

SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA: EXPLORING CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN GHANA

by Linda Kreitzer

ISBN 978-1-55238-596-8

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence.

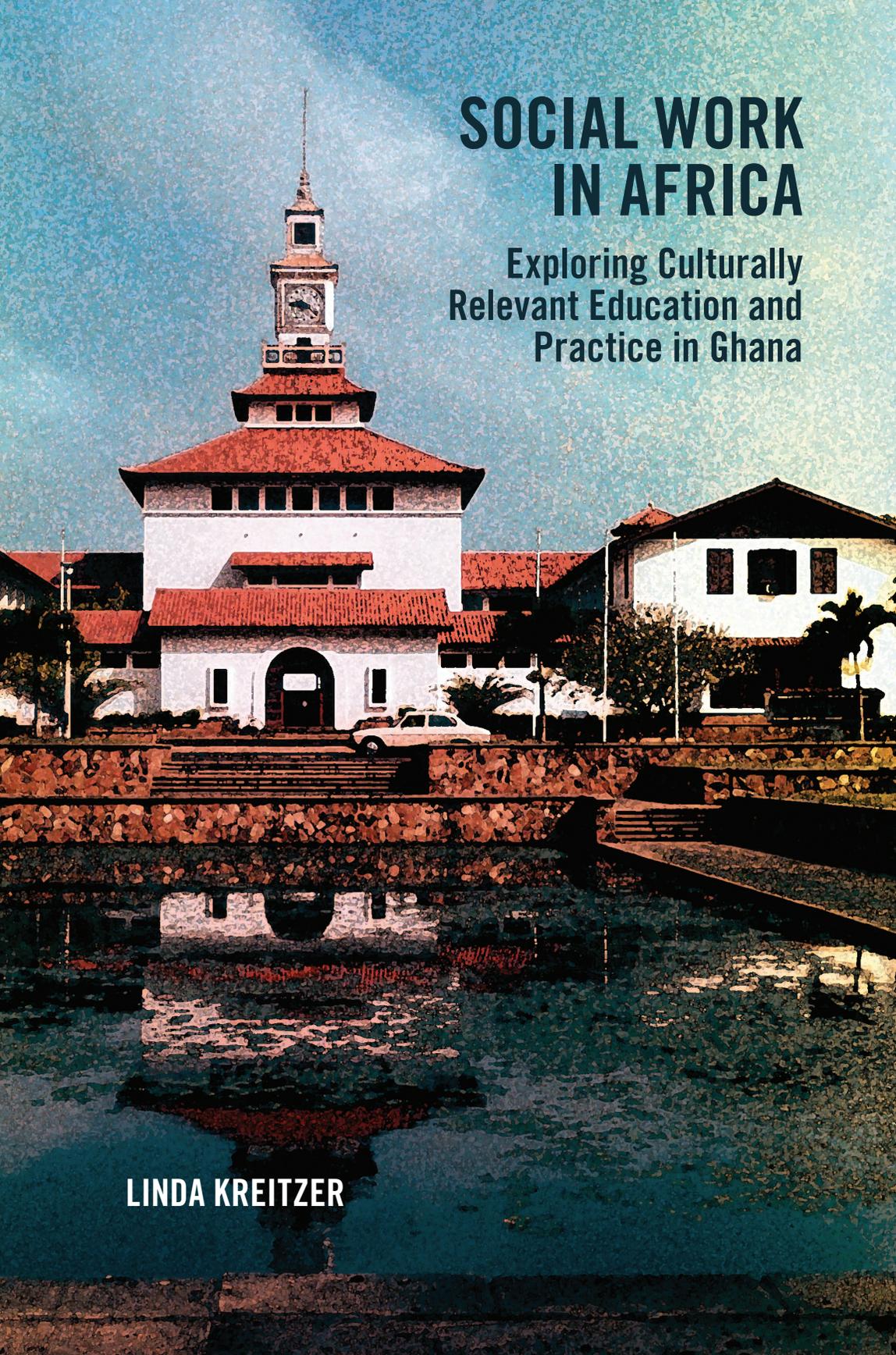
This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY**:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY NOT**:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA

**Exploring Culturally
Relevant Education and
Practice in Ghana**

LINDA KREITZER

SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA

AFRICA: MISSING VOICES SERIES

DONALD I. RAY, GENERAL EDITOR

ISSN 1703-1826

University of Calgary Press has a long history of publishing academic works on Africa. *Africa: Missing Voices* illuminates issues and topics concerning Africa that have been ignored or are missing from current global debates. This series fills a gap in African scholarship by addressing concerns that have long been overlooked in political, social, and historical discussions about this continent.

