

Conceptualization of Soft Skills as Part of the Professional Socialization of Social Workers

(Konsepsualisasi Kemahiran Insaniah sebagai sebahagian daripada Sosialisasi Professional Pekerja Sosial)

FUZIAH SHAFFIE

School of Applied Psychology, Social Work & Policy

Universiti Utara Malaysia

Email : fuzi484@uum.edu.my

RUZLAN MD. ALI & FAHAINIS MOHD. YUSOF

School of Education & Modern Language

Universiti Utara Malaysia

Abstract

This article discusses the conceptualization of soft skills which current higher institutions' educators of professional programmes should contemplate. Social work educators were probed to describe their experiences within their profession, and viewpoints on, soft skills as part of the professional socialization of social workers toward becoming professionally and socially competent when providing their services to their clients. In-depth interviews were used as means of gathering qualitative data. The transcribed data was then thematically analysed. This paper highlights the opinions of two social work educators, from two public universities, on the issue of soft skills among social workers. The social work educators insinuated that it is important to raise awareness of soft skills competencies among social work educators to help them in assessing themselves, and identify where and how they could actively seek to improve themselves as trainers or teachers of social workers to function effectively within the context of their workplaces. Embedding the soft skills competencies into their career as social workers is assumed as one of the effective and efficient method of achieving both professional and social competence. The proposed soft skills provided early ideas and initiatives which can serve as guideline when facilitating and guiding future qualified social workers.

Keywords: *soft skills, social competence, social workers, social work education*

Abstrak

Artikel ini membincangkan konsep kemahiran insaniah yang perlu diberikan perhatian oleh pendidik di institusi pengajian tinggi masa kini. Pendidik kerja sosial telah ditemubual secara mendalam untuk menggambarkan pengalaman profesion mereka, dan memberikan pandangan terhadap kemahiran insaniah sebagai sebahagian daripada sosialisasi profesional pekerja sosial menjadi profesional dan berketerampilan dari segi sosial apabila memberikan perkhidmatan kepada pelanggan mereka. Berdasarkan kajian kualitatif, data telah dikumpul melalui temu bual secara mendalam. Data dianalisis mengikut tema. Pandangan daripada dua orang pendidik kerja sosial, dari dua buah universiti awam telah diminta berkaitan isu kemahiran insaniah dalam kalangan pekerja sosial. Pendidik kerja sosial ini berpandangan bahawa adalah penting untuk meningkatkan kesedaran terhadap kecekapan kemahiran insaniah dalam kalangan pendidik kerja sosial untuk membantu mereka dalam menilai diri mereka sendiri, dan mengenal pasti di mana dan bagaimana mereka boleh secara aktif berusaha untuk memperbaiki diri mereka sebagai jurulatih atau guru pekerja sosial untuk berfungsi secara berkesan dalam konteks tempat kerja mereka. Penerapan kemahiran insaniah secara kompeten dalam kerjaya sebagai pekerja sosial dianggap sebagai salah satu kaedah yang berkesan dan cekap untuk mencapai kecekapan profesional dan sosial. Kemahiran insaniah yang dicadangkan boleh memberi idea awal dan inisiatif serta garis panduan apabila memudahkan dan membimbing pekerja sosial pada masa hadapan.

Kata kunci: kemahiran insaniah, kecekapan sosial, pekerja sosial, pendidikan kerja sosial

Introduction

Soft skills are the personal attributes that facilitate modern work that characterise how an individual interacts with others and with institutions, and a necessary complement to functional and other hard skills. Soft skills are very much needed at workplaces today. Historically, technical or hard skills, were very much the only skills for career employment but today's workplaces is showing that technical skills alone are not enough to sustain the employment of individuals when organizations are right-sizing and cutting positions (James & James, 2004).

Soft skills that complement subject-specific knowledge are commonly demanded by employers when looking for employees which makes having soft skills as an important factor that determine students' employability (Haselberger, Oberhuemer, Perez, Cinque, & Capasso, 2012) in various professions. Since soft skills are critical for productive performance in today's workplaces, current and future organization leaders are emphasizing and considering the development of soft skills (Nealy, 2005).

