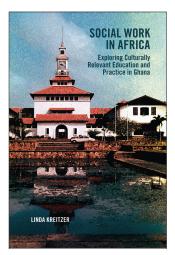# University of Calgary Press

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SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA: EXPLORING CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN GHANA
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V. Development and Aid

> The idea is that poverty is endemic, rooted. In my own community, they have a proverb that sustains that idea. "Poverty is king, money is like a stream, it passes so don't worry, it passes." … So if you get money soon it will pass, it will go to the next one, it will pass, it will never stay. And that is the sad nature.

A. History of development theories

The above statement was shared with the research group by a guest speaker summarizing his observations of rural Ghana. It portrays a sense of helplessness concerning poverty and the belief that, once a person is born poor, they will always be poor. To rural people, poverty is a condition or situation that is natural. It is unfortunate that many development projects inadvertently feed into this mentality. As one group member stated:

> People have resigned themselves to fate … because you go to a community and for so many years there is an impending

problem but it appears that they have exhausted all of their energy as to solving their thing but they have come to the realization that they can't do anything about it and have resigned to fate.

When I was carrying out my PhD research in Ghana, I heard two stories that I think summarize how recipients of development projects general feeling about many of the local development projects that have been administered by overseas organizations. The first story concerns a village in which a foreign donor had visited and assessed that the water situation in the village needed to be changed. In this village, every morning, the children would get up and do their chores, which included going to fetch water from a distant stream and bring it back to the house before going to school. The donor decided that a borehole should be built in the village which would save the children from having to go so far to fetch water. The borehole was built and the next year the donor came back to evaluate its use. What they found was that lots of grass and weeds had grown up around the well, showing that it had not been used. When asked why the borehole had not been used, the people of the village had a very simple response. They explained that when the children went to fetch the water, it was the only chance for the parents to be together intimately and thus provided an important alone time for couples. Construction of the closer borehole intruded on this intimate time and it was, therefore, not acceptable. Villagers were clear, however, that if the donor had asked them, they would have told them the situation and saved a lot of time and money. Unfortunately, they were never asked.

The second story tells of a volunteer whose organization deemed it necessary that each volunteer should do a project in their village within the two years of their volunteer appointment. One volunteer noticed that people were racing their cars through the village, thus putting women and children at risk of being hit. The volunteer's solution to this was to build mounds in the middle of the road through the village that would slow cars down and decrease the risk of people getting hit. This was a very noble gesture. Unfortunately, overtime, cars began to go around the mounds thus putting women and children at even greater risk, as going around the mounds meant driving further off of the road.

Both were initiated with the best intentions, but both failed to ask and listen to the local people. Ownership was in the hands of the donors and not the people. Volunteers, westerners, and development workers often come into a community with their own ideas of what should be done, spending little time or effort in understanding or learning about the local culture and values. Culture has deep and often unexpected influences on behaviour, but unfortunately cultural questions are not often asked before projects are implemented. If the village, in both scenarios, had been invited to discuss the issue, possibly a locally appropriate solution that met everyone's needs could have been agreed upon. Learning about culture and building relationships takes time. Over and over again development projects don't spend enough time listening and consulting with local people. Projects have to be approached with humility and with a teachable spirit by the donor agency. Pertinent questions to ask include: 1) whether the project is really needed; 2) what possible solutions are available; and 3) whether the local community been included in the planning and decision-making process. This is true in any development project.

1. Development through modernization

Walsh (2010), in critiquing development, concludes that "the very idea of development itself is a concept and word that does not exist in the cosmovisions, conceptual categories and languages of indigenous peoples" (p. 17). In fact, she, as well as many others, see the development industry as "signalling more than just material progress and economic growth; it has marked a western model of judgement and control over life itself" (p. 15). How did this happen?

