Searching for Appropriateness in Social Work Education in Botswana: The Process of Developing a Master in Social Work (MSW) Programme in a 'Developing' Country

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Developing a tertiary academic programme in Botswana is not only an intellectual activity but also an institutional process that must be balanced to satisfy different stakeholders and contending claims. This paper focuses on the intellectual and institutional processes of developing a Master in Social Work (MSW) programme at the University of Botswana. It discusses the intricacies of identifying the need for a MSW and the consultative process of designing the programme and course objectives, titles, and course content. The paper takes the view that institutional and intellectual issues are significant factors of the exercise of searching for appropriateness in social work education in an African context.

Keywords: Botswana; Masters Degree; Contextualized Program Design

Introduction

As the socio-economic problems in most African countries intensify, social work educators and practitioners are increasingly being called upon to refine their skills and contextualise their practice. The call is for social work to apply relevant values and knowledge that allow it to focus effectively on Africa's major social problems, especially poverty, high levels of HIV/AIDS infection, absence of socio-economic infrastructure, conflict, political insecurity, and lack of respect for human rights and social justice. Based on what is required to address many of these problems, it is also argued that social work in Africa must not be practised as it is in the West,[1] but must

focus on a developmental role (Osei-Hwedie, 1990; Hutton, 1992; Mupedziswa, 1992; Midgley, 1995; Kaseke, 2001).

Part of the problem associated with African social work practice is the fact that borrowed western social work interventions are not readily transferable to, and accepted by, non-western societies (Osei-Hwedie, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Hutton, 1994). Based on this, Osei-Hwedie (2000, p.7) argues strongly that African social workers must start from within in order to do 'what is appropriate, and develop the necessary social work knowledge, skills, outlooks, philosophies and theories', and that social work must be defined to suit the African environment. In this regard, the people–environment relationship must be conceptualised as a response to the specific spiritual, economic, social, political, and psychological contexts. According to Osei-Hwedie (2000) this is the very essence of indigenisation, which implies the process of modifying or adapting imported ideas and practice to make them appropriate to the local contexts. It also means practice influenced by new or old local strategies built on local knowledge, resources and needs.

From the outset it must be pointed out, however, that not all social work academics in Africa believe in indigenisation and the search for appropriateness. For example, Bar-On (1999, p. 11) dismisses the basic theoretical and conceptual formulations of indigenisation and refers to the arguments for indigenisation and appropriateness as 'little more than broad, commonsensical truths from which only equally broad and commonsensical declarations can be made'. He argues further that, having been westernised, educated Africans are not capable of original thinking or contribution, and thus uncritically perpetuate what they acquire from the west.

Despite these claims, the ultimate aim of social work is to meet peoples' unmet basic and psychosocial needs in their specific context, and through appropriate professional practice. This also means developing educational programmes that equip professionals with the appropriate knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. This paper discusses the process of developing a MSW programme at the University of Botswana. It focuses on the identification of the need for a MSW; the consultative process of selecting the objectives and course titles; and the development of course descriptions. The paper takes the view that institutional and intellectual issues are significant components of the exercise in the search for appropriateness in social work education.

Country Profile

Botswana is a landlocked country, bounded by South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It is relatively large, with a geographical area of 582,000 square kilometres, and is about the size of Kenya, France, or the state of Texas in the USA. The country has a population of about 1.6 million people which is expected to reach the 2 million mark by 2015 (CSO, 2001). There is a high preponderance of youth in the population as evidenced by the fact that the 0–14 year age group comprises 41% of the total population.

Available data indicate that Botswana's economy has grown significantly because of the increase in output from the mining sector. For example, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in nominal terms, is estimated to have increased by 13.8% from 25 billion pula to 28.9 billion pula during the 1999/2000 period (Republic of Botswana, 2000). Despite the country's expanded opportunities, it has neither developed the capacity nor attracted enough investment to create the necessary employment opportunities. The unemployment rate is estimated at 25% (CSO, 2001). What is apparent is that many people in Botswana are still very poor and require help; there are not enough jobs for those who need them, and much remains to be done in the area of social service provision. However, the changing patterns of living (exacerbated by urbanisation and HIV/AIDS) have necessitated the move towards formalised social welfare provision that has given birth to new strategies, social work opportunities, and policy development (Jacques, 1993; Osei-Hwedie, 1997).

HIV/AIDS in Botswana is a serious social, health, and developmental problem. Available data indicate that one in three Botswana, between the ages of 15 and 49, are HIV positive and that an estimated 320,000 people are living with HIV in a population of 1.6 million. Some 21% of young people 15–19 years, and 37% of those aged 20–24 years, are HIV infected. Further, 35% of pregnant women are HIV positive and 21–40% of infants born to these women are likely to be HIV infected (Republic of Botswana, 2003, p. 12).

Botswana has a diverse cultural heritage and many ethnic groups, although the majority of the population are of Sotho-Tswana linguistic origin. The San (Basarwa) are identified as the original inhabitants of the country. Today, they are classified as one of the minority groups and survive mostly by hunting and gathering in a nomadic lifestyle. Ethnicity in Botswana may be understood in the context of tribal affiliation, which distinguishes social groups on the basis of culture in relation to language, beliefs, and values. Despite the fact that there are different ethnic groups such as Bakwena, Bakalaka, Balete, Bayei, there is a near common language and similar patterns of living. The family structure is largely extended in nature, with emphasis on interpersonal relationships, responsibility, and obligation to kinship systems and the community.