- No. 1 · **Grassroots Governance?: Chiefs in Africa and the Afro-Caribbean**
Edited by D.I. Ray and P.S. Reddy · Copublished with the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA)
- No. 2 · **The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging**
Edited by Wisdom Tettey and Korbla Pupilampu
- No. 3 · **A Common Hunger: Land Rights in Canada and South Africa**
By Joan G. Fairweather
- No. 4 · **New Directions in African Education: Challenges and Possibilities**
Edited by S. Nombuso Dlamini
- No. 5 · **Shrines in Africa: History, Politics, and Society**
Edited by Allan Charles Dawson
- No. 6 · **The Land Has Changed: History, Society and Gender in Colonial Eastern Nigeria** By Chima J. Korieh
- No. 7 · **African Wars: A Defense Intelligence Perspective**
By William G. Thom
- No. 8 · **Reinventing African Chieftaincy in the Age of AIDS, Gender, Governance, and Development** Edited by Donald I. Ray, Tim Quinlan, Keshav Sharma, and Tacita A.O. Clarke
- No. 9 · **The Politics of Access: University Education and Nation-Building in Nigeria, 1948–2000** by Ogechi Emmanuel Anyanwu
- No. 10 · **Social Work in Africa: Exploring Culturally Relevant Education and Practice in Ghana** By Linda Kreitzer

SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA

**Exploring Culturally
Relevant Education and
Practice in Ghana**

LINDA KREITZER



**UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY
PRESS**

AFRICA: MISSING VOICES SERIES
ISSN 1703-1826 (PRINT) ISSN 1925-5675 (ONLINE)

© 2012 Linda Kreitzer

University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2N 1N4
www.uofcpress.com

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Kreitzer, Linda, 1955–

Social work in Africa [electronic resource] : exploring culturally relevant education and practice in Ghana / Linda Kreitzer.

(Africa, missing voices series, ISSN 1925-5675 ; 10)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Electronic monograph.

Issued also in print format.

ISBN 978-1-55238-511-1 (PDF).—ISBN 978-1-55238-596-8 (PDF).—

ISBN 978-1-55238-598-2 (EPUB)

1. Social work education—Africa—Western influences. 2. Social work education—Africa—History. 3. Universities and colleges—Africa—History. 4. Social service—Africa—Western influences. 5. Social service—Africa—History. 6. Social service—Ghana—History. 7. Africa—Civilization. 8. Curriculum change—Social aspects—Africa. 9. Curriculum change—Social aspects—Ghana. I. Title. II. Series: Africa, missing voices series (Online) ; 10

HV11.8.A35K74 2012

361.3071'16

C2012-901033-2

The University of Calgary Press acknowledges the support of the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Multimedia Development Fund for our publications. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund for our publishing activities. We acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program.

**Government
of Alberta** ■

Canada



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Cover design, page design, and typesetting by Melina Cusano

Table of Contents

Preface	ix
Introduction: Situating the Context	xiii
Prologue	xxv
I. Historical Context	1
A. Historical influences affecting social work education in Africa	1
1. Sub-Saharan African universities – Historical context	
2. Sub-Saharan African universities – Current state	
B. Institutions affecting social work education in Africa	11
1. International level	
2. Continental level	
3. National level	
4. Summary	
C. History of social work in Ghana	33
1. Introduction	
2. Colonial period	
3. Social work training in Ghana	
D. Conclusion of chapter	39
II. Cultural Identity	43
A. African culture and identity	43
1. Understanding culture	
2. Understanding identity	
3. Understanding cultural identity	
B. How Africa's history has influenced African cultural identity	50
C. African cultural identity today	56
D. African cultural identity and social work	60
1. Professional identity	
2. Professional training	
3. Professional practice	
4. Culturally relevant social work practice	
E. Conclusion of chapter	70

III. Hegemony of Western Knowledge	73
A. Imperialism and education	73
B. Hegemony of knowledge	75
C. Western knowledge and social work education	77
1. Ethics and values	
D. Conclusion of chapter	85
IV. Neo-Liberal Policies	89
A. The rise of international financial institutions	89
B. Present economic issues in Africa	92
C. Consequences of neo-liberal policies	94
D. Social work and neo-liberal policies	98
E. Conclusion of chapter	104
V. Development and Aid	107
A. History of development theories	107
1. Development through modernization	
2. The effects of modernization theory on poor countries	
B. Social work and development	116
1. The role of social welfare institutions	
2. National development and social policy	
3. NGOs and development	
C. Conclusion of chapter	126

Adinkra Symbols



Chapter 1

SANKOFA - "Go back and take"