The term 'under-developed' first appeared in U.S. President Harry Truman's Inaugural Address in 1949. Known as 'Point Four,' the address begins by stating that "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of the underdeveloped areas" (Rist, 2008, p. 71). This set the stage for the development era whereby "'under-developed' and 'developed' were members of a single family: the one might be lagging a little behind the other, but they could always hope to catch up … so long as he continues to play the same game" (p. 74). "The

term became active … thus 'development' took on a transitive meaning (an action performed by one agent upon another)" (p. 73). There are assumptions around these terms that promote an industrialized western model of social and economic development. Simpson (1994) explains:

> Terms such as undeveloped, under developed, least developed, less developed, have all appeared and been used by bodies such as the United Nations. Underlying all these labels is a perceived distinction of differences in poverty and wealth, and a belief that there is a process called development during which the condition of poverty is replaced by one of comparative affluence. (p. 4)

These categorizations and terms, fuelled by neo-liberal economic policies, shaped an evolving modernization theory in the 1950s and 1960s. Critics describe modernization theory as a reflection of the neo-liberal view of laissez-faire economics, competitive capitalism, and private property accumulation (Mullaly, 1993; Prigoff, 2000; So, 1990). This theory has the optimistic belief that through westernization, mainly economic development (Midgley, 1995), all countries would see economic growth, the benefits of which would trickle down and alleviate poverty (Roberts, 1984; So, 1990; Wilson & Whitmore, 2000). Wilson & Whitmore (2000) describe this modernization theory, based on W.W. Rostow's book "The Stages of Economic Growth," as having five sequential stages: "1) the traditional society; 2) the period when preconditions for take-off are developed; 3) the take-off stage; 4) the period of sustained growth and 5) the age of high mass consumption" (p. 17). The goal of modernization is to replace traditional societies with modern industrial societies (Midgley, 1995). The theory assumes a cultural value shift from traditional values to industrialized values, which could mean a shift from a community-based society to an individualistic society, and a shift from a sharing of resources to a competitive consumer society. It could also mean a shift from a work ethic that revolves around local culture and environment to one of hard-working individualists, often at the expense of the family and community. It assumes "the applicability to Third World countries not only of First World economic institutions, but of their political institutions as well"

(p. 18). Waters (2001) describes this development theory by using the metaphor of mountain climbers. The strongest are at the top of the mountain, while the weak are lagging behind due to smallness in stature, natural calamity, poor resources, or lack of training. The strong try to help by throwing ropes down but the ropes are not strong enough. However, most of the weak, still struggling up the mountain, long for the top of the mountain so that "when everyone gets to the summit they will join hands in mutual congratulation because they are all in the same place" (p. 34).

The perceived need to 'develop' the rest of the world was a way for western countries to rationalize maintaining economic and political influence in post-colonial countries. Through exploitation of 'developing' countries for their resources and supporting the overthrow of many governments to combat the spread of communism, development took on a political agenda (Meredith, 2006).

Over time, major criticism of this type of theory came from different areas, including neo-Marxism and feminist thinking. As Simpson (1994) states:

> The concept of development when viewed from inside the Developing World has often been neglected. The poor peasant of Peru or the slum-dweller of Calcutta would no doubt, if asked, conceive of development as the amelioration of his dire poverty. Others in the developing world often regard development as the intrusion into their societies of European and North American values imposed upon their own cultures, to them development is a mixed blessing. (p. 11)

Other countries and their people began to question this approach. "Not only were they not seeing prosperity, poverty was increasing, the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing, and there was no evidence of any 'trickle down' of economic benefits to the poor" (Wilson & Whitmore, 2000, p. 18). Another critique of development emerged known as the 'dependency theory.' Wilson & Whitmore (2000) historically identify this theory as coming from "the experience of Latin America, Andre Gunder, Theotoniao Dos Santos" (p. 20) and summarize this as follows:

To dependency scholars (*dependentistas*), underdevelopment is seen as a result from a growth process induced from the outside rather than from within. Underdevelopment is not seen as a *condition*, the obvious solution to which would be 'modernization'; rather, it is seen as a *process* coming out of historical experience shared by Asia, Latin America and Africa. This includes the experience of colonial rule, and of economic dependence on the sale of certain commodities (agricultural, mineral, some industrial goods processed by cheap labour) to the West … the underdevelopment and impoverishment of Third World countries (the periphery) is produced by their dependent relationship with the exploitative rich countries (the core or centre). (pp. 20–21)

Simpson (1994) supports this by stating that "development must allow both peoples and nations the self-respect that comes from participation in the world economy as equals. Any 'web of interconnections' in a post-colonial world must develop not between exploiter and exploited but between partners with a reciprocal respect for the values of each other" (p. 11).

