

# INDIGENIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM IN SWAZILAND

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# Introduction

- Context
- Issues within the University system/curriculum formation
- Review process
- Conclusion and recommendation

# Context

- The kingdom of Swaziland presents a unique case where governance and education are concerned.
- From colonial times there has always been a mix between the ‘Westminster’ and indigenous system of governance.
- At independence the indigenous system gained significant dominance and affects all other sectors in the kingdom.
- For instance, the queen mother has always handled ‘social welfare’ and/or social work related issues. In the queen mother’s courts lots of social issues are reported because she is seen as the problem solver and solution giver. She is seen as **the liaison** between the people and social welfare and care services and ensures that there is fairness in the distribution of resources.
- Even though the queen mother is not a formally trained social worker but her activities lean more on what professional social workers do. In this regard if Swaziland wants the social profession to take root maybe there is a need to create some synergies between the queen mother and social workers. As Kreitzer puts it “queen mothers need social workers and social workers need queen mothers”.

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- Regardless of such rich culture and traditions it is surprising that the education system was and still is largely geared into satisfying the needs of the colonial masters.
- Failing to get rid of Eurocentric templates has resulted in the failure to totally separate colonial and post-colonial educational system.
- Somehow the umbilical cord of our education even at tertiary level is still very much in the western context, which could explain why Swaziland is unable to adequately address some of its social problems.
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- “Before colonialism, social problems were solved within the context of a traditional system, which had always been an integral part of social life of the indigenous people. This traditional system was a social institution of extended families characterised by strong family bonds, which assured the security of its members. The system dictated its norms, safeguarded its moral values and conserved its economic base” (Apt & Blavo, 1977: 320).

# SOCIAL WORK IN SWAZILAND

- Swaziland has really come a long way in professionalising and training social work professionals.
- In 2014/15 the University of Swaziland as well as other tertiary institutions introduced the bachelor of social work degree (BSW). The exportation of western social work theories and knowledge has helped in the introduction of the social work programmes.
- “The rationale being that theory and practice is universal and transferable and that a western social work curriculum is the best in the world” (Kreitzer, 2014).
- Three years into the programme, there are warning signs that theories and/or methods transplanted directly from the West might present some implementation issues for the future. In some instances there are clashes between theory and practice:
  - i.e. witchcraft and epilepsy or mental illness
- In cases of abuse sometimes a child is taken to safety but this is met with resistance- families do not welcome an outsider into their space (**family conferencing**)
- A direct transplant of the Eurocentric social work programme totally disregards the cultural, political and social differences that exist in developed and a developing country such as Swaziland. And the inability of the education system to cultivate logical reasoning and/or critical thinkers makes the translation of western concepts into local context challenging.

# Question

- **The question to ask is why is it so difficult for a country like Swaziland to indigenize and/or decolonize its social work curriculum when it is so rich in culture and traditions.**

# Challenges

- It is not easy to indigenize a programme because of the global influence- the need to be relevant and internationally recognized programme
- We have no local textbooks or resources which address local context: case examples, films
- Language: we teach students in English and expect them to be able to work with communities fluently in native language. This presents issues for local and international students in our group



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- Social work education in most of the African context continues to borrow heavily from the West. African social work should have its roots, which are value based, indigenous and imported (Asamoah, 1995:223). But instead most social welfare policies influencing the social work profession
  - a) fail to take a holistic view of human conditions
  - b) neglect that politics really matter in the formulation of policies
  - c) ignore the good practices in indigenous structures and approaches (ibid).

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- Kreitzer (2014) argues “mobilising relevant people in order to go through the process of examining assumptions, critiquing and building culturally relevant social work curriculum is both difficult and creative. Therefore, taking the best of western theory and practice and balancing it with African indigenous knowledge and traditions is an important step in this process”. This is a similar approach needed in the formulation of social welfare legislation and policies/programmes.

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- It can be submitted that western education was not given to Africans to encourage critical thinking nor was it meant to influence consciousness and awareness, but instead it was presented as a tool for further enslavement (Kreitzer, 2014).
- Yes the colonial tertiary education was crafted such that the African child is able to memorize and regurgitate what they have learnt-nothing more and nothing less. In this end this enslavement of the mind was a tool that was [and still] being used to control how the Africans are able to perceive themselves as a people (Cornwell, 2001).
- Such a situation has succeeded in producing black students from the outside but white on the inside [coconuts] (Van Hook, 2004). With such mind enslavement the anything from the west is ideal and indigenous knowledge is not cultivated. This and other reasons are signposts for Swazi scholars and educators to come up with learning material, which is relevant to the context of a developing country.
- There should be a desire to even develop case studies using local examples, in order for students to begin to assimilate the issues that they will face up upon completing their education.

# Question

- A question that is beyond this paper is how can Swaziland embrace an integrated social welfare approach where it borrows the good from the western concepts and also incorporate the traditional approaches in order to have a well balanced curricula and/or social workers who are relevant and vibrant within the context of Swaziland.

# Recommendations

- Tertiary institutions need to come up with a curriculum that addresses the developmental needs and challenges faced by the country. For instance, issues of culture and its impact on practice need to come out clearly so that students are able to address them in the field.
- The goals of tertiary institutions should be enhancing research in order to assist policy makers in coming up with evidence based policies and programmes. On the other hand the curricula needs to also benefit from experiences from the field so that real issues on the ground are adequately addressed.

# Recommendations

- Community work
- Integration between theory and practice
- Use of local knowledge in teaching

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