Gender inequality is a major social issue in Botswana. Despite much progress in terms of educational achievements, women are still socially marginalised to some extent. Culturally, men still dominate the decision-making structures. However, in terms of employment opportunities, research shows that Botswana women have made steady progress towards high status occupations. For example, in terms of government positions, currently there are two female permanent secretaries out of eight and one woman foreign head of missions out of 12. In addition, women make up 30% of deputy permanent secretaries, 50% of directors, and 34% of deputy directors. In the area of political decision-making, there are eight women parliamentarians out of 32 and five are cabinet ministers (Women's Affairs Department, 2003).

Botswana as a society recognises and advocates for multiculturalism, and therefore racial discrimination has never been a national issue as in South Africa and

Zimbabwe. For example, the national constitution guarantees protection from discrimination on the basis of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, and creed. It also prohibits denial of privileges or advantages based on diversity (Botswana Government, 1966).

Overview of Social Work Education and Practice

The social work profession is relatively young in Botswana. The education of professional social workers in the country started only in 1985 at the University of Botswana. It is conceptualised as a community-based practice grounded on social justice and provided by professionals working with vulnerable people to: reduce risk and enhance their lives; prevent social dysfunctioning and situations which are threatening to the social order; promote healthy development for communities, organisations, and individuals; enhance the provision and effective management of progressive services to those in need; and promote social justice, human rights, and mutual responsibility (Department of Social Work, 1993). Social justice is conceptualised as a process to promote democracy, protect human rights and values, provide basic needs, and ensure equitable access to economic opportunities. Social justice in Botswana is also defined to include the perception that individuals or groups in the country are entitled to a fair share of the national income (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1991).

Wass (1969) contends that, during the colonial era, there was a lack of commitment to social development in Botswana. Social services such as education and health, which existed at that time, were rudimentary and were provided by tribal organisations, under their respective chiefs (Dikgosi). Community based organisations such as *Mephato* (age regiments or cohorts), were the basis of this service. In this respect, traditional voluntarism and mutual aid were the key instruments to service provision in response to changing socio-economic conditions at the community level.

During the colonial period, there was no concerted effort to develop a social work practice as part of the whole process of service provision. Ngwenya (1991) contends that prior to independence, individual local chiefs developed their own social service infrastructure. The first comprehensive and consolidated efforts at government level came only after independence, especially in the period 1966–70, when community development was institutionalised as a national strategy for social development and nation building at grassroots level. Some aspects of social work practice, however, were incorporated into the community development strategy developed after independence (Noppen, 1982; Republic of Botswana, 1983; Ngwenya, 1991; Osei-Hwedie, 1997).

In the early stages, social work, as part of community development, focused on the provision of basic infrastructure for social development such as roads, schools, clinics, dams, and was undertaken in the context of 'food for work' drought relief programmes. The organising concept of these projects was *ipelegeng*, literally translated as 'carry your own weight' (Ngwenya, 1991). Social work was therefore

seen as a tool for social mobilisation and participation at the grassroots level and emerged by way of the training of community development workers. Formal training of assistant community development officers began in 1972 at the Botswana College of Agriculture. In 1974, a few social work courses were introduced into the curriculum, and the programme emerged as a certificate in social and community development (Osei-Hwedie, 1997).

Social work education, as established in Botswana in the mid-1980s, came under sharp criticism from several quarters and questions related to relevance and appropriateness were raised in many fora. For example, Ngwenya (1992) refers to the 'agony of irrelevance' and laments the lack of strategic curriculum development and dialogue due to the absence of networking and organisational relationships among the stakeholders—students, social agencies, social work practitioners, social work educators, and representatives of various clients. Hutton (1994) argues that the type of social work education established in Botswana focused on meeting individual rather than social or communal needs as it was firmly rooted in the social sciences and based on a curriculum and direction not in harmony with local requirements. For example, whereas the focus of the government development plan was on rural and community development, with emphasis on creating social capital, the curriculum focused on individual skill development. It was inflexible, utilised texts which were not suitable for local conditions, and had a preconceived methodology, all of which mitigated against its contextual appropriateness (Hutton, 1994).

The Department of Social Work (2003) at the University of Botswana identifies social work as aiming to understand and change different situational contexts that affect people socially, culturally, and politically. It also seeks to prevent, ameliorate, and manage undesirable social and environmental situations; develop appropriate interventions to meet the needs of the people and their communities; design and implement appropriate policies for development; manage and supervise others in pursuit of development objectives; and undertake research and apply findings in relevant settings. This is similar to the definition of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) of the US which identifies social work as 'the professional activity of helping individuals, groups and communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and to create social conditions favourable to their goals' (Zastrow, 1999, p. 5).

Reshaping the Curriculum: Attempts towards Indigenisation

Hutton (1994) and Osei-Hwedie (1997) emphasise that reshaping any existing university programme is complex and difficult. It involves evaluation of past employment needs and a careful anticipation of future needs, as well as making choices about content, organisation, and balance between different philosophical and political outlooks. In 1991, the Department of Social Work at the University of Botswana was faced with this difficult issue of developing a curriculum that challenged the status quo and met the needs of the disadvantaged in society. The task then was to design and implement such a programme (Hutton, 1994). Other

problems were related to social work's incongruence with some realities of practice, suitable teaching materials, and resolving the issue of community misunderstanding about the nature of social work (Osei-Hwedie, 1997).