Along with western-style development the issue of the effectiveness of aid has been critiqued in recent times. Moyo (2009) challenges the notion that aid "can alleviate systemic poverty" (p. xix) and points out that the US$1 trillion in development-related aid has not made African people better off. "In fact, across the globe the recipients of this aid are worse off; much worse off. Aid has helped make the poor poorer, and growth slower. Yet aid remains a centrepiece of today's development policy and one of the biggest ideas of our time" (p. xix). Mammo (1999) agrees.

During the post-colonial period, poverty has been exacerbated from two fronts – external and internal. The external influences exhibited through development assistance or aid programs have made many African countries heavily dependent on external factors; financial institutions have accelerated African debt; imbalance in international trade has forced prices

of primary goods to fall; and multinational corporations use African cut-price labor and natural resources to their advantage. In these processes Africa stands as a loser and is exposed to further poverty. (p. 6)

An example, concerning who benefits from aid, was given by one group member when he told of his work as a community worker in Northern Ghana. The agency he worked for was supported by USAID. In the food distribution program, local people were not given cash to buy locally but were given wheat from the subsidized farmers in the United States. Who is benefiting? The people who are now dependent on USAID wheat (who were not wheat eaters before this food distribution started) or the U.S. government who conveniently sent wheat left over from their production in the United States? His local agency was also instructed to drop programs if they no longer served the interest of the U.S. government. According to this group member, the local people would have wanted to have cash so they could buy from the local market, thus supporting the local economy. Who is this development project serving? Is it serving the well-being of the local community or the country from which the aid was sent?

Before the G8 meeting in Hokkaido in 2008, there was a warning concerning the anticipated rise of global food prices. According to Wintour & Elliott (2008), a British Cabinet Office report concluded that "world cereal production needed to increase by 50% and meat production by 80%, between 2000 and 2030 to meet demand, while noting that up to 40% of food harvested in the developing world is lost as a result of storage and distribution problems" (p. 2). If the developing world continues to be dependent on aid for food, sustainability of communities to provide for themselves will be lost and Africa will continue its dependency on the world for its food. As seen above, world food supplies are no longer a stable commodity and more sustainable development needs to be encouraged so Africans can feed themselves as they did before colonization.

2. The effects of modernization theory on poor countries

The results of a world in which neo-liberal economic policies and modernization theory have made their mark have not produced what was expected. Not everyone is on the mountain top experiencing economic and social prosperity. Is it really conceivable that the world can sustain prosperity for every country at the level of the industrialized societies? The world is already suffering with the amount of the western world's consumption of natural resources, the increase in population growth, and economic imbalance. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing every day (Worldwatch, 2003). Unfortunately, development agencies are slow to change their attitudes and ways of 'doing' development. This type of development continues to this day with experts continuing the trek to 'underdeveloped' countries to modernize them. Heron (2007) researched the need for western countries, particularly white western females, to continue to 'develop' these countries. The way in which development projects are carried out has "been normalized and operationalized in the work of development agencies, bilateral aid projects and so on. In this process, the unspoken subtext is that what really counts and must be preserved are our standards, our perspectives, our national fantasies, our imaginings of the Other, and, when we do development work, our experiences 'there'" (p. 4). Many development projects still aren't working for the people; they often continue to promote dependency and are often caught in bureaucracy with very little to show for the work these projects have started. One of the researcher group members commented: "NGO's have worked with the communities for a very long time and apart from fiscal infrastructure such as school buildings, health centres and boreholes you cannot see a significant or drastic change in the lives of the beneficiaries themselves." Although some attitudinal changes have taken place within development agencies, western 'experts' continue to design and prioritize many of the development projects delivered to the non-western world (Mouelhi & Ruckert, 2007).

We cannot assume that our ways of understanding are necessarily the same as those of others or are any nearer the truth. However, in the present development state of mind, "the message that Northern countries have a special role to play in alleviating the woes of the poor global "Others" (Heron, 2007, p. 5) seems true today. "In the case of Canada,

this has become one of the most significant narratives of the *res publica*, a kind of national calling, that coalesces in both aid/development commitments and peacekeeping activities" (p. 5).

