

DECOLONIALITY AND INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN BOTSWANA: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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Outline

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Introduction

- Formerly, known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate (1885-1965).
- Botswana is situated at the heart of southern Africa; completely surrounded by its neighbours.
- The Precolonial era was characterised by traditional Tswana chiefdoms that were self-governing. Traditional governance - *bogosi* (chieftaincy) and the *kgotla* (village assembly); informal social supports based on communitarian ethic (Mwansa, Lucas & Osei-Hwedie, 1998; Rankopo, 1993; Schapera, 1970).
- The British heritage: Missionaries – education and health services across tribal territories e.g. Seventh Day Adventists in the Southern District, London Missionary Society in Central District, Lutherans in South East, Dutch Reform in Kgatleng (South East), etc.
- The first colonial social welfare officer was appointed in 1952 followed by community development in 1962 (Wass, 1972).

Post-Colonial (1966+): The African ‘miracle’

- Botswana was among the poorest countries in 1966.
- Discovery of minerals (1968-1973) led to rapid development and ultimately upper middle income status.
- Improved social services & social safety nets
- National Development Plans lasting 6yrs: Currently, implementing NDP 11 (2017-2023): Theme - “Inclusive Growth for the Realisation of Sustainable Employment Creation and Poverty Eradication.”
- National principles: Development, Democracy, Self-reliance, National unity and **Botho** (humanness - **1997**).
- Rural Development Policy (1973, 2002) emphasised rapid economic growth, infrastructural development & rural employment creation.

SW Education: Western origins

- Certificate in Community Development (renamed Cert. in Social Welfare and CD in) in Botswana started in 1972 at the Botswana Agricultural College.
- University of Botswana: In 1985 the BAC programme was transferred to the University of Botswana, Department of Social Work (Faculty of Social Sciences); CSW, DSW, BSW, MSW & PhD programmes.
- In **1992** UB started “**indigenising**” its programs; Prof. Miriam Hutton (Canadian) and Prof. Kwaku Osei-Hwedie (Ghanaian) were the architects of the new social work education agenda.
- Staff educated mainly in North American universities.

Structure of SW P in Botswana

- Social work practice exists in the Government, Private, Parastatals & Civil Society sectors.
- In 1974 the Departments of Social Welfare and Community Development were merged and renamed the Department of Social and Community Development and moved to the Min. of Local Government.
- Subsequently renamed Department of **Social Services** in 1996 and in 2012, Department of **Social Protection**.
- A separate Department for **Community Development**.
- Departments of **Youth; Gender Affairs**
- The Local Authorities have retained the name Department of S&CD since 1974. There are plans to create a separate CD dept.

Conceptualising Indigenisation and Decoloniality in Social Work

- Indigenisation as “appropriateness”, “authentization” and “culturally relevant social work” has been adequately discussed in the literature (Midgley, 1983; Walton & El Nasr, 1988; Osei-Hwedie, 1996; Gray et al., 2008).
- Social work educators at UB began to talk and write about the importance of culturally relevant social work in the early 1990s (Osei-Hwedie, 1993; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2015).
- Influence from post-apartheid South Africa.
- Canadian staff exchange & devt programme sponsored by CIDA – Prof. Miriam Hutton, expert on curriculum development.
- “**Community as an organising precept for social work**” as well as “**social development as a priority**” for social work practice (Hutton, 1994; Hutton & Mwansa, 1996; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2015).
- Emergence of **indigenisation** but lack of consensus.

Who are we? Morena & Kgosi

- Batswana by birth. Govt of Botswana uses the term “indigenous” to refer to all Batswana.
- Botswana is relatively homogeneous; the Tswana speaking ethnicities are dominant.
- Minorities include the Basarwa (San Peoples), Kalanga, Herero, Subiya, Bakgalagadi, etc.
- Morena is a pioneer of the BSW program, MSW (Canada) & PhD (Australia).
- Kgosi is a product of the “indigenised BSW & MSW (Botswana) & PhD (South Africa).
- Prof. Kwaku Osei-Hwedie – mentor & former HoD (UB).
- Staff members of the Dept of Social Work at UB.

Reflections on SWE&P in Botswana

1. Evidently, social work has been largely influenced by Western ideas through dominant textbooks. Indigenisation has not been an easy task due to larger university policies on globalisation of education (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2015).
2. Apart from UB policies, there has never been consensus on the indigenisation agenda by both social work academics, practitioners and students.
3. Attempts have been made to produce locally relevant literature through production of case studies. However, these lack the depth advocated for by advocates of decolonisation.
4. The Government of Botswana has been slow to adopt social development as a framework for social work practice. Prefers patronising programs and services.
5. Decoloniality has never been a major part of the indigenisation debate at UB. At the national level, there is no movement towards indigenising knowledge and practice.

- Across Africa and other developing nations, there is consensus that social work education and practice has been dominated by Eurocentric epistemology (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird & Hetherington, 2013; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Van Rooyen, 2016).
- Decolonisation, therefore, is about **changing the power relations in knowledge building** by first dismantling the dominant epistemology and then imagining an alternative that accurately and meaningfully enables us (Africans) to see ourselves clearly in relation to others and our environment.
- Thus, decolonising social work requires attention to both ideas and actions (Gray, Coates, YellowBird & Hetherington, 2013).
- The western belief system encourages permanence as a part of a philosophy of academic research and in many ways shapes professional social work practice (Crampton, 2015).
- By contrast, indigenous knowledge is not cast in stone. It allows clear expression of “plural voices” of the different population groups. It encourages “**impermanence**” in knowledge building.
- Some ideas will work in one community/society and not another. But that should not stop us from exchanging ideas and building on each other’s experiences.

- Generally, colonisation was achieved through the use of aggression and destruction.
- **Decoloniality requires a different approach** – a philosophy of impermanence of knowledge; non-violent engagement based on the dignity of others, respect, human rights and social justice (Crampton, 2015).
- This has implications for curriculum development. Social work education cannot be the purview of academicians alone. It is a **process** requiring **an inclusive approach** of all stakeholders.
- We believe that UB started the indigenisation project on good foundation by preferring students-based reflective learning.
- Academicians and students must be co-partners in the development of knowledge.
- Practice wisdom must inform education.
- Community members must also contribute to curriculum development.

- Decoloniality calls for society to critically interrogate social issues; reverse colonisation of the mind; deconstruction and reconstruction of social systems that produce knowledge; recognising and cultivating available indigenous processes and techniques of helping.
- While Botswana started as a democratic state, issues of ethnic pluralism and social inclusion have never been seriously interrogated. Minorities remain marginalised.
- Today, the country is still unable to adopt a policy on the use of multiple indigenous languages or mother tongue in the education sector.
- We contend that if social work is about the idea of helping people enhance their social functioning; empowering them to improve their well-being and strive towards liberation, then as Africans (Botswana) we should be able to chart our own curriculum which is culturally relevant.

Conclusion

- Decoloniality and culturally relevant social work, in our view, is a PROCESS of liberating the mind.
- It requires university policies to clearly articulate the importance of developing culturally relevant curricula.
- Similarly, governments must also embrace the process.
- The challenge remains – are all the different actors willing to give up their positions of privilege to enable the decoloniality project to take off?
- Lessons from North America, New Zealand and Asia show that genuine collaborations do yield desired outcomes.

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