Several assumptions guided the process of curriculum restructuring. It was assumed, among other things, that western knowledge and theory may not be directly adaptable or transferable to the Botswana context, and that appropriate knowledge and theory may not yet be available for use. In the process of searching for new ways to teach, we must begin with what we know. The process of change must be informed by grounded theory through which issues may be prioritised within the social context (Hutton, 1994; Osei-Hwedie, 1996). This was based on the realisation that even common problems, such as poverty, must be understood in the specific context of Botswana, which would then indicate the direction for seeking and assembling appropriate knowledge to respond to the situation. The need to reconsider our understanding of, and responses to, problems led to the choice of a reflective approach. Hutton (1994) sees this approach as relevant in situations of ambiguity and uncertainty. She contends that this approach allows for tentative choices among a range of possibilities, and reflects on a way of thinking about social work practice which does not address situations through preconceived methodology but with openness to understanding and willingness to try again when actions are ineffective.

The whole process of reviewing and reorganising the curriculum was underlined by the question: what should be the focus of appropriate professional practice in Botswana? Community-based practice was then chosen as the curriculum organiser. The importance of community in Botswana became the underlying principle of social work education, which implied that the starting point was not to be the individual or the social sciences. Thus, the role of the community as providing a context for living and for social structures was recognised. At the same time, it was accepted that community-based social work was not community organisation, but a recognition and acceptance that the community is the basis of social life and identity, and a primary resource for meeting needs (Osei-Hwedie, 1997). Osei-Hwedie (1997) further notes that in selecting the community as the starting point, there was an implicit assumption and recognition that social problems, such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, youth unemployment, dropping out of school, and weakening family structures and relationships are all community issues and must be addressed as such. Thus, the approach is essentially developmental in nature and focuses on social change and appropriate responses to society's problems.

The Context of Programme Development

The search for appropriateness in the 1990s was directed towards the development of a social work profession and practice in Botswana relevant to, and consistent with, the needs, aspirations, and vision of the country, the southern Africa region, and the continent as a whole. Thus, even though some course titles and content may be similar to those in the West, the differences emanate from the underlying approach and philosophical orientation, as well as the practice and cultural context.

From the mid-1980s, the University of Botswana had a tripartite programme in social work education namely certificate, diploma, and Bachelor's degree. The certificate programme that was phased out in the 1999/2000 academic year, trained students for para-professional positions in rural and urban social work in diverse settings, including local authority social welfare and community development departments, rehabilitation centres, the disciplined forces, and non-governmental social service and developmental organisations. This programme was mounted for two main reasons. First, government employs, through local councils, community development assistants with no prior training, and the expectation was that all would receive appropriate qualifications after an indeterminate period of time in the field. Second, the programme paved the way for promising students to enter the diploma (and at a later stage, the degree) programme. In this way, a number of students progressed in their professional development.[2] Eventually the programme was phased out without any input from the department and other stakeholders as the university management decided that certificate programmes were better suited to other tertiary institutions.

The Diploma in Social Work, of two years' duration, prepares students for front-line professional social work practice and middle management positions in the human services. The diploma includes courses in social work practice with communities, groups, and organisations; social work intervention with families and individuals; interpersonal communication skills and techniques; the social services in Botswana; administration and supervision in the human services; sociology and psychology; and a selection of theoretical and practical issues in social work practice in southern Africa. In response to changing needs and gaps in knowledge and skills, the curriculum for diploma students was reviewed and revised to include the relation of social work to youth, health services, disabilities, social policy, professional development, the social structure of society, culture, HIV/AIDS and home based care, social development, probation services, and computer awareness. Mathematics, statistics, and social work literature were also incorporated in the course.

The four-year Bachelor's Degree in Social Work (BSW) provides a higher level of professional training for social work students, extending the parameters and broadening the horizons of the diploma programme. It offers professional education and practical training for the prevention and amelioration of a wide range of undesirable social conditions by developing knowledge and skills in diverse areas of living. The programme prepares students to deliver and monitor personal human services, formulate and implement social policy, and assume managerial and leadership positions in human service organisations. At its inception in 1985, it was oriented towards 'casework' and home economics. By the early 1990s, however, the focus had shifted to more developmental issues. BSW courses cover a wide range of areas such as communication theories and their applications, organisational behaviour and planning, management and supervision, social policy, and research. This basic curriculum is supported by foundation courses in psychology, law, political science, public administration, sociology, population studies, and economics.

Since the 2001/2002 academic year, the BSW programme has been further developed to reflect the continuous search for appropriateness and contextual relevance by including such areas as: oral communication; reflective practice; helping in communities; theory and social work practice; field work practice; culture and social work; counselling; integrative fieldwork practice; and a host of seminars focusing on topical issues. The curricula of the two programmes are situated within a cultural analysis framework utilising community as their focal point. Emphasis is thus placed on the 'social' as the main thrust of the 'work' (communal) through which individuals, families, and society receive the strength and resources to improve their quality of life (Osei-Hwedie, 1993b).

Reflective practice relates to the process of enabling students to consider, through seminars, discussions, role-play, and other practical exercises, their fieldwork experience in the context of the theories, knowledge, skills, and cultural factors that informed their practice. This is to help them gain a wider understanding of the factors that influence social work practice in specific settings. Whereas this process may not be different from those of European and American professional training programmes, the focus is on cultural and theoretical influences specific and relevant to Botswana, and Africa in general. For example, the community home based care programme for terminally ill patients, the majority of whom are people living with HIV and AIDS, is built on the traditional kinship and community support system. Thus, the family and community members are the primary care givers while government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) provide material and psychosocial support. The course on reflective practice, therefore, assists students to link cultural influences to professional practice and government policy.

