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Indigenization of Social Work Education and Practice:

A Participatory Action Research Project in Ghana

by

Linda Kreitzer

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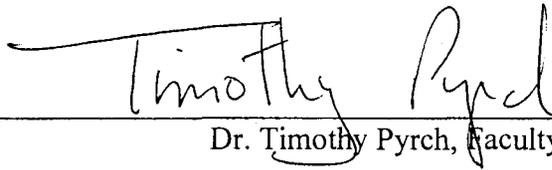
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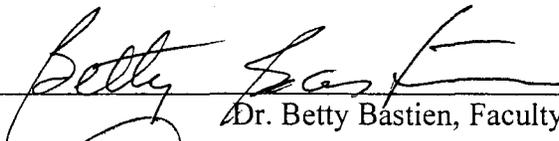
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled “Indigenization of Social Work Education and Practice: A Participatory Action Research Project in Ghana” submitted by Linda Kreitzer in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



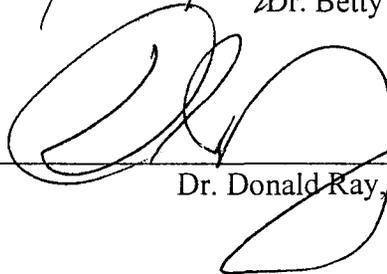
Supervisor, Dr. Maureen Wilson, Faculty of Social Work



Dr. Timothy Pynch, Faculty of Social Work



Dr. Betty Bastien, Faculty of Social Work



Dr. Donald Ray, Department of Political Science



External Examiner, Dr. Judith Mill, University of Alberta

September 1/2004
Date

ABSTRACT

The hegemony of western knowledge has influenced and continues to influence knowledge production throughout the world. Factors including colonialism, development under modernization and current neo-liberal globalization policies have helped to define knowledge production that promotes western thinking. Indigenous knowledge, for the most part, continues to be deemed primitive and unimportant. This hegemony is seen in the historical domination of Western social work knowledge worldwide and can be traced back to the colonial era.

During the middle 20th century, social work education expanded to other non-western countries in an imperialistic fashion with the assumption that western social work knowledge, mainly North American and British, was universal and transferable. West Africa was influenced by this exportation of western social work knowledge, in particular, in Ghana. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Association of Social Work Education in Africa and the Ghana Association of Social Workers were active in promoting social work education and practice in that area. Over time, these organizations have lost their momentum and are perceived to have become ineffective. Western social work knowledge has continued its domination of social work education there.

This study attempts to address the hegemony of western social work knowledge through a critical and emancipatory approach to knowledge production. Guided by Critical Theory and Participatory Action Research, it explores the processes of westernization and indigenization that have affected Ghanaian society. Through a dialogical process, faculty, students, social workers and a community leader came together to create new knowledge concerning Ghanaian social work. Through this

critical process, the group emerged with action plans that changed their situations personally and professionally. This new knowledge reflects a need for a greater profile of social work in Ghana, an organizational change in regards to the Ghana Association of Social Workers and a greater emphasis on the publication and use of indigenous writing in social work education. It is hoped that the new knowledge produced from this research will continue to evolve and will motivate and challenge social workers in Ghana to develop an innovative social work education and practice that will be relevant to the needs of Ghanaian society.

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DEDICATION

To all Ghanaian social workers, past, present and future, who are passionately committed to a positive and vibrant social work profession in Ghana. May you continue to be the leaders in creating new knowledge that is innovative and dynamic for social work education and practice in Ghana and Africa.

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For three weeks now I have been reading, synthesizing, reflecting and questioning as I work through my exam questions. Tonight, as I stopped to rest on a shady bench by the Elbow River I fell apart. My tears tell me that I am moving and learning in ways I never thought possible. This is a sacred place, a place where emotions are gently shared to the universe and nature. I have gone from social work to international social work to development issues. I have visited African world-views, western scientific knowledge and have tried to rationalize, categorize and objectify my knowledge. Yet the indigenous part of me rejoices in feeling the interconnectedness of the earth and the universe and what that feels like...there is a tension within myself between my rational mind and intuitive/spiritual being. I have visited another country's culture and history. I have been the colonizer and the colonized. And yet what I see in Ghana is the resilience of a nation and its people who have had to deal with an oppressor and still survives with vibrancy. They have learned to live with the diversity of world-views.

Linda Kreitzer, August 25, 2003, Calgary

We live in many different worlds at the same time and that is the challenge for anybody who is a social worker or who wants to deal with our society at this time. Because the person themselves who you are dealing with is trying to handle all of that. They are balancing a lot of things. And I think that we need to recognize that and see what to do in that situation and it is partly because "where are the points of reference?" Who is providing the points of reference? That is where the Queen Mother and the people who are the custodians of the culture become very very important.

Mrs. Esie Sutherland-Addy – June 14, 2003 - Ghana
Senior Research Fellow, Institute of African Studies,
University of Ghana, Legon.



Two of the many different worlds in Ghana.
First President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (left)
Queen of England, Queen Elizabeth II

Chapter One

Introduction: Setting the Stage

This thesis is a journey of many years of experience with people from different countries and ethnic groups. It is the story of the conscientization of a group of people who are committed to knowledge production concerning issues of social work in Ghana, and of their own desire for personal growth and development. It is also the story of the profession of social work and its impact in the world, in particular West Africa. It includes my own experiences, as a white western female social worker, living and working in different countries as well as those of nine Ghanaians with their different life experiences, ethnic groups and social work experiences. We came together for ten months to experience a group process that challenged our own thinking, created new knowledge and empowered us to look at the issues surrounding social work education and practice in Ghana.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is concerned with the dialogical process of knowledge production. It “accesses local resources and encourages self-reliance...it honours all forms of knowledge” (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001). Important to this study is the respect for indigenous knowledge as well as other forms of knowledge, and this reflects how the criteria for involvement in the project were selected. The criteria emphasized the personal experiences of the group in regards to social work education at the University and a wish to look critically at social work education. The only exception was the involvement of the Queen Mother as an educationalist who was interested in social work but who had not been educated in this profession. However her involvement was very important to our work concerning culture, indigenous knowledge and education and we

welcomed her graciously. The research is also concerned with the dissemination of that knowledge through actions that are practical to the lives of the people involved in the research (Fals Borda, 1988). Therefore, the thesis concentrates on and devotes the majority of the written work to the process of this PAR project. Through the different forms in which information was gathered and knowledge produced, space was created for the group members to create new knowledge. This, in turn, allowed the group to act and reflect on this knowledge in a continual cycle concerning issues surrounding their relationships with each other and their profession. It allowed for the creative process of producing action through knowledge production that will affect the lives of the group and social work in Ghana. This empowering of people to effect changes in their lives and work was particularly seen with the decision to start a new Ghana Association of Social Workers as one of the group's action plans.

PAR is a chaotic process in which many layers of learning are taking place at the same time. "It is coming to recognize our own knowledge while valuing the knowledge of others in mutually respectful dialogue, coming to share openly while openly sharing with others" (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001, p. 384). My own struggles as a facilitator, living in another culture, convey the importance of PAR as not just a methodology but also a way of life (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001). The group dynamics, which include tensions and growth of relationships within the group, shows a living and vibrant community of practice. It is important that the struggles and joys of the group are documented reflecting the conscientization process. Therefore, my own personal journal reflections and the journey, reflections and thoughts of the group concerning the research make up much of this writing. The boxes highlight these reflections, with the non-shaded boxes showing my

own personal journal and comments from transcripts and the shaded boxes showing the comments of different group members throughout the research process. “PAR social research incorporates valuable knowledge acquired from the collective experiences of the people and with the people” (Fals Borda, 1988, p. 53).

The title of this thesis was partly determined by the broader title given to the research process by the group in its March 29, 2003 workshop. The group guided the evolutionary process in which understanding was gained concerning their own lives, culture and the social work profession. The group was encouraged to share practical experiences as they struggled with their own feelings, frustrations and joys surrounding this profession. “The act of sharing gives us new knowledge about where we ‘fit’ in relationship to others. And in turn, that knowledge strengthens us as individuals because it deepens our understanding of who we are and what we have to offer” (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001, p. 381).

There are three important outcomes that I wish to highlight concerning this thesis and the effect it has had and will have on the future of Ghanaian social work. Firstly, the experiences of these nine Ghanaians and the other people impacted by this research, has empowered a group of social workers in creating changes in the profession. The learning and growth experiences of these group members, and of myself as a facilitator are life changing. Introducing another way of knowledge production that is different than the traditional postivist approach to knowledge was one of the most important learning experiences of the group members. This was reflected in a video we produced at the end of my time in Ghana concerning our feelings about the project. Secondly, Fals Borda (1988) speaks of the recovery of lost history and knowledge as an important aspect of the

PAR process. There has never been a comprehensive study of the documents of the Association of Social Work Educators in Africa nor of the work of the Ghana Association of Social Workers. Information concerning their activities during their life span needs to be written down and taught in the classroom before people of that generation are no longer around. Thirdly, the relationship between Queen Mothers and social workers has not been adequately explored and the importance of including a Queen Mother in this project cannot be underestimated. Social workers and Queen Mothers have roles in communities that overlap and they can build on each other's strengths in order to contribute to the development of communities in Ghana.

Each chapter begins with a quotation that I think reflects the content of that chapter. It proceeds with my own journey that has taken me to this place and time. Chapter two gives an introduction to the topic at hand, Social Work Education and Practice and the history of social work in Ghana in the context of Ghanaian history. When immersing oneself into a culture it is extremely important to understand the background to the country in which the research is taking place. Ghana has a rich history that has been influenced by many different worlds and they have worked on balancing these worlds. A researcher has to understand the social, political and cultural developments of a country in which the research is placed (Fals Borda, 1988). Also, important to PAR is the inclusion of the voices of older participants concerning events they remember in the earlier days of independence. Chapter three briefly describes the historical factors that have influenced social work in Ghana. These factors were important throughout the learning process of the group as we critically looked at and struggled to understand the influences these factors have had on our own lives and that of social work. A deeper

understanding of social work in West Africa is written here through my own research after returning from Ghana. Documents concerning social work in West Africa and in Ghana were not available to me when I was in Ghana and only came to be understood as important knowledge after our second speaker, Dr. Blavo, explained their importance to the group. Chapter four begins with research questions guiding the project and describes the history around critical theory and PAR. The evolutionary process of this PAR project is described in chronological order through a detailed account of each workshop. In the beginning I planned the workshops by myself after reflection on the previous workshop. The group, using knowledge produced and built upon each time we met, planned all subsequent workshops. This chronology also offers a good understanding of how and when the action plans emerged within the group context. Chapter five describes in detail the layers of learning that both myself as a facilitator and the group experienced throughout the research process. In describing this, I separated the learning experiences of the group from my own learning experiences as the facilitator. This does not, in any way, put me outside the thoughts of the group but the facilitator's section expresses my own experiences as a facilitator that may have not been known by the group. The rich data in this section point to the trust and respect gained through this research process and the achievements of the group in a prolonged period of time. "PAR demands time" (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001) and the group exhibited respect and patience with the process. Through the knowledge produced I linked the thoughts and experiences of the group with the work of Gramsci, Freire and Foucault. Chapter six describes the action plans so important to the PAR process (Fals Borda, 1988). These action plans and the pictures highlighting the dissemination of these plans show the importance of reciprocity in the

research relationship. “There is an obligation to ‘return’ the processed information to its rightful owners, that is, to disseminate in the communities concerned...the acquired knowledge.” (Fals Borda, 2001, p. 75). It also updates the reader on the course these action plans have taken since I left Ghana in November 2003. Chapter seven begins with concluding reflections about the thesis, followed by implications for social work at a local, national and international level, and identifies areas for future research.

As I have journeyed through this process and studied the different aspects of the different areas of this thesis I come back to the idea that we all live in and are influenced by many worlds. The PAR process enables these worlds to come together, interact with each other in order that we can know ourselves in a deeper way and understand what we can offer to our communities. This research project continues even though I am no longer in Ghana and its effect will continue for years to come. The more I learn more about social work worldwide, Ghanaian culture, indigenous knowledge and the process of PAR the less I feel I know about each of these worlds. That is the excitement of seeing life as a continual learning experience.

Chapter Two

A People's History

PAR has shown itself to be an endogenous intellectual and practical creation of the peoples of the Third World. Neither its appearance nor its significance in Latin America can be understood outside the specific context of the economic, social and scientific development of the region...It is important to understand the different stages of economic, social, cultural and political development of [a country] at the time of the study (Fals Borda, 1988, pp. 2 & 7).

The journey emerges

In 1981, after finishing my degree in social welfare in Colorado, I moved from the United States to England. As a person in a new country, I experienced the adaptation processes important to living in a different environment. Understanding a different political and social system and differences within my own profession in regard to knowledge and practice sensitized my awareness and celebration of diversity in culture. While living and working in Britain, which was becoming increasingly a multicultural country and was in sharp contrast to own my geographical area of the United States, I was challenged to broaden my thinking and to adapt to different ways of knowing and living. Through this experience, I became interested in the development of social work in other countries, particularly non-western countries. I began a journey of discovering and learning how other cultures provide support to people at the individual, group and community level. I was interested in knowing if social workers were present in other countries and what professional role they filled, and what education they received in their country. In the past twenty-two years, this journey has included time spent in Britain, Ghana, Armenia, Canada and a Liberian refugee camp. This research project continues this exploration of the world of social work and its different characteristics in an increasingly globalized world.

Social work in the global context

The social work profession emerged in the western world, in particular the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom, at the turn of the 20th century (Kendall, 1995; Midgley, 1981). With the increase in technological knowledge, modernization, and neo-liberal economic policies, social work is now re-evaluating its role in the international arena of global interdependence (Hokenstad & Midgley, 1997). Not only has the present globalization phenomenon influenced and challenged the social work profession; past historical conjunctures, including colonialism and modernization, have also influenced the development of social welfare and social work training in non-western countries. For many of these countries, western social welfare systems were introduced through the colonial empires of the 19th and 20th centuries (Asamoah & Nortey, 1987).

The expansion of western social work to other non-western countries occurred in the middle of the 20th century (Kendall, 1995; Midgley, 1981). An understanding of social work expansion can be achieved only through a review of certain historical processes. Through the period of colonialism, European welfare systems were exported to the colonial administration and Africans were trained to work in and uphold these structures (Altbach, 1989; Ajayi, Goma & Johnson, 1996; Berstein & Gray, 1991; Lebakeng, 1997; Memmi, 1965, Wicker, 1958). European knowledge was considered superior to African knowledge and indigenous ways of knowing were seen as primitive (Semali & Kincheloe, 2000; Smith, 1999). Through modernization, social workers and social work institutions, working under the assumption that western social work knowledge (theories, methodologies and practices) were universal, imported this knowledge to non-western countries (Haug, 2000; Kendall, 1995; Midgley, 1981; Nagpaul, 1995). Modernization

emphasized the expertise and superiority of western knowledge (Haug, 2000; Smith, 1999). Social work curricula reinforced the colonial system. A more recent example of this is illustrated in writings concerning the influence of apartheid on South African social work education (Berstein & Gray, 1991). Because non-western countries often requested social work knowledge from western countries, non-western social work practitioners and academics made little attempt to challenge the western models of social work.