Chapter 2

EPA – Symbol of captivity and slavery



Chapter 3

NTESIE – Symbol of wisdom and knowledge



Chapter 4

WAWA ABA – Symbol of hardiness



Chapter 5

HYE-WONHYE – Symbol of imperishability and endurance



Chapter 6

DENKYEM – Symbol of adaptability



Chapter 7

NYAME BIRIBI WO SORO – Symbol of hope

Preface

The journey towards initiating and ultimately writing this book (my PhD research) did not begin with my first visit to Ghana in 1994. It began as a young child watching slides of my father's visits to Africa. My own courage and confidence to travel came from my parents, who throughout their lives travelled the world, making it a normal part of life's experience. My own travels outside my country of the United States began in 1972 with a backpacking trip with my sister at the young age of 17. In 1981, I moved to London, England, where I experienced my first cross-cultural living experience. I learned what it was like to be a privileged immigrant and to live and work in a different culture. During the thirteen years I lived in England, I took advantage of the opportunities to travel to many parts of the world in order to experience and learn about other cultures. This interest in other cultures paralleled my training and practice in social work and led naturally to an interest in combining my two passions. In particular I was drawn to learning how social work had developed and was currently manifested in other countries, particularly non-western countries.¹ Specifically, I discovered and learned how other cultures provided social supports for people at the individual, group, and community level. I was interested in knowing if social workers (or their equivalents) were present in other countries, what social and professional role they filled, and what education they received in their country. In the past twenty-two years, this journey has included lengthy times spent in Britain, Ghana, Armenia, Canada, and a Liberian refugee camp.

From 1994 to 1996, I taught social work at the University of Ghana, Legon, in the Social Work Unit through the British non-government organization Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO). At the same time I was reading James Midgley's (1981) book *Professional imperialism: Social work in the Third World*. As I taught western social work theory and methods to African students in Ghana I became uncomfortably aware that I too was part of this professional imperialism. Over the past ten years I have questioned why I was needed in Ghana to teach social work and why 'western knowledge' was so revered. I wanted to know if western-style social work

theory and practice was appropriate in all countries of the world, and, if not, what alternatives have been created in order for the curriculum to be more culturally relevant.

To further educate myself in regards to the above questions, in 2000, I became involved with the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work and have attended their conferences at the international and African regional level. I continue to be interested in social work in other parts of the world. I see that it continues to flourish in some places and continues to struggle in others, including Africa. At its best, social work reflects the society in which it is operating. It should be a dynamic profession, changing and evolving with the needs of the people of the country and continent. However, this evolution can be both positive and challenging, particularly when countries are politically, socially, and economically unstable. It is my impression that western social work curricula (theories, values, and practice) are still transferred to other countries in a top-down fashion instead of evolving naturally from a grassroots base. Why is this so? Why is it that 90 per cent of books in the social work library in Africa are western? This forces students to adapt western textbooks to their own situation when they should be having textbooks of their own. How far can one push adaptation to a point where it stifles learning? These and other questions will be part of the contents of this book.

On a more personal level, in combining my interest of international work and social work I have had to come to terms with my own place in this world, one in which I am a privileged white western woman who was socialized to believe in a certain way about the world. My journey has included challenging these worldview assumptions and challenging the profession of social work as a white, western professional entity. I have also been challenged by my own racism, particularly concerning Africans. Over the years I have been privileged to work with many Africans that have helped me reduce this irrational prejudice. I have endeared myself to Africa and its people and wish to continue this connection at both a personal and a professional level.

Many people, places, animals, spirits, and objects were part of this journey. First and foremost, I am grateful to my PhD research group in Ghana for giving their time, knowledge, and experience to be part of the

2002/2003 research project that provided the impetus for this book. The research group included: Ziblim Abukari, Adu-Gyamfi Jones, Kwaku Afram, Joanna Mensah, Salima Imoro, Patience Antonio, George Dah, Nana Boatema Afrakoma II, and Comfort Sackey. My thanks also go to Dr. Maureen Wilson, Dr. Timothy Pynch, and Dr. Donald Ray for their encouragement over the years. My thanks also extend to the great people of Ghana at the Department of Social Work and their helpfulness while I was there on my various visits. I am grateful particularly to Prof. Nana Araba Apt, whose friendship and encouragement has been exceptional. I want to thank Prof. Lengwe Mwansa at the University of Botswana for his insight into the Association for Social Work Education in Africa. Finally, I thank both the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) for giving me the opportunities to present at their conferences as part of my process of thinking and learning about social work in Africa. This has allowed me to develop my thoughts from a thesis to a book. Finally, I thank Steve Brechtel for his loving support and editorial help during this process of writing. To all of you, thank you from the deepest part of my heart.