This modernization theory has influenced the phenomenon of globalization. There is a range of perspectives on globalization that elicits a whole body of discourse on its influence in the world today (Lechner & Boli, 2000; Waters, 2001). To some, globalization signifies interdependence, prosperity, modernity, and progress (Martin, 2000), while others see globalization as an advanced stage of modernization causing poverty, fragmentation, corruption, and marginalization (Lechner & Boli, 2000; Midgley, 2000). Scholte (2000) divides common conceived notions of globalization into five components: (a) internationalization (cross-border relations between countries), (b) liberalization (creating open borders between countries and international economic integration), (c) universalization (the spreading of world objects and experiences to all corners of the world), (d) westernization (modernization or Americanization that tend to destroy local and indigenous cultures), and (e) deterritorialization or globality (a reconfiguration of geography so that time and space are not seen in terms of territories/transplanetary and supraterritoriality). The accelerated process of globalization includes the compression of time and space and this is challenging life today (Waters, 2001).

Although globalization has made some positive contributions, it is presently dominated by neo-liberal policies of the most powerful nations of the world. Wilson & Whitmore (2000) call this ideological orientation 'globalism' (p. 14). Robertson (2003) describes challenges with this particular brand of globalization concerning equity and justice in the world. The first challenge is the "deepening of democratization and enhancing the centrality of civil society" (p. 12). In the present system of privatization, short-term profit-maximizing strategies are pursued "at the expense of human capital and infrastructure … the result is increased inequalities brought on by war, debt and policies of exclusion" (p. 12). The second challenge is the environmental challenge. "Just as democracy cannot survive in a sea of poverty, it cannot survive in an environmentally damaged and disease-ridden world." The third challenge is the fact that nations are becoming more diverse in their populations. "Skewed development, within and across nation states and continents, reflects the fact that race,

class, gender and other factors such as culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability intersect in powerful ways to influence people's access to power, prestige, status and resources" (Sewpaul, 2006, p. 424). Robertson (2003) shares his thoughts of what an unequal globalization process is capable of doing and its consequences:

> People need to reclaim ownership of globalization and democratize the process. The alternative has confronted humans before. Actions that seek to marginalize human agency and creativity, and undermine democratic gains, will not only make societies more vulnerable to economic and political shocks, but will also deny humans the mass global dynamism they now need to address problems that exist in global proportions. Every child that starves is a child denied the ability to contribute to society to the best of his or her ability. Every child refused education represents a loss in social and human potential. In one way or another, all peoples and their societies pay the penalty for such neglect. (p. 6)

With the present-day modernization theory of development still functioning in most parts of the world, social workers are in a unique position, working with the more vulnerable in society to change attitudes and beliefs concerning development in order for people to experience a more equitable outcome. This begins by integrating experience with teaching about development models in the classroom. A shift in thinking plus understanding of the different development theories can help clients at the individual, group, and community levels to find more inclusive and equitable patterns of development. The understanding of structural systems that affect Africa's growth and development should be known by all social workers in Africa as well as how these systems affect their own national policies and their clients and communities.

B. Social work and development

Social work can play an important role in strengthening civil society and advocating for poverty reduction policies that support the local

communities. Unfortunately, one of the results of modernization and skewed globalization is a concentration of power and money, both inside the country by elitists as well as some countries of the world while others, like Africa, continue living in a survival mode. This imbalance has also created a dependency cycle between western and non-western countries that perpetuates a colonial mentality. The historical and ongoing attitude of the west towards Africa has resulted in an attitude of distrust. Countries that are in the survival stage (just trying to get enough food, clothing, housing, etc.) that are now used to depending on the western world for food and clothing experience a kind of greed among their peoples that is understandable. For example, in Accra, Ghana, there is a cooperative art gallery that was set up so that artists could sell their paintings without the middle person and the proceeds would be distributed among the artists in an equal cooperative fashion. When it came time to distribute the money, the cooperative distribution didn't work because the artists only wanted their own money for themselves. Another example can be drawn from the time I spent in a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. When second-hand clothing came in to the centre, the women designated to distribute the clothes among camp residents usually took most home for themselves and their families (Kreitzer, 1998). Trying to survive can bring out both the worst and the best in people. Unfortunately, the historic patterns of development and aid in Africa tend to perpetuate this mistrust and greed. The game of development is played by all, and the people 'being de-veloped' have learned to fight for what they can get, not trust anyone other than their own, and not give any information that would put their culture and life into jeopardy. One research group member stated that

> True development is about contributing towards the com-munities own ideas, pursuits and dreams and supporting them, through skill training and financial backing, to fulfil those dreams and not just handing them something. Let people themselves also come up with their own talents … helping people to use their own abilities to do things for themselves.