Included in this modernization process was the continual emphasis placed on scientific research that Greenwood and Levin (1998) call logical positivism. “It is based on the ontological argument that the world is objectively given; the epistemological effort is to apply objective methods to acquire the truth” (p, 68). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain the fundamental principles behind positivism as assuming

a) there is a single, tangible reality ‘out there’ that can be broken apart into pieces; the whole is the sum of the parts, b) the possibility of separation of the observer from the observe, c) that what is true in one time and place may, under appropriate circumstances also be true at another time and place, d) linear causality and e) that the results of the inquiry are free from bias (p. 28).

These assumptions were part of the dominant social research paradigm at the time when the exportation of western social work was at its highest. It also defined, named and claimed indigenous knowledge in the world (Smith, 1999). Smith (1999) would broaden these principles to what the West stands for. “I argue that what counts as Western research draws from an ‘archive’ of knowledge and systems, rules and values which stretch beyond the boundaries of Western science to the system now referred to as the West” (p. 42). In many countries, including Ghana, this type of logical positivism remains dominant in the area of research.

The move towards indigenization of social work knowledge varied in different parts of the world (Aguilar, 1995; Joseph-Hampson, 1995; Healy M., 2001; Jinchao, 1995; Kendall, 1995; Nagpaul, 1993; Wilson, 1992). Alternative approaches to development, including the dependency theory, have challenged the assumptions behind western modernization. The dependency theory views underdevelopment “as induced from the outside rather than from within” (Wilson & Whitmore, 2000, p. 20) and points to the effects of imperialism and the world capitalist economy as perpetuating a dependency cycle between the North and the South. These alternative approaches have influenced schools of social work in many countries to shed western-based curriculum for more appropriate curriculum conducive to the needs of their country. This was true in Ghana where the first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, influenced by socialism, encouraged developmental approaches to welfare, including the community development movement (Blavo, 2003). Concerning research, the assumptions of logical positivism (Greenwood & Levin, 1998) have been increasingly questioned by researchers resulting in an increasing number of researchers using qualitative methods that suggest different ways of knowledge production in research. Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe the naturalist paradigm as acknowledging

- a) that realities are multiple, constructed and holistic, b) the observer and observed are inseparable, c) that only time and context-bound working hypotheses are possible, d) that all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping and it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects and e) inquiry is value-bound (p. 37).

Many of these acknowledgements are the basis for other ways of research including Participatory Action Research (PAR). Emerging from countries deemed ‘the Third World’ and in particular Latin America, PAR “starts with concerns for power and powerlessness; and aims to confront the way in which the established and power-holding

elements of societies worldwide are favored because they hold a monopoly on the definition and employment of knowledge” (Reason, 1994, p. 328). PAR “differs from other research perspectives in its commitment to fundamental social change aiming to break down hegemonies-forms of domination-binding us” (Pyrch, 2001, p. 4).

Nevertheless, the hegemony of western knowledge still exists within social work knowledge and education worldwide. Current neo-liberal globalization policies, enforced by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS), have had a negative effect on health, social welfare and education in Africa. Through these policies, cutbacks have been made to higher education, affecting infrastructure, teachers’ pay and technical resources. As a result, dependency on Western educational institutions for technical and human resources remains and gaps in access to knowledge have widened. Many Africans continue teaching in western countries as they often find greater opportunities in teaching and publishing in the western world (Tettey & Puplampu, 2000; NEPAD, 2001).

Social problems are increasing worldwide and are shared more by all countries of the world now than ever before (Healy L.M., 2001). This reality implies the need for social workers throughout the world to be aware of the international issues that affect the people they serve. With the poverty situation not likely to improve in the near future (WHO, 2003), it is imperative that the dissemination of social work knowledge be exchanged by social workers all over the world through collaborative processes (Abrahams & Chandrasekere, 1990). In this way, social workers in both non-western and western countries can appreciate, accept and reject each other’s knowledge base in ways they deem appropriate for the situations of their particular countries (Chow, 1996). The continual exportation of western social work knowledge by western social workers and

social work institutions and the acceptance of a western social work knowledge base by non-western social work practitioners and academics need to be persistently challenged. Healy L. M. (2001) and Wilson & Whitmore (2000) affirm that mutual exchange and reciprocity are essential to any exchange of social work knowledge. Tsang (1998) states that social workers in non-western cultures can learn from the pitfalls encountered by western social workers. He states: “The wisdom of indigenous culture can be used to supplement and complement the western conception” (p. 178). Through the inclusion of the voices of the people to whom we serve and claim to research is a need to empower people to come out of their ‘culture of silence’ (Freire, 1997) and participate in the production of new knowledge that changes their own communities.

This research project explores the processes of westernization and indigenization and their influence on the development of social work curriculum at the University of Ghana through the critical/education approach of PAR. With any type of research it is important to understand the history and culture of the context in which the research is being facilitated (Fals Borda, 1988; Smith 1999). What follows is a brief history of Ghana and the evolutionary development of the profession of social work in Ghana.

Contextualizing the journey: Ghana

In 1994, I traveled to Ghana as a Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) volunteer. I had never been to Africa but had wanted to go since early childhood, having listened to my father’s stories of his visits to Africa. I had grown up in a white community and also wanted to challenge my prejudices and ignorance concerning Africa and its people. Through this voluntary experience, I learned much about African culture and its incredible history and was interested in understanding, in depth, the historical forces that

led to present economic and social difficulties experienced in Ghana. On the one hand, the Gold Coast region and its history are well known to many people as the place in which the international slave trade began. The castles of Cape Coast and Elmina are a reminder of this historical atrocity. On the other hand, Ghana led the African independence movement; it was the first colonized African country to become independent of a colonizer.

What I found in Ghana was a country rich in culture and tradition. Despite economic hardships, vibrancy and love of life can be seen in everyday activities. The pageantry and splendour of chiefs on important occasions, traditional clothing worn regularly, pride in the Black Star football team, and Ghanaian drumming, music and traditional art in everyday life show a country with pride in traditional and modern ways of life. Colonialism, westernization and neo-liberal economic globalization have all affected Ghana's history and culture.

Pre-colonial West Africa – Before 1471. The region encompassing the West Coast of Africa was divided into kingdoms in pre-colonial times (Ray, 1986). Life was mainly rural, with clans settling in different regions. “Hereditary succession, age as a basis of status and rigid adherence to custom were the characteristics of these kingdoms” (Nukunya 1992, pp. 7-8). According to Boahen (1975), there were two principal language sub-families, the Gur and the Kwa groups, divided by the River Volta. These groups were sub-divided into other groups, the Kwa group having the Akan-speaking people that constituted 45% of that population.

The center of the social system in pre-colonial West Africa was the kinship institution. The kinship system is defined as “patterns of behaviour associated with

relatives in a society, together with the principles of governing these behaviours” (Nukunya, 1992, p. 11) and was key in the running of societies (Nukunya (1992). The kinship system 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. A clan was a group bearing a common clan name and having a common ancestor or ancestress (Busia, 1951; Nukunya 1992). Lineage was a “segment of the clan found in one locality” (Nukunya, 1992, pp. 15-16). Intertwined in these systems was a religious belief system that depended heavily on the guidance and punishment by ancestors throughout life.

Both Busia (1951) and Rattray (1929) describe these kinship systems as decentralized systems. Busia (1967) describes the Ashanti system as being democratic but with an authority figure, the chief. “The fact that each lineage, village, or part of a chiefdom managed as much of its own affairs as was consistent with the unity of the whole chiefdom enabled many to share in decision-making in local affairs” (p. 24). This approach to decision-making has been a part of Ghana for many years (Gyekye, 1996; Sackey, 2001; Sutherland Addy, 2003).

Colonial Period – 1471-1957. The region of West Africa has a long history of European influence beginning with the French, Portuguese, English, Flemish and Italian traders in the 1400’s (McFarland, 1985). The Portuguese landed on this coast in 1482, but life for much of the interior region remained untouched by Europeans (Ray, 1986). In 1641, the Dutch founded a school for Africans at Elmina (McFarland, 1985). In 1821, English property in the region was transferred to the British crown and by the middle 1800’s missionary schools had been established in the coastal areas. In 1874, the British

founded the Gold Coast Colony and the seat of government was established in Cape Coast (Boahen, 1975).

In 1902, the British annexed the last two territories, Ashanti and the Northern Territories (Nukunya, 1992). By the 1920's, the British, in keeping with their strategy of "indirect rule" (Crowder, 1968) and Africans, who demanded greater decision-making power, encouraged replacement of Europeans with Africans in government. A Constitution in 1925 laid the groundwork for a legislative council. During the early 1900's social uprisings occurred against British rule, but independence from Britain was only talked about. However, the Second World War and the entrance of Kwame Nkrumah accelerated this process of independence (Boahen, 1975).

Nkrumah Period – 1951-1966. In 1951, elections were held. Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) won the election (Boahen, 1975) and Nkrumah "became the first African Prime Minister of the Commonwealth" (Ray, 1986, p. 12). From 1952-1957, power was divided between the British government and the CPP. In 1957, Ghana became independent and on July 1, 1960, Ghana became a Republic. According to Boahen (1975), the first years of Nkrumah's leadership brought peace, order and stability to the country. During the initial rule of the C.P.P., there was an economic boom, low cost of living, new buildings, roads, schools being built and new opportunities available to many people. Money and effort was put into building new clinics, hospitals and health centers (Boahen, 1975; Osei, 1999; Ray, 1986). Government expenditure on education tripled in many cases and sixteen new teacher training colleges were established (Davidson, 1973). Nkrumah made community development a top priority through creating the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Abloh & Ameyaw,

1997). However, during the dyarchy (“joint” British/Ghana rule as decolonization took place) Nkrumah’s government had to contend with outside forces that eventually steered them towards a “scientific socialism” (Fitch & Oppenheimer, 1966; Ray, 1986). These outside influences included the British government controlled Cocoa Marketing Board who held profits from Ghanaian cocoa reserves for use in “investing in long-term British government securities” (Fitch & Oppenheimer, 1966, p.44) and an early attempt to gain economic stability through the Lewis plan. (Fitch & Oppenheimer, 1966). “For two years after independence, the Lewis strategy of governmental passivity and reliance on foreign capital was so influential that Ghana actually had no economic development plan at all” (p. 90). With the failure of this plan it seemed sensible to embark on a socialist type government. However, during the last part of Nkrumah’s rule, 1964-66, the country deteriorated economically and socially and change was needed (Hadjor, 1988; Nukunya, 1992). “A combination of stagnating cocoa revenue and government permissiveness in dealing with British banks and import-export firms produced a severe balance of payments crisis which could only be resolved by drawing dangerously on Ghana’s reserve” (Fitch & Oppenheimer, 1966, p.106). “Economic problems grew as production failed to keep pace with expenditure” (Ray, 1986, p. 14). “The Nkrumah regime had reduced foreign reserves to only NC (cede) 80 million, and had left a national debt of over NC800 million” (Boahen, 1975, p. 226). The C.P.P. had lost touch with the organized working class.

Economic Reform in Ghana – 1966-2000. During the period of 1966 to 1982, several coup d’etats occurred, various governments were elected and military juntas governed Ghana (Osei, 1999; Ray, 1986). However, on December 31, 1981, Flight - Lieutenant J.J.

Rawlings led a coup d'état and twelve days later his party, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) became the "supreme political authority in Ghana" (Ray, 1986). In 1992 Ghana changed to a multi-party electoral system and the Fourth Republic of Ghana was publicly acknowledged on January 7, 1993. Rawlings won the 1992 and the 1996 Presidential Parliamentary elections.

From 1982 to 2000, President Rawlings led his country through economic, political and social reforms that have won the admiration of the western dominated international financial institutions (Jeong, 1996; UNDP, 1990) but have had mixed responses from Ghanaians and humanitarian organizations. The 1992 Constitution is considered one of the most important and "extensive set of human rights, with children receiving pride of place" (Dankwa, 1994, p. 59).

A major part of the economic reforms have been implemented through the lending programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Due to the heavy debt acquired from Nkrumah and subsequent governments, as well as the lack of repayment of these loans in the interim period, Ghana's economic crisis deepened during the world economic crisis of the 1980s. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were implemented to regulate the economy and pay back debts incurred. The effects of these SAP's have been particularly harsh on public services such as social welfare, education, employment, health, women and the environment (Ecumenical Coalition, 1990; Ihanvbere, 1995; NEPAD, 2001; Reed, 1996; UNDP, 1990; UNECA, 1989; UNICEF, 1989). In particular, any funding for education was centred more on primary and secondary education and less on African higher education institutions (Ajayi et al. 1996; Amonoo-Neizer, 1998; UNECA, 1989). In 2002, Ghana's economic growth has remained

weak with an estimated 3.9% growth as opposed to 4.3% between 1997-2000 (African Development Report, 2002). Ghana was considered to be a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) with a “debt of 6.7 billion (U.S.D.), of which 62 per cent owed to multilateral institutions, 25 per cent to bilateral creditors and 13 per cent to commercial banks” (African Development Report, 2002). According to the World Bank (2004) Ghana has now reached its completion point under HIPC and the government is looking forward to the economic situation of Ghana changing for the better (Ghana Home Page, 2004). Some are not convinced as the World Bank points out that “although human development indicators have generally improved, a recent survey show a rise in child and infant mortality. In addition Ghana still has significant disparities in poverty distribution, especially in its northern region” (World Bank, 2004, p. 1-2). Opposition parties point this out as well as the fact that guinea worm cases are at its highest and “over a third of Ghanaian children are malnourished” (Ghana Home Page, 2004, p. 2). “The challenge of achieving long-term debt sustainability and sustained growth will require continued reforms and fiscal vigilance” (World Bank, 2004, p. 2). Controversy remains over the effectiveness of this program.

The role of traditional authority in Ghanaian Society

Introduction. Kingship (chieftaincy) is an institution that has existed since ancient times in Africa (Kludze, 2000). It is an institution of “enduring significance on the social and political landscapes of Ghana ... the roles of chiefs will continue to feature prominently in both the private lives and the public affairs of the citizenry.” (p. ix). Traditional authority encompasses “kings, other aristocrats holding offices in political structures...as well as the heads of extended families and other political-religious offices

in decentralized polities” (Ray, 2000, p. 2). Their role has varied due to the historical factors influencing Ghana.

