**Critical Reflection**

**Introduction**

The aim of this essay is to critically reflect on my learning experience and how it affects me and my professional identity. This is part of my learning as a social worker. Reflection can be defined as a process in which one tries to establish connection between certain instances in an experience. It is essential for social workers to reflect on what they have learnt since it helps them derive sense and know the changes they can implement so that they can better their learning and practice in the future. Also, reflection has been discovered to help social workers transform themselves in a way that can help them take care of their patients well through sharpening of their skills and insights. Moreover, it is through reflection that social workers can bridge the gap between theory and practice. The following is a critical reflection of my learning experience throughout the subject.

**Identification of the Influence of Consumer Perspectives in the Delivery of Social Work Services**

Consumer perspective is very vital in as far provision of social services is concerned. It aims at involving patients in the process of healthcare services delivery. In the course, I learned that social workers should consider preferences, expectations, and experiences of consumers of their services. Some of the areas that I critically looked at in regard to consumer perspective are as follows:

The first area of reflection is domestic violence. This part looks at domestic violence with the prime objective of gaining knowledge on the lived experience of those individuals who fall victims of domestic violence in the society. I acquired the insights from the coursework. From the subject, I learned the importance of consumer perspective in domestic violence due to the effects of domestic violence on them. It is worth mentioning that services delivered to victims of domestic violence have not been very effective and that this has called for regular checks so that the problem can be identified (Laing, Humphreys, & Cavanagh, 2013). I was able to realize that consumer perspective can come in handy in such situations.

Another area worth reflecting on is disability. After reviewing the history between social workers and persons with disabilities, I felt sad that the connection had not been strong from the beginning. The society despised them and did not pay much attention to their needs. Even when the society felt the need to look after them, they still disregarded their perspective (Johnson, 2009). However, as time progressed, dehumanization and degrading of persons with disability started ceasing with efforts put in place to accommodate them. I feel that human beings would have started treating persons with disabilities with dignity in the first century. However, there are reasons to be happy as recently the society has realized the importance of treating them well and seeking their perspective on the whole process.

LGBTQI is another area of reflecting, and refers to lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (McCready, 2007). In the process of learning this subject, it occurred to me that consumer perspective was important in this aspect. Consumer perspective helps to improve quality of services delivered by social workers in the sense that they get to know the experiences of the LGBTQI people and understand their point of view (McCready, 2007).

Additionally, I realized that it is not proper to judge individuals from one’s culture as this would lead to ethnocentrism. I learned that consumer perspective could be used by social workers to better their area of practice or provide a solution to an existing problem to the satisfaction of their patients. This approach is reliable since it gives a social worker a chance to reflect on what the LGBTQI people go through and try to empathize with them. The importance of consumer perspective also applies in the case of older people as they have their respect, dignity, and independence. Also, the importance of consumer perspective in dealing with victims of loss and grief cannot be underrated. It is essential for social workers to take into consideration consumer perspective in this case as it would help them understand the experience of the victim.

**Demonstration of the Ability to Critically Reflect On Ethical Dilemmas Relating To Diverse Fields of Social Work Practice**

Areas that can lead to dilemma during social work are several. However, with the right approach, on could finally end up making the right decisions. AASW Code of Ethics (2010) provides a framework that can direct a social worker in case dilemma arises.

One area that can provide a conundrum situation is that of confidentiality and informed consent. For those individuals who suffer from mental disorders, it might not be easy to make the right decision in as far as confidentiality and informed consent are concerned. The same case applies to older people and persons with disabilities. Dealing with older people can also provide a dilemma as they have rights that should also be respected and services given to them with diligence and integrity so as to avoid cases of harming them. On the other hand, their relatives or people who take care of them need to be informed on status of their health so that they can know what action to take.