Introduction: Situating the Context

The African continent has a rich and ancient history of which much has been forgotten and remains unacknowledged by the world today. With the expansion of European civilization into Africa in the 1800s (Congress of Berlin, 2000) came the assumption that Africa was a continent to be explored and exploited, having no relevant history or culture (Hegel, 1956; Kuykendall, 1993; Pakenham, 1991) and thus was a land free to be conquered and civilized. However, it is clear that Africa had a long involved, complex and cultured history with an immense diversity of ethnic groups living on a continent, complete with appropriate social, economic, and political infrastructures. In terms of governance, “Africa was probably more democratic than most other parts of the world, including Europe” (Tandon, 1996, p. 296). Kuykendall (1993) emphasizes that “customs, laws, and traditions were the constitution and these structured the society ... and from these structures stability and perpetuity were maintained” (p. 579). An example of these laws and customs can be seen in the region of Africa that is now known as West Africa, which was divided into kingdoms in pre-colonial times (Ray, 1986). Life was mainly rural, with clans settling in different regions. The centre of the social system in pre-colonial West Africa was the kinship institution. Defined as “patterns of behaviour associated with relatives in a society, together with the principles of governing these behaviours” (Nukunya, 1992, p. 11), this system uplifted and supported the running of societies. It served as a way to administer rules and principles of seniority, succession, and residence patterns concerning customary law (Rattray, 1929). Within the kinship system were descent groups called clans and lineages (Busia, 1951; Nukunya, 1992). Intertwined in these systems was a religious belief system that depended heavily on the guidance and punishment by ancestors throughout life.

The Asante Kingdom had a chieftaincy system in place whereby the king (divisional level) was to administer the Division, look after the spiritual, physical, and emotional welfare of the people, maintain law and order, consult with elders, lead the army into battle, and act as mediator

between ancestors and the clans (Busia, 1951). “Africa has had a long tradition of democracy based on the accountability of the rulers to the ruled ... rulers were accountable to their people, to their ancestors, and to a regime of democratic principles” (Tandon, 1996, p. 296). Each king had a queen mother (biological mother or close relation) who watched the king’s behaviour, gave advice and counsel to him, and was involved in marriage considerations (Obeng, 1988). Rattray (1929) describes the role of the queen mother as “the whisper behind the Stool” (p. 88).² She was the second-most important person in the traditional authority system. Her many roles within the community included community social welfare worker, distributor of local and governmental resources, liaison officer between people and the community support services, role model and care-giver for women and children, educationalist, guidance counsellor, and supervisor of puberty rites, to name a few (Boateng, 1982). She was and continues to be considered, along with the king, the keeper of culture and tradition. This traditional system evolved over many generations and brought stability to the different clans and communities.

These traditional social systems and mechanisms for social development already established were broken down with the colonization of Africa (Burke & Ngonyani, 2004; Kreitzer, 2004b). Colonization is a relationship between people, groups, or countries where there is a domination and oppression of one particular relationship over the other (Memmi, 1965). This oppression results in what Freire (1997) speaks of as the “culture of silence” in which a culture is so oppressed by another culture that it effectively silences the people of the oppressed culture. They no longer have a voice in the society or the world and are therefore of no importance. The effect of this invasion on Africa was a loss of identity and culture that greatly affected the psyche of the people of Africa. What is human and not human, what is civilized and primitive, were defined by European colonial discourse (Willinsky, 1998) and Africans were defined as non-human and primitive. The African continent has been a source of wealth for the growth of industrialized countries in the world (Busia, 1951; Hochschild, 1998; Sartre, 2001; Smith, 1999; Willinsky, 1998) and continues to be exploited by the more powerful countries and institutions of the present world. Through modernization, colonization favoured western expertise and attempted to ‘civilize’ Africa at the expense of its

own knowledge and cultural practices (Kreitzer, 2004a; Moshā, 2000; Semali & Kincheloe, 2000; Smith, 1999; Willinsky, 1998). Today, the hegemony (a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by a certain powerful group; Mayo, 1990, p. 35) of western knowledge influences all aspects of African life. There is a strong desire to promote western knowledge, and to compete in a global world of universities that are on par with western/northern university systems (Ajayi, Goma, & Johnson, 1996). While seen as admirable, it often proceeds at the expense of traditional knowledge. Most African universities were established according to a European model and many Africans were trained in western universities in Europe, the United States, and Canada. On returning to Africa and assigned teaching positions, they “naturally emulated the practice established at the institutions where they conducted their studies” (van Wyk & Higgs, 2007, p. 68). This process promoted a dependency upon western written material and often undermined local knowledge and expertise.

While many African countries were seeking independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the new world economic order was established and Africa again became subject to colonization tactics. Borrowing money from western lenders and international financial institutions (IFIs), these countries experienced debts that devastated their chance for growth after independence (Boahen, 1975; Konadu-Agyemang, 2000; Rimmer, 1992). “These rigid fundamentalist policies did extraordinary damage to African economics from which they have yet to recover” (Lewis, 2005). By 2003, the total debt for all of Sub-Saharan Africa stood at US\$218 billion (World Bank, 2005). After the Second World War, emerging development theory favoured a modernization approach to country growth. Modernization theory assumes that economic growth alone can alleviate poverty and that all countries of the world, through certain standard economic programs, would eventually have economic and social prosperity (Prigoff, 2000; So, 1990; Wilson & Whitmore, 2000). Along with modernization, the world is experiencing the phenomenon of globalization.