Pre-colonial Ghana. Customary law was used to govern society. Examples of civil action were “inheritance, ownership of movable or immovable property, status of individuals, rules of behaviour and morality of which everyone was familiar since childhood” (Rattray, 1929, p. 286). At the lower level of authority, the father/elder was the arbitrator in family disputes and this role was carried out in consultation with household members. Disputes could become public and move up the different levels of authority (Busia, 1951). Each village had a group of elders that represented the different lineages. The elders were the king’s councilors, held hereditary office and had a symbolic stool (Busia, 1951; Obeng, 1988). “Stools refer to a real stool or throne, upon which a chief (king) sits. It also services as a synonym for a chief’s (king’s) office and the section of state over which he and more occasionally she ruled” (Rathbone, 2000, p. 13). The duty of the elder, elected by the village, was to maintain peace and amity between groups of the community.

The role of 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). “The chief (king) was bound by custom to act with the consent and on the advice of his elders, who were themselves representatives of lineages and were subject to similar restraints from the members of their own lineage” (p. 21). The king was the axis between political relations of the different elders and subjects. In Asante, the Asantehene

was king of the Kumasi Division and the overall king of the Asante Kingdom and was the most important and respected person in Asante (Obeng, 1988).

Colonial Ghana. With the establishment of colonial rule, traditional authority was weakened (Nukunya, 1992, p. 118). One of the controlling mechanisms of the British was to change the title of “king” to “chief” (Rathbone, 2000; Ray, 2000). “Britain subordinated these pre-colonial states, removed certain sovereign elements such as armies and the capacity to make treaties, and transformed pre-colonial ‘kings’ and other office-holders into ‘chiefs’” (Ray, 2000, p. 3). Elders and chiefs now had to take instruction from a foreign body. The British appointed District Commissioners as colonial authorities for newly established districts. The colonial system introduced a new police force and prison system and a way for ordinary people to bypass the chief’s courts. The British closely supervised the chieftaincy system and used it for their own means, only intervening in disputes if it was to their advantage (Ray, 2000). In 1924, the British “passed the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance which defined the powers and duties of the chiefs in Ashanti” (Busia, 1951, p. 139). Called the Native Authority, it had an administrative and judicial function using native courts to administer traditional customary law and practice. The British also set up the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs in 1925 that was controlled by paramount chiefs to deal with chieftaincy issues (Rathbone, 2000). The British claimed to use “indirect rule” in Ghana “by concluding that they could only rule the Gold Coast effectively with the assistance of the country’s traditional rulers” (p. 10). This policy later fuelled nationalists to rid the country of traditional leaders who were sympathetic to the British.

Post-colonial Ghana. During the interim period between Nkrumah and Rawlings, changes were made to improve the status of the chiefs and their situation. The Chieftaincy Act, (1971) created the National House of Chiefs that is the system used today (Ray, 2000). The Chieftaincy system “consists of the National House of Chiefs, ten Regional Houses of Chiefs and over one hundred and sixty Traditional Councils at the district and sub-district level” (p. 11). The 1992 Constitution was significant for the chieftaincy system and “removed the right of government to recognize or refuse to recognize newly appointed chiefs ... and allowed chiefs to hold public office” (Rathbone, 2000, p. 164).

Despite the difficult years, traditional authority has survived and is re-inventing itself. Growing recognition of the role of chiefs is seen in Ghana today by local people and the government (Rathbone, 2000; Ray, 2000). They work with the government on national policies and are protectors of customary law. According to Ray & Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1996) in order to bring democracy and development to Africa,

chieftaincy has re-emerged as an important vehicle for more or less authentic indigenous political expression Chiefs not only have to be guardians of tradition but they must also be active agents of the present and future by promoting the well-being of the community” (pp. 7 & 9).

The chiefs take this responsibility seriously, as do their advisors, one of whom plays an important role in this traditional institution, particularly in the Asante region. This advisor is the Queen Mother.

Queen Mothers. “It is when the chief has good councilors that his reign becomes peaceful” (*Ghanaian proverb, Gyekye, 1996, p. 119*). In pre-colonial Ghana, the king had an advisor, the Queen Mother, who watched the king’s behaviour, gave advice as to a

candidate for a new king 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). She was the next most important person in the traditional authority system. “Despite her name, she is not necessarily the real mother of the chief but can also be a sister, a mother’s sister or the latter’s daughter” (Nukunya, 1992, p. 69). Historically, the Asante Queen Mothers were very powerful; two good examples were Akyaawa Yikwan and Yaa Asantewaa. During the 1820’s and 1830’s, Akyaawa Yikwan “was a diplomat and negotiator in the Asante disputes with the British”(Brydon, 1996, p. 230). In 1900, Yaa Asantewaa led the Asante army against the British in Kumasi. However, this battle was lost, and the British gained authority over the Asante region (Brydon, 1996; Salm & Falola, 2002).

The Queen Mother is the biological mother or close relation to the chief. A summary of her role was given at the International Chieftaincy Conference in Accra, Ghana in January, 2004 by Boateng (2003), who gives his understanding of what should be the role of the Queen Mother in society.

She is the number one royal in her lineage, can’t be the chief’s wife and she is the mother of the occupant of the stool, which means that in essence the stool belongs to her. She is a community social welfare officer. She makes sure everyone gets their resources fairly. She is a liaison officer between people and services. She is a role model for women and children and explains policies to them concerning their lives. She is involved in health education and keeps up with her own education in order to serve others. She encourages and helps women to be economically strong and gives advice as to how to raise children. She is a guidance counsellor to chiefs, parents and children. She supervises puberty rites or picks someone to supervise these rights (Boateng, 2003).

She can be a member of the Queen Mother’s Association who “lobbies traditional and political leaders in order to influence traditional and public policy in favour of women” (Fayorsey, 2003, p. 6).

Today the Ashanti Region continues a strong line of Queen Mothers, mainly due to its matrilineal society. Other ethnic groups, like the Ga and Ewe, do not have this strong leadership (Kludze, 2000). This was confirmed when I visited the Ga palace in January 2003 and spoke to the Queen Mothers there. “We had drinks and chicken and I started talking to two Queen Mothers. It was quite sad because they were telling me that they are not appreciated and it is very discouraging to be a Queen Mother in the Ga House” (Kreitzer, 2003). Ray (2000) states some important issues concerning the role of Queen Mothers in today’s society. “The question of whether women can be chiefs, and if so, what type of chief, including Queen Mothers, has been a hotly debated issue in Ghana for sometime” (p. 8). Rawlings and his advisors “were pushing for paramount Queen Mothers to be made members of those Regional House of Chiefs where such offices existed in the Region” (p. 9). This has yet to be achieved. They are “excluded from participation in decision-making bodies, like the Houses of Chiefs and the national House of Chiefs on the basis of their gender” (p. 10). This situation needs to be addressed, as Queen Mothers are extraordinary diplomats and mediators and are very aware that they have a role in modernizing the traditional institution and becoming part of the National House of Chiefs.

Little has been written concerning the relationship between Queen Mothers and social work. However, the roles of each are similar and they complement each other. It is crucial that social workers understand traditional leaders and how best to work with them. It is also vital that traditional leaders understand the history of social work and the important role social workers can play in communities. What follows is a brief history of social work in Ghana.

History of the profession of social work in Ghana

Introduction. The history of the profession of social work in Ghana coincides with the development of a social welfare system through the colonial administration. However, according to a pioneer of social work in Ghana, social work “has been in existence from time immemorial in Ghana because we all have problems ... long ago, before colonialism, social work was in practice but it was being performed by a different group of people” (Blavo, 2003). Another pioneer in social work, Professor Apt agrees with Dr. Blavo.

Before colonialism, social problems were solved within the context of a traditional system, which had always been an integral part of social life of the indigenous people. This traditional system was a social institution of extended families characterized by strong family ties, which assured the security of its members. The system dictated its social norms, safeguarded its moral values and conserved its economic base (Apt & Blavo, 1997, p. 320).

Asamoah (1995) explains that “African social work has historical roots which are value based, indigenous and imported” (p. 223).

Colonial period. The need for social workers began with the breakdown of the family institutions.

When Ghana was colonized our extended family system and the power of the chiefs broke down and this also came with its problems so the colonists brought in what they call “social work” to help solve the problems due to the capitalist economy and the broken down extended family (Blavo, 2003).

Up until these times “religious missions to the Gold Coast, working closely with ethnic societies, provided various charities for families in need” (Apt & Blavo, 1997, p. 320).

In Africa organized social services owes much to the activities of missionaries who pioneered in the medical services, in education and in the care of needy children and mothers...the missionaries were involved in literacy...they did much to bring home to colonial administrations the need to concern themselves with the social welfare of their subjects” (U.N., 1964, No. 2, p. 7).

On June 22, 1939 an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter scale struck the Gold Coast (Amponsah, 2003) and many people lost their homes as a result. Also, veterans from the Second World War were returning to Ghana and families were experiencing problems related to separation due to war. Both of these factors influenced the government to take action to help those affected by the above. A social work faculty member explains.

In 1939 there was this earthquake and there was the destruction of houses. We had a transitional government and it was put upon the government to provide houses for those who lost their own homes. The earthquake, that was when social welfare started ... and you know we had our veterans coming back and during the absences so much went down the drain, the families were not together anymore, children were wayward, mothers and wives who were left behind married others so around this time social welfare took on other dimensions other than the housing issues (Mensah, 2003).

In 1929, the British government passed the first Colonial Development Act (Wicker, 1958). This led to the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Development projects were requested that “maximized co-operation of the local peoples in the initiation and execution of projects” (p. 182). In the 1940s, a Secretary of Social Services was appointed and given the task of coordinating all existing welfare activities in the country. In 1946, the Department of Social Welfare and Housing was created. Other changes followed. “A social development branch of this department was set up in 1948, which has now become the Community Development Department. In 1951, social welfare separated from housing and a Ministry of Education and Social Welfare was created” (Apt & Blavo, 1997, p. 320). The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development was created in 1952. The first recruits in Ghana for the profession were volunteers and experienced people “who had acquired some knowledge of human beings ... they recruited experienced and mature people to do the work especially teachers and

people who had worked in the villages ” (Blavo, 2003). The training was short because they had the background information concerning human behaviour and all they needed was the methods subjects.

In the 1940s, in Ghana, expatriate and indigenous social workers trained overseas and formed the nucleus of the administration in social welfare. One of these persons was David Acquah. “David was one of seven teachers selected by the new Department of Social Welfare to proceed to the London School of Economics and Political Science to undertake a two-year course leading to the Social Science Certificate in 1945” (Hill House newsletter, 2004, No. 1). I met David Acquah on my first visit to Ghana, in 1994, and during 2003 in Ghana. I visited him regularly to glean information and experiences from him about those days and his involvement in social welfare.

In 1948, an indigenous development took place in Ghana that used the skills of social workers. This was the community development movement (Sautoy, 1958) and grew “during the 1950s as one of the most important factors in the social and economic development of the country” (Abloh & Ameyan, 1997). More importantly, community development depended upon inspired voluntary leaders (Sautoy, 1958) and traditional local leaders who contributed through their knowledge and skills in the area of village development (Abloh & Ameyan, 1997). Community development provided “adult literacy, home economics, self-help village projects, extension campaign (teaching locals how to improve their lifestyle) and training” (pp. 282-283). Much of the success of community development was due to financial backing from the colonial government and the rise of nationalism. The rise of nationalism not only helped community development; it also helped the profession of social work become public.

Social work practice in Ghana, and I am saying we were lucky to be more or less the first to try and start in Africa what we now call professional social work. Because by that time we were free...we had been liberated but the other parts were still fighting for their liberation” (Blavo, 2003).

Between 1945 and 57, the Act was revised to include more expenditure.

Commitments under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act included social sciences, which incorporated education, medical and health services, housing, nutrition, water supplies, broadcasting and welfare. Britain set up a welfare system “that reflected both the ideology and basic structures of the system in the United Kingdom” (Asamoah & Nortey, 1987, p. 22). The main model was a remedial model and attention was given to rehabilitation, with special attention to homeless children, the disabled, women, migrants and the physically and mentally ill. Asamoah & Beverly (1988) point out the shortsightedness of the colonial welfare policy as “a) failure to take a holistic view of the human condition, (b) an overriding importance of political considerations, (c) minimization of the positive effects of traditional structures, and (d) emphasis on economic expediency or advantage for the colonial power instead of benefiting the colonies” (p. 178).

Social Work training in Ghana. The School of Social Work in Osu, established in 1946, offered a “nine-month certificate course” (Apt. & Blavo, 1997, p. 328). One of the important figures during this time was Dr. Gardiner. “He actually started the School of Social Work and he was then the Director of Social Welfare and Community Development ... then the University of Ghana came together with the Department of Social Welfare and they moved the program to the University” (Mensah, 2003). The University of Ghana, Legon began social work training in 1956.

Since 1956 the University of Ghana has taken responsibility for training of social workers at higher levels. A two-year diploma course in social administration was designed for experienced trained social workers who were products of the certificate course ... a 10-week mandatory field experience was included (Apt & Blavo, 1997, p. 328).

Of interest were the types of people who enrolled in this diploma course.

There were the beginnings of a whole lot of interest from different spheres: education, social security, even firms, textile firms. Telephone companies where they would be sending people to come and take the social work course ... I found a whole spectrum of institutions interested to send their workers/employees to come and take the diploma course (Apt, 2003).

As the social work profession progressed, the training needed to be more in-depth.

If the university was to recognize a particular study they also had requirements. The training should be scientific and there should be a lot of research. We had to pump into the curriculum research knowledge ... and then the profession had international standards that required background subjects, knowledge of man and society... for a trained social worker, theory should match with practice. This was the requirement by the international Association to recognize as a professional training that we should have a strong fieldwork practice (Blavo, 2003).

Thus, fieldwork began with placements in local and national agencies, with the added task of organizing supervisors for the students. The new undertaking was not easy as there was little money to go around.

An important figure in the creation of a Bachelor's program was Yvonne Asamoah. She taught at the social work unit and was the coordinator of the program. She, together with others like Nana Apt, developed a Bachelor's program. However, it took three years for the program to start due to Mrs. Asamoah's moving, and the effects of the politics of the Department of Sociology and personalities within that department. At that time, the social work unit fell under the control of the Department of Sociology and this often caused problems.

All over the world where social work has started linked with the sociology departments the three universities I know have all broken away because of the

conflicts are just too great ... one is the professional organization and the other one is a little bit theoretical and they don't see what it is all about (Apt, 2003).

To date, Mrs. Asamoah has been one of the only writers in the Western world to treat the subject of social work in Ghana and Africa. She has written for the International Handbook on Social Work Education, Social Welfare in Africa and has authored other important articles that keep the history of social work in Africa alive.

In 1989, a three-year undergraduate (BA degree) course in social work was established at the University of Ghana, Legon. In 2000, the social work unit separated from the Sociology Department and became the Department of Social Work. In 2001, the Bachelor's curriculum was revised and the Master's program created. In 2003, the first Master's program was started, with fifteen students enrolled. In 2004, the revised Bachelor's program will begin, with our project's recommendations included in another revision.