The other challenge can arise from conflict between paternalism and self determination of consumers. Some individuals might not find it right to have a social worker determine what their best interests are. However, circumstances may dictate the same, hence, providing a dilemma. Dealing with the victims of loss and grief falls under this category. Loss occurs when an individual can no longer access something that they used to have before (Ross & Kessler, 2005). More often than not, loss leads to grief with the latter referring to a situation of mourning for something or somebody lost. It is essential for social workers to handle this kind of situation intelligently as it can lead to a dilemma at times. There could be what is best for such victims to recover and they might not be agreeing to the decision of a social worker. However, consultation could be done before the final decision is arrived at.

Another source of dilemma that I found common is that of community practice. It involves a conflict between rights of individuals and the common good in the society like in the case of LGBTQI. My dilemma in this case arises from my cultural values, which are against gays and lesbians. However, I would not like my values to hinder my practice as a social worker. According to AASW Code of Ethics (2010), I need to respect them and recognise gender equality. Over a long period of time, the society has not recognized the rights of these individuals and this has led to movements that advocate for affirmative gay practices. What this means is that individuals in this category champion for their rights to be treated the same with heterosexuals in community services. Another instance elaborating on this point is domestic violence, which is a challenge deserving serious attention as it has posed problems in the society. The problem increases the chances of victims suffering mental and physical social disorders. I learned that social workers are in a pole position to identify and attend to individuals who fall victims of domestic violence. However, this can sometimes present dilemma as in some cases (like in the Middle East) women have no say. One might be torn between doing the right way and considering the practices of the community.

Allocation of resources is also a source of dilemma for social workers. Resources are limited and choosing areas of priority might be hard as there might not be a well established criterion for doing so. An instance elaborating this kind of a scenario can be that of international social work. It refers to an approach of appreciating the views of others in the world and recognizing the impact globalization has had on well-being of human kind. Social work is not just informed by local practices but also by international insight. As such, allocation of resources might not be easy.

**Critical Reflection on Personal and Professional Values When Working With Diverse Consumers and Communities in a Range Of Field**

When working with individuals from diverse background and societies, one needs to consider both personal and professional values (Banks, 2012). The following instance illustrates the situation.

One critical incident in this scenario is when collaborating with victims of domestic violence and from where I was practising my internship. The victims I interacted with were collaborative throughout the process and they were willing to give me every insight that they had regarding their perspective on the matter and its influence in delivery of social services. The victims I selected agreed to work jointly with me and had sent their acknowledgement emails. The whole process started well and ended well. I related this incident to the concepts I studied in class and my approach towards domestic violence became different.

In the course of conducting the interaction, we discussed several issues with the victims one by one for privacy purposes. The particulars of our discussion were as given below: The first matter that was common from their perspective was the fact that the participants of health services should be asked about incidences of domestic violence in their lives. Others were of the opinion that it would be necessary for women in families that are experiencing several cases of domestic violence to leave since its consequences is dire.

The social views from the perspective of patients of domestic violence are that both genders are responsible for continuation of cases of domestic violence. However, during the process of learning, I came across a few challenges. One problem that I encountered was that my individual personality was a bit different from some of the views presented depending on the culture which people from my place practice. However, I have to choose the code of conduct above all and recognize the importance of understanding the perspective of consumers in social work.

I learned that I felt a little discomfort when asking individuals questions that touched on domestic violence. Additionally, I learned that the success or the effectiveness of social work in as far as attending domestic violence cases depended on the perspective of consumer a lot.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I was able to reflect upon my learning during my course and when practising as a social worker. The main aspects that I reflected upon are learning experiences on persons with disability, LGBTQI, older people, international social work, and domestic violence. I learned that consumer perspective was essential in improving the quality of services offered by social workers (Dominelli, 2004). There is need to listen to the other side when dealing with patients as it also quicken the healing process. Moreover, I reflected upon ethical dilemmas and experience working with diverse groups. Several instances might be sources of dilemma in the course of practising social work. However, with the aid of AASW Code of Ethics (2010) and other different approaches such as consultation, one could end up making the right choice.

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