Social workers have the opportunity to change this attitude of depend-ency, empowering clients to think for themselves and create a better life

for themselves. One group member states: "Sometimes it is just encouraging confidence and courage in people to find answers to their own problems because the solution lies within the problem." A social worker has to be very sensitive when entering a community because the people will suspect that he/she is there to disturb things and the social worker will not be accepted. There may be good intentions but communities can be frightened of change. This is where working with traditional authority or elders, spending time in the community, knowing the different coping mechanisms, building relationships, and including the community in any plans for the community are essential. Otherwise, people may be grateful for your help but may not use what you have initiated because they don't own it.

A good question to ask when creating a development project is "who benefits"? According to UNESCO (1982) "placing culture at the heart of development policy constitutes an essential investment in the world's future and a pre-condition to successful globalization processes that take into account the principles of cultural diversity" (p. 1). Development policy needs to include "the qualitative dimension, namely the satisfaction of man's spiritual and cultural aspirations. The aim of genuine development is the continuing well-being and fulfilment of each and every individual" (p. 2). One of the consequences of donor-controlled development is what I call "research or development fatigue syndrome." This is the negative reaction that people have to yet more researchers or development workers coming in to try and help a community. One of the group members described this well:

> When I did my research for my long essay I went to the village and people started narrating stories for me.… I had to explain that I wasn't from the government or NGO but from university.… Everybody thought that when you come into a community and do research, basically you have come to give them some help. Unfortunately, people come and make all of these promises and so it affects the subsequent ones, when they are coming the villagers are not willing to give information because the other people came and made promises they couldn't fulfil.

Heron (2007) sees development as meeting the needs of the donors and their staff and volunteers. "Here again is a story where 'developing countries' appear to be in a state of unmanageable disarray, and where what seems to matter is not just the assistance that is given, but the helping imperative and the effect that 'helping' the passive Other will have on our [development worker] own life experiences" (p. 5).

At its best, development is about empowering local people to use their own resources so they don't depend on external assistance, take out loans, and end up in debt thus continuing the dependency cycle. Moyo (2009) suggests that African countries need to wean themselves off of foreign aid and this will improve Africa's poverty levels and their economies. However, this kind of 'rehabilitation' lacks political will from western countries involved in the aid industry and for African leaders who find it easier to accept aid. Mammo (1999) explains that "when post–colonial African countries made their decisions to adopt a certain path of development they simply followed Western footsteps – without thorough examination of the model(s) adopted to ensure that they could address the desires of African societies" (p. 11). It is now time to correct this error (Moyo, 2009). African leaders could take the step of decolonizing from aid and this takes a selfless leader. "Economic prospects in a non–aid environment require a long-term and selfless vision and not the myopia so many policymakers are afflicted with today" (p. 148). It is also about people thinking for themselves and using their own experience, knowledge, and talent to produce projects that are positive and innovative and which use and foster the inner strength of the people (Mammo, 1999). It is about sustainable development. An example of this type of development was given by the same research group member concerning his project in Northern Ghana. A training program was set up called Participatory Farm Management with the goal of cultivating an acre of land for maize. Using Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques, local farmers were asked to come up with what would be needed to achieve this goal. They came up with what they needed, thought through the task and came up with their own local workable solutions with the help of a local community worker. Yunus (2007), the founder of the Grameen Bank, speaks of a social business model that "recognizes the multi–dimensional nature of

human beings" (p. 21). The social business principles aim for "full cost recovery, or more, even as it concentrates on creating products or services that provide a social benefit" (p. 22). These and other initiatives could change the way development is perceived and delivered in Africa. Social workers can implement positive change by using and teaching these various methods in their day-to-day work.