Summary

The country of Ghana has a rich history of indigenous knowledge from its ancient past. Colonialism brought western knowledge, social welfare and a new political system that pushed Ghana into the 20th century. Like many other non-western countries, western social work was exported to Ghana and had an influence on developing a social welfare system that catered to the effects of a capitalist economic system. As Ghana experienced urbanization and industrialization, the need to help the more vulnerable was identified by missionaries, the colonial administration and the people of Ghana. Like many countries, Ghana was and is influenced by western social work knowledge. However, Ghana has a unique blend of traditional and western social work practice. A more balanced approach to social work education is needed, so that indigenous social mechanisms can be

incorporated into social work education and practice including alternative ways of producing knowledge through research. This approach would include working closely with traditional authority.

The profession of social work was most influential during the initial independence years when the government spent time and money on health, education and social welfare. Since the 1980s, the profession has suffered from the political, economic and social problems of many countries plagued by world debt, coups and general instability. When asked why social work seemed to have collapsed Prof. Apt, a pioneer in social work in Ghana, stated the following.

Since the university went down, government withdraw, withdraw, withdraw so everything collapsed, we didn't have money to do these things ... also because instead of looking at the community as a total realm to work in, we began to sectionalize ... and the personalities, poor governance and poor administration. When the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development was set up part of the problem is that in Ghana they seem to think that if you work in social welfare and this person also works in community development and another in rehabilitation, you who are in welfare can never work in community development. And they have all these ideas. If you are in welfare you can work with youth or family but somebody in community development can never work with youth or family ... everybody who has gone through a bachelor's degree ought to have the competence to work with individuals, groups and communities (Apt, 2003).

Ghana is a freer society than it was when I experienced it in 1994 and there is new energy to work at developing an effective social work program that meets the needs of Ghanaian society today. The challenges continue in the work to establish the profession of social work as an effective voice in Ghanaian society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to provide a creative and empowering environment so that ordinary Ghanaians could explore social work education and practice through the historical factors affecting the exportation of western social work knowledge. We created

an environment in which each person was able to validate each other's knowledge, learn from each other and grow together as a group. Through a dialogical consensus process, faculty, students, social workers and a community leader were able to participate in a research process critically reflecting on the historical factors of colonialism, modernization and globalization and how these have affected our own lives, Ghanaian society and the profession of social work. Participatory Action Research was used as a research philosophy and methodology that enabled the group to produce new knowledge important to social work education and practice in Ghana as well as a better understanding of their own lives. Recommendations for changes to the curriculum as well as other action plans constituted the dissemination of knowledge produced to the relevant community of social work and Ghanaian society. Ownership of this knowledge remains within the context of Ghana. It is hoped that this research project will be useful to the ongoing development of social work education and practice in Ghana.

Chapter Three

Knowledge and Power relationships in Social Work

Two thousand seasons of restless sleep, beneath the destroyers' fragmented image, we used their definitions of ourselves to disconnect our consciousness. Lines drawn in denial of deeply textured souls ... they knew even as we slept that our spirit was more powerful than their white death ... Confusion within our lost knowledge. Enemies have blurred the line between us and them. Are we destroyers ourselves? ... Ancestors and children to be born. Keys to the circles of connectedness and clarity. Africa redeemed, the universe in harmony. Return and move forward to the way of a natural order, African World Order. (Ani, 1994, pgs. xxi – xxii)

The journey continues

In 1994 I arrived in Ghana as a volunteer in order to teach social work at the University of Ghana, Social Work Unit. There were three of us from the United States and Britain who taught social work classes due to a shortage of local social work teachers. I was also asked to develop and coordinate the field practicum program. It was through these experiences that I struggled with the appropriateness of imparting my western social work knowledge to Ghanaian students who lived and thought in a different culture and had a worldview other than my own. I found myself teaching less and less from my own background and encouraging more discussion, projects and role-play that would adapt a western concept to a Ghanaian context. Through this experience, I found that my interest in the issues concerning western social work knowledge and its hegemony in non-western countries grew and became an important part of my understanding of issues concerning social work education and practice worldwide. This experience continued my questioning of the teaching of western social work approaches in non-western countries, but it also challenged my own assumptions and Euro-centric thinking concerning western knowledge. I began to question and read about historical forces at work that seemed to encourage the hegemony of western knowledge over

indigenous knowledge. This questioning has intensified since my move to Canada and listening to and learning from First Nations people concerning the historical forces that have interacted with their indigenous livelihoods and ways of thinking and knowing. They too have been involved in the re-creation of indigenous ways of knowing and in particular social work education (Bastien, 2000).

Historical conjunctures

The social work profession, including the development of its values, theories and ideologies, originated in Europe and the U.S. (Kendall, 1995; Healy L.M., 2001; Midgley, 1981). By the early 1900s, the profession had been established and educational facilities created to train social workers in these countries. As Nagpaul (1993) notes, social work educational values “were and still are dominated by ideologies of capitalism, Social Darwinism, the Protestant Ethic and individualism” (p. 214). These social welfare policies, from mainly European countries, were the basis for the social welfare policies of their colonized territories.

According to Asamoah & Beverley (1988), Payne (2000) and Venkataraman (1996), social work education and practice can be neither acultural nor ahistorical. Asamoah & Beverly (1988) and Noyoo (2000) point out that we cannot understand welfare systems, including social work education, without looking at the historical context (pre and post colonialism). Smith (1999) explains that it is difficult to discuss issues “without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (p. 2). Therefore, in order to understand fully the development of Ghanaian social work education, it is important to

understand colonialism, modernization, neo-liberal globalization policies and indigenous ways of knowing.

Colonialism. In his classic book on the colonizer and the colonized, Memmi (1965) defines colonization as a relationship between people, groups or countries where there is a domination and oppression of one particular relationship over the other. The colonizer has successfully imposed the view that traditional non-European societies are primitive and in need of modernization, lazy, unintelligent, weak and in need of protection. Freire (1997) speaks about the oppression of the people who have been silenced by a cultural invasion of a group of people. He describes oppressive actions as the “dehumanization” of people and this dehumanization “is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human” (p. 26). Willinsky (1998) describes imperialism as the process of dividing the world between objects and subjects.

It taught people to read the exotic, primitive, and timeless identity of the other, whether in color, hair texture, or the inflections of taste and tongue. Its themes of conquering, civilizing, converting, collecting, and classifying inspire educational metaphors equally concerned with taking possession of the world (p. 13).

According to Smith (1999) colonialism is one aspect of imperialism. To establish colonies was to expand imperialism. The effect this has had on indigenous peoples and non-western countries is one in which the psyche of the people is greatly affected by oppression and by being seen and treated as though they were inferior and not human. What is human and not human, what is civilized and primitive were defined by colonial discourse (Willinsky, 1998).

Modernization. Modernization theory emerged in the 1950s in the aftermath of World War II. Critics of this theory describe it as a reflection of the neo-liberal view of laissez-faire economics, competitive capitalism, and private property accumulation (Mullaly,

1993; Prigoff, 2000, So, 1990). They explain this theory as having the optimistic belief that through westernization, all countries will see economic growth, the benefits of which will trickle down and alleviate poverty (Roberts, 1984; So, 1990, Wilson & Whitmore, 2000). Waters (2001) describes this as the development era and uses the metaphor of mountain climbers to describe this view concerning progress. The strongest are at the top of the mountain, while the weak are lagging behind due to smallness in stature, natural calamity, poor equipment 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). It is clear that this thinking has not materialized in a practical way. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing every day (Worldwatch, 2003). Some people, mainly the colonized, would say that modernization is linked with colonialism as a newer form of imperialism (Smith, 1999).

Globalization. The term globalization is used by many people all over the world and has many different associations (Scholte, 2000). 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). This world phenomenon of globalization is a distinct and important event in history and needs careful and ongoing critique (Held, 1999; Waters, 2001). 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 (a reconfiguration of geography so that time and space are not seen in terms of territories). The accelerated process of globalization includes the compression of time and space and this is challenging life today (Waters, 2001).

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). Although globalization has made a contribution to our lives in this world, it is presently dominated by neo-liberal policies of the most powerful nations of the world. This has caused an imbalance of power between wealthy nations and so-called “developing countries”. Foucault (1992) describes three types of struggles societies have experienced historically as “either against forms of domination (ethnic, social and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way” (p. 307). These struggles continue today and increasingly critical analysis by social workers is challenging these neo-liberal policies concerning their direct relationship to world poverty (Prigoff, 2000; Wilson & Whitmore, 2000) and forms of domination and exploitation. Neo-liberalism is “an ideology that makes the market central in governing economic, social, and political life ... At the international level, this is expressed through advocacy of “free trade” in goods and services, free circulation of capital and freedom of investment” (Wilson & Whitmore, 2000, p 14). Structural Adjustment Programs are advocated and enforced by these policies, through international financial institutions.

These programs generally involve cuts in health, education and social programs. Neo-liberalism is the dominant policy framework in contemporary globalization and is criticized as an approach that “promotes corporate and financial interests at the expense of human communities” (Prigoff, 2000, p. 123).

Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Colonialism, modernization and neo-liberal globalization have all had a part in repressing indigenous ways of knowing and discouraging people from making use of their own traditional knowledge in everyday life and in a higher education setting (Bamgbose, 1983; Mosha, 2000; Smith, 1999; Venkataraman, 1996).

The secret that Europeans discovered early in their history is that culture carries rules for thinking, and that if you could impose your culture on your victims you could limit the creativity of their vision, destroying their ability to act with will and intent and in their own interest. The truth is that we are all “intellectuals,” all potential visionaries (Ani, 1994, p. 1).

Battiste & Henderson (2000) describe indigenous ways of knowing as “knowledge that is the expression of the vibrant relationships between the people, their ecosystems and the other living beings and spirits that share their land” (p. 42). Ani (1994) identifies three common world-views among Native American, African and Oceanic peoples. They all “presuppose a fundamental unity of reality based on the organic interrelatedness of being; all refuse to objectify nature and insist on the essential spirituality of a true cosmos” (p. 82). She summarizes the African world-view as follows:

The African universe is personalized, not objectified. Time is experienced. There is no infinite abstract and oppressive future; it grows organically from the past and present. Value is placed on “being” rather than “doing”. The universe is understood through phenomenal interaction, which produces powerful symbols and images, which in turn communicate truths (p. 97).

Indigenous ways of knowing imply an evolving and changing process over time and are not static. Mosha (2000) identifies four indigenous African worldviews of life and the

world as: “(a) a firm belief and profound reverence for the eternal divine mystery, (b) a lifetime process of human formation, reformation and transformation, (c) an intrinsic unity between individuals and communities, and (d) a living interconnected and interdependent universe” (pp. 7-15).

Ani (1994) explains one of the differences between European thinking and African thinking by stating the following.

The claim to an absolute ultimate truth is a psychological necessity for the European mentality...but African-centeredness breaks that hold by recognizing the truth as a process in which we immerse ourselves because of a commitment, not to some universal abstraction, but to a certain quality of life. From an African perspective we understand truth to be inseparable from the search for meaning and purpose – the unique concern of human consciousness (p. 23).

It is important to recognize the differences between cultures and their ways of knowing even though most of our worlds are interconnected and influenced by many different ways of knowing. Western thinking has emerged as the dominant knowledge and the indigenous ways of knowing have been labeled primitive or uncivilized. However, this is slowly changing as indigenous peoples are speaking out about their own ways and knowledge. As Ani (1994) states, “You have to teach Pan-African studies alongside European studies so people will understand the assumptions behind each. This is demanded by an African-centred view because we are Africans and because the future towards which Europe leads us is genocidal” (p. 2). Linking development to the balance of knowledge, Lauer (2003) states the following: “Underdevelopment is not due to traditional knowledge or folk knowledge. Modern scientific tradition itself is a failure in the successful integration of modern and traditional knowledge” (p. 2). Understanding this integration is crucial to the future of this planet.

Challenging the hegemony of western social work knowledge

The impacts of colonialism, modernization and globalization are reflected in the spread of western social work knowledge (Asamoah & Nortey, 1987; Haug, 2000; Ose-Hwedie, 1990; Torczyner, 2000; Venkataraman, 1996). The honouring of indigenous ways of knowing in social work has, until recently, been virtually ignored (Ani, 1994; Durst, 1992; Midgley, 1981; Smith, 1999; Venkataraman, 1996). According to Kendall (1995) and Midgley (1981) a combination of different influences moved social work into developing countries. In particular, the spread of western social work knowledge worldwide had its beginnings with the United Nations, who felt the need for the increase of this profession after the Second World War and who assumed this knowledge was universal and transferable.

United Nations surveys. The United Nations (Healy K., 2001; Midgley, 1981) was supportive of social work education and completed five surveys between the 1950s and 1970s concerning social welfare training worldwide. In the early 1950s, the United Nations began a series called “Training for Social Work”. The purpose of the First International Survey was to “provide the Social Commission and the Economic and Social Council with a detailed description and analysis of the methods of training in educational institutions that have been evolved by the various countries for the professional preparation of social workers” (U.N., 1950, p. iii). This came out of a concern and urgent need for “greater numbers of competent men and women who possess the qualities of personality, the knowledge and the skill required for solving problems around social welfare” (p. 1). At the end of this survey, a table was produced, showing schools of social work and other educational institutions offering social work training.

General characteristics of social work in all countries were highlighted and country summaries of their own definitions of social work were given. Four summaries were from African countries: Egypt, The Union of South Africa, Liberia and Ethiopia. Ghana was not mentioned, even though in 1945 the School of Social Work in Osu had been established to train local staff to work in the Department of Social Welfare and Housing. The report concludes that there had been an increased interest in the profession since the end of the war “as a means of raising the standards of living and thus promoting a greater measure of social and economic well-being for their peoples” (p. 87).

The Second International Survey, published in 1955, was a follow-up to the first survey but limited its research to the years 1950-1954. Another survey was needed due to the “growing concern of Governments for a more rapid increase in the supply of social welfare personnel trained at different educational levels” (U.N., 1955, p. 1). The survey identified “trends and problems that appear to be significant for the further development of training for social work ... and described the curricular and non-curricular aspects of training programmes and identifiable trends in the countries in each region” (p. 2).

Interestingly, the Union of South Africa and Egypt are included but Ghana was excluded from this survey even though it had been ten years since the establishment of its School of Social Work. The report concluded, in part, that it was the responsibility of international organizations to “assist countries in establishing, co-ordinating, extending and improving training facilities and programmes in the field of social work” (p. 160). In 1958, a Third International Survey was published; the purpose was to

review problems of social work training and to set out in some detail for the use of government agencies, schools of social work, voluntary social agencies and others, the range of subject matter and the educational method, which is coming to be

considered desirable at the present stage in the development of training for social work (UN, 1958, p. 2).

The report was extensive and covered all aspects of the social work profession including current trends, the nature of social work, the field of social work, community development and social work, the historical background and current trends in training for social work. The training section covered non-professional training of auxiliary workers, the content of training for social work and the educational method in training social work, including curriculum planning, course content and fieldwork.

