

Global is local: the importance of teaching the concept and impact of globalisation to students of social work.

We begin this topic by examining the concept of globalisation, and aim to show social work students that people's lives locally are affected by what happens elsewhere. This is what we mean by the idea that the *global is local*. We explore globalisation on three levels, which are equally important and inter-related:

- *Capital* – that is, financial markets and the way in which companies can invest in any country, where they can get a high return. Thus, capital can be moved rapidly all over the world;
- *Labour* – that is, people. Globalisation is not confined to the movement of money, but it also includes the movement of people between countries;
- *Knowledge* – that is, information, ideas and skills and the ways in which these are now increasingly global and not confined to a particular country or continent.

As the topic develops, each of these themes is explored by using a combination of case studies, research summaries and exercises, which should enable students to make links between these different but inter-related areas.

We conclude by examining how global factors impact upon people's lives, and have always done so. We suggest that the following are important points for social workers and their educators to consider:

- Our society is made up of many diverse communities with their own histories and these are largely the consequence of global trends and movements in relation to either capital, people or both.
- Migration has been a long-standing feature of the UK with movements of people, ideas and skills.
- On one hand this has had positive consequences in the creation of cultural diversity and influence in relation to clothes, food, art and music.
- On the other hand this has also created tensions and misunderstandings, racialised identities, and government controls. All too often this has been accompanied by fear of the other and demonisation of migrants.
- Global movements are a feature of capitalism and a desire for profit. This is based upon exploitation, which occurs at both global and local levels.
- Social work does not stand apart from the global. It is a local response to a series of difficulties which are influenced by, if not created and sustained by, global factors. Local practice needs to understand this.

Adapted from: Chapter 3: Global is local is global by G. Simpson and S. Lawrence in Lawrence, S. et al (2009) *Introducing International Social Work*. Exeter: Learning Matters.