IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATE MINIMUM BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN TRAINING AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

A plethora of challenges confronts social work training. Such challenges include social change, the changing face of poverty, human misery as well as social inequality. All the more, modernity has seen the emergence of new and intric1ate disease regime of communicable and non-communicable diseases that include HIV and AIDS, cancer, diabetes, hypertension among others. These diseases require interventions previously unfamiliar to the field of social work as we know it today. Society is responding to these challenges in varied and often complex ways, employing both spiritual and medical techniques. With regards the human rights and governance issues, focus has shifted from a purely welfaristic and/or philanthropist approach to a more liberal and rights-based approach and to service provision. All this demands a versatile and innovative social worker whose relevance to present day socio-economic and political circumstances stands scrutiny. Therefore, social work educators, researchers and practitioners should move with the times and ensure the continued relevance of the profession. It is in the light of these stuck realities that this paper seeks to advocate a more proactive curriculum. In response to these shifts in the challenges facing social work, the Council of Social Workers (Zimbabwe) produced a minimum body of knowledge designed to act as a yardstick against which all schools of social work benchmark their programmes. This paper benefited significantly from the scholarly debates on the need to continuously update the knowledge base of social work. Use was also made of the Global minimum standards for the education and training of the social work profession (2004). The paper endeavours to utilize a three tier framework of knowledge bases based on theory, fact and practice.

KEY TERMS: *social work, knowledge base, theory, practice, education*

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INTRODUCTION

The prime goal of the social work profession is to promote social development, social change, social justice, empowerment and liberation. To this end, social work adopts a human rights perspective which reinforces the social work profession's belief in the worth and dignity of all human beings and their inherent capacity for purposeful change. Social work is alert to the fact that social, cultural, economic, political and environmental conditions can negatively impact human well-being.

This paper interrogates social work education in Zimbabwe by scrutinizing the social work knowledge base with reference to the social, economic, and political demands of the contemporary society. In order to examine the social work knowledge base, the paper adopts a simple framework put forward by Trevithick (2008). This framework looks at social work knowledge base from three fronts namely; theoretical knowledge, factual knowledge as well as practice knowledge.

It is however important to note that this framework is not watertight in the sense that theoretical knowledge informs factual knowledge which at the same time informs practice knowledge. This framework therefore is interwoven but provides a convenient way of discussing knowledge in social work. (see Trevithick, 2008 for a comprehensive discussion of the knowledge base in social work).

THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE BASE

Turner (1990) argues that social work needs a diverse set of theoretical accounts to capture the complex and ever-changing nature of persons, the settings in which they are embedded, and the realities of practice. By the same token, this paper contends that the roots of any profession is its theoretical base. Precisely, a sound theoretical base forms the rallying point upon which any profession depends as a locus of reference once it encounters novel and intricate situations likely to pose a serious threat to its credibility and existence. It is on the basis of such an understanding that this paper contends a thorough appreciation of social theory is instrumental in understanding social challenges and crafting the most suitable, reputable and relevant intervention strategies.

Theoretical knowledge base includes a comprehensive appreciation of relevant theories required to explain and manage social problems. This first section categorizes theoretical knowledge, or theory into three overlapping areas:
  i.   theories that illuminate our understanding of people, situations and events;
  ii.   theories that analyse the role, task and purpose of social work; and
  iii.   theories that relate to direct practice, such as practice approaches and perspectives.

Theories that illuminate our understanding of people, situations and events as has been alluded to above, the theoretical base of social work, just like that of cognate disciplines from which it heavily borrows is so much interwoven that the current framework is just but a working typology with no set boundaries. This section therefore like others to follow from it shall mainly deal with political as well as development theories.

It is imperative that social work educators and trainers in Zimbabwe take a paradigm shift from a remedial or welfaristic orientation that is primarily dominated by casework towards a more pragmatic economic and political orientation that would enable their graduates to occupy a space in the geo-political and economic space where development has become more of a right than a privilege.

In line with the above intellectual orientation, the following set of theories is proposed:
  • Conservatism
  • The liberal democratic paradigm
  • Deliberative democracy
  • Liberalism, freedom, and culture
  • Participatory democracy
  • Globalization
  • Theories of social justice and human rights.
  • Religion and social structure.