One of the issues identified in this survey was the universal lack of textbooks, reports of research projects, case records, and films.

It is recognized that western social work training texts are helpful as background and historical teaching ... but they do not suffice for teaching courses on social problems of Asian countries and for the appropriate use of methods of dealing with such problems (p. 17).

Forty-six years later, this issue continues to be a problem in many parts of the world, including Ghana.

The Fourth International Survey, completed in 1964, was “designed to identify significant developments and trends in training for social work at all educational levels” (UN, 1964, p. 1) and relates to the years 1954-1962. The survey states that not all social work countries are identified in it. Still, it is interesting to note that the African section on Social Policy and Social Services refers only to Uganda, Tanganyika, Morocco, Kenya and Ivory Coast. The survey contains cursory references to social work training in different parts of the world and information on objectives and patterns of training. In light of the significant number of surveys during the period between 1950 and 1962, it is surprising that Ghana is not mentioned in any.

The Fifth International Survey in 1971 “drew attention to the unintended consequences of development and the critical role that social welfare personnel must play in ensuring that the social objectives of national development are kept in focus” (Asamoah, 1995, p. 227).

The United Nations sent many western consultants to non-western countries in order to help create social work curricula. As Kendall (1995) suggests, these consultants went with the understanding that western social work knowledge was superior to local knowledge. Thus, it was believed that duplication of the western curriculum would lead other countries to acquire this same knowledge and have excellent, prestigious social work programs. Through the setting up of new social work programs in many non-western countries, experts promoted western social work theories and methodologies, with little understanding of the relevance of these theories to those countries (Midgley, 1981; Rodenborg, 1986). Faculties of western social work institutions also helped set up social work programs in non-western countries and continue to do so today (Driedger, O., 2004; Asadourian, 2001).

One of the first official challenges to the universality of western social work knowledge was made at the United Nations Fifth Conference on Social Work Education (United Nations, 1971). Others challenged this universality as well. Brown (1971) discusses the compatibility of western social work in Zambia; Gulati (1974) discusses western social work’s role in traditional societies and questions the assumption of universality. The book *Professional Imperialism: Social Work in the Third World* (Midgley 1981) brought this subject to the forefront and challenged the exportation of western social work knowledge to developing countries.

Many social work colleagues and academics from the non-western world have questioned western social work knowledge and its appropriateness in solving problems confronting non-western countries (Lebakeng, 1997; Noyoo, 2000; Osei-Hwedie, 1990; Shawky, 1972; Walton & Ebo El Nasr, 1988). The traditional values of western social work stem from a Judeo-Christian background and the methods used arise mainly from a medical model. Those values and methods seemed to be inadequate and inappropriate for dealing with the consequences of colonialism, poverty, government corruption, religious practices and other philosophical orientations. Many non-western social workers learned theories and methodologies alien to their cultures and had the added burden of filtering the parts that worked from the parts that did not work in their own social work practice (Midgley, 1981; Nimmagadda & Cowger, 1999; Venkataraman, 1996). Osei-Hwede (1993) claims that African social workers had no part in defining their profession, with government and non-government organizations dictating much of their education. American and British textbooks continue to be used and translated into different languages. These textbooks promote American and British values and use case examples from urban western cultures. Osei-Hwede found, in Africa, that there was a strong social science knowledge base that had no reference to Africa. To promote indigenous ways of knowing went against the trend of modernization.

Many non-western people were sent to the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia to gain social work qualifications. They were taught social work knowledge that pertained to western urban problems with no training concerning how this knowledge could pertain to the issues of their own countries (Midgley, 1981). On their completion of

overseas studies, these soon-to-be teachers and social workers come back to their own countries and perpetuate the western social welfare models.

Curriculum Studies. Various social work curriculum studies have documented the predominance of western social work knowledge in the world. Midgley (1981) completed a curriculum study in which twenty-two schools around the world were surveyed. Although differences were seen between countries, on the whole most had not indigenized their curricula, with Western social work theories and methodologies still dominating teaching and practice. Nagpaul (1994) found the same to be true in his curriculum study in India. Shawky (1972) found that most African schools relied on western social work literature. Crawford (1995) speaks of the attempt to translate British and American social work textbooks for Aboriginal people in Australia and the problems encountered in this process. Australian social work educators assumed this was possible as they assumed social work knowledge to be technical, ahistorical and acultural.

While practitioners and academics may not wish to reject all that the western social work world has to offer, the recognition of one's own traditional contributions is still undervalued (Chow, 1996; Walton & Abo El Nasr, 1988). Local educators and students have, no doubt, adapted some of the western social work curriculum to their own situations. However, due to a lack of economic and human resources and the continual hegemony of western books and journals, non-western countries remain dependent on western social work literature.

If a more balanced curriculum of social work education is to be produced, a serious reassessment of present social work training is needed. Asamoah & Beverley (1998) propose an emic (beginning with indigenous) approach to this reassessment, in contrast to

the etic (beginning with non-indigenous) approach used in the past. Mamphiswa & Noyoo (2000), Patel (1987) and Bernstein & Gray (1991) assert the need for a reassessment of the validity of social work methods and practices in South Africa. Walton & Abo El Nasr (1988) offer a helpful schema of developmental stages of indigenous social work development. The first stage is the *transmission* stage during which western models of social work were exported to and imitated by schools of social work in non-western countries. Eventually, the effectiveness of these models was questioned by social workers. A stage of *indigenization*, or modification of relevant western social work values, needs and problems was instigated and curriculum was modified accordingly. The final stage is has been called *authentization*, or the creation of new methods and theories rooted in the local context. Social workers must release themselves from foreign theories, gain knowledge from their own practice experience and build domestic social work methods and theories that are locality-specific rather than imported.

Asamoah & Beverley (1988) give examples of how this process can happen, suggesting the creative use of local literature. “Novels, poetry, collections, short stories and essays depict the human condition in ways that are both entertaining and informative. An entire course in human behavior could be developed using themes from local literature” (p. 183). Bernstein & Gray (1991), in their redesign of South African curriculum, suggest beginning with an unlinking of structure and function with a critical, responsible and caring look at discarding inappropriate material and retaining more useful imported models. Gray (1998) suggests a social development model that has an “egalitarian and humanistic vision of a society in which all social institutions and the

people within them work together to eradicate poverty, inequality and injustice” (p. 58). Osei-Hwede (1993) suggests that African social workers must start from within, determine African problems and requirements and what resources are available and then decide what outside methods can be used. Ngai (1996), when looking at the issue of indigenous Chinese social work education, suggests two questions to ask: “What aspects of contemporary social work theories and practices are useful for the purposes of social work education in China? How can they be integrated with Chinese indigenous culture and experience?” (p. 294).

Collaborative movements. The process of indigenization of social work curriculum has progressed differently in different countries. India and parts of Africa are still working at this process (Nagpaul, 1993; Asamoah, 1995); the Latin American countries began the process much earlier (Aguilar, 1995; Wilson, 1992). Tesoriero & Rajaratnam (2001) write of Australian social workers collaborating with Asian Indian social workers in India. Their conclusions were that there needs to be considerable teaching in western social work schools of other cultural ways of thinking and knowing. In collaborative exchanges, there needs to be an open discussion concerning North/South relationships of hegemony and dependency. Watt (1998) found that social workers from the Baltic States and Poland, countries only beginning to develop social work education, were developing a unique approach to social work but needed to work more on curriculum addressing oppression and macro issues in their own countries. Wilson (1992) writes about the curriculum change in Nicaragua. Until 1974, North American functionalist thought dominated the Nicaraguan School of Social Work. With the overthrow of the Somoza government, the School of Social Work was closed and then reopened with a new

curriculum that was consistent with the political project of the Sandinista popular revolution. Aguilar (1995) states that western social work education can learn a lot from the indigenization of social work in Mexico and Central America. Dores Costa (1987) speaks of the changes in Brazilian social work over the past years. The rise of social work education supported the interest of the ruling bourgeois class and legitimated oppressive policies. A reconceptualization process, which coincided with the leftist military coup of 1964, provided an opportunity for social workers to “reevaluate their education in political and professional practice, institutional practice and social work education” (p. 119).

Mupediziswa (1996) writes of the changes in Zimbabwean social workers and their curriculum. The School of Social Work has advocated a developmental approach, with an emphasis on rural work and mobilization of communities through community workers. Para-professional social work training and an African journal being published each year have increased indigenous social work training and knowledge. Drower (2000) writes of an exchange of ideas with South Africa and Asian social work educators. Through the visit of a team of social work educators, themes emerged that South Africans could learn from their Asian counterparts. Social work educators in both countries expressed the need for an emphasis on globalization from below and a continuing dialogue between these countries to promote non-western social work knowledge. Berstein & Gray (1991) designed a first year course that used predominantly South African literature and, where theory and content dealt with ethnic diversity, anti-oppression and non-discriminatory perspectives. Asamoah & Beverly (1988) say that developing indigenous teaching material is extremely important and should be a priority. They argue that through

collaboration, social workers from all countries can help each other develop indigenous social work training. “Such relationships must be built upon mutual respect and indigenous relevancy and be forged in the crucible of ‘oneness in diversity’. Only in this way can an applicable synthesis be achieved to the mutual benefit of all participants” (p. 191).

Finally, social work educators in South Africa have taken seriously the Truth and Reconciliation Commission principles as it applies to social work education in South Africa. In the context of healing and restoring peace, they acknowledged in writing “those aspects of social work education and practice that diminished opportunities for all South Africans” (Sacco & Hoffman, 2004, p. 161). They submitted these to the Truth and Reconciliation Council as a way “for a foundation of positive change in social work education and a social work practice geared towards reparation” (p. 161).

The Western African experience.

Along with the surveys, the United Nations published monographs between 1964 and 1971 concerning various issues related to social welfare in Africa. The first was a directory of Social Welfare Activities in Africa and the second entitled “Patterns of Social Welfare Organizations and Administration in Africa, 1964” states the following:

In the tradition of little or no consultation with indigenous elements, the resulting administrative structures for social welfare services were a direct imitation of those services already provided in the home countries ... The social services to be found throughout Africa accordingly reflect the differences in structure, traditions, intellectual values, and concepts of the colonizing countries and not of the indigenous African societies (U.N. 1964, No. 2, p. 7)

Ghana, Ivory Coast and the United Arab Republic were highlighted concerning their administrative structures. The third series in 1964 concentrated on “Training for Social Work in Africa”. Over fourteen African countries produced information concerning the

history of their schools of social work curriculum (U.N., 1964, No. 3). In 1966 the “Family, child and youth welfare services in Africa” monograph was published emphasizing the mother and the family, health problems, food and nutrition and social welfare for children and youth, including the rural exodus of youth (U.N., 1966, No. 5). In 1967, “The status and role of women in East Africa” was published looking at all aspects of women’s issues including education, family life, work, community development, legal and political rights of women and the participation of women in community life (U.N., 1967, No. 6). “Youth employment and national development in Africa” was the next monograph and it concentrated on the problems of youth unemployment and youth training schemes (U.N., 1969, No. 7). In 1971, the monograph entitled “Integrated approach to rural development in Africa” was published, bringing out factors influencing rural development, problems of rural development and present strategies of rural development (U.N., 1971, No. 8). These monographs are important in documenting the social development of countries, particularly after independence, and should be taught to students in the History and Philosophy of Social Work at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana. There is no evidence that they are used at the moment. Possible reasons are that these monographs are not available in Ghana and that ordering them through the U.N. is expensive. I had to use the library in Calgary to obtain these documents.

Association of Social Work Education in Africa. The social work profession came nearest to being accepted by Ghanaian society was during the presidency of Kwame Nkrumah. One pioneer of social work in Ghana recalls those years.

The aim of the country at that time was a welfare state. We were trying to achieve a welfare state. So they tried to recognize social work as a profession. And for the first

time in the whole of West Africa, a meeting was held in this same premises (University of Ghana) concerning social work (pounds table)...But even then it (welfare state) was not done because the man (Kwame Nkrumah) was ousted and we went back to square one (Blavo, 2003).

The conference mentioned above was preceded by other conferences concerning urbanization and industrialization and their effect on social issues. They were held in various places in West Africa. The first was held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in 1954; another took place in 1961. Still others were held in Accra -1960, the Congo - 1961, Abidjan -1962 and Dar-es-Salaam - 1962 (Drake & Omari, 1962).

In 1962, a conference was held at the University of Ghana, Legon, entitled "Social Work in West Africa". The President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, asked the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare "to explore the possibility of convening a conference in collaboration with the Department of Sociology of the University of Ghana for the purpose of discussing problems confronting social workers throughout West Africa" (Drake & Omari, 1962, p. 2). Fifty-three delegates came from five West African countries: Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo and Ivory Coast. The purpose of the conference was to "a) discuss present methods of social work, particularly in West African countries, b) make concrete proposals for improved methods of social work and c) foster inter-territorial co-operation" (p. 3). The introductory comments spelled out the situation in West Africa at that time.

With the recent changes in political and economic structures in West Africa, it seems timely to consider the attendant social problems, their causes and what solutions we have for them. The African Way is no less relevant in the field of Social Welfare than in other areas, but it should conform to the internationally accepted principles and practice of social work and we do not wish to be found wanting in this respect (p. 3).

Recommendations were made in the areas of creating a journal of social work, professional training, the professional status of social work, appropriate legislation concerning social issues, research and different areas of vulnerability in society.

In 1963, an important conference was held in Lusaka, Zambia on social work training in Africa (Tesfaye, 1973). The common problems of social work education were identified: “a) general shortage of trained social workers at all levels, including teaching staff, b) lack of adequate local literature for teaching purposes, lack of adequate financial backing to improve and expand training facilities and c) problems of determining curricular content” (p. 17). As will be shown in this study the same challenges exist today. Other issues identified in this conference were the differences between Anglophone and Francophone countries concerning social welfare and the need to “concentrate more on the preventative than the remedial...Social welfare programs should be concerned more with developmental or educational activities of the community in order to raise the standard of living of the total population instead of special groups” (p. 18).

This important conference was followed by the Alexandria conference in 1965. Sixteen schools of social work were represented and the purpose was to “examine the content of training programs and syllabuses and to make a critical survey of existing trends in training for social work” (p.18). In 1969 a group name The Expert Working Group of Social Work Educators met to further discuss the issue of social work training in West Africa. The Second Expert Working Group met in the same year with the intent of establishing the Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA). The Third Expert Working Group, in 1971, formally established ASWEA (Asamoah, 1995,

p. 226). The purpose of the organization was to “serve, among many other functions, as a forum where social work educators will discuss and resolve common problems that face schools of social work in Africa” (p. 20). ASWEA produced documents that provided indigenous material to be taught in the classroom.

ASWEA launched a case studies project in 1972 in cooperation with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The project involved the compilation of case records of experiences of social work, community development workers in some selected countries ... A compilation of case studies of social development in East Africa was mimeographed and sent to members for use as teaching materials in classrooms (ASWEA, 1986, p. 10).