Potential stakeholders seemingly seek employees who possessed suitable soft skills competence. Employers have problems in recruiting suitable and quality employees as quality human resource. Employers have also been reporting that fresh graduates joining various organizations are not performing well according to the designated job specifications. The categories of soft skills which are both high priorities for local employers and most lacking in job applicants are communication, problem solving and adaptability, and reliability.

Acquisition of soft skills competencies among students in public and private higher learning institutions in Malaysia is imperative. For example, Social Work profession, which continues to flourish as a profession and has been recognized as a discipline that needs further development despite our own diversified perceptions on the discipline (Ismail & Fuziah, 2014), would need to ensure that the social workers possessed the necessary soft skills since they most certainly need to deal with people in the community. Unemployment phenomenon that occurs today shows us that there are graduates who are lacking in these soft skills themselves despite obtaining excellent results in the examinations. This soft skills issue arises because the graduates are lacking in additional skills which they are supposed to have before they can be employed. Their failure to acquire soft skills while learning in the higher institutions could result in unemployment issue.

The terminology used to refer to soft skills differs in various countries. The terms use include: 'key competencies', 'soft skills', or 'employability skills' (Australia); 'key skills' or 'core skills' (United Kingdom); 'essential skills' (New Zealand); and 'necessary skills', 'employability skills' or 'workplace know-how' (United States). Soft skills are defined as intra- and inter-personal (socio-emotional) skills, essential for personal development, social participation and workplace success. They include skills such as communication, ability to work on multidisciplinary teams, adaptability, etc. These skills should be distinguished from technical, or 'hard skills' in order to emphasize the fact that they can be learned or developed by suitable training efforts, and they can also be combined, towards the achievement of complex outcomes within the workplace. As soft skills are characterized skills which are applicable and useful in various contexts, thus they can be supposedly transferred among different work occupations.

Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated approach to create stable and harmonious intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically. Effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, honourable, responsible, competent and capable of achieving well-being and contribute to the betterment of family, community and country.

Based on Malaysia's National Education Policy, it is worth noting that the main goal of education is to produce a balanced and harmonious individual who is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically, whereby effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, honourable, responsible, competent and capable of achieving well-being and contribute to the betterment of family, community and country, on a firm belief and faith in God. Higher learning institutions are deemed the most suitable venue for polishing soft skills among students. Higher institutions' educators need to have the desire and ability to participate in the formation and development of human capital with first class mentality. In order to equip students with soft skills, the educators themselves ought to possess the required soft skills as well. Hence, in a sense, these educators would need to indicate and inculcate soft skills to their students during their formal interactions with them.

The literature revealed that soft skills are a widespread concern of employers' world-wide. One example of the depth of the concern is evident in a series of interviews with executives of information technology companies. Those interviewed stated that it was not the lack of technical skills that caused projects to fail; rather, it was the lack of interpersonal or soft skills. Students, in addition to the technical skills required for their careers, also need to develop social or emotional intelligence (Golemon, 2004). This can be accomplished by helping them to equip themselves with professional skills like writing, speaking out, presenting, decision making and teamwork. In order to achieve this, new concepts, strategies and methodologies need to be introduced into the teaching. Teachers were considered as the sole source of information and students approached them for every possible solution for problems encountered (Jayaprakash, 2005). It is recognized that teaching methods can influence the development of several social intellectual abilities such as cooperation, leadership, responsibility, self-confidence, independence, ability to make decisions and communication skills (Riccio, 2008; Kermis, 2009).

The Dictionary of Social Work defines social work as "the paid professional activity that aims to assist people to overcoming serious difficulties in their lives by offering care, protection and counselling" (Thomas & Pierson, 1995, p. 357). To the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW): "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" (www.iassw.org).

Social workers play an important role in maintaining and promoting social wellbeing of society. In providing social care and promoting social

wellbeing of clients, social workers need to use a variety of social interventions in the context of development, prevention and not only subjected to recovery and social treatment. In order to meet the social expectations of the community and also the profession itself, Malaysia must have trained social workers who can solve social problems and restore effectively the social functioning of their clients. To achieve this, social workers would indeed learn the skills from their educators, either directly or indirectly.