For some, globalization signifies interdependence, prosperity, and progress, while others see it as an advanced stage of colonization causing poverty, fragmentation, corruption, and marginalization (Lechner & Boli, 2000; Martin, 2000; Midgley, 2000). Wilson and Whitmore (2000)

identify the present form of globalization, that of globalism (ideological orientation underlying the neo-liberal agenda³) as an orientation that supports the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. Countries in Africa continue to struggle to provide for their own people in their own land under globalism. Many countries in Africa still suffer from poverty, starvation, and famine, with millions of Africans dying of HIV/AIDS each year (Bar-On, 2001; Lewis, 2005). In 1996, out of fifty-nine countries listed in the World Bank low-income category, thirty-six countries were from Africa (World Bank, 2006). In 2010, twenty-nine African countries are still at the low-income level and eleven are at the lower-middle-income level (World Bank, 2010). Poverty in Africa is chronic and rising. Africa hosts only 10 per cent of the global population, yet it is home to 30 per cent of the world's poor (World Bank, 2007). In 2011 food insecurity is a main issue for many African countries with food riots organized to protest this trend (World Hunger, 2011), Aid has been questioned for some time now as an effective way to alleviate poverty (ASWEA, 1977; Mammo, 1999) and is now being criticized openly for its failure to alleviate poverty in Africa (Moyo, 2009). Neo-liberal economic policies have been tried and tested worldwide, and they have failed to achieve economic and social prosperity for many countries. This is still a future goal for these countries and only a concerted effort by African governments and the international community will change this situation.

The profession of social work's role in the world

The social work profession has been affected by all of these historical factors. Not only is it struggling to be a voice in countries of Africa, but social workers are struggling to empower clients and are fighting against the negative social effects of neo-liberal economic policies including cutbacks in health, education, and welfare (Prigoff, 2000; Sewpaul, 2006). The exportation of western social work theories and knowledge has helped introduce social work to many parts of the world with the assumption that its core theory and practice is universal and transferable and that a western social work curriculum is the best in the world.

Today, this exportation continues. A good example is in Asia where Australian Schools of Social Work are exporting their programs. Midgley

(2008) and Ife (2007) challenge this trend. Ife (2007) concludes that the exportation is done “regardless of the cultural, political and social differences involved and without any agonizing about the colonialist impacts of our international work” (p. 14). He continues by stating that if “there is a lack of any debate or analysis about the dangers of colonialism, there is nothing surer than that it will perpetuate such colonialism, and not be ultimately for the benefit of the countries concerned” (Ife, 2007, p. 14).

In Africa, from 1971 to 1986, there was debate concerning the relevance of western social work education in the context of the African reality. These debates were through the Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA). However, despite these debates, many social work educational programs have not critically reflected on the cultural relevance of their social work curriculum in relation to the social, political, economic, and spiritual aspects of its culture. Central to the theme of this book is why some countries have progressed more than others in changing their curricula to their societal needs and factors that have affected producing culturally relevant social work in Africa and what are the possible ways forward in the future.

Overview of the book

Many of the ideas and thoughts that are presented in this book originated from a research project I facilitated from 2002 to 2003 concerning social work curriculum in Ghana. The research group consisted of ten people who had been involved in the social work curriculum over the years, plus a cultural advisor. We spent one year looking at the relevance of social work curriculum in Ghana, in light of the historical and current factors of colonization, modernization, and globalization as they relate to social work education and practice. The research methodology used for the project was Participatory Action Research (PAR). The reasons behind using PAR were: 1) only Ghanaians can critically look at and decide on a culturally appropriate curriculum for themselves; 2) Ghana is a society in which consensus was and is still used in decision-making processes (Gyekye, 1996; Sackey, 2001; Sutherland-Addy, 2003). PAR uses a dialogical consensus approach to generating knowledge; 3) African universities have isolated themselves from the needs of local society but

are now recognizing the need to change (Tettey & Puplampu, 2000). Many African social workers have not had a part in the process of defining their professional and educational needs (Osei-Hwedie, 1993). This PAR project used social work practitioners, academics, students, and community persons interested in social work education; 4) PAR has been successful when examining situations of domination and exploitation (Fals Borda, 2001; Reason, 1994; Tandon, 1981). The domination of western social work knowledge was part of the attempt to modernize social work education in Africa and to promote the western way of knowing. This thinking is still predominant in many universities in Africa today; and 5) PAR is not new to the everyday life of Ghanaians. Many PAR examples can be found in the areas of agriculture (Dakubo, 2001; FAO, 2001), girls' education (Ministry of Education of Ghana, 2000), self-help activities in the informal sector (Schneider-Barthold, 1997), and gender studies (King & Oppong, 2001). However this type of participatory action research is not reflected in the university setting.