It is important for social workers to make a judicious application of these and other theories that help understand people, life situations as well as the institutions that foster social change, social justice and social welfare.

Globalization and social work are closely and intricately interrelated. Social work educators and practitioners should therefore strive towards a concise understanding of the dynamics nature of social problems brought forth by globalization. To put globalization into perspective, the paper takes a leaf from Held's conception of globalization as 'stretching and deepening of social relations' such that 'day-to-day activities are increasingly influenced by events happening on the other side of the globe' where 'the practices and decisions of local groups or communities can have significant global reverberations' (Held, 1999: 92).

The importance of globalization in social work practice is indispensable. This led Kaseke (1995) to conclude that globalization is an important determinant of social policy. Considering the situation in Africa, the influence of globalization is vividly seen in the bulk of social policies and programmes. These include the case management and other diverse child rights and child protection programmes couched in liberal or social democratic values of human rights, citizenship, freedom and equality of opportunity. The workings of national political and human rights systems, the international economic and development trajectory as well as the impact of these on the psycho-social and environmental wellbeing of people is of paramount importance to social workers.

In addition, the need to understand theories of globalization, liberal democracy and other human rights issues is deeply engrained in the urgent need for the social workers to intervene in emergency situations. The intricacies of social problems such as the wars in the middle east and other parts of Africa including the prevailing wave of xenophobic attacks of foreigners by South African Nationals surely call for unique and diverse portfolio of theoretical orientation not ordinarily resident within the current social work curriculum.

Following on from the above theoretical demands is the call for social justice that has become an anthem within the social work parlance. Once more, the call for social justice has meant a dramatic shift towards a political and grassroots approach to community mobilizing to fighting oppression and inequality. The current social work education and practice wisdom however is divided over whether social workers should be politically active or not (Weiss, Gal and Katan, 2006). These opinions are divided along two main schools of thought. One school believes that social workers should not be engaged in politics (Weiss et al, 2006). This school of thought claims that political involvement diverts attention from direct practice, is incongruent with professional values such as emotional neutrality and a non-judgmental approach to clients, and prevents social work from serving a wide spectrum of clients (Bardill, 1993 quoted in Weiss et al, 2006). Another school of thought – which strongly resonates with this paper – is that politics remains the root of most social and economic problems that social workers end up dealing with. This school of thought treats the political engagement by social workers as a necessary precursor to social justice.

Therefore, it is here contended that Africa's social problems now demand a dramatic shift from the traditional residual and welfaristic approach to problem solving towards a human rights or citizen of the world approach. Therefore, the profession's call for social justice is a call on the schools of social work to have a fresh look at their curriculum and determine whether they are delivering as expected.

The pursuit of social and economic justice is central to social work's purpose. Social justice refers to the creation of social institutions that support the welfare of individuals and groups. In addition to social justice, it is here contended that social workers have to start bothering themselves with economic justice if ever their ploy to fight poverty is to register any degree of success. By economic justice is meant those aspects of social justice that relate to economic well-being, such as a livable wage, pay equity, job discrimination, and social security. By advancing such theories as conservatism, liberalism and human rights theories as part of a social work set of theories necessary within Africa's social work curriculum, this paper is cognisant of the dramatic shift from a highly philanthropic, remedial and charitable approach to social work practice towards a more rights based political and economic orientation. Closely linked to social justice is participatory democracy wherein modern societies are built or founded upon the belief that citizens need to have a stake in matters that concern them. In social work nomenclature, this has translated to participatory development, grassroots participation, the bottom up approach to community development as well as empowerment. The concept of empowerment in social work theory and practice has been largely popularized by such scholars as Payne (1997). The empowerment concept has since been applied to a variety of social work interventions in line with the democratic and emancipatory ideals which have come to punctuate modern social work theory and practice, especially in resource poor countries. In the case of Africa, empowerment and participatory development entails giving power over decision making to the clients rather than patronizing and directing them all the time.