Singapore Accreditation Council of Social Workers (SACSW) defines the term social workers only to those who have a degree and post-graduate degree in social work or those who have qualifications in a recognized field of social work (<http://www.sasw.org.sg>). Generally, social workers can be divided into two categories. The first is that they are trained, who obtained qualifications recognized by professional bodies in the field of social work (Americana, 1987: 139). This group is seen as a social worker or professional social work practice with the advantages of belonging to a degree. The second category is those who do not possess a degree or certificate in the field of social work, but directly involved doing charitable work or community work in the long term either in government agencies, private or voluntary bodies recognized by the government. Experience and knowledge possessed by the latter can sometimes be stretched or they can be made to be more skilled than the former (Wan Ab Rahman Khudzri, Wan Ibrahim, Fuziah Shaffie, Ab Aziz & Azizan Bahari, 2013).

The Malaysian Cabinet approved several proposals by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development in 2010 to establish, among others: (i) A National Social Work Competency Standards; (ii) A Social Workers Act to implement the competency standards; (iii) A Social Work Council under the Act to regulate social work practitioners and educators; and (iv) To standardize programs in social work education in institutions of higher learning. Nevertheless, the Social Work Act is still pending until the present day for cabinet's approval (Ismail, 2012). The issue of whether or not social workers in Malaysia are professional is still being debated. It will not be resolved until the country is able to introduce its own Social Work Act and develop a proper infrastructure for competency and a set of practice standards.

Social work continues to flourish as a 'profession' and has been recognized as a discipline that needs further development despite our own diversified perceptions on the discipline (Ismail & Fuziah, 2014). The growth of social work education and the social work profession have become more visible, at least intellectually, in terms of their usefulness, particularly after several universities (e.g. Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak) have decided to offer social work education in the country. The development of these programs also suggested that Malaysia recognized the

need to train more social workers in order to address its own social problems. Ismail and Fuziah (2014) further point out that the emergence of these education programs has served as a social indicator that Malaysia needs to develop competence social workers and quality social services for its people.

Methodology

In this qualitative study, in-depth interviews were used as means of gathering qualitative data. The transcribed data was then thematically analysed. This paper highlights the opinions of two social work educators, from two public universities. Noteworthy, the broader study was carried out to explore the conceptions of soft skills among experienced higher institutions educators, as well as their thinking about what soft skills are relevant to higher institutions educators, that is the soft skills which higher learning institutions need to have. The study set out to explore the educators' understandings of soft skills competencies and the ways in which they incorporate the delivery of these skills into their working contexts. At the same time, the study also aims to determine the critical elements for effective acquisition of the identified soft skills. The central research question being address in this paper is to what extent are the Malaysian educators' soft skills competencies applicable for the development of social work profession and social workers social competence within their working contexts?

The two educators, who were purposively selected to be the respondents in this study, comprised of two males educators (SWE1 and SWE2). SWE1 had been involved in the field for 35 years and SWE2 for nine years. They are currently attached at two different public universities in Malaysia. Two phases of interviews (Phase-1 and Phase-2) were carried out, whereby in Phase-1, the participant was asked about their interpretations of the term 'soft skills'. Their responses during Phase-1 were fully transcribed and analysed, whereby emerging themes were identified together with identification of responses that warrant further clarification from the participants. Phase-2 was a 'follow-up' interview to seek further clarification and meanings based on the responses that the respondents had given in Phase-1. The questions that guided the focus of the interviews are (i) How would you conceptualize the soft skills for social workers?, and (ii) What are the soft skills that you perceived as relevant for social workers currently and for years to come? In addition, in Phase 2, the participant was interviewed on the relevant soft skills which he believed social workers must have to ensure that they could execute their role as social workers efficiently and competently. The next part of this paper provides a glimpse of the findings from the interviews.

Results

What follows next are some of the respondents' responses in the interviews and excerpts of the interviews' transcripts.

Understanding of Soft Skills

SWE1 conceptualized soft skills as “skills that allow a person to become effective at his workplaces...these soft skills thing are related to the social or human touch”.

SWE2 viewed soft skills as “elements which each individual should have ... these skills are not natural skills but they need to be cultivated and translated within concrete context”. To SWE2, concrete context referred to “real life situations where one is actually living within a social community”. SWE2 added, “these skills involve social networking whereby an individual can fit him or herself within a social context”. When next asked to elaborate on what he means by ‘fit him or herself within a social context’, SWE2 responded:

“soft skills can also be conceptualize as a mechanism in which we adapt ourselves with other individuals ... and it is a reciprocal process, and these skills can be cultivated through formal as well as informal means... having soft skills can support an individual to face upcoming constraints and challenges whether just by himself or in groups” (SWE2, 2014).