Dzobo (1981) identifies truth and knowledge as the key elements in indigenous African society. By examining the languages of two ethnic cultures in Ghana, Ewe and Akan, he identifies important aspects of acquiring knowledge. The four ways of knowing, in the Ewe language, are 1) Nyatsiname (oral tradition, knowledge passed down from generation to generation); 2) Susununya (the act of reflection, listening to others and reflecting on what others have said); 3) Nusronya (academic knowledge); and 4) Sidzedze (knowledge gained as a result of many years of living, self-awareness, wisdom, knowing yourself, how you interact with your environment and situations in life and your knowledge of your own past). These elements of knowledge-gathering, indigenous to Ghana, fit quite well within the philosophy and structure of PAR.

The original questions for the research were as follows: 1) how did the historical dominance of western knowledge and in particular western social work thinking emerge and how has it preserved itself? 2) how and to what extent has western social work thinking been replaced by indigenized approaches in social work in non-western countries? 3) how has the experience of the PAR process facilitated the creation of new knowledge? (Kreitzer, 2004a). These questions were presented to the research group at the initial stages of the process. Over time, two main topics emerging

from these research questions were: 1) How did social work evolve in Africa; and 2) What is African culture? Through these two questions, the group was able to critically examine social work education and practice in Ghana. Our main data-collecting techniques were inviting appropriate people to dialogue with the group about a particular topic, group discussions, document analysis, and journal writing. Data analysis was a continual process through the group meetings and individual themizing. At the end of ten months, action plans were initiated that have played an important part in changing certain aspects of social work education in Ghana. For more details of this project, see Kreitzer (2004a), and Kreitzer, Abukari, Antonio, Mensah & Kwaku (2009).

The question of why an outsider had to come and do this project was discussed on various occasions. The group felt that sometimes someone from the outside is able to see things differently than insiders and can challenge them to think outside the box. Sometimes people need to be challenged to think about these issues, and a trigger can be used to do this. I was the trigger to the social work curriculum issue.

This book has been written with the hope that it will challenge African social workers and schools of social work to critically look at their curriculum and to continually evaluate this curriculum in light of the social, political, economic, and spiritual aspects of African life (Ife, 2007). It is time to cut the umbilical cord⁴ with western theory and practice and create new theories and methods that are culturally relevant to the current African context. This book invites the reader to reflect on, explore, critically evaluate, and take action on the thoughts and ideas expressed here. My hope is that readers will take away new ideas and be challenged to think about the book's content; in other words, *explore* what has been written. To explore is to investigate, open up and discover new knowledge that challenges old assumptions. Foucault (1980) talks about the archaeology of knowledge as a way to get beneath the surface of an idea or structure. An archaeologist digs underneath the ground to find the layers of different eras in the world. Social archaeologists dig beneath the structures that we make in order to find out where they originate. In this case the structure is African education and in particular social work education. Questions that the research group contemplated were: 1) what is below the surface of education? 2) what are the circumstances or context

behind the educational system? 3) whose perspectives or points of view influenced the educational system? 4) who is in control of the system; and 5) what are we actually trying to achieve by exposing the truths of these questions? In exploring ideas in this book I hope that new knowledge will be uncovered and questioned and that change will come about as a result of this exploration.

These chapters reflect the themes from this research as well as international, national, and local conferences, various articles read, and my own thinking and writing concerning African social work since the research.

- Chapter I provides an historical overview of influences, both foreign and local, that have made social work what it is today in Africa. This includes a brief history of the evolution of Sub-Saharan universities in Africa.
- Chapter II discusses the concept of cultural identity and its important influence on Africans and African social work in light of its current state in African society.
- Chapter III discusses the role that western knowledge has played in the development of Africa and in particular social work training. The role of traditional knowledge in this development is discussed.
- Chapter IV highlights the effect that neo-liberal thinking and economic systems have played in regards to social development and in turn the social work profession.
- Chapter V discusses development and aid in Africa and its influence on social development. Welfare institutions of the past are examined and questions surrounding who social workers are accountable to are discussed. The roles of professional associations are also discussed.
- Chapter VI offers practical ways to initiate a more culturally appropriate social work curriculum in Africa. Details of the

research group findings and action plans will be elaborated upon. Suggestions for ways forward with social work curriculum will be discussed.

- Chapter VII offers concluding remarks concerning ways forward in creating African social work curricula that works for Africa.

There are five important issues concerning the content of this book.