Theories that analyse the role, task and purpose of social work

At a theoretical level, social work is beset by a plethora of challenges brought forth by globalization (see the above discussion). During the past two decades, practice theory has emerged as a potent challenger to prevalent ways of thinking about human life, which have until now focused either on individual minds and actions or social structures, systems and discourses. Such theories are meant to sharpen the skills of intervention of the social worker as a professional. In the case of Zimbabwe, the following theories are essential:

- Psychodynamic theory
- Behavioral theories
- Systems theories and
- Critical social work.
- Psychosocial theory
- Cognitive development theory
- Person-centered theory

- Ecological systems theory
- Moral development theory
- Small group theory
- Family systems theory
- Organizational theory
- Attachment theory
- Empowerment theory
- Social justice theory

These theories essentially help social workers understand the basis of human life. Such an understanding remains critical in developing psycho-social and therapeutic interventions (Thyer, Sowers and Dulmus, 2008). With regards to Africa's social work practice terrain, the advent of a highly complex disease regime and attendant psycho-social problems demands that social workers be versatile when it comes to their role in casework and clinical practice. Such a theoretical deficit is highly evident in the preparedness of most of the graduates. For example, in all fairness, recent graduates of social workers have failed to impress and distinguish themselves from other professionals in the fields of community health, clinical social work, psycho-therapy and palliative care as well as generic counseling. Subsequently, some employers and the general public could not help but doubt the relevance and responsiveness of the social work profession to the pressing needs plaguing contemporary society.

Social workers are therefore called upon to demonstrate an adept appreciation of theoretical issues at various levels in order to utilize the above theoretical knowledge. These skills include:

- The ability to build and sustain helping relationships.
- Ability to select appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating social work interventions.
- Awareness of the need to collaborate with other professions and disciplines and being able to function in multi-disciplinary teams.
- Awareness of the potential limitations of Western theories in dealing with local realities.

These and other professional skills place a somewhat insurmountable theoretical demand upon African social workers who must no longer be complacent with their good command of casework towards a versatile and intricate multi-disciplinary domain. In effect, although this has not received adequate emphasis within the generality of African social work curriculum, such skills are not new to the field of social work. Emphasis on person in environment is simply a call on social workers to treat a person as a person living or embedded in social, cultural, economic and political context (see Tolson, Reid and Garvin, 2003). A person and environment construct suggests that social workers always examine individual behavior in its context, reflecting on how that behavior is both a response to and, in turn, influences the individual's environment.

A typical example of such theoretical expectations is family and child welfare as well as counseling demands required within an array of a complex regime of social and psychological problems. In effect, working with a child or adolescent requires knowledge of developmental factors and communication skills that are unique to young people, and at the other end of the age spectrum, older people also have unique needs that a social worker should recognize.

Additionally, the emphasis placed on psycho-social support due mainly to a precipitous social problems caused by a wave of communicable and non-communicable diseases such as HIV and AIDS, cancer, diabetes, malaria, and, in some countries cholera now calls for more versatile theoretical grounding than previously known to the profession. Such problems as orphan care, palliative and terminal care, bereavement counseling, as well as other psychological, clinical/medical and community-based interventions are now proving too complex given the present social work curriculum.

Furthermore, society has devised complex and sometimes novel ways of coping with such challenges. These coping strategies have often taken the form of spiritual and religious practices not emphasized in most of African schools of social work. Evidently, in most countries, social work was borne out of the work of missionaries whose prime motive was mainly to extend their evangelical teachings with more coordinated works of charity. To that effect, little attention was paid to religious tolerance and human diversity, which values now constitute the core element of social work ethos. Contrary to prevailing social practices, it is here contended that schools of social work in Africa have not invested the expected energy and skills in the area of spiritual social work and social diversity.

There are many theories that relate to direct practice, including practice approaches and perspectives. The IASSW and IFSW (2004) identify the following as the core purposes of social work:

- Promoting social inclusion;
- Dealing with inequalities and social injustices;
- Promoting human well-being and enhancing capacity to solve problems;
- Facilitating access to services and resources;

- Influencing and developing social policies that serve to meet human needs;
- Engaging in advocacy; and
- Protecting disadvantaged and powerless members of society.