From the respondents' responses in the interviews, it can be seen that SWE1 had related soft skills to effective functioning of an individual within his or her career context. On the other hand, SWE2 had related soft skills as something that could help an individual to use within a concrete or social context and can be cultivated through formal as well as informal means.

Soft Skills for Higher Institutions Social Work Educators

According to SWE1, “social work educators certainly need to have soft skills as well because they need to show the best ... they need to become an effective role model”. When asked what he meant by ‘effective role model’, SWE1 responded, “the social work educators need to actually do what they preach. These soft skills would be the social and human touch ... something very relevant with the role of social workers”.

During the interview, SWE1 had identified ‘communication skill’ as one of the relevant soft skills that social work educators need to have for now

and for the future as well. His justification was:

“...the main problem ...there is conflict...because of communication problem ...in whatever situations...because conflict can happen when there is communication problem... when there is communication breakdown. So, I think if we need to have communication skills... good communication skills. Communication skills also have values ...so that it makes you to be considerate and so on. So, I think ...if we can enhance communication skills ...in its true sense, I think we can enhance our relationship with other people ... our friendship...our understanding. Social work educators then must have good communication skills ...then only their students can actually learn about the soft skills from them... they can see what effective communication is like from their lecturers” (SWE1, 2014).

SWE1 also mentioned about social work educators need to “have appropriate values within workplace context”. He expounded that:

“ ...the importance of soft skills ...like for social work, for counselling, ...for clinical...psychologists... I think they emphasize on issues related to soft skills. For instance ...when we want to shape an individual ...guide him or her on how to have good relation with the client... we as educators must also show what good relation means. We are taught about basic values ...but the basic contexts for these values are not emphasized. That is the reason why there are differences in interpreting the values. Islam stresses on values...but differences in background ... different social environment... make them interpret the same value differently” (SWE1, 2014).

The social work educators’ behaviour may influence their social work students’ competence (SWE1, 2014). To SWE1, social work students may learn a lot of things related to soft skills and values from their educators. As mentioned by him:

“...there are differences because of the values which we brought from the society we came from...or even from our teachers...our lecturers...from the role models which we got... it could be from our teachers, parents, our brothers or sisters ...our relatives ...or even from our readings. What soft skills we bring to class is important... our students see

and evaluate what we do...how we behave in front of them” (SWE1, 2014).

SWE2 views were that “soft skills are definitely needed in the social work profession ... in fact in education at higher institutions”. He perceived that all higher institutions educators should “take issues regarding soft skills seriously” and suggested that;

“Social work educators themselves need to have and portray high level of soft skills...as an example or model to the students that are educating” (SWE2, 2014).

Furthermore, according to SWE2, “educators at the universities need to always be prepared to mould their students towards achieving their academic potential and also to educate them holistically”. SWE2 further expressed;

“Students need to be educated in matters pertaining to their relationship with other people because by building and cultivating their relationships with other people, they can then be more understanding towards others and can be more confident when interacting with others...and the social work educators need to have soft skills so that they cultivate these soft skills in a real, sincere and non-pretentious manner. They (social work educators) undoubtedly need to continuously have high level of relevant soft skills in fulfilling their students’ need as well as to contribute to external employability and ensuring their professionalism” (SWE2, 2014).

SWE1 and SWE2 seemingly agreed that social work educators are role models for their social work students. Having soft skills is deemed important because these skills relate to the notion of social and human touch. Both the respondents also agreed that communication skill is a must for social work educators in Malaysia because it can help to resolve conflicts. Social work educators need to realize that the soft skills which they have could contribute to supporting their students’ employability in the future as well as upholding their professionalism.