A pioneer of social work in Ghana remembered these case studies and how helpful they were to the teaching of social work.

We were attending conferences and the reports from ASWEA were being used as teaching material. ASWEA motivated or got money to get a casework booklet, collected caseworks from the whole of Africa, which we were using ... so indigenous teaching materials had long been started in 1960s here to the 1970s in ASWEA where the U.N.E.C. started and are doing all these things to help social work to be accepted by the society (Blavo, 2003).

In 1973, the General Assembly for ASWEA was convened in Togo and looked at the relationship between social work education and national social development planning (ASWEA, Doc. 6, 1973). In 1974, at another workshop in Ethiopia concerning the Techniques of Teaching and Method of Field Work Evaluation (ASWEA, Doc. 9, 1975), over eleven African countries were represented. A similar workshop was held the following year for French speakers in Cameroun (ASWEA, 1986). In 1976, “Realities and Aspirations of Social Work Education in Africa” was the theme for the 3rd ASWEA conference in Ethiopia (ASWEA, 1976). This conference was marked by the support of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and followed the theme of the XVIII IASSW conference in Puerto Rico. Forty-three representatives from

fourteen African countries attended, including four Ghanaians. A regional workshop was also held after the ASWEA workshop with the theme of “The Role of Social Development Education in Africa’s Struggle for Political and Economic Independence” (ASWEA, 1977). Two main objectives were to acquaint participants with the role of ASWEA and to “acquaint the participants with the objectives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), instill the idea of pan-African solidarity, and encourage them to propagate the idea in their respective institutions” (p. 12). Other issues concerned indigenous materials for social work training and the lack of initiative to reorganize the curriculum.

The dearth of teaching materials related to the particular culture of the respective countries of the continent had been a chronic problem. As basic social service materials adapted for classroom teaching are in short supply, there has been a heavy reliance on books and other materials produced in the industrialized countries in the West (p. 52).

Why are schools of social work in Africa so shy in radically reorganizing their curricula? Is the problem within or outside the schools? Social welfare training in Africa, draws its objectives and strategies from the socio-economic needs of African peoples and also from the development strategies adopted by African Governments. In order to develop sound social welfare curricula, social welfare policies in African countries must be clearly spelled (p. 53).

Reorganizing curricula was frustrating and continues to be a chronic problem throughout Africa.

The next seminar was held in Lusaka, Zambia in 1978. Unique to this workshop was the presentation of country statements concerning “Guidelines for the Development of a Training Curriculum in Family Welfare”, the title of the conference. Ghana was one of six countries to make statements concerning training they had developed in family welfare (ASWEA, 1978). The 4th ASWEA conference was held in Ethiopia in 1981. Eighteen African countries were represented, including Ghana, to look at the theme

“Social Development Training in Africa: Experiences of the 1970s and emerging trends of the 1980s” (ASWEA, 1982). The objectives of the conference were to

examine and discuss social development in the continent and its potential role in the promotion of social development programmes, examine country statements to determine the impact of social work education in the overall development strategy of Africa, and to identify resources, opportunities, limitations and constraints and make appropriate recommendations for the indigenization of social development concepts and approaches (p. 7).

In 1982, an ASWEA seminar was held in Egypt with the theme as “the Organization and Delivery of Social Services to Rural Areas in Africa”. The workshop highlighted the problems of rural development. It examined course content of rural development and the opportunity for the exchange of ideas concerning rural development, and made recommendations (ASWEA, 1982). In particular, the role of women in rural development was discussed. No one from Ghana was represented at this meeting, possibly due to the instability of the country at this time. In 1984, the 4th workshop on Family Welfare for Social Work Educators was held in Kenya. The 5th ASWEA conference was held in Ethiopia in 1985; the theme was “Training for Social Development: Methods of Intervention to Improve People’s Participation in Rural Transformation in Africa with Special Emphasis on Women” (ASWEA, 1985). Six areas were examined, including community participation, research, curriculum, women and development, population and regional cooperation. By the 5th conference, “ASWEA had a membership of about 55 Social Development Training Institutions and 150 social work educators from 33 African countries” (Tesfaye, 1985, p. 17). In 1986, a workshop was held in Ethiopia with the theme “Role of Social Development Agents in Rural Transformation in Africa” and Ghana was a part of this workshop. The workshop gave educators the opportunity to examine social development and integrated rural development practices; how social

workers can improve the socio-economic conditions and standards of living of the rural populations; strengthening existing curricula, in particular looking at women, youth, population and cooperatives; the introduction of research evaluation; and staff development (ASWEA, 1989). From 1971-1985 ASWEA produced an impressive twenty documents. I have been able to find most of these, while others do not seem to be available. A social work journal was established in 1974 and eight issues were published (p. 62). ASWEA offered the institutional backup to put the issue of social development on the agenda in Africa. The momentum of the 1960s and 1970s offered a good start to an effective organization to bring social work into the forefront of African issues.

Alongside the ASWEA conferences were other conferences called the Conferences of Ministers. The first was held in 1968 (Asamoah, 1995). “This conference challenged the international social work community to pursue a dynamic agenda that would put social work out front on issues of development and make it, as a profession, more relevant to current realities: (p. 225). The 2nd conference, now called the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs, was held in 1977; the third in 1980. They “continued to press the issue of reorienting social welfare services to a developmental model and training key personnel accordingly” (p. 226). The African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development (ACARTSOD) was formed out of these conferences and together ASWEA and ACARTSOD highlighted issues concerning social work practice and training through their work and publications.

A systematic study of the gradual development of social work education in Africa indicates that certain amount of dynamism has been generated since the early 1960s. The various national and international seminars, conferences and expert group meetings on social work education and practice that have been taking place throughout the continent are good testimony (Tesfaye, 1973, p. 16).

The above gives an overall picture of the kinds of activities that took place between the 1960s and the 1980s in West Africa. Details of the documents produced by ASWEA are not available to people in Ghana and are rarely written about in articles concerning social work in West Africa. It is important that these documents are made known to social work educators and writers in Africa as important historical knowledge concerning social work in West Africa.

Ghana Association of Social Workers. Mazibuko & Gray (2004) give a good history of social work associations in South Africa. At one point there were five different associations depending on race and social divisions. “Professional associations ... have had a chequered history in South Africa ... due to the deep social and racial divisions engendered by apartheid and attempts by the government to control every aspect of social life” (p. 140). They give a list of major functions of a professional association as follows.

1) advance the interests of social workers by attending to matters relating to salaries, service conditions and benefits, and line of promotion, 2) promote the professional development of social workers through theory and research, and the introduction of professional journals to facilitate this development, 3) encourage ethical professional conduct by providing codes of ethics to guide social workers, including practitioners, managers, policy-makers and educators, towards ethically and politically sensitive practice, 4) ensure the promotion of relevant and appropriate social work education and practice aimed at the alleviation of poverty and the reconstruction and development of communities and 5) monitor service provision so as to ensure a just and equitable distribution of social work services (p. 132).

The Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW) was established in 1971 and seems to have taken the above functions seriously. They were active in planning its own seminars and publishing these seminars as part of indigenous teaching material for teachers and students. The purpose of GASOW was to

- a) promote activities that strengthen and unify the social work profession as a whole,
- b) stimulate sound and continuous development of the various areas of social work

practice as a contribution to meeting human needs and c) contribute effectively to the improvement of social conditions in the country (GASOW, 1972, p. v).

Mrs. Nana Apt, secretary of the Association, was instrumental in publishing these seminars. The first seminar was in 1972, ten years after the conference on Social Work in West Africa encouraged by Kwame Nkrumah and after twenty-five years of social work in Ghana (GASOW, 1972). This first seminar was held at the University of Ghana, Legon and the theme was "Social Welfare Education and Practice in Developing Countries". Sponsored by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, the seminar featured Mr. Walter Karberg, the Director of Information, ASWEA and Dr. Jona Rosenfeld of the Hebrew University School of Social Work. "It was felt that Ghana could learn from Israel's experience in development" (p. vi). The speaker from ASWEA spoke of changing the term "social welfare" to "social development" in order "to highlight the future perspective of social welfare in Africa" (p. 11). The seminar identified several sources of social workers' discontent including discontent with the profession, social conditions and national priorities. Recommendations were made and are very interesting in light of this research project, some of which are very similar. It was recommended that

a) the name social welfare be replaced with social development, b) the term social worker be replaced with social development officer, c) investigate the basis of differential treatment accorded to social workers in different areas of work, d) GASOW be the voice of social protest through professional publications etc. (p. 66-67).

The 2nd GASOW seminar was held in 1973 with the theme "Social Planning in National Development" (GASOW, 1973). This conference addressed many of the issues facing social planning in Ghana, including the resettling of over 80,000 people displaced by the Akosombo Dam on the Volta River and the planning of the new town of Tema, created as a result of the building of Tema Harbour. A wider question of the conference spoke to the

need to collaborate with other countries; this point came from guest speakers from Tanzania and Mali.

The Ghana Association of Social Workers support the views of our foreign guests in hoping that in the not too distant future, social workers in Africa, East, West and Central shall get together in mutual co-operation to develop social welfare practice in the total African context, and thereby transcend any political and other boundaries that now appear to separate us (p. ix).

In 1974, the third GASOW seminar was held with the theme “The Role of Agriculture and Rural Technology in National Development”. It observed that “the realization that social workers in a developing country like Ghana ought to break away from traditional welfare practices and be more involved in the economic development of the nation is gradually catching on” (GASOW, 1974, p. 5). The purpose of this seminar was to

a) bring together an interdisciplinary group of social workers, community development workers, specialists in the field of agriculture and rural technology and social and economic planners to look at agriculture and rural technology, b) to review research in these areas and c) to develop guidelines for social workers which will enable them to play their role as rural animators and initiators of social change efficiently (p. 5-6).

Representatives from ten different African countries were present, as well as professionals from other faculties within the University of Ghana at Legon and the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi.

The fourth seminar, held in 1975, concerned “Popular Participation and the New Local Government System” (GASOW, 1975). The objectives of this seminar continue to be very relevant to the local situation in Ghana and the role of social work in this ever-changing society.

The objectives were to a) bring together social workers and local government officials from Ghana and other West African countries to examine the structure and functions of the new local government system in Ghana, b) to develop practical guidelines for

greater participation and effective utilization of local resources in development and c) to consider the Treaty establishing the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) and its implications for social work and social services (p. 5).

These seminars were impressive examples of the energy and commitment by GASOW to develop the profession of social work and give it an important voice in dealing with the Government of Ghana. The seminars also exemplified the continual attempt to intertwine social work and the important issues facing Ghana in the 1970s. I was not able to find any more publications of GASOW from after the 4th seminar. One of the reasons for this was the untimely car accident that the secretary endured, requiring her to go to Germany for a year to recover. No one was able to do the things she had done and GASOW seminars lapsed. Since that time the professional Association has not represented the profession of social work effectively and is seen as corrupt by many practicing social workers and educators.

Summary

The hegemony of western knowledge has played an important role in determining what knowledge is important and this is reflected in the exportation of western social work knowledge and education, which began in the Western world out of the social, political and economic dynamics of those countries (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004). This exportation process is reflected in the historical factors of colonialism, modernization and globalization and the ignorance of indigenous knowledge, which was rarely included in mainstream social work education. Enthusiasm for the profession spread to other countries in the 1960s and 1970s in an imperialistic fashion, in an attempt to help non-western countries develop social work training. Many non-western countries accepted

social work theories and practice from western countries with little critique of their relevance to the needs of their own countries.

More recently, a creation of new social work knowledge is taking place in different parts of the world. Progress in this work in some countries has been quicker than in others. Collaboration between countries is an encouraging sign that social work educators and practitioners are seeking creative solutions to this western hegemony. In light of the impressive beginning to the social work profession in West Africa one must wonder about the past twenty years and what has happened to the momentum of ASWEA and GASOW. Very little has been written about the work of these two Associations and their important work in the 1960s and 1970s.

It will be appreciated that ever since ASWEA was founded, the Association has tried to respond to its Pan African calling by organizing conferences, seminars and workshops on pertinent issues in social development education. In all of these meetings it has been the working practice to critically examine the issues being discussed within the African context (Kibuka, 1982, p. 95).

It seems apparent that social work education in Africa is linked to the political, social and economic realities of Africa. "African history, coupled with the current social and economic realities, has left a definite mark on social work education" (Asamoah, 1995, p. 224). Many of the countries involved in the development of social work in West Africa have experienced instability, civil war, economic hardships and political upheavals. The coup in Ghana caused many to keep to themselves and to cover their backs in whatever they did. Ethiopia, in the past 30 years, has experienced upheaval, revolutions, famine, war with Eritrea and other conflicts that have influenced development there (Africanet, 1997). During the 1960s, Togo had several governments overthrown. These disturbances continued into the 1980s and 1990s (Nationmaster, 2000). Sierra Leone and Liberia have

been in conflict and unstable off and on since the 1960s (Nationmaster, 2000). Zambia, too, had its upheavals in the 1970s and has suffered from its growing debt to the IMF and the World Bank (Abacci Atlas, 2004).

It is also clear that social work in South Africa has struggled to establish a professional association that will “unify the profession and reach consensus on the tasks and functions of a united professional association” (Mzaibuko & Gray, 2004, p. 140). It continues to struggle with this task of “drawing together social workers with diverse and seemingly irreconcilable moral and political ideologies” (p. 140). Like South Africa, Ghana’s political and social situation has left its mark on a Professional Association that struggles to survive and be an effective voice for social work in Ghana.

Continuing her thoughts on social work in Africa, Asamoah (1995) states that “although there has been improvement over the past decade, lack of acceptance of social work as a profession and lack of resources continue to plague social work in many African countries” (p. 228). The future of social work in Africa is dependent on gaining back the momentum from the 1960s and 1970s so that the profession of social work can be an important and vital voice to African social policy. Today, in order to accomplish this, countries in Africa need to be free from the debts they owe to the western world and from the economic perils in which they find themselves entrapped. “Africa’s severe economic problems in the 1970s, made worse by the global recession of the 1980s and the implementation of structural adjustment programs in some countries in the mid-1980s posed new challenges for social work education” (Asamoah, 1995, p. 235). Through lifting the constraints that affect African progress and recreating a new sense of identity that not only confronts the past but learns from it and moves on from it can social work

possibly build towards the future, shifting from being on the periphery to becoming an important voice for Ghana and Africa.

Chapter Four

Entering the World of Knowledge Production

Group member -I have been thinking about why Linda has to come to Ghana and study about our curriculum and this project...we ourselves haven't even thought of it, I mean, I don't even know if anyone has done that here, but I haven't seen anybody...nobody has come out with an alternative and we are still using the western ones. So I have been thinking, is it that we don't have the resources or that nobody has thought of it. I have been thinking about it myself and I am trying to battle it out and find answers.

Group member – Perhaps Linda has come to trigger our mind for us to look at our system and see what necessary changes we could impact on our system.