These expectations require that social workers be versatile with a plethora of theories that help shape their practice. This paper advances the following theories specifically for practice within the Zimbabwean context:

- Social development and the developmental approach to social welfare
- Therapeutic, protective and preventive approaches in social welfare
- The human rights perspective in social work
- Development as social transformation
- Structural Marxism
- Dependency theory
- World systems theory
- Intellectual dependency theory
- Feminist epistemology
- Women in development
- Women and development
- Gender and development,
- Women, environment, and development
- Postmodernism and development
- Critical disability theory

The above theories stand in response to the clarion call for a departure from a remedial, welfaristic approach to practice towards a more developmental and proactive orientation. This paper therefore adds to the already existing call for the immediate implementation of a developmental social work. By development is meant an improvement in a complex of linked natural, economic, social, cultural, and political conditions. On the same note, Developmentalism is the belief in the viability and desirability of this kind of economic progress. The above set of theories enables social workers to perfect their practice skills towards poverty alleviation. This entails an informed interpretation of the causes and effects of poverty and social deprivation.

Social workers directly addressed many of the factors associated with poverty at the individual, household, and community levels. As a profession, social work has always focused attention on poverty and the difficulties faced by persons who do not have enough resources to obtain the basics of life, such as food, shelter, and medical and dental care. Poverty has devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities. It remains the preeminent factor contributing towards many other social problems, such as the breakup of families, violence, crime, substance abuse, suicide, and a multitude of health as well as other psycho-social and related problems bedeviling contemporary African societies.

Poverty is especially injurious to children because they are most vulnerable to the effects of poor nutrition, disease, family insecurity, and social instability. The causes of poverty are always complex and will vary somewhat, depending on whether one is examining poverty in a first-world, modern country or in a third world context.

In the literature, three perspectives to the definition of poverty exist: These are the *income* perspective, the *basic needs* perspective, and the *capability* perspective. The income perspective posits that a person is poor if, and only her/his income level is below the defined poverty line e.g. US$1 a day/US$2 a day. The basic needs perspective on the other hand defines poverty as a deprivation of material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfillment of human needs, including food.

On the other hand, the capability perspective explains that poverty represents the absence of capability to function. Thus, poverty is considered as *state of insufficient purchasing power to meet minimum consumption needs; it is accompanied by inadequate access to health services and related public goods*. These two insufficiencies lead to the poor having shorter life expectancy, as well as being more prone to disease and disability than the average person in the society where they live. In other words, poverty should be conceptualized as *a multidimensional web of deprivation resulting in living conditions that lie below some minimum standard*. Such a theoretical requirement calls upon social workers to have a thorough appreciation of the basic theories of economics. Contrary to the usual traditional scenario wherein social workers concerned themselves primarily with development economics, the changing face of poverty and social deprivation requires that social workers possess astute knowledge of fiscal policy and management, understanding of competition law and economics, the causes and effects of economic mal-performance, price determination, and a thorough knowledge of statistics and other mathematical models that help interpret the modern forms and manifestations of poverty. This squarely places social work practice face to face with the novelties of the causes and effects of poverty and inequality resident in a mis-match between economic growth and general human welfare.

Economic growth means achieving a massive economy—producing more goods and services on the one side of the national account (gross domestic product—GDP)—and a larger total income on the other (gross national income—GNI). But economic growth can occur without touching problems like inequality or poverty when all the increase goes to a few people. Indeed, growth has occurred in most Western countries over the past 30 years at the same time that income inequality has widened. In this case, economic growth functions, in the most basic sense, to channel money and power to the already rich and famous.

This paper believes that an adept knowledge of the multifaceted nature of poverty and deprivation and attendant political and economic theories help social workers in their advocacy for better policies. Coupled with the in-depth understanding of poverty and its root causes is the issue of gender inequities. This paper recognizes that the current curriculum does not fully equip social workers with the sufficient knowledge both theoretically and practically to direct their interventions towards the amelioration of the negative effects of gender inequalities. The above theories, if taken aboard, are specifically aimed at achieving this goal. It goes without saying that gender structures favour of men, making it difficult for most women to perform their life tasks. Despite having assumed new roles, women continue to face both discriminations in the labor market and gender inequity in the home. They confront oppressive social norms in both state and civil society institutions in which they live and work, and many have internalized stereotypes that deny their worth as women (Narayan, Patel and Schafft, 1999). Gender inequality within households seems remarkably intractable; economic empowerment does not necessarily lead to social empowerment or gender equity within households Nonetheless, in some places there were glimmers of equitable power relations within the household (Narayan et al, 1999:7-8).