Relevant Soft Skills for 21st Century Social Work Educators

SWE1 believed that communication skill will always remain as on the relevant and needed soft skills now and in the future. In enhancing the communication skill, social work educators “must also be a reflective person” (SWE1, 2014). When asked why the need to be reflective, SWE1 responded by saying;

“Social work educators also need to be reflective...about ...whether I am on the right directions or not...or whether what I am saying is right or wrong. Yes, I think that to be able to reflect is very much in the communication skill also. In communication skill, we also teach our students on how to confront the clients ...and know how to deal with the clients who are trying to take advantage out of us. So, the clients won't feel defensive ...and all these are related to communication skill” (SWE1, 2014).

SWE1 had also highlighted the need for competence in communication skill among social work educators within the context of Malaysia. According to him;

“As for the context of unity in Malaysia, I still think the most important is communication skill because we are a very much multi-ethnic, multi-religion... multi-cultural as well... I think the main problem is when conflict arises in communication... conflict happen because of communication problem...communication breakdown. So, we must have good communication skill because in communication skill we also have values ...for instance being considerate. We ... as social work educators must show that we are always willing to communicate with others ...regardless of their race or beliefs. So, I think if we can enhance the communication skill in its true sense, I think our friendship... or any other sort of relationship...we can be more understanding” (SWE1, 2014).

SWE2 proposed that “soft skills that involve capability to interact positively with others” and “skills to cultivate creative thinking and being analytical when interacting with the surroundings” are very much relevant for social work educators in the 21st century. Other soft skills include “critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, teamwork skills and leadership skills”. SWE2 provided the following justification;

“Critical thinking skill is important because these soft skills are very much needed to solve problems and educators need to have these skills. Educators must be able to solve a problem in a variety of ways and being able to think critically can have the credibility effect on the educators and being a credible educator is one characteristic in which the students can accept the educator as someone who is capable of solving problems” (SWE2, 2014).

With regards to teamwork, SWE2 stressed;

“Teamwork is important because it can make the undergraduates to work collectively to achieve the relevant knowledge and to face issues raised by other parties. Working collaboratively together has the potential to enhance the students’ maturity process and assist them to disentangle all problems effectively” (SWE2, 2014).

Another soft skill that SWE3 deemed applicable to the 21st century social work educators is leadership skills. He voiced out that;

“Social work educators must have these leadership skills since by having these skills, they can influence others to achieve their desired needs...there are various leaderships skills which educators can indicate when teaching their students but to me the most prevalent and significant would be the democratic leadership skill” (SWE2, 2014).

When requested to further explain about ‘democratic leadership skill’, his response was;

“Democratic leadership skill is the skill which gives opportunities for others to provide and contribute ideas to help the group achieve a certain aim. The educators need to have these soft skills because the students will be watching the educators when he or she is teaching in the classrooms, and at the same time these students are evaluating their educator’s leadership style. The leadership style portrayed by the educator will be modelled by the students and help mould their future leadership style when they are then part of the outside community” (SWE2, 2014).

The respondents viewed that communication skill is a necessity for social work educators in the 21st century. The social work educators also need to be constantly reflective of what they say and do as well as “cultural-literate”, especially within Malaysia. Other soft skills which the respondents perceived as relevant for social work educators in the 21st century include critical thinking skills, teamwork skills, and “democratic” leadership skills.

Discussion

In this study that explored the social work educators understanding or views regarding soft skills, we found that the two respondents had associated soft

skills with the ability of the individuals to work and function effectively at their workplaces, the aspect of possessing a personality related to social or 'human touch' and the ability to embrace the notion of lifelong learning. We had also learned that to these educators, soft skills can be taught and cultivated among higher institutions students so as to prepare them for their working contexts in the future. The respondents also collectively agreed that having appropriate soft skills will enable the individual to accommodate himself or herself with the living within a real social community context, which consequently would support the individual to face and solve challenges that he or she will be facing individually or collaboratively in groups.

With regards to the soft skills that social work educators at the higher institutions should have, we found both the respondents supported the idea that all educators at the higher institutions need to have soft skills. Among the justifications that they had provided include the belief that the educators need to become effective role models to their students, whereby they need to actually practice what they preached. In a sense, we feel that the respondents hold the view that students can learn by observing their instructors or educators, a point raised by Rogers (1983). In relation to this, the educators should portray their true self when carrying out the training and communicating with their students. Hence, suggesting the requirement for the educators themselves to have the relevant soft skills. Moreover, having soft skills is important because they are training future social workers who will need to have soft skills when they play their role as social workers in the real world context. To the respondents, the most prominent soft skill that educators should have is the communication skill, as suggested by Farooqi (2013).