1. The role of social welfare institutions

Within each country it is important that social support systems exist to support the development of the community. A style of remedial social services was imposed upon anglophone African countries during the colonial times, with little consideration of traditional systems. According to Crown Colonist (1945), this was already frowned upon by a special correspondent for the Crown Colonist. Warning against transplanting social service institutions from western countries to Africa, the correspondent remarked that "by concentrating their attention on the application of borrowed and foreign solutions to their local problems, these colonies tended to overlook the possibility of finding other solutions, rooted in their own institutions, which may be more appropriate to their own particular needs" (as cited in ASWEA, 1976a, Doc. 11, p. 28). Exceptions were countries like Ghana and Tanzania where the indigenous Community Development Movement was encouraged to promote literacy and self-sustainability (Abloh & Ameyaw, 1997). Both the Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Community Development have felt the cutbacks to their programs through the various IFI programs. As well, little critique of these institutions has occurred in Africa as to their effectiveness in today's society (Laird, 2003). "Indeed over three decades, African scholars have consistently argued that the national Departments of Social Welfare set up by the former colonial powers of Britain and France should be reoriented to undertake interventions which support the objectives of social development not rehabilitative modes of casework" (p. 259). Important questions to ask concerning these institutions are: 1) who do these institutions serve; and 2) what is their purpose? These critical questions should be asked with students in the classroom, academics researching these institutions, and practitioners. Reformation of some

type is possible or ultimately getting rid of them if they are not meeting the needs of society. South Africa is a good example of a country trying to change a social welfare system that was mainly remedial to better serve poor white South Africans (Earle, 2008). After apartheid, the whole social work ethos had to change and this challenged and continues to challenge the social work profession concerning the different roles and social services institutions that are needed in the new system (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; Patel, 2005).

In Ghana, the traditional system of social care was that people in the whole community looked after each other. However, the present system depends on the Department of Social Welfare, NGOs, the Department of Community Development, and external organizations to provide social welfare services. As a result, the government has reduced its funding for social welfare, people have not been trained for self-survival, and many simply wait for handouts that are not forthcoming. Communities seem less self-motivated and more dependent on someone else, an outsider or the government, to motivate them to effect change. This apathy may be partially a result of not being involved in the planning of the past projects and having projects put upon them that they did not want.

2. National development and social policy

For many countries in Africa, since independence, national planning was a priority. This can be seen in the ASWEA documents in regards to social work education. In order to have a relevant social work curriculum, there needed to be social policy as part of national planning. "Governments need to have a balanced, integrated and coordinated national development plan; a commitment to social development and to formulate social policy and to involve social workers at different levels of planning and implementing the national development programmes.… Governments should have a policy of balanced and decentralized services and social work educators and practitioners should start to be active and involve themselves in rural development where most of the needs are found and the majority of the people live" (ASWEA, 1974c, Doc. 6, pp. 11–12). In 1976, at another ASWEA conference, it was noted that development was not reaching the poor rural people but only the privileged few.

"A growing number of observers are beginning to perceive – some-times with a felling of disgust – that so many of the efforts put in a large number of countries in the process of development have not assisted, up until now except to enrich further an already privileged minority, this without benefit for the underprivileged minority" (p. 81). The speaker goes on to say: "The aim of development is the improvement of man before the improvement of the economy. In other words, the economic resources must be of service to man and not vice versa" (p. 82). Four im-portant aspects of development are as follows: "1) Social services support including nutrition and education; 2) popular participation; 3) respect of traditional cultures and 4) integrated character of rural development" (ASWEA, 1976a, Doc. 11, p. 82),

In 1982, the same themes emerged again. "There is a growing realiza-tion in Africa today that the neglect of the social dimension of develop-ment has substantially contributed to the lack of progress in development effort both in the colonial and post colonial eras" (ASWEA, 1981, Doc. 17, p. 24). One speaker relates this to present remedial social work education.

> With the type of social welfare systems and national planning approaches that have been around in Africa for some time now, it is easy to see why social work training programmes and ap-proaches could not be different. This is because the type of services produced their own appropriate workers. Training programmes were geared to producing workers that would fit in the service models of the time. Since service models were dominated by non-African influences, Jan de Jongh was justi-fied in remarking: "I don't know of any developing country in which social work education was an original product of national development: the origins can always be traced back to strong foreign influences." (ASWEA, 1981, Doc. 17, p. 87)

In 1986, ASWEA conferences were geared towards trying to alleviate the many crises' affecting Africa at that time.