Rationale for the MSW Programme

The MSW programme builds on the knowledge and competency base of the undergraduate programmes and, by so doing, provides opportunities for specialisation to enable social workers to meet their personal and professional development needs, and to afford society high quality services. The diploma programme, which is the basic qualification, enables students to enter the second year of the BSW programme. Both the diploma and the degree are qualifying programmes for generalist professional practice. The areas of specialisation for the MSW are currently, social policy and administration, clinical practice, and youth and community practice. The curriculum is structured in such a way that it builds on the experience of students, 90% of whom have five years or more practical experience in a social welfare setting. In addition, the occasional direct entry students will have completed the field practicum requirement for diploma and degree.

The extraordinarily rapid rate of social change in Botswana has been a major determining factor in the local provision of a MSW. This is in view of the fact that the growing complexity of the society has spawned new, or exacerbated old, problems such as unemployment, mass poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, juvenile and adult crime, mental ill-health, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, suicide, and child abuse

and neglect. In the past, kinship systems provided support, social security, protection, and a sense of belonging to all individuals and, through the spirit of self-reliance and the participation of all members in the life of the community, a sense of purpose and a direction in their lives. With the weakening of such structures (through the processes of modernisation, the replacement of a subsistence by a cash economy, and increasing morbidity and mortality rates due to HIV/AIDS), has come a growing need for professional competence to devise and implement new approaches to existing and emerging issues. The creation of a MSW is part of the response to these challenges.

Furthermore, the profession of social work in Botswana, as in other developing countries, is at a relatively early stage of development and requires social workers with higher qualifications to guide its growth, future enhancement, and contextualisation. Particularly in areas of indirect practice such as research, policy development, management, and professional supervision, there is a serious shortage of suitably qualified social workers who can provide constructive and competent input. The MSW programme seeks to address this shortage and enrich the academic and professional interface.

A Presidential Task Group (1997) in Botswana produced a long-term mission statement for the country, entitled 'Vision 2016: Towards Prosperity for All'. One of the goals is to build a just and caring society to benefit groups such as the poor, dysfunctional families, youth, pregnant teenagers, people of all ages affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, and potential recipients of welfare services in general. It is envisaged that graduates of the Masters programme will have the relevant knowledge and competencies to contribute, in an informed manner, to the development of this 'just and caring society'.

Needs and Objectives

Based on the foregoing arguments, the Department of Social Work included, in its submission to the Botswana Government's National Development Plan 8 (1997), a proposal for the establishment of a MSW at the University of Botswana. Subsequent to this, the department undertook a countrywide survey to determine the potential benefit to human service organisations through the establishment of such a programme. Discussions were held with government, local authorities, parastatal, and private organisations, NGOs, the disciplined forces,[3] the Advisory Board[4] of the Department of Social Work and supervisors during annual field supervision workshops. Trainers and sponsors also added their voice to this affirmation. These discussions resulted in a strong support for the creation of a MSW programme. A number of government ministries and departments as well as NGOs, who are the major employers of social work graduates, were involved in the design of the programme, especially in identifying critical areas for curriculum development. This process was important for three reasons: (a) to enable the stakeholders to jointly own the programme; (b) to satisfy the university requirement for support from consumers; and (c) to reduce costs associated with the current practice of sending students abroad by producing local training opportunities.

A considerable amount of research into, and discussion on, existing programmes and course content around the world was undertaken in the identified professional areas. Materials from institutions in the southern Africa region, Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom were studied as were their accreditation criteria in an effort to ensure internationally accepted standards while fulfilling local demands. All these consultations, discussions, and research procedures yielded information that guided the design of specific courses to cater for the needs of Botswana, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and Africa as a whole. There is also sufficient general content to satisfy global expectations.

Apart from addressing critical problems such as HIV/AIDS, rape, orphan-hood, and child headed households, professional social workers with qualifications beyond the BSW are required to participate in developing the profession. This is also significant in realising Vision 2016 for Botswana. Through this vision, Botswana aims to offer support and opportunities to her citizens who are poor and provide safety nets for those who are in poverty traps. The vision also calls for the establishment of strategies and programmes to strengthen family structures; enhance family functioning; develop viable programmes for youth; reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy; and contain the prevalence of HIV and AIDS (Presidential Task Force, 1997). The MSW programme is seen as an important player in this respect as may be observed in courses displayed in Appendix 1.

Additionally, professional development is linked to added responsibility and accountability, which can lead to stress, burnout and low productivity if not addressed in a positive manner by social work agencies. The Government of Botswana, at the central and local levels, is the largest employer of social workers in the country and progression in the public service is no longer linked to length of service and experience but rather to post-graduate qualification and productivity. As a result, management is mandated to expedite such procedures so that eligible officers can advance to positions of greater competence and responsibility. The availability of a local MSW programme will facilitate this process with corresponding benefit to professionals and target populations alike.

Given this background, the curriculum of the MSW is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- train broad-based, advanced practitioners who are competent in one of the three specific areas of specialisation (social policy and administration, clinical social work, and youth and community practice);
- enable students to gain broad understanding of individual and societal functions and dysfunctions and to utilise this knowledge in designing, implementing, managing, monitoring, and evaluating social services; and
- prepare professionals who are committed to promoting equality and social justice at the local and national level.