Other soft skills mentioned by the respondents include religiosity, working collaboratively and social and culture literate. Malaysia is known for having a multi-cultural society with a distinct religion, race, customs, belief system and language. As a very diverse society, the future social workers in Malaysia should be culturally competent. The social workers in Malaysia will need to be sensitive when dealing with different clients with various biopsychosocial spiritual elements. As for the relevant soft skills for social work educators in the 21st century, we found that the respondents had emphasized communication skills, reflective skills, positive interaction skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork skills, and leadership skills. Embedding the soft skills competencies into their career as educators is assumed as one of the effective and efficient method of achieving both professional and social competence.

To be a social worker, one requires certain types of personality and characteristics and one of the attributes the profession is interested in is humanity i.e. kindness, empathy, emotional intelligence, good manner and ability to work with everyone (Ismail & Fuziah, 2014). Social work is

a profession that requires skills, knowledge, and values. The profession has its own standard and work ethics that the social workers must observed and followed. The personal attributes needed for social workers include work ethic, teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking and communication skills.

Social work is fundamentally dependent on good communication. Qualified social workers must be able to demonstrate sound communication skills. However there is a big gap between being able to communicate and being able to communicate effectively. Social workers need to communicate effectively with service users and carers, other social workers, and other professionals (Fuziah, 2013). It is necessary for social workers to have effective communication skills if they are to promote self-help and empowerment (Lishman, 2009). Without effective communication skills, a social worker may not be able to obtain or convey that information, thereby causing detrimental effects to clients.

Social workers do certainly need to have appropriate soft skills as emphasized by the Scottish government:

“Social Work has a strong ethical basis that emphasises the importance of building a positive, professional relationship with people who use services as well as with professional colleagues. Social workers must be able to balance the tension between the rights and responsibilities of the people who use services. They must also be able to understand the implications of, and to work effectively and sensitively with, people whose cultures, beliefs or life experiences are different from their own. They must recognise and put aside any personal prejudices they may have, and work within guiding ethical principles and accepted codes of professional conduct”.

(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>).

Picking up on the expert's views on soft skills that social work educators should have currently and in many years to come, as presented within the interview excerpts above, we had constructed an initial version of the framework (see Table 1). This framework was framed with the assumption that social work students would take away not only the knowledge relating to social work fields, but would also learn by observing the behaviour of their educators and how they could function within the context of a multi-cultural society. We believe that the content within this framework will be enriched by collating the results of our further interviews with other social work educators as this study progress.

Table 1

Initial Soft Skill Framework for Social Work Educators

Relevant Soft-Skills	Descriptor	Implication for social work students
Communication skills	Social work educators demonstrate effective communication skills appropriated to the context.	High level of communication skill could avoid conflict when performing tasks or rendering services to the service users or receivers.
Reflective skills	Social work educators demonstrate reflective behaviour.	Students become effective reflective practitioners towards enhancing services that they provide to the community and the service users or receivers.
Considerate	Social work educators demonstrate sensitivity and consideration towards their students.	Students become social workers who are sensitive and considerate towards the service users in a multi-cultural society and able to function within an appropriate context.
Critical thinking skills	Social work educators able to solve problems in a variety of ways	Students can accept that their educators are capable of solving problems which can be guidance for them to be credible when solving problems at their workplaces.
Teamwork skills	Social work educators encourage their students to work collaboratively.	Students can work collectively to achieve the relevant knowledge and to face issues. Working collaboratively can enhance students' maturity process and assist them to solve problems effectively.
Leadership skills	Social work educators give opportunities for students to provide and contribute ideas to help the group achieves its aim.	The leadership style portrayed by the educator will be modelled by the students and help mould their future leadership style when they are then part of the community.

Conclusion

Social work is an art and science of helping others. Regardless of how the current situation of Social work is in Malaysia, social work is bound by its values and ethics. These values and ethics are very much reflected in client self-determination and respect for client. Social worker should try to maximize his/her clients to cope and adjust in his/her own environment. The social workers will also need to be sensitive when dealing with different clients. As a very diverse society, the future social workers in Malaysia should be culturally competence including across cultures.