This chapter introduces my entering into a new culture and experiencing a research process that I knew little about. The research questions below were an initial guide to this project but the group was not limited by these questions. In fact, the questions were a catalyst for further knowledge production concerning our own lives and Ghanaian society.

Research Questions

1. How did the historical dominance of western knowledge and in particular western social work thinking emerge and how has it preserved itself?
 - a. What historical conjunctures and processes affected this dominance in the context of Ghana?
 - b. What evidence is there in curriculum content and pedagogical processes of this dominance in the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana?
 - c. What impacts have these historical processes had on faculty members, students and practitioners in the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana?

2. How and to what extent has western social work thinking been replaced by indigenized approaches in social work in non-Western countries?
 - a. What historical conjunctures and processes affected this indigenization process in Ghana?

- b. What changes have been made in curriculum content and pedagogical processes through the indigenous process in the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana?
 - c. What impacts has this indigenization process had on faculty members, students and practitioners in the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana?
3. How has the experience of the PAR process facilitated the creation of new knowledge?
- a. What learning did the group members experience in their own lives and social work careers through this research?
 - b. What contribution has this research project made to the future of social work education and practice in Ghana?

Personal challenges of my journey

As a white western woman travelling and working in other countries, I became aware of my own background in relation to the people I met and the places I lived. In Britain, I worked with elderly populations who were eternally grateful for the Americans during World War II. I received the benefits of this gratefulness over and over again. In Ghana, although a member of a minority, I was seen as a western person and was met with respect in regard to my background and social work knowledge. I was aware that Africans coming to the western world were not always treated with the same respect. I was also struck with the conversations I had in Ghana and in the Liberian refugee camp concerning skin colour and wondered why “being a little more white than black” was a sign of European heritage and subtly conveyed superiority. What is behind these power relations and why am I treated differently? Why is skin colour so important in our world? Critically examining the historical conjunctures in African history, in particular colonialism, modernization and globalization, has challenged the way I respond to people of cultures other than my own. It has also challenged my personal assumptions

concerning western ways of knowing and thinking generally and, in particular, concerning social work education worldwide.

Critical theory

Critical theory had an important impact in the 20th century in research, education and philosophy and continues to be a major theoretical framework for the critique of society and culture. Critical theory emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in Germany within a Marxist tradition at the University of Frankfurt's Institute of Social Research (Rasmussen, 1996). It is influenced by the work of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud and Weber, with the key theorists including Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2001). Critical theory is a "radical social theory, a sophisticated form of cultural criticism combining Freudian and Marxist ideas, and a utopian style of philosophical speculation deeply rooted in Jewish and German idealism" (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1992, p. xviii). The critical theory movement was deeply affected by the experiences of the Second World War (Held, 1980, Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Morrow & Brown, 1994).

Political events and revolutionary practice had not coincided with the expectations derived from the Marxist theory of the day. The following questions became urgent: How could the relationship between theory and practice now be conceived? Could theory preserve hope for the future? In changing historical circumstances how could the revolutionary ideal be justified? (Held, 1980, p. 20).

In the minds of the scholars at the Frankfurt school was the question of why the working class had not developed a revolutionary action against fascism (Morrow & Brown, 1994).

Authoritarian personality, the culture industry and technology were issues related to oppression that were studied by Freud, Adorno, and Marcuse in order to understand the shortcomings of Marx's predictions. As critical theorists spent time in other cultures, the development of the conviction that injustice and subjugation shaped the lived world

(Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) became important issues within the critical theory movement and later influenced feminist, civil rights and ecological groups. One of the critiques of Marx's theory was that it did not adequately account for multiple sources of power such as race, gender and sexual orientation (Young, 1990).

Critical theory has developed in a number of different directions since the initial work of the Frankfurt School (Held, 1980; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2001). Influenced by the work of Gadamer and critical hermeneutics and laying the groundwork for critical research,

continental {European} social theorists such as Foucault, Habermas, and Derrida, Latin American thinkers such as Paulo Freire, French feminists such as Irigaray, Kristeva, and Cixous, or Russian socio-linguists such as Bakhtin and Vygotsky are all considered contemporary critical theorists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2001, p. 290).

Postmodernists such as Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and Ebert, poststructuralists like Derrida (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2001) and post-colonialists such as Spivak, Benhabib, and Escobar (McEwan, 2002) are influenced by this tradition. Critical theory does not identify with scientific positivism or existential phenomenology, in which critical thinking has been abandoned, but seeks to move beyond this polarization to a critical and emancipatory interest in knowledge (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1992; Morrow & Brown, 1994).

Researchers who draw upon critical theory as a theoretical framework use it as a guide for appropriate kinds of questions relevant to the research. Critical theory is not a "research method but a worldview that suggests both an epistemology and a purpose for conducting research" (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett, 1999, p. 561). Critical theory seeks to question the very institutions and societal structures that cause this oppression and which prevent humans from fulfilling their creative potentials in life. Critical theory asks

important hidden and subtle political, social, and economic questions underlying the area being researched in order to allow for a new critical consciousness to emerge and appropriate social action to take place during and as a result of the research process (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, p. xx). My own research questions are guided by an awareness of the hidden and subtle historical forces that have affected African social work education and are the basis of critical analysis concerning the exportation of western social work knowledge to Africa. Helpful in this process is the work of three important critical theorists: Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, and Michel Foucault.

Gramsci. Antonio Gramsci refers to critical education as a means for an overall strategy for social transformation (Joll, 1977; Mayo, 1999). His belief that educational systems are not neutral and serve the existing hegemonic group/forces is helpful in understanding the African educational process. Hegemony is defined as “a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by a certain powerful group” (Mayo, 1990, p. 35). The function of intellectuals is to support the dominant group through encouraging acceptance by the masses of the dominant group who enjoy their position (Gramsci, 1971). To study intellectuals has historically been to look at the system of relations in which they have a place or were created in a society. Gramsci identifies two types of intellectuals; (a) the traditional (representatives of an historical continuity uninterrupted by changes in social and political forms) and (b) the organic (cultural or educational workers who are actively involved in society) that can help or hinder this process (Fals Borda, 2001; Mayo, 1999). Organic intellectuals can “serve to mediate the ideological and political unity of the existing hegemony” (Mayo, 1999, p. 41) or, if they are organic to a subordinated group, can work against the dominant group.

Instead of a “war of manoeuvre” (head-on confrontation with the state), a “war of position” (transformation of the state through the “war of ideas”) is needed, through critical education activities, to counter this hegemony. To Gramsci, true education is a critical/political approach to knowledge tied to praxis; the two cannot be separated. It is a creative exercise through spontaneous and autonomous learning with the teacher as a guide (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci’s understanding of critical education inspired another educator, Paulo Freire.

Freire. Underlying Freire’s developmental psychology are the issues of

a) subject-subject communication, (b) the process of humanization and dehumanization, (c) a phenomenology of oppression as a process of domination based on violence, (d) a model for overcoming domination, and (e) critical pedagogy as a process of liberation (Morrow & Torres, 2001, p. 120).

Humanization is the “emancipation of labour, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women. It is a creative struggle for freedom for people to regain their humanity” (Freire, 1997, p. 26). Dehumanization is an historical distortion of the vocation of being human that leads to despair (Freire, 1997). This is created by an unjust order. When dehumanization occurs, a culture of silence exists. Freire argues that few human relationships are totally equal and escape the bondages of oppression (Torres, 1994). People can be oppressor or oppressed by virtue of their class, race, sex, religion, political affiliation, and so on. Freire (1997) challenges the social, political and scientific frameworks that dominate education and society. He identifies four mechanisms of hegemony that form a culture of silence: (a) conquest, (b) divide and rule, (c) manipulation, and (d) cultural invasion. Conquest refers to the conquering of a culture through any means using relations of subordination and domination. The aim is to conquer the dispossessed of their word, culture and expressiveness through myths and

non-dialogical action (Freire, 1997; Morrow & Torres, 2001). In order to keep the oppressed suppressed, a divide and rule mechanism keeps the oppressed from uniting and maintains the power of the oppressor. Unity is a threat and in order to keep the oppressed from uniting, the oppressor localizes problems and prevents the identification of the wider problems of social structures. Bribes, promotions, threats, penalties and benefits are used to soften the oppressed into staying suppressed. Their strategy is often hidden behind the social structures supporting the oppressive society (Freire, 1997).

Manipulation, through non-dialogical agreements, tries to manipulate the oppressed to conform to the oppressor's objectives. It teaches people not to think critically but to accept their oppression. Finally, cultural invasion "penetrates the cultural contexts of groups, imposing a view of the world that deprives subordinate groups of any sense of their 'alternative' possibilities" (Morrow & Torres, 2001, p. 130). This invasion is an act of violence; it molds and shapes the oppressed into conforming to the oppressor's objectives. The oppressed have to be convinced of their inferiority and the oppressors their superiority. These mechanisms can all be seen in colonialism, modernization and neo-liberal economic globalization. The mechanisms for creative learning are (a) cooperation, (b) unity of liberation, (c) organization and (d) cultural synthesis. In order for liberation from oppression to occur, a critical consciousness needs to evolve that Freire calls "conscientization". The dialogical process is crucial to this conscientization process. It involves love for the world and man, humility, faith in man, hope and critical thinking (Freire, 1997). "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (p. 69). Underlying the thought of both Gramsci and Freire

are certain understandings of power and knowledge. Foucault's work adds to this understanding.

Foucault. Foucault offers insight into power and knowledge relevant to this study. Essential to critical thinking is an analysis of power within society. Power, seen historically as repressive and negative, can also be positive and technical (Foucault, 1980). It can be exercised and not possessed and can come from grassroots movements (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). In order to analyze power, it is important to understand the forms of resistance to power. Power relations and not the notion of power help in analyzing institutional and dominant structures (Foucault, 1980, 1992). Foucault believes that "knowledge is rooted in power relations" (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 135). "Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (Foucault, 1980, p. 133). There is an intimate relationship between power and knowledge and "knowledge-making supported by various cultural and political forms creates a reality which favours those who hold power" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 6). Power is productive and relational. It exists only through action and is seen as a sphere of life rather than as one group or individual over another (Foucault, 1992; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). "For Foucault, power works through discourses, institutions and practices that are productive of power effects, framing the boundaries of possibility that govern action" (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001, p. 72). In challenging, shifting and acting upon these boundaries this "may, in some cases mean that those with relatively less power, working collaboratively with others, have more, while in other cases, it may direct conflict between the relatively powerful and the relatively powerless" (p. 72). In analyzing power relations, Foucault identifies

five areas that need to be historically established: (a) systems of differentiation, (b) types of objective, (c) means of bringing power relations into being, (d) forms of institutionalization, and (e) degrees of rationalization (Foucault, 1992, p. 316). “Analysis of these relationships includes their historical formation, strengths and weaknesses and the possibility to transform or abolish them. “Knowledge-making cannot be neutral and disinterested but is a political process in the service of particular purposes, and one which has been institutionalized in favour of the privileged (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 6).

Foucault (1980) links power and knowledge in reference to indigenous or local knowledge. Speaking about academic knowledge, he describes a typical use of this type of knowledge as exemplified by “documents, reference works, dusty tomes, texts that are never read, books that are no sooner printed than they are consigned to the shelves of libraries where they thereafter lie dormant to be taken up only some centuries later” (p. 79). Foucault speaks of subjugated knowledge and its recent emergence as being the result of local criticism that has gained strength in the last fifteen to twenty years. He defines subjugated knowledge as “historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization” (p. 81). It is also “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (p. 81-82). This type of knowledge is buried because it concerns itself with “a historical knowledge of struggles” (p. 83). So much of African history, written by European writers, reflects this burying of knowledge that is slowly reappearing and redirecting the understanding of history. As researchers, we need to ask whose knowledge we are discounting or diminishing in our work.

Researcher's assumptions

Exploring the researcher's own assumptions and preconceived notions that impact this research is an important part of a critical theory framework (Henderson, 1995; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2001; Soltis-Jarrett, 1997). These come from my own life experiences and formed my initial assumptions when first beginning this research process. They are as follows: (a) the assumption that an imperialization of western social work knowledge to non-western countries has occurred and continues to occur, including an adaptation process of social work curriculum in non-western countries that has favoured western social work knowledge. This has occurred through the historical conjunctures of colonialism, modernization and globalization; (b) a belief in the need to indigenize social work knowledge to meet the needs of each country who are working through this process; and (c) a recognition of the negative and evil impact of colonialism on Africa. Through the research project, these assumptions changed in degrees as a result of the group's critical reflection and knowledge production concerning these issues.

Critical theory shares many of the same orientations as the research methodology called Participatory Action Research (PAR) and these can be used effectively together in research (DePoy, Harman & Haslett, 1999), particularly where there has been a history of domination and oppression (Morrow & Torres, 2001; Tandon, 1981). Habermas, a more recent scholar of critical theory states that "there must also be knowledge that is oriented to liberating individuals from the constraint of domination and distorted communication and allows them to be involved in the process of their own emancipation"(Berman, Ford-Gilboe & Campbell, 1998; Kim & Holter 1995, p. 209). The methodology for this research was Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Reading, Naming and Transforming the World – Participatory Action Research

To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it (Freire, 1997, p. 69)

The journey with others

In 1997, I returned to Ghana to conduct a phenomenological research study concerning the role of women in a Liberian refugee camp. I lived in the camp for four months, talking, observing, writing and interviewing refugee women concerning their leadership role in the camp. Through this experience I was frustrated with the limitations of my own resources and that of the research methodology concerning the women's participation in the analysis of the data and their lack of participation in affirming the themes of the project. I questioned my role as researcher/expert when, in fact, these women were truly the experts in the issues we discussed in the interviews. I questioned my role as an outsider and obviously the one with the power over the research process. In reflecting on my concerns with research and the power issues surrounding the different methodologies, I knew that to facilitate a research project concerning indigenous ways of knowing in social work education, a participatory approach to generating knowledge was the most appropriate approach. Clearly, the experts were Ghanaians themselves. It was my belief that only through working alongside them, in a participatory action group, could the project truly be meaningful to social work education in Ghana.

Concerning my own experience with non-hierarchical approaches in organizations, following my second time in Ghana, I worked for a year in Armenia with the American Red Cross. Due to communication and cultural challenges, I relied heavily on my Armenian team of interviewers during our project and we worked alongside each other in order to conduct a fair and just selection process. The success of the project and feedback

from my team suggested that all appreciated this group collaboration approach. Finally, I have observed the use of dialogue and unity in decision-making over the past eight years through my involvement with the Quakers. Through this organization I have come to appreciate and experience first-hand a consensus process.