> The deterioration of African family's levels of living has been underway for many decades. Contributing factors have

been the distortion of rural economics plus high under and unemployment, large population increases, constantly decreasing availability of land and even that land available being steadily degraded in an ecologically disastrous trend. Add to this inappropriate food policies, the impact of world recession and heavy debt payments, political instability and mal-development through policies that have given little attention to the needs of the majority rural dwellers, particularly women and children and the dimensions of the problem emerge. (ASWEA, 1985, Doc. 20, pp. 23–24)

There needed to be a social development approach to social services and appropriately trained social development workers to help alleviate suffering caused by the above factors. South Africa began this process through a positive social policy initiative called the White Paper for Developmental Social Welfare in South Africa. This policy advocates for the social development approach to development. Social development is "essentially a people-centred approach to development that promotes citizen participation and strengthens the voice of poor people in decision-making and in building democratic and accountable institutions … social welfare policies and programmes from a social development perspective set goals that are likely to lead to tangible improvements in people's lives" (Patel, 2005, p. 30). The White Paper for Developmental Social Welfare "sets out the government's strategy for transformation which includes five key policy objectives: the provision of basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy, the democratization of the state and society and the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)" (p. 92).

It is imperative that social workers are involved at the national planning level and at the social policy level in particular and together influence government social policy for the future. This may mean actively protesting the present economic strategy and to also question the growing number of NGOs who are taking on the role of providing for poor people instead of what was once the government social welfare plan. Critiquing the role, responsibilty and influence of the non-government organization sector is crucial to social work education.

3. NGOs and development

As governments are decreasing their funding for health, education, and welfare, pressure is put on the private sector to provide these services. In Africa, where funding health, education, and welfare is not a profitable business, NGOs are taking up the task of filling in the gaps that neo-liberal economic planning is leaving behind. "The combination of a weak African state and the New Policy Agenda of the IFI's and donor countries (emphasizing neo-liberal economics and liberal democracy) has created not only a vacuum in the development space (by de-emphasizing the state), but also a fertile ground for the mushrooming and operations of NGO's in all their shades, largely seen as the favoured child of the financial institutions as beginning from the late twentieth century" (Matanga, 2010, p. 117). These can be national or international organizations. NGOs have grown considerably in African countries, often serve the governments in the countries where they are based, and can play into the neo-liberal agenda (Manji & O'Coill, 2005; Onyanyo, 2005; Sankore, 2005; Wallace, 2004). Cohen, Kupcu & Khanna (2008) call these NGOs the 'New colonialists.' They recognize that many NGOs are holding weak states together, for example, Afghanistan, but question whether they have gone too far "in attempting to manage responsibilities that should be those of governments alone" (p. 75). Beyond that, "they often tackle challenges that donors and developing country governments either ignore or have failed to address properly" (p. 76).

On the other hand, NGOs are also a voice for human rights abuses and can play a significant role in putting pressure on governments to serve their people in a better way (Roff, 2004). A growing number of critics are questioning what positive effect there has been after decades of development projects through NGOs. As Wallace (2004) states: "NGO's are now becoming increasingly tied to global agendas and uniform ways of working. This reality threatens their role as institutions providing an alternative, as champions of the poor, as organizations working in solidarity with those marginalized by the world economy.… It is hard to see how NGO's can really be watchdogs and monitors of those they have to go to for funding" (pp. 216–17). In a report concerning partnerships between Africa and the Northern countries, Heron (2007) points out that "from the perspective of Southern development agency personnel,

Northern organizations privilege the views of Northerners over those of African 'partners'; this was considered an especially egregious issue in partnership relations" (p. 13). There are questions being raised as to why there has been a huge increase in NGOs (around 25,000 groups are now qualified as international NGOs) and whether this is a healthy scenario for an equitable world (Onyanyo, 2005).

Increasingly, social workers are being hired to work in a variety of international, national, and local NGOs. This is good news for social workers as NGOs often have better pay and working conditions than government jobs. As one group member pointed out, in more and more NGO job advertisements, the qualification of a social worker is increasing. What is this saying about the influence of NGOs in society? Cohen et al. (2008) admit that these NGOs, although ideally they should be working their way out of a job, will stay in these countries doing what government should normally be doing for their people. They recommend that at least there should be a system of accountability. Recently a code of conduct was signed by international NGOs "pledging to pursue practices that bolster the public sector in the countries in which they operate" (Bristol, 2008, p. 2162). There is concern that "the number of NGO's operating in Africa has grown nine-fold and that governments are struggling with the myriad of different operating styles and approaches. He hopes that the code helps to standardise operations and encourage use of the public system as the platform for the delivery of services" (p. 2162). Social workers need to critically look at the role of NGOs in their countries. Are these NGOs filling in gaps that should be filled by the government? If so, should social workers lobby their governments to push for accountability for the lack of funding to human services? Do they need to be involved at the social policy level advocating for change? By working for NGOs, are social workers buying into the top-down modernization approach to development? If so, are social workers trained to influence these organizations to work in a more collaborative way with their clients? These and other question should be part of social work education curriculum in this world of NGOs.