It is therefore imperative that the social work curriculum pays due attention to gender issues as these shape and influence the manner in which resources are distributed in society. more so, gender relations are at the epicenter of social work interventions especially in rural areas where patriarchy dictates that women need to ask for permission from their husbands or male significant others to undertake various crucial decisions such as purchasing property including land and livestock, attending a workshop, soliciting for social work services as well as even responding to a questionnaire. In the absence of a thorough and comprehensive appreciation of gender theories, the role of social workers in equalizing opportunities between men and women is likely to be compromised.

Another issue of central importance to the social work profession is that of food security and rural development. A majority of Africa's population lives in rural areas where agriculture is the main source of both income and livelihood. As a result, it is no wonder that the bulk of social workers are employed in relief agencies where they work in various capacities. Sustainable democracy is not built on empty stomachs and rampant poverty. In other words, food and nutrition security has had a far-reaching impact on democratization processes. It has been a sound road map to rural development and political stability. Therefore, the issue of assuring food and nutrition security for all in Africa is a critical concern not only for African governments, but also for the international community (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2004).

Given the poor rainfall patterns in many African countries, social workers need to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to crafting sustainable interventions in the area of food security, especially in the rural areas where most people eke a living from agriculture. This paper therefore cements the centrality of rural development as a social work intervention strategy.

FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

Factual knowledge is knowledge acquired through research. Social workers use scientific evidence as a basis for social work practice. They use evidence as a foundation for decision making. The complexity of present-day social problems requires that the social worker be equipped with effective research skills.

When working in the practice environment, all social workers are hired with the expectation that they have good problem identification, and case planning skills and factual knowledge in social work helps in sharpening their skills in interpreting the causes of poverty and the attendant interventions. Advocacy becomes a farfetched dream in a situation where social workers speak of poverty from the basis of little technical and empirical economic information. Factual knowledge lays emphasis on the need to measure the extent and effects of poverty. This paper therefore contends that poverty is measured and analysed for four main purposes namely;
   i.   cognitive (to know what the situation is)
   ii.   analytical (to understand the factors determining this situation)
   iii.   policy making (to design interventions best adapted to the issues) and
   iv.   Monitoring and evaluation (to assess whether current policies are effective, and whether the situation is changing).

The place of factual knowledge in social work cannot be overstated. This paper however observes that there is a dearth of knowledge and skills in various areas such as poverty analysis and social policy (Weiss et al, 2006).

Poverty analysis moves from describing poverty to understanding its causes. Types of analysis vary from econometric analyses of the microeconomic determinants of poverty. Groups of people have been marginalized and disadvantaged for reasons that are historical, cultural and political, among others. These reasons are deep rooted and intricately intertwined with power structures, knowledge levels, belief systems, attitudes and values of societies. They have been barriers to equitable social development. Development programmes and projects have tended to draw on insufficient understanding of these issues. Consequently, development results have often benefited the most advantaged while only percolating in drops to those who are deprived, thereby perpetuating the inequities. The following skills are essential if the social workers are to achieve the required expectations:

- Ability to use qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Understanding ethical issues in social work research.
- Ability to utilize research to influence social policy and social work practice.
- Ability to disseminate research results to stakeholders.
- A thorough appreciation of principles and analytical tools of economics.
- An in-depth understanding of statistics and other mathematical models necessary for programme and project planning and evaluation.
- Knowledge of and skills in assessment;
- Social welfare policies and laws at national, regional and international levels.

Given the above expectations, it becomes all the more necessary that social work educators and practitioners equip students with the skills described above, if they are to remain relevant to the present demands. Otherwise, the quest to fight poverty, advocating for human and child rights and other social work related activities will never stand firm in the absence of such skills.

Factual knowledge therefore is central to modern social work practice. The need to analyse and influence social policy on behalf of the less fortunate and powerless members of society calls for social workers to prove their case to the powers that be utilizing concrete and in objectionable facts.