References

- Abdullah, M. B. (2003). Management of social work in Malaysia. In Zakiah Jamaluddin (Ed). *Pengurusan perkhidmatan kerja sosial di Malaysia*. pp. 3-10. Sintok: Universiti Utara Malaysia Press.
- Americana. (1987). *The Encyclopedia* 25. USA: Grolier.
- Cummins L., Sevel, J. & Pedrick, L. (2006). *Social work skills demonstrated: Beginning direct practice*. Pearson: Boston, USA.
- Farooqi, S. (2013). Soft Skills: A tool for maximizing productivity in educational institutes. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 3(11), 152-153.
- Fuziah Shaffie. (2006). *British colonial policy on social welfare in Malaya 1946-1957: Child welfare services* (Unpublished doctor dissertatation) Universiti of Warwick. United Kingdom.
- Fuziah Shaffie. (2013). *Komunikasi dalam kerja sosial (Communication in Social Work)* Sintok: Universiti Utara Malaysia Press.
- Golemon, D. Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2004). *Primal leadership: Learning to lead with emotional intelligence*. New York: Perseus Publishers.
- Haselberger, D., Oberhuemer, P., Perez, E., Cinque, M., & Capasso, F. (2012). *Mediating Soft Skills at Higher Education Institutions*
- International Association of Schools of Social Work (<http://www.iasw.org>)
- Ismail Baba. (1992). An effort towards building a caring society. In Cho K. S. and Ismail M. S. (Eds.) *Caring society: Emerging issues and future directions*. Kuala Lumpur: ISIS.
- Ismail Baba. (2012). Kerja Sosial di Malaysia: Peranan Institusi Pengajian Tinggi dalam Transformasi Kesejahteraan Psikososial Negara. Paper presented at the National Convention on Strengthening Leadership of the Higher Learning Institution's. Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi and Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11-12 October 2012. Double Tree Hotel by Hilton, Kuala Lumpur.

- Ismail Baba & Fuziah Shaffie (2014). *Indigenization or Culturally Relevant vs. Advancing Universal of Social Work Education and Practice in Malaysia*. Asian Center for Welfare in Societies (ACWeS), Social Work Research Institute, Japan College of Social Work.
- James, R. F., & James, M. L. (2004). Teaching career and technical skills in a “mini” business world. *Business Education Forum*, 59(2), 39-41.
- Jayaprakash, J. C. (2005). Strategies in teaching accounting in higher education. Teaching and Learning Forum 2005. <http://otl.curtin.edu.au/tif/tif2005/refereed/jayaprakashj.html>. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies Professional presence and soft skills*, p.10.
- Kermis, G. F. & Kermis, M. D. (2009). Model for the transition from ethical deficit to a transparent corporate culture: A response to the financial meltdown. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics*, Fall 2009.
- Lishman, J. (2009). *Communication in social work* (2nd ed.). London: The Macmillan Press.
- Nealy, C. (2005). Integrating soft skills through active learning in the management classroom. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 2(4), 1-6.
- Riccio, E. L. (2008). Internet published paper, “Teaching – Learning methods in accounting education – An empirical research in the Brazilian scenario”. University of Sao Paolo – Brazil.
- Rogers, C. R. (1983). *Freedom to learn for the 80’s*. Macmillan Publishing Company: New York.
- Thomas, M. & Pierson, J. (Eds.) (1995). *Collins educational dictionary of social work*. London: Collins Education Ltd.
- Wan Ab Rahman Khudzri Wan Abdullah, Wan Ibrahim Wan Ahmad, Fuziah Shaffie, Ab Aziz Yusof & Azizan Bahari. (2013). Penyertaan pekerja perkhidmatan sosial dalam keusahawanan sosial pertubuhan sukarela Islam di Utara Malaysia. *Prosiding Seminar Hasil Penyelidikan Sektor Pengajian Tinggi Ke-3*, vol.3. pp 1495-1503.
- Yasas, Frances Maria. (1974). A report to the government of Malaysia on the establishment of a professional course in social work and community development training at the bachelor’s level at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang. In co-operation with United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.
- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16202/17019>
- [http://www.sasw.org.sg/public/accreditation/Accreditation% 20v8.html](http://www.sasw.org.sg/public/accreditation/Accreditation%20v8.html)