The development of an academic programme at the University of Botswana follows a specific procedure. The programme originates in the academic department which must hold discussions with the Advisory Board for consultation and approval.

It then goes to the Faculty Executive Committee, which makes comments, and recommendations to the Faculty Board, which ensures adequate content, and identifies areas of duplication and discrepancies. The Faculty Board also monitors adherence to faculty rules and regulations. The proposed programme then goes to the Academic Policy Review and Planning Committee, which examines the programme within the context of university and national academic needs. The next step in the process is the University Senate, which has the overall mandate for overseeing academic programmes with respect to intellectual and professional quality. The final authority is the University Council that gives the stamp of approval to the implementation of the programme on behalf of the Government and thus, performs the duty of an accreditation board.

Modular Titles and Descriptions (See Appendix 1)

The MSW programme focuses on foundation courses and specific issues in the three areas of specialisation. The foundation courses are taken in first year, first semester courses. These are compulsory and provide students with critical knowledge and perspectives as they relate to theory, practice skills, and ethical issues relevant to communities, families, and individuals in an African context. The foundation courses also address the theoretical, conceptual, and cultural bases of appropriateness (which underlie developmental social work), and associated administration, research, and practice. The organising core of these courses is developmental social work. The main focus is the search for practice paradigms that articulate a developmental model of social work consistent with the African social context.

With regard to areas of specialisation, it was evident to stakeholders through the consultation process that certain issues required immediate attention. These related to social policy and administration, clinical and youth and community practice. Social policy and administration draws from experiences in the SADC region and across Africa. Emphasis is on the main socio-economic problems besetting Africa. The major focus is on critical and emerging issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, and orphan-hood that affect vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Furthermore, many policies implemented by social work professionals are unworkable at frontline or community level. The magnitude of current problems addressed by social workers in an organisational setting necessitates their possession of administrative/managerial skills as well as professional expertise in order to ensure that limited agency resources are utilised with the utmost efficiency and effectiveness.

Clinical practice is also an area of high priority despite the fact that social work education in Botswana has been accorded a developmental or community focus as the core principle. The truth is that no one method of intervention can be said to be more significant than others in a holistic or integrated approach. Thus, clinical skills are urgently required for those caught up in the vicissitudes of terminal illness, loss, orphan-hood, poverty and living with disability. These are associated with the negative outcomes of the shift from traditional to contemporary patterns of living,

which require an African perspective on professional knowledge, process and practice. Emphasis is placed on preventive, educational, coping, and service requirements in the context of changing kinship systems and the declining capacity of families and communities to care.

The youth and community practice specialisation is targeted at an area which requires vision and informed investment aimed at enhancing the quality of life of young people in their communities. Of special importance in the programme, for example, with respect to HIV/AIDS, are youth encounters that may lead to infection, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and rape, often with traumatic implications for individuals, families, and communities. In addition, this area of specialisation also focuses on issues such as youth and community entrepreneurship, social work education, needs assessment, programme development, and evaluation. The adoption of a National Youth Policy in 1996 constituted a formal commitment, on the part of the state, to the well being of young people and an acknowledgement of the necessity to afford them greater opportunities in the spheres of education, health, employment, sport, recreation, and others (Republic of Botswana, 1996).

The significance of the community practice in the MSW programme is reflected in its focus on social responsibility, which is the bulwark of African social networks. This implies the need for reconstruction of community kinship systems and informal networks in addition to the utilisation of non-governmental and other private sector agencies and resources. Social workers, as advocates of community self-sustainability, require advanced programmes to hone their skills in this very fundamental area of human service and social development.

These three areas of specialisation, although not exclusive, represent major issues for social workers in Botswana. Their inclusion in the MSW programme signals recognition of the need for a new direction in professional competence and development. Elective courses such as: gender in social work; religion, spirituality and social work practice; perspective on life and death, on the other hand, cover a wide range of historical and topical issues. These are related to social welfare, social work practice, human behaviour, and relevant disciplines and policy processes. The modules supplement and reinforce foundation and specialised courses in relation to issues such as living with death in Africa, transitional rural livelihoods, and spirituality in African social work. Further, these enable students to pursue individual interests in specific areas (see Appendix 1).

Conclusion

The introduction of a master's programme by the Social Work Department at the University of Botswana represents a progression in the field of tertiary education in a dynamic society. Consultation and discussion in the local community and research in the region and beyond provided materials which guided the design of the programme towards clearly stated objectives. This was necessary to satisfy different levels of expectation and obligation including areas of specialisation most vital to the needs of the country.

The process of developing an appropriate academic programme at the University of Botswana is underpinned by intellectual and institutional factors that must be carefully negotiated in an effort to arrive at meaningful and acceptable decisions. In this regard, the curriculum constitutes a satisfactory compromise between key elements including public and private service providers, University of Botswana and its various decision-making structures as well as the Department of Social Work. From these consultations emerged three areas of specialisation as top priorities in social work education for Botswana at a postgraduate level. The courses cover a wide range of topics that address specific issues and needs related to policy and administration, clinical practice, youth and community development and research. These were constructed on theoretical and philosophical bases that interrogate contemporary and ethical issues in African centred development social work practice. An outstanding lesson learned from this process is that different types of activity and many levels of understanding are essential to inspire confidence and achieve a high standard of appropriateness.