1. Firstly, without the insights and critical thinking of the Ghanaian research group,⁵ this book could not be written. I therefore, again acknowledge the research group, including the guest speakers, as the key contributors in this process. However, over the past years I have continued to develop some of the themes and tested them at various conferences against the different experiences of Africans at these conferences and have expanded them. Therefore, as much as I have tried to stay faithful to the reflections of the research group, it is important to acknowledge that some of the ideas I have developed may not be the ideas and reflections of the research group.
2. Secondly, the themes and questions in this book relate to the African context and in particular this work was focused in an anglophone West African country. To generalize for all of Africa would not be appropriate considering that the research was facilitated in a specific time, place, and cultural context. I am also aware of the different history that South Africa had in comparison with other African countries and the complexity of different ethnic groups there. However, I have used social work literature from other parts of Africa as well as my own experience of working in North America, Europe, Africa, and Armenia, to support different themes of the book so that some generalization can be made. Meredith (2006) points out that “although Africa is a continent of great diversity, African

states have much in common, not only their origins as colonial territories, but the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced” (p. 14). Particularly, other countries with a colonial history may find the concepts and ideas useful. Readers from outside Africa must judge how these issues relate to their own cultural and social realities. What is relevant should be considered and what is not applicable can be noted.

3. Thirdly, I am not a French speaker and therefore untranslated francophone African literature on social work education and practice has not been included.
4. Fourthly, students, practitioners, and academics from the western world will find this book useful in thinking about localizing their own curriculum. Faculty and students embarking on faculty and student exchanges in Africa will find the contents helpful.
5. Finally, when quoting from the research project using direct quotes from the participants I have kept to the original transcripts. Therefore, some of the wordings in the quotes are what people said and I have not changed the grammar or words. This causes some anxiety for people quoted as what we say may not be as grammatically accurate as we would like it to be. Some of the quotes were written into my PhD research thesis and in those instances I have referenced my thesis instead of the person.

Summary

There have been many historical and current factors that have influenced how the profession of social work has emerged in Africa. From a continent with a long and complex history made up of micro-nations (Maathai, 2009) to a continent that was colonized and is continuing to modernize, it has experienced more than its share of political, economic, and social

challenges (Yimam, 1990). The profession of social work has been influenced by these factors, including a dependency on western social work education and practice. The challenge started back in the 1970s with the ASWEA conferences, to critically think through what social work education means in an African context and this was just the beginning. This issue continues today and is more relevant than ever. This book is written mainly for African social workers and academics in hopes that, through reading this book, a spark of revolutionary thinking is ignited as to what kind of social work education and practice would be most useful and practical for Africa in the twenty-first century. Mobilizing relevant people in order to go through this process of examining assumptions, critiquing and building culturally relevant social work curriculum is both difficult and creative. To remove one's self from western knowledge that has been deemed "the best," and held in high esteem, is to ask a culture to remove itself from its parent and start a new life on its own. Taking the best of the western theory and practice and balancing it with African indigenous knowledge and traditions is an important step in this process. This is the only way that African social work can be a creative and revolutionary force in Africa and in social work worldwide (ASWEA, 1974c, p. 32).

Prologue

In July 2007, I presented at an International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) international symposium in Toronto, Canada. It was a one-day conference with participants from Africa, Asia, North America, and the Caribbean as well as students from the social work program at York University. I wanted to articulate some of the basic questions I have been asking about social work in Africa since my beginning days teaching at the University of Ghana, Legon. I asked participants to close their eyes, rid themselves of present thoughts and concerns, and open their minds to the following scenario.

You are head of the only school of social work in a fictitious non-western medium-sized country. Your country was colonized but has been independent now for thirty years. You have been trained in a western country in social work and finished your training five years ago and have been head of this school of social work since then. You were recently told by your government that the social work curriculum and training does not meet the needs of your country. A new approach is needed as far as training people to help citizens of your country who are struggling with life circumstances. You are told to start fresh and get rid of western social work methods, theories, and knowledge altogether. You are challenged by this task as it goes against your western social work training but you are up to the challenge.

I then asked three questions: 1) How did it feel to be asked to delete all of your western social work training, including beliefs and values from your mind and start fresh; 2) Where would you begin? Who would you ask to help you in this task; and 3) what curriculum and training would you consider being appropriate and why?

For some there was a feeling of liberation, for others a feeling of fear and others realized how, even though they have lived in Africa all of their lives, western curriculum continues to dominate. Is the above

task impossible? Other schools of social work have radically shifted their curricula and training to meet the needs of their own country. Latin American countries are an example (Wilson, 1992). Why has this been slow to occur in Africa?

What would that curriculum look like? What knowledge, theories and practices would emerge from a fresh start? Would it even look like social work training and practice we have today? I also did this exercise in Durban, South Africa, at the 2008 IASSW workshop. In the short amount of time we had as a group, many of the ideas in this book were independently brought forward at the workshop as ways to make social work curriculum more African.