Kreitzer & Wilson (2010) see the social work role as being part of a global solidarity movement, advocating for a fairer and just world for the millions who are not benefiting from neo-liberal policies. This begins

with educating oneself to these issues. It also means setting an example for positive partnerships, particularly between North and South partners. They highlight three important areas to consider in partnerships: 1) preconditions for effective alliances; 2) planning and implementation; and 3) personal qualities and skills. Preconditions for effective alliances involves a common understanding of the key issues; forming appropriate alliances; awareness of the issues of power and dependency; and availability of sufficient resources. Planning and implementing partnerships involves addressing the following: 1) creation of a safe place to work; 2) addressing power issues and the role of the outsider; 3) ongoing reflection and evaluation; 4) flexibility and responsiveness to emerging unexpected situations; 5) respectful use of host-country resources; 6) sustainability; and 7) dissemination to all people of project outcomes. Personal qualities and skills needed in the individuals involved in the project are: 1) self-awareness; 2) conceptual skills; 3) openness to and respect for different ideas and worldviews; 4) transparency/honesty/trust; 5) mutual respect; 6) sensitivity; 7) humility; 8) sense of humour and fun; 9) flexibility/adaptability; 10) willingness to share the challenges of daily life; 11) resourcefulness and commitment; and 12) relationship building skills (pp. 711–14). All of these areas reflect social work values and ethics and can be taught as part of social work curriculum. In the context of Africa, other areas can be added as well.

C. Conclusion of chapter

'Development' is a term that is loaded with assumptions about how a country should be. It is defined by a Eurocentric understanding of the world with little recognition of other ways of knowing and living. Development, so far, has had mixed success. What is missing is that people in the western world do not listen to the people. Listening, *really listening*, building relationships and advocating for full participation of the community or group is essential. Promoting self-awareness, encouraging people to come up with their own solutions and working towards a dynamic approach to development is a way forward. A group member sums it up very well:

It is important for us as social workers, and I think that is some-times the problem or misconceptions that we have that in help-ing people we let them become sometimes dependent on us to the point where they cannot be on their own. I think that is the confrontational aspect of our work that we need to tackle very much … we need to develop a system where people will not be dependent but will be independent of themselves, to be able to contribute to society irrespective of their handicap. But we also need to recognize that for them to do that they need to start from a point … so as social workers we come and assist people and try to build up their own lives in terms of development … to do this we need to put into place structures or systems that will make those people not just survive but help them to develop themselves to the extent that with or without us whatever process we have started with them could continue.

Vanbalkom & Goddard (2007) speak about development as not only being sustainable but also dynamic. "Sustainability is about leaving something behind that will last" (p. 257). A dynamic approach is the ability to "be willing and capable of responding in creative ways to shifting circum-stances and priorities" (p. 255). Sometimes these two are in tension with each other but flexibility to the needs of the community is critically im-portant. The most important aspect of any development project is listen-ing. This has been the major criticism of development projects. Social workers have been trained to listen and it is up to them, whether they work in NGOs or government organizations, to keep listening as a prior-ity to any work they do.

A true measure of mature development is the ability of local individuals and organizations to change the course of reform in response to emerging needs and changing circumstances. Thus, the goal of development is not merely to have local part-ners carry on with programs started by or with international collaborators, but rather to develop in them the capacity and deeper understanding of development that creates the confi-dence to improve existing approaches, create new programs

and indeed drop initiatives that no longer serve the country's needs well. (p. 256)

Cultural identity, hegemony of western knowledge, and neo-liberal policies and development agendas have all contributed to the success and challenges to the social work profession in Africa. Each of these factors, and not exclusively these, should be critiqued in all social work programs. The result will be a critical body of knowledge that will create a new curriculum in Africa that is culturally appropriate and more suitable to the needs of the continent. So, what is the future of social work in Africa? Should the profession stay or should it go? If it stays can it change to be more culturally appropriate? The next chapter brings practical suggestions to these questions and is based on the reflections of the research group in Ghana.