PRACTICE WISDOM

All professions have value preferences that give purpose and direction to their practitioners. Indeed, the purpose and objectives of social work and other professions come from their respective value systems. Professional values, however, are not separate from societal values (Fook, 2002). Rather, professions espouse selected societal values. Society, in turn, sanctions the activities of professions through supportive legislation, funding, delegation of responsibility for certain societal functions, and mechanisms for ensuring that those functions are adequately discharged (Hepworth and Larsen, 2008). Because a profession is linked to certain societal values, it tends to serve as society's conscience with respect to those particular values.

In this context, values tend to represent strongly held beliefs about how the world should be, about how people should normally behave, and about what the preferred conditions of life (. What constitutes an appropriate value base for social work practice shifts and evolves to meet the changing nature of the service environment (Watson and West, 2006). Practice knowledge includes the knowledge acquired through practice. This area of knowledge is also described in a number of ways—as *process knowledge* (Sheppard *et al.*, 2001), *professional knowledge* and *action knowledge* (Osmond, 2005). Practice knowledge therefore includes the following skills and attributes:

- Demonstrate understanding of social work values and principles.
- Ability to apply social work values and principles in all interventions.
- Recognizing the inherent capacities of human beings to find solutions to their problems.
- the ability to plan strategic programmes that identify a social problem and clarify existing policies, formulate intervention goals and objectives, undertake surveys of social needs and formulate policy.
- The ability to employ tactics such as negotiation, persuasion, lobbying and advocacy, to form task groups and build coalitions, to organize letter writing or telephone campaigns, and to make use of the media to further their policy goals.
- The ability to give evidence before legislative committees, to make efficient use of research resources in order to better understand existing policies and problems and to draw up alternatives that can serve as the basis for position papers (Hepworth and Larsen, 2008).
- An in-depth appreciation of national policies and legislation.
- Knowledge of and skills in assessment.
- Helping processes and how to build relationships;
- Application of social work knowledge and skills.
- Knowledge of human behavior.
- Critical understanding of the impact of structural factors on human social functioning.
- Knowledge of how culture, beliefs, traditions and religion influence human functioning.

- Critical understanding of the origins and purposes of social work and country specific developments.
- International and regional Conventions, Treaties and Declarations and Policy Frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention 102, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Charter on Fundamental Rights in the SADC, African Union Social Policy Frameworks.
- National structures for the delivery of social welfare services.
- Social policy as an instrument for meeting human needs.
- Management and supervision in social work.
- Fields of social work practice such as mental health, child welfare and probation services, gerontology, disability, medical social work, residential social work, correctional services and occupational social work.
- Ability to intervene at micro and macro levels to achieve a range of outcomes, notably therapeutic, protective, developmental/ transformative and preventive.
- Understanding how social policies are developed.
- Ability to analyze national budgets with a view to influencing allocation of resources.
- Awareness of national structures for the delivery of social welfare services

In addition to the above, another practice issue associated with the maintenance of the dignity and worthy of every human being is the aspect of poverty alleviation. As the discussion above has revealed, poverty is the worst of all evils, and a focus of many professions. Social workers are in no way strangers to the war on poverty. The very emergence of the profession is located in the fight against urban poverty that became manifest in Europe and the United States of America mainly due to industrial revolution that greeted those societies in the eighteenth century.

In view of this social work ethos, the question that remains is whether or not social workers are equipped to understand and interpret poverty and social deprivation. In other words, are the present day social workers able to interpret economic data in a way that would enable them to detect malpractices and injustices in the distribution of national resources?

Last but not least, the importance of recording in social work practice should in no way be ignored. Inadequate record keeping often results from professionals not being properly trained in documentation. This lack of training can make it difficult for social workers to meet record-keeping requirements for a growing number of clients. Furthermore, Kagle (2002) believes that many social workers simply do not recognize the importance of keeping sound records. When a trial-and-error approach is used to document case plan services, the worker may be uncertain about the nature, duration, and outcomes of the therapeutic encounter.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the need to continuously update the knowledge base of social work is an indispensable part of social work practice. This therefore calls for a constant interaction between social work educators and practitioners with a view to sharing current knowledge and latest practice developments. On the other hand, social work educators should continue their quest for the latest theoretical knowledge that would enable their graduates to function in a variety of settings both at national and international levels. This therefore calls for the adoption of the appropriate minimum body of knowledge in the training and practice of social work in Africa.

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