Notes

[1] The concept of West refers specifically to Western Europe and North America.
[2] The certificate programme enrolled between 30 and 60 students per year. The diploma programme has approximately 120 students annually, while the BSW has about 240 students.
[3] The term includes local police, the defence force, prison and police officers. The prison and police officers in Botswana are not armed.
[4] Quasi-official entity made up of the staff of the Department of Social Work, students, representatives of government ministries, NGOs and prominent individuals who act in an advisory capacity to the department with respect to academic and professional matters.

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Appendix 1

Code & Title: MSW 601 Theory, Methods, and Ethical Issues in Social Work Practice

Course Synopsis: This course is intended to provide students with foundation knowledge in those generic aspects of theory and practice skills common to social work with individuals, families, and communities. The theoretical base focuses on

social science theories and research that influence practice. The practice skill component includes generic methods of exploration and data gathering, assessment, planning intervention, and evaluation with application to direct practice. The course also deals with the relationship between general ethical principles and, in particular, African ethics and values and social work practice. Ethical issues related to confidentiality, justice, human rights, client autonomy and self-determination, right to life and death, reproductive rights, right to work, and other ethical dilemmas as related to the complexity of human needs in today's society will be examined.

Code & Title: MSW 602 Developmental Social Work

Course Synopsis: The course discusses the efforts to make social work education and practice legitimate and more appropriate to African conditions. It examines the theoretical, conceptual, and cultural bases of appropriateness in social work and discusses related fundamental issues such as indigenisation, authentisation, reconceptualisation, and associated prospects and problems in using social work as a tool for social development in Africa. Its main focus is the search for practice paradigms, which articulate and implement a developmental model of social welfare, consistent with the African social context. The issues examined include: assumptions about personality and social life and socio-cultural, economic, political, environmental, and psychological conditions that must form the building blocks of social work practice. Using the cultural energy (ubuntu, social strategy, locality based) approach from the human environment perspective, the course links social interventions to the dynamic process of socio-economic development, and explores the integration of social and economic policies. The course begins with the definitions and descriptions of developmental social work (welfare) with reference to its historical emergence, key characteristics, and implications for social work practice. Finally, the course situates values, ethics, and knowledge for social work practice in the cultural and socio-economic domain, and examines the implications of 'social' and 'community' as the bases of social work practice in Africa.

Code & Title: MSW 603 Managing Human Services

Course Synopsis: The course provides an understanding of the context and acquisition of skills required by managers to design and implement human services in both public and private agencies.

Code & Title: MSW 604 Social Policy in a Changing Society

Course Synopsis: The course examines the characteristics, functions, and development of social policy with special reference to Botswana. Examples will also be drawn from the SADC region and across Africa. It analyses the underlying assumptions, theories, and models of the role of the state in social welfare. An examination of the social, economic, and political factors that influence the development of social policy is also

made. Topics covered will include: characteristics of the social policy process, philosophical and ideological foundations of social policy, controversies about re-distributive justice, and the role of governmental involvement in social welfare. Emphasis is directed at policies for the poor, the disabled, minorities, women, the unemployed, the elderly, HIV/AIDS sufferers, children, and other vulnerable groups.

Code & Title: MSW 605 Policy Analysis and Formulation

Course Synopsis: The course is designed to introduce students to various techniques utilised in policy analysis and formulation, to examine various case studies of the problems and the processes of policy implementation; and to examine options in several selected policy areas of current interest. The first part of the course exposes students to policy analysis techniques: cost–benefit analysis, risk analysis, decision analysis, and relevant approaches used in the social sciences. Part II of the course deals with issues related to the implementation of policy including the analysis of alternative strategies. Part III deals with various conflicts and other issues including the ethical dilemmas raised in policy analysis.

Code & Title: MSW 606 Poverty and Welfare

Course Synopsis: The course focuses on major theories of poverty and their implications for welfare provisions in Africa in general and Botswana in particular. Economic, socio-cultural, and integrative theories of poverty are examined in order to understand and appreciate how these theories influence poverty policy and their implications for welfare reform. Case studies of poverty alleviation strategies will be examined. Topics will include: defining the problem and characterising poverty specific policy approaches; poverty programme design, development, and delivery; integrating poverty alleviation programmes into overall development strategies; resources for poverty alleviation programmes; structural adjustment and poverty; and HIV/AIDS and poverty.

   To sensitise students to the needs of the poor as they express them and how they might be met.

Code & Title: MSW 607 Rethinking Family and Household Interventions

Course Synopsis: The course covers the knowledge, concepts, and skills associated with social work with families. Beginning with a grounding in family systems theories, the course explores patterns of family interaction as well as demographic, socio-cultural, and economic conditions that impinge upon family systems. It will build practice skills in assessing, interviewing, and intervening in family situations and emphasise a strength base perspective in these processes. It stresses transactions of the family in the context of the welfare of children and adolescents. The course covers the development of the family in a life span with emphasis on the normal family stages and tasks as well as alternative family forms. Life transitions such as

marriage, parenting, divorce, remarriage, step parenting, and child headed, and single parent families will be discussed. The course will also examine family coping mechanisms in relation to various life stresses such as substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, parent child separation, family dysfunction, chronic illness, disability, aging, and poverty. A variety of aetiological perspectives in explaining maladaptive conditions of children and adolescents are also addressed.

Code & Title: MSW 608 Social Work Intervention in Chronic Illness and Disability

Course Synopsis. The course focuses on direct social work practice with individuals in all age groups who suffer from chronic illness or any form of disability, and their families. The course also reviews theories of adaptation and management of chronic illness and physical disability. The psychosocial consequences of chronic illness and physical disability, their inherent stresses, and associated problem areas are emphasised. The course offers substantive content related to social attitudes, environmental conditions, and stereotypes with respect to their influence on social functioning, interpersonal relationships, and physical and psychological mobility.