Doing an exercise like this highlights the complexity of social work education and practice. The reality is that countries today are living with many different worldwide influences, at the local, national, and international levels. These different influences challenge citizens concerning the cultural practices, values, and beliefs and challenges nations to work within the more powerful political and economic forces governing their world. Africans are embracing aspects of western culture as well as preserving their own traditional ways. For countries with a colonial history, Little Bear (2000) states: “No one has a pure worldview that is 100% Indigenous or Eurocentric; rather everyone has an integral mind ... a pre-colonized consciousness that flows into a colonized consciousness and back again ... colonization left a heritage of jagged worldviews” (p. 85). A country’s or a people’s cultural identity is affected by this push/pull factor and is strengthened and weakened by its own view of itself in relation to the past, present, and future world order (Sultany, Lavie, & Haimov, 2008).

Social work, throughout the developing world, is also challenged by this balancing act. In Africa, common themes surrounding social work keep re-emerging, through the years, as African social workers and academics try to promote the profession of social work as an important player in national development, including social development. The Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA) reflects this pattern of struggle in their twenty volumes of seminar documentation produced in the 1970s and 1980s. Mumeka (ASWEA, 1974c), speaking about rural development at one of these seminars, challenges African social workers and

academics to this task of changing African social work and in particular using a more interdisciplinary approach to assessment and intervention.

In my opinion the time has come for serious and critical re-examination of social work training in Africa.... Twentieth century Africa expects social work to be *creative* and *revolutionary*. In the context of the inter-disciplinary approach I see the profession of social work as a catalyst for the polarization of all shades of opinion relating to rural development. By virtue of their training, social workers should be able to make a positive contribution as members of inter-disciplinary development teams.... However, it is again necessary to reiterate my earlier concern that unless the *profession of social work is prepared to take a new path, social workers will for a long time to come remain ineffective in developing countries.* (p. 32)

Dr. Murapa (1977) speaking at a similar seminar four years later makes the strong and similar remark.

African instructors, being from the most part products of Western education, have proved either incapable or unwilling to engage in *extensive* and *creative* revision of the existing textbooks, curricula and approaches to make them *relevant* to the social and other developmental problems and aspirations in Africa. (p. 32)

Since the 1980s, other African scholars have highlighted these same themes (Asamoah & Beverly, 1988; Bernstein & Gray, 1991; Brown, 1971; Drower, 2000; Gray, 1998; Gulati, 1974; Haug, 2005; Jacques, 1993; Kaseke, 2001; Midgley, 1981; Mupedziswa, 1996; Nagpaul, 1993; Nimmagadda & Cowger, 1999; Noyoo, 2000; Osei-Hwedie, 1990; Osei-Hwedie, 1993; Osei-Hwedie & Jacques, 2007; Rodenborg, 1986; Sewpaul, 2006; Shawky, 1972; van Hook, 1994; Venkataraman, 1996; Walton & Abo El Nasr, 1988). In 2003, similar themes were highlighted and questions asked through my research project in Ghana and when attending African social work conferences these themes are repeated.

Why has it been so difficult to cut the umbilical cord of western social work training and practice for a more culturally relevant social work education program for Africans? Why, after sixty years of social work in many countries in Africa is the profession still struggling and still on the periphery? Why has the re-examination of social work education in Africa, completed through the ASWEA conferences, been slow to take hold? Africa is re-emerging as an important force in the world order. Social work can play an important role in this re-identification process. However, in order to do this it first has to cleanse its own self from past indoctrination by others. Critical analysis of the curriculum in light of colonization and modernization and globalization is a possible next working step. Through these processes, the social work profession can create culturally relevant social work training and practice that fits its own needs as a continent. A new and creative curriculum will emerge when African social workers and academics question and take charge of their own training and practice, without the arbitrary constraints of western social work knowledge and practice. The time has come for Africans to have partners and not masters. This calls for a relationship of solidarity (Kreitzer & Wilson, 2010).

Social work academics and practitioners from around the world, in encouraging the development of a more culturally relevant social work curriculum in Africa, need to critically exam the approaches they have taken in the past when western curricula had been conveniently imported and used with little or no understanding of how this act supported colonization and an unhealthy dependency relationship. Sending western social work textbooks creates a climate of dependency whereby students have to adapt their learning to an African setting. Unfortunately, this exportation of western social work curricula continues today (Ife, 2007; Midgley, 2008). Western social work has to understand the complex interrelationship of history and present realities so that it can become more culturally sensitive to countries, particularly ones that have been colonized, when creating partnerships which may involve curriculum development. Therefore, an understanding of the past influences on African social work is worth an examination. Chapter I gives an historical account of influences affecting education in Africa and in particular social work education and practice in Sub-Saharan Africa.