yarmouk University is offering the major of Social Work merged with the Sociology major. The local perspective about the profession, and academic discipline of Social Work is that it is a feminine major (Al-Makhamreh & Sullivan, 2013). Other challenges are also present. Not having national standards, and specific job descriptions is creating some miscommunication for the duties and rights of Social Works in the job market. And most importantly not having a code of ethics to govern the practices of the profession. Beside the challenges, good opportunities for developing Social Work in Jordan are happening through international exchange and projects (Al-Makhamreh & Sullivan, 2013).

3.2.2 Special emphasis on Lebanon¹

Back in 1800, Social Work in Lebanon was built on a system of charity or tenders. The wealthy Lebanese or the upper economic class, the Lebanese diaspora, religious associations and missionaries, and the "endowment" of the princes were the primary sources of Social Work funds (Slim, 2019). Accordingly, the wealthy families concentrated their aid to orphanages, shelters, and religious associations such as the Makassed Islamic Charitable Association, which was founded in 1878. Also, foreign missionaries, some wealthy Lebanese and foreigners

¹ Publications around the Social Work development in Lebanon are limited. Hence, this part refers to one author
volunteered their money to build free hospitals such as the free hospital of Jabour Tobya Kallab built in 1887 in the town of Amchit and, the first school for the blind was built in 1868 by an American lady (Slim, 2019). Some princes were taking properties in the name of the Christians religion under the conditions of building schools for their community, such as what happened with the princes of Abu al-Lamaa in 1830 (Slim, 2019).

During the First World War in Lebanon, the economic situation deteriorated due to the blocking of sea entrances in the face of aid and assistance of Lebanese immigrants, in addition to the locust attack on the agriculture, and the monopoly of grains, resources, and subsidies by the Lebanese officials. This situation led to the death of many of the underprivileged people and the spread of epidemics among them. This led the wealthy citizens and the upper class to intervene and start creating orphanages and elderly homes that many are still functional to date (Slim, 2019).

After the First World War and the misery of the Lebanese people, Armenian refugees started fleeing to Lebanon due to the war in Armenia, which required Lebanon to build shelters for them in the Karantina area in 1922. Charity organizations were active in providing services, building schools, and orphanages playing a role in directing public opinion and spreading social awareness among individuals and asking the Lebanese authority to intervene. However, during this era, due to the growth of commercial monopolies in the cities, many of the poor rural people fled to the town in search of a living. Also, the capital of Beirut began to expand to the suburbs, especially Bourj Hammoud. This has led to building shelters for rural Lebanese people, as well. The concentration and vulnerability of people created lots of health and social problems. On the other hand, the industrial sector has started to flourish due to the presence of migrants and refugees, while other rural resources such as the silk industry started to disappear (Slim, 2019).

The situation remained the same until the Second World War, where the population of Beirut increased from twenty thousand to more than 100,000, most of them living in inadequate housing conditions shelters and tents with a deteriorated situation in all regions and governorates. As the problems of World War II started to worsen, the social sentiment began to grow, which has pushed individuals and public opinion to pressure the state to intervene to reduce risks. The Lebanese state realized its role after the independence in 1943, considering that the care of the citizen is its responsibility, but the political and social chaos after the departure of the French colonizers prevented the state from fulfilling its duties (Slim, 2019).
The problem got more complicated in 1948 by the influx of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon as a result of the Israeli occupation of their state. The industrial sector was unable to absorb the large numbers of people. The unemployment rate got higher, due to the reluctance of young people to work in artisanal and handmade industries, which led to its disappearance. The social and economic problems got more altered, where 50% of the population received 18% of the national income. For this, the government intervened by creating an employment office aiming to support the needs of refugees. However, this office could not achieve its aim, which has led to the creation of the Ministry of Social and Work Affairs in 1952. This Ministry was distributing financial aid according to sectarian proportions to associations and institutions and orphanages through contract or Memorandum of Understanding between them, but could not secure the needs of the people and solve their problems, and the situation remained the same until the year 1959. After this, the latter Ministry decided to carry out studies and plans to build an independent state where the Ministry proceeded by closing the weak institutions, not providing the needs of people, and replacing them with social justice and equality institutions. Upon which the Social Welfare Department was created and aimed to take care of people's requirements and the social situation in general. It became part of a comprehensive social development plan requiring competence and expertise; foreign experts were hired to study the situation and assess needs. Then, the head of the Social Welfare Department, Mr. Joseph Donato, established the social development project, which set up a plan to build the capacity of the team, and prepared a training programme for the employees by the foreign experts. They had a degree in sociology until the social workers started being graduated from the Lebanese School of Training in Social Work. During the year 1948, the Ministry of Education authorized the Lebanese School of Training in Social Work to provide a Social Work diploma upon completion of two years of training in Social Work. In 1978 the programme became an independent branch within Saint Joseph University and contained theoretical and applied social services education according to the French system (Slim, 2001).