Code & Title: MSW 609 African Centred Helping and Counselling Strategies

Course Synopsis: This practical course aims at helping students accept the notion that client systems are responsible for changing undesirable situations and for developing unused and underused opportunities. This course exposes students to different counselling traditions and techniques. Students will build on their skills of helping clients to help themselves. The course covers three major topics. First, students are taken through a process of awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses so that they can help others to do the same. This is aimed at improving open-mindedness, mutual collaboration, and respect in the client/helper relationship. Secondly, the course focuses on skills in helping clients tell their stories through self-exploration by concretising their feelings, behaviours, and experiences. This cultivates in students, comprehension of the subjective world of the client (empathy). Skills emphasised will include listening, reflecting, challenging, and clarifying while staying in the background. Finally, the course will discuss situations that help clients to view themselves, their problem, and their unused opportunities from different perspectives; determine clients' needs and wants; and consider methods of helping clients to translate what they need and want into problem-solving action.

Code & Title: MSW 610 Youth and Community Practice: Theory, Approaches, & Skills

Course Synopsis: The course focuses on providing a foundation of knowledge about the theory, development, and behaviour of youth and communities. It emphasises the application and integration of theoretical perspectives on social behaviour in relation

to empowerment oriented practice, administration, and organising in youth and community work. Emphasis is also placed on community building and organising that integrates family development, education, health, housing and economic development. Topics covered include: theoretical and conceptual issues; historical background; policy and planning processes; and methods, techniques, and other skills of group work including committee staffing, lobbying, agenda building, use of media, and advocacy techniques. In addition, models and approaches in the context of youth and community development are examined.

Code & Title: MSW 611 Economic Vitality

Course Synopsis: The course examines issues of youth and community entrepreneur-ship. It discusses economic deprivation and explores community interventions to improve the economic well-being of marginalised groups in communities with special emphasis on youth. It examines how locally available natural resources may be exploited for the enhancement of the quality of life of young people and their communities. Topics covered will include: project development, management, proposal writing, fund-raising, budgeting, resource identification, marketing, and networking. Emphasis is also placed on community building that integrates youth development into community organisation and development strategies.

Code & Title: MSW 612 Needs Assessment, Programme Development and Evaluation

Course Synopsis: This course is intended to enable students to conduct needs assessments, and to design, implement, and evaluate programmes as well as linking needs to community resources. The course is based on the rationale that there is a need for accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency in social service delivery. Students will acquire skills in the interpretation and conduct of different types of assessment such as process evaluation and outcome/impact assessment. Particular emphasis will also be put on methods of designing and implementing programmes. Consideration is given to analytic and interactional elements in programme development. In addition, students will be provided with practical experience in developing and applying skills in the designing of social programmes.

Code & Title: MSW 613 Research Seminar

Course Synopsis: This seminar focuses on acquisition of practical skills necessary for conducting research in the human services. The main purpose of the course is to review and discuss research topics leading to the development of a research proposal, and familiarity with tasks involved in conducting research. Students therefore, will have extensive hands on experience in the implementation of the research process. Through a series of class discussions, exercises and individual tutorials, students will be assisted to develop confidence in conducting research.

Code & Title: MSW 702 Child and Family Welfare Policy Issues

Course Synopsis: The course focuses on major policies, legislation, directives, and related structures and practices that impact children and families. The course is intended to integrate policy content with practice skills. Students will work in groups to plan, implement, and evaluate a project to bring about change at community and agency level using a policy-practice approach. Topics covered will include: a critical examination of policies and programmes in the area of family and children's services such as foster care, adoption, and other forms of alternative care; services to neglected and abused children; services for juvenile offenders; family and child advocacy; and services to alternative families. The impact of global policies, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relevance to Botswana, will be debated.

Code & Title: MSW 703 Supervision in the Human Services

Course Synopsis: This seminar discusses the organisational context within which supervision and staff development occur. Supervision will be examined from supportive, educational, and administrative perspectives. The course will also discuss different management functions within an organisation. Topics will include: personal and organisational factors in leadership and occupational motivation; elements of supervision and staff development and their implementation; and staff recruitment, development, and evaluation. The course will also explore inter- and intra-organisational environments and their impact on staff performance as well as the relationship between the organisational structure, staff development, and supervision. Finally, the course will focus on team building, work force diversity, and the interactional relationship between supervisees and supervisors.

Code & Title: MSW 704 Social Work, HIV/AIDS, and Other Terminal Illnesses

Course Synopsis: The course will provide an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of community caring processes. It will discuss the values, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge base, and skills necessary for practitioners in this area. In particular, the course will review the theories that guide family and home based care services and develop competencies necessary for practice. Special attention will focus on care for populations at risk, especially HIV/AIDS sufferers. The caring process as related to orphans, women, youth, and the elderly will also be addressed. Emphasis is placed on preventive, educational, coping, and service requirements for adequate and effective response to the needs of all these groups. The course will also help students to conceptualise and develop new programmes and services in community care.