The Social Training School continued to provide specialists for the labor market in specific to work in the Department of Social Welfare until the year 1973, where the Social Training School started graduating social workers with a Master and Doctoral degree until date (Slim, 2001).

As for other universities and schools in Social Work, in 1950, a three-year social services programme was established at Beirut University College, currently known as the Lebanese American University, and still exists until date (Slim, 1993).
In 1987, Social Work continued to develop under the umbrella of the Social Welfare Department until the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs was established. Social Work focused on social health aspects, which encouraged the Lebanese University to develop a specialization of Medical Social Work in the Faculty of Public Health in its five branches. Haigazian founded the School of Social Work, which mainly was catered for the Armenian issues (Slim, 2019).

Accordingly, the Union of Social Workers was established in Lebanon in 1999 and is in the process of approval by the Parliament to legislate and regulate the Social Work profession (Slim, 2019).

During the era of the development of the Social Work profession, and because of the worsening of the problems in Lebanon, the Modern University for Business and Science decided to establish a specialization in Social Work in 2004 and then a master degree in Social Work and in the management of Social Work institutions within the Higher Institute of Social Work in 2012, in addition to the Jinan University, which began the social health supervision programme in 1990 and then stopped, to open again in 2007 and are still continuing it (Slim, 2019).

Based on Social Work history, one can conclude that Social Work in Lebanon is guided by principles, methods, and theories outsourced from abroad, although the field of Social Work in Lebanon is rich in expertise. Hence, there is a necessity to build on this to localise the profession in Lebanon.

3.3 The relevance of the localisation of Social Work in Arab countries

Localisation of Social Work means the process of changing the profession and its theories, methods, and tools in a way that it is context-bound. Localisation in this matter attempts to “limit the hegemony of social work’s mostly Northern models and to promote the development of alternative approaches that are more responsive to and appropriate for local and minority communities” (Bradshaw & Graham, 2007, p. 94). This development can be either the adaption of existing Western models to non-Western local areas, or the establishment of new models by identifying local resources and needs (c.f. Chapter 2.3.2).

Generally, the process of localisation appears in several areas, economic ones, and social ones, as the process itself is relevant in all of them. In terms of Social Work, this relevance can be justified with the need to react adequately to the objection of the profession being a Westernized profession.
Social Work epistemology remains as a Western conception, but it is nonetheless the time to add space for the other perspectives, including the Arab world, where Social Work, has been a product of colonialism. The region's first Social Work training school was established in 1936 in Cairo, and social work education here and elsewhere remained strongly indebted to West European and North American approaches. Followed by Libya 1960 and then late 1978/80 it spread around the Arab region, where governments hired Egyptian social workers.

“Historically, many aspects of social work have fit poorly with Arab cultures and social structures. Polygamy and blood vengeance are excellent examples of culturally embedded practices for which social work theory and methods had, until recently, little to say. This process may lead to a more locally responsive, culturally appropriate model of professional intervention.” (Graham & Al-Krenawi, 2003).

Specific consideration in cultural aspects when practicing Social Work with Arab clients should be taken. Where, one must “realize that unlike Western clients, many interventions with Arab clients are to be especially couched in the context of the family, community, or tribal background. Another important issue to consider is the different approaches to gender relations amongst Arab clients.” (Graham & Al-Krenawi, 2003)

Those different views on gender relations refer to Arab societies commonly being patriarchal ones. Therefore, women empowerment approaches, the fight for equal rights between men and women, as well as the attempts to foster acknowledgment of transgender take place on a completely different basis than in the Western world. Therefore, social workers must consider this context when developing approaches or implementing measures. They must localize Social Work in this field of action.

Additionally, the status of the family and the community is different from the perception of the Western world. While societies in Western countries are rather individualistic, societies in Arab countries are collectivistic. Therefore, when Social Work takes action in Arab regions, it must actively involve the client’s family and friends. Case management approaches imported from the West might not focus strong enough on the social environment and therefore must be reflected on that and be localised.