Code & Title: MSW 705 Social Work in Health and Mental Health

Course Synopsis: The course gives students an overview of the health and mental health system in Botswana. It grounds students in current theoretical perspectives in

health, mental health, and related treatment approaches. The course focuses on the organisational structure and health policies that determine how health and mental health services are delivered and their reciprocity with social work practice. In addition, issues related to psychological stress for individuals and families affected by physical or mental illness and trauma will be examined within the context of both modern and indigenous settings. Themes discussed include: psychological reactions of patients, relatives, and others to physical and mental ill-health; treatment; and the effects of rehabilitative processes on social functioning. Special attention is given to intervention in all health care settings and methods appropriate to interdisciplinary practice. Particular skills acquired will include interviewing and assessment techniques, and initiating community based rehabilitative treatment and family psycho-education aimed at reducing relapse rates and increasing client functioning.

Code & Title: MSW 706 Youth and Sexuality

Course Synopsis: The course introduces students to human sexuality in the context of social work practice with youth. It discusses sexuality as an integral part of human functioning and the life cycle as it impacts youth. It aims at enabling students to deal comfortably with sex related youth behaviour and personal and social attitudes associated with human sexual expression. The course will explore sex-related problems of young people normally handled by social workers in settings such as the community, family, school, health, and the criminal justice system.

   Students will be exposed to a variety of interventions through role-play, group exercises, and case studies. Issues discussed will include: sexual identity, orientation, and intentions; gender identity; sexually transmitted diseases; sex related offences; and other physiological and psychological aspects of sexual behaviour.

Code & Title: MSW 707 Social Work in Educational Settings

Course Synopsis: The course provides knowledge and skills to prepare students to work effectively in educational settings. It examines both social services and educational systems in terms of their relationship and the combined potential for improving the lives of children in the school system and their families. Specific topics will include: poor academic performance; truancy; disruptive classroom behaviour; poor peer relations; inadequate social skills; substance abuse; teenage pregnancy; conflicting school/home relations; parent involvement in school; child abuse and neglect; violence; disability and dropping out of school. Focus will be placed on schools as community service agencies and designed to meet the needs of culturally diverse student populations and families.

Code & Title: MSW 708 History and Philosophy of Social Welfare in Africa

Course Synopsis: The course focuses on the evolution and development of social welfare in the African context. It examines the development of social welfare systems

and associated philosophies in the context of the social, economic, cultural, and political environments from which they emerge in different historical periods. Topics will include: the conception of social provision; the role of public, voluntary, private, non-governmental, and community based organisations and trends in family, kinship, and community dynamics and how they have influenced welfare provision. Specific attention will be paid to the development of social work in relation to social welfare.

Code & Title: MSW 709 Gender in Social Work Practice

Course Synopsis: The course examines various theories that are relevant to the development and socialisation of both women and men in African societies and explores issues that lead to differentiation based on, for example, sex, ethnicity, age, and religion. The course also addresses the interactive relationship between cultural norms and values and the differential outcomes for women and men. Special attention is given to personal and professional awareness of the consequences of the social assignment of gender roles, the creation of gender based identities, and the impact of the social construction of woman on service delivery. The biological, social, psychological, economic, and political determinants of gender based identity are explored with special emphasis on their roles.

Code & Title: MSW 710 Religion, Spirituality, and Social Work Practice

Course Synopsis: The course examines the meaning of religious beliefs and spirituality, their impact on human behaviour and functioning, and their implication for social work practice. The course also discusses influences of religion and spirituality on the development of social work foundations with respect to philosophy, ethics, and values as well as methods of intervention. Traditional religions from different cultures and spirituality are explored in relation to difference associated with issues such as marriage, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, health, disability, poverty, and life and death. Attention is paid to developing processes and enhancing skills in the creation of a system of practice that reflects the interface between social work, African spiritual and traditional beliefs and other religions, and civil society in the promotion of a just and caring society.

Code & Title: MSW 711 Dying in Africa

Course Synopsis: The course examines the concepts of death and dying and related processes from a social work practice perspective. Topics include the meaning and role of death in African culture; the dying process and related institutions; assessment and intervention strategies; life span and family life considerations; and end of life decisions. The course also discusses post-death issues such as burial and related institutions; inheritance and disposal of property; care-giving for survivors (material and psychological support); and ancestral interaction. The course provides both

theories and experiential exposure to the dying process as it relates to self, the dying person, and the bereaved. Students will gain insight into serving the terminally ill, those who need assistance with mourning and grief, and clients dealing with life and death decisions. In general, the course will explore the cultural context of death and its aftermath.

Code & Title: MSW 712 Substance Abuse, Addictions and Dependency

Course Synopsis: The course is a multidisciplinary overview of the scope of the problem, focusing on current theories, and controversies in the field of substance abuse, addictions and dependency. Emphasis is placed on assessment and interventive strategies in service to individuals, families, and groups. Students will acquire skills in screening, motivational interviewing, and evaluation. Clinical issues of denial, enabling, and countertransference along with issues of culture, the role of social work, and resource mobilisation are also addressed. In addition, models and theories are examined and integrated with relevant treatment techniques and settings. Policy implication for education, treatment, and law enforcement will also be discussed.

Code & Title: MSW 713 Social Work in the Work Place

Course Synopsis: The course focuses on social work in the work environment. It explores models of service delivery including employee assistance programmes and professional social service programmes. It also examines the links between work and health, mental health, family well-being, aging and retirement issues, occupational alcoholism, job security, and credit. Attention is also devoted to organisational policies, particularly those that affect workers and their family functioning. Students are helped to develop preventive, remedial, and rehabilitative interventions. The course also enables students to develop skills necessary for enhancing motivation and productivity in the workplace.