Aside Arab societies being collectivistic cultures and the distinctive gender relations, religion is another point to consider. In Arab countries, religion usually has higher relevance to clients than in the Western world. Social Work methods that are connected to spiritual and religious must be fostered in the Arab Social Work or slightly newly developed since the religion itself
differs. While in Europe and in the USA Christianity is the main religion, in the Arab world, Islam is the leading religion. This means that even those Social Work methods from the Western world, that consider religion, could turn out to be inappropriate for Muslim clients.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to localise Social Work in the Arab region and to develop suitable methods for its implementation.

Moreover, funding developmental projects in the Arab countries mainly rely on funders from the West or even from other Arab countries, like the Gulf. Although the country itself could have a government budget for such projects, it is not sufficient for filling the needs to assist capacities and professionals. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in Lebanon or the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) and the Ministry of Planning and International Corporation (MOPIC) in Jordan, are examples of funding systems to achieve governmental plans and provide social services and facilities. Other organizations are also to be seen among the Arab world that rely on their own money, whereas it is more popular or even a must to outreach for Western funders because of accountability. However, the organizational structure of NGO’s and INGO’s differ to those from abroad, which could conflict and maybe also need more skills in project management. Accordingly, funding should be contextualized accordingly. There should be needs-based assessment, culturally acceptable terminology and more flexibility. Nevertheless, creating sustainability of own projects and decrease dependability on outside funds.

Additionally, community engagement is based on the fact that people being affected by an issue have the right to participate in the decision-making process and to solve their own problems. People’s participation or public participation can influence decisions around services being provided to these communities. A long term vision of a community has to take into account not only the government and organization perspectives but also the people in need. Hence, the importance of engaging communities in decision making when it comes to projects being implemented for them, is still lacking in the non-Western countries, where most of the projects are being planned and organized based on external agenda. Whereas, social workers should base these projects on the needs emerging from the local community and cater each and every project to the local culture.

Volunteerism is an other factor to consider in the field of Social Work. In most of the Arab countries, Social Work started with voluntary work with charities and organizations. Jordan is one of the examples that reflects this point, Social work started to flourish in Jordan by
volunteering within charitable organizations (Al-Makhamreh & Sullivan, 2013). UN reports show that over 900 UN volunteers are supporting UNHCR in more than 70 countries around the world every year. However, most of the Arab countries are still lacking in professionalizing their Social Work and volunteers consider themselves as social worker even though they are non-professionals. A problem is that a lot of Arab countries are lacking a Code of Ethics for the profession of Social Work, the lack of strategies, procedures, and organisational plans to practice Social Work and this fact also shapes a weak understanding of the professionalization of Social Work.

Furthermore, as shown with the example of the EBP (c.f. Chapter 3.1.2.), there is merely sufficient data gathered, for the implementation of such approaches. Social workers in the Arab region cannot use the data collected for instance in the U.S. when applying approaches to the field in their regions. Also, the Arabic academic literature that addresses this, is not rich or even available. While in the Western world practitioners can use the already gathered data, those often must be newly collected by Arab practitioners. The same applies to other research fields, not only data collection. Therefore, there is a need for more Arab scientists conducting their own, context-bound research. For those, there must be structures implemented, to publish their work so other professionals have greater access to this localised research.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to localise Social Work in the Arab region and to develop suitable methods for its implementation. However, when talking about localisation, the relevance of international connections cannot be denied. Even though, Social Work must be context-bound, there should always be an ongoing dialogue amongst professionals on an international level. Without this, Social Work would become an isolated profession and its further development would stagnate. The concept of ‘glocal’ approaches (c.f. Chapter 2.3.2) must be considered when applying localisation of Social Work, which says that global awareness and local solutions must be equally emphasised on.

4 Outlook

This basic paper has shown the high relevance of localising Social Work in Arab countries. For this localisation several measures must be taken. Social Work curricula must be screened to analyse the desiderata on this topic within the education. The comparison from several study programmes can show how universities already cope with the postcolonial impact or at least detect a lack in this regard, which can then be tackled.
Furthermore, practitioners and scientists of Social Work must become aware of these challenges to reflect on own approaches. Additionally, students need to learn about the relevance of localisation to include this knowledge in their further study. Those students must also be encouraged to consider the scientific career as an option for their future, since Social Work needs young scientific professionals who develop the research on this topic further. Moreover, structures must be developed that foster international cooperation between universities and professionals to promote the localisation of Social Work. The access to literature as well as publication options must be enabled for such a localisation to become possible. Considering all this from a glocal perspective, neither denying advantages of globalisation, nor the relevance of the local field, will lead to a balanced localisation of Social Work.
5 References