Historical emergence of PAR

The action research family is one in which “beliefs and relationships vary greatly. More than a set of discrete practices, it is a group of ideas emergent in various contexts” (Noffke, 1997, p. 306). It has a long history in education. This family draws from a number of historical influences including those of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Stephen Corey in the United States, Habermas in Germany, Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott in Britain and Carr, Kemmis and McTaggart in Australia (McTaggart, 1991). Other influential researchers are Stringer (1999), who has written of community-based action research, McGuire (1987), who has discussed a feminist perspective of action research and Carson & Sumara (2001), who have drawn upon hermeneutic phenomenology for educational action research. Alongside these developments were the non-western countries and their development of Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Participatory Action Research (PAR), born out of work with grassroots populations committed to social action (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999) and exemplified by the work of Orlando Fals Borda in the villages of Colombia, Mexico and Nicaragua, is a research methodology that “simultaneously encompasses adult education, scientific research and political action in which critical theory, situation analysis and practice are seen as sources of knowledge” (Fals Borda, 1988, p. 2). Unlike the European approach which “focused on organizational reform” (Healy K., 2001, p. 94), PAR is “strongly shaped by Lewin’s

(1948) theory of action research and an amalgam of critical social science perspectives” (p. 94). “It differs from other research perspectives in its commitment to fundamental social change aiming to break down the hegemony-forms of domination-binding us” (Pyrch, 2001, p. 4). According to Healy K. (2001), PAR is influenced by Marx and Engels, Gramsci and the Frankfurt school and is connected to the liberation movements in non-western countries, in particular, Africa and Southern Americas. Fals Borda (2001) acknowledges certain people from India (Kaluram), Colombia (Rosca Foundation for Research and Social Action, Fals Borda), Tanzania (Swantz), Brazil (Freire) and Mexico (Bonfil and Stavenhagen) as being instrumental in developing PAR. Tandon’s (1981) work in India and his emphasis on the oppression and domination aspect, has contributed greatly to PAR literature. Paulo Freire’s (1997) work in Northern Brazil outlining critical transforming pedagogy lays the foundation for Participatory Action Research.

Mulenga (1999) describes the growth of PAR in the African setting. In defining PAR as a “democratic approach to knowledge production and utilization” (p. 2) he identifies four phases of the development of participatory research (PR) in Africa: (a) “inception (pre 1970 to 1979), (b) consolidation (1980 to 1985), (c) diffusion (1986 to 1991), and (d) crisis (1992 to date)” (p. 35). The present concerns of PR and its use in Africa relates to the indiscriminate application of PR to serve the outsider, ridding PR of the radical political agenda so important to the historical context of PR, and reducing its value to just another research tool. Mulenga concludes that PR “can contribute to reconstruction of a more democratic culture in Africa” (p. 44).

Fals Borda (2001) defines the PAR process as not only a quest for knowledge but also a “transformation of individual attitudes and values, personality and culture, an altruistic

process” (Fals Borda, 2001, p. 32). He identifies the task of participatory scholars and practitioners in the coming new generation as follows:

In the last analysis, the effect of PAR work carries a liberating, political accent worldwide. The rising universal brotherhood of critical intellectuals – women and men - tends to construct open pluralist societies in which oppressive central powers, the economy of exploitation, monopolies and the unjust distribution of wealth, the dominance of militarism and armamentism, the reign of terror, abuse of the natural environment, racism, and other plagues will be proscribed. On these vital issues many of us appear to be like one, as we concur on insisting about the humanist utilization of science, knowledge and techniques. Such now appears to be our global commitment (p. 34).

Foucault (1980) speaks of this type of knowledge gathering as the “local character of criticism” which is an “autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought” (p. 83).

Fals Borda (1988) identifies useful techniques from his own experiences with PAR as the following: “a) collective research; b) critical recovery of history; c) valuing and applying folk culture and d) production and diffusion of new knowledge” (pp. 94 & 95). These create an experience of empowerment for the people involved in the research to change their own situations.

Principles of PAR

Susan Smith (1997) and Dorothy Henderson (1995) give a comprehensive understanding of the principles and assumptions behind PAR. They are as follows: (a) The importance of full participation by the people being studied in all phases of the research process. It is non-hierarchical dialogical consensus decision-making process; (b) the understanding that knowledge is not limited to scientific knowledge but values experiential and popular knowledge, culture, history and the lived experiences of the

people being researched along with their self-understanding of their life experiences; (c) focusing, challenging, and balancing power relations within the research group (between researcher and co-researchers) and focusing on the importance of empowerment; (d) the active consciousness raising of all of the researchers, including the outside researcher, in order for a mutual educative experience to take place; and (e) the avenue by which political and social action can take place. PAR is a process that is continually changing and that uses the process of the “repetitive, transforming rhythm of reflection-action, action-reflection in which spirally moments of ‘think, discover/recover, and do,’ ‘think, discover/recover, and do’ occurs and where the process is more important than the outcome” (Susan Smith, 1997, p. 186). There is an understanding of and trust and acceptance that people, no matter of what class, race, education, gender, and ethnicity, can think critically and can embrace empowerment in order to transform their lives. It is a radical alternative to the traditional forms of research and in this sense is similar to the challenges made by critical theorists.

The Application of PAR

PAR process in the Ghana context. The context for this research was the University of Ghana, Legon, situated just outside Accra, the capital of Ghana. While a volunteer teacher in the Social Work Unit at the University of Ghana from 1994 to 1996, I noticed that many of the classes taught and the terminology used were from western social work methodologies and language. The social work library was depleted and there was little indigenous social work writing being completed or that was considered to be important knowledge. The teaching experience and relationships formed in Ghana gave me a good opportunity to approach the University of Ghana, Legon and my colleagues there in order

to see if this kind of research would be something of interest to them. My previous work there and the positive attitude of the University to my last contribution helped me gain entry into this setting.

Appropriateness of PAR for this research project. This type of research methodology was appropriate in relation to this research project for the following reasons:

1. Ghana is a society in which consensus was and is still used in decision-making processes (Gyekye, 1996; Sackey, 2001, Sutherland-Addy, 2003). Consensus in Africa presupposes an original position of diversity. All points of views are listened to and discussed, with reconciliation as part of the process. No majority rule is allowed; unanimity is achieved through talking (Busia, 1967; Sackey, 2001; Wiredu, 2000). PAR uses a dialogical consensus approach to generating knowledge.
2. Up to the present, African universities have isolated themselves from the needs of society but are now recognizing the need to change (Tettey & Puplampu, 2000). Many African social workers have not been a part of the process of defining their professional, including educational, needs (Osei-Hwedie, 1993). PAR uses ordinary citizens, interested in social work education, as the main group co-researchers.
3. PAR has been successful when examining conditions of domination and exploitation (Reason, 1994; Tandon, 1981). The importation 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 but attitudes are beginning to change and PAR can help in this process.

4. Critical theory and action research are congruent with the mission, values and aims of the social work profession (DePoy, Hartman and Haslett, 1999).
5. PAR is not new to Ghana. 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, 1993) and gender studies (King & Oppong, 2001).

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations guided this research project.

Informed Consent. All participants of the research group were asked for oral consent to their research involvement. See Appendix E for a written version of this oral consent. It was made clear that at any time during the research process, group members could withdraw voluntarily.

Remunerations. It was culturally appropriate to compensate Ghanaians for their travel expenses, food and time. Food was provided at each meeting and remuneration was given, at each workshop, to all group members who attended on that day.

Confidentiality. The meaning of confidentiality can be different in different cultures. Africa is generally seen as a community-based society and the view of confidentiality may be less individualistic. Members of the research group were very open to each other and some personal issues were dealt with in the workshop setting. Group members were also aware that they could talk to me at any time concerning the group process. Group rules were established at the beginning of the workshop, and adherence to these rules promoted openness and acceptance of issues within the group. All field notes, tapes,

transcripts and knowledge-generated material were locked in a filing cabinet in my room or in a safe locked place at the University of Ghana.

Counselling. It was made clear that during the research, if a group member became upset with the process, several avenues could be taken to help this situation. The research group itself could be used in working through the issue. I was available to any group member to discuss with them any issue they were upset about. This happened on several occasions and I tried to be there for people if they wanted to talk to me. I had a cell phone that they could call if any need arose. Finally, other colleagues in the Department of Social Work were willing to discuss matters with the individual. This happened particularly around the issue of the Association, when faculty members were asked their advice about how to proceed with developing a new Association.

Timeline

November 15, 2002 – Arrival in Ghana

December/January 2002/03 – Notice for researchers displayed

January/February 2003 – Open presentation to anyone interested in the project, creation of research team and PAR residential workshop completed.

February/March 2003 – Research group meets and begins discussing the way forward with the group.

March/April 2003 – Defining problem, discussing issues, continual analysis

May-September 2003 – Gathering information, analyzing that information and identifying and working on action plans.

October/November 2003 – Analysis finished and action plans completed. Presentation of action plans to the Department of Social Work.

December/ present – Continuing work on televising the video about social work in Ghana. Continuing work on the development of the Association, six readers of articles sent to the Dept. of Social Work and the collection of writings from group member concerning the project and the role of the Queen Mother in order to publish two articles in the future.

Entering the University of Ghana context

(Please note that all of my personal reflections from my journal and the transcripts are in non-shaded boxes and the comments from the group members are in shaded boxes). In April 2002, a letter of support was received from Prof. Apt, Head of the Department of Social Work (See Appendix C). A proposal was sent to Prof. Apt outlining the proposed research project. It was important to continue dialogue with her and her staff concerning finding appropriate accommodation and key people who might be interested in this project. On my arrival in Ghana in November 2002, I appreciated the warm reception I received from the staff at the Department of Social Work. In fact, the second day I was there I saw a former student of mine. As we talked about his life and about the research, he expressed great interest in the project and agreed to be part of it. I write in my journal.

I felt better about the research project and the rightness of it when one of my former students walked in and greeted me...I told him about the project and he seemed very interested and was prepared to travel from Tamale twice a month. That was very encouraging to me.

I spent November and December settling in, meeting people, and orientating myself to the country, the city of Accra and the University of Ghana. I soon realized that I needed to get letters out to potential group members before the Christmas period as life slows down quite a bit during this period. I introduced myself to the Directors of Social Welfare

and Community Development (government ministries), presenting a letter concerning my research project and its support by the Department of Social Work.

I felt nervous going to see the Director of Social Welfare. She was very cordial to me and read my letter and is prepared to send out some to the different regions...She will also give me the name of a Queen Mother...I left and dropped by to see the Director of Community Development and he agreed to send the letters out to appropriate people in his department.

By the second week of December, approximately fifty letters were written (see Appendix D) and distributed by these departments as well as non-government organizations (NGO) employing social workers. I also used the opportunity to meet with various NGOs who use participatory methods in their work including the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) and the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ). I shared my PAR material with the people at CEDEP and in return they offered support to me during the project.

I hired a taxi that took me to the different corners of Accra: first Mamobi, then the CASS shelter, Legon, and then back to Cantonments to give letters to Action Aid. It was nice to see the old part of Accra; the Portuguese houses of the colonial area are still standing in many places.

I arrived at CEDEP and we talked a while and I gave them my articles and books on PAR as well as popular education. I wanted them to know that the exchange of knowledge was reciprocal as I needed wisdom from them and I had something to give to them. It was an encouraging time and I felt I was among kindred spirits.

I spent my Christmas holidays with Professor Apt in her house in Achimota. During this time we were able to discuss the proposal together, the criteria of participants and what the challenges might be in facilitating this kind of research. This feedback was very helpful to me.

Two people responded to the letters by the beginning of January. I visited one of these people and felt she would be an asset to the research. I remember my initial reaction.

When I got home the phone rang and I couldn't believe it. One of the people I had written to is interested in the project!! Unbelievable. Now I really have to do this. This is so exciting.

The other person who had responded acknowledged his wish to participate through letter. Unfortunately, my response letter to him was never received and he was not included in the research group (mail in Ghana can be slow at the best of times). I had also approached four people through recommendations from students and staff and these people expressed interest in the project. This process entailed interviewing interested people and going over the project purpose with them.

I arrived at the university and there was a faculty person waiting for me with a former student of hers who is interested in the project. The faculty person is interested as well. This former student also had a former student interested in the project. We sat down and I explained the project with these three people and they felt encouraged by it and felt it was feasible. One of the former students had two current students in mind who would be interested in the project.

To pursue the possibility of including a traditional leader as part of the of group, I attended an International Chieftaincy conference the first week in January 2003 and approached a Queen Mother recommended to me by Professor Apt. I spent time with her talking about the project and the purpose of the research. She expressed some reservation about joining, as she was not a trained social worker, but agreed to come and see if it was something she felt she could contribute to. The next step was to begin gathering the group for the research and this started with a revelation.



The University of Ghana, Legon



Department of Social Work

As I lay in bed this morning I had a great revelation. It occurred to me that I am missing out on a step in this process. I need to have an open meeting for interested parties first and then decide on the date for the residential workshop at Aburi... What a relief! Once I had confirmed that first open workshop, things fell into place again.

On January 25, 2003, I held an open meeting at the university so that people could come and learn more about the research project. One question by an attendee encouraged me to think that this topic was of interest to people.

I want to know to what extent did other countries change their curriculum and did they try to infuse their cultural differences or did they decide to come up with a whole different program...and if so why did they decide to totally change their curriculum?

At the end of this session one of the attendees made an encouraging comment.

Okay, Linda, I think you have talked a lot already and I have told you why I think your suggestions are welcome...our context, so I think it is a good project and I hope we can give you all the support you need to make this a reality...So I think we are very grateful for this particular project and we are grateful to be a part of this. At the end of this, we will all be happy that we have been a part of this.

From that meeting, six people expressed interest in the research project. Two interested people gave me names of current students at the university who would be interested in the project. I approached them and by the middle of February fourteen people had expressed interest in the project.

Criteria. The criteria for participating in the research project were kept simple, so that a diverse group of people could participate. As the experiences of people are so important to the PAR process, one of the important aspects was that the group members had to have experienced one of the social work programs at the university either as a student or faculty. Once I had gone over the criteria with Professor Apt the criteria established were the following:

1. Each person has graduated from one of the programs at the university, is a current student of the program or has taught a course in the social work program.

2. Each person is committed to critically looking at the curriculum and is open to looking at indigenous knowledge.
3. Each person commits his or her time from February to October, 2003.
4. Each person commits to writing in a journal between workshops and to participate fully in the workshops.
5. Each person commits to involvement in conducting an action response to the knowledge produced at the end of the research project.

Two interested people did not meet the criterion of having been through one of the social work programs at the university and were dropped from the list. We did make one exception to this rule. The Queen Mother was not a trained social worker. The difficulties of finding a Queen Mother who had trained as a social worker there was a reality we had to face. However, she attended social policy conferences regularly at the university and was a trained teacher.

Establishing the team. Once a group of people was identified and diversity (a mixture of education, age, gender, ethnicity and religion) within the group established a residential workshop was held at Aburi Botanical Gardens in the hills of Accra.

Invitations were sent out and eight out of twelve people came. We left Legon after work on Friday and took a minibus up the hill to the gardens.

Aburi is situated in the hills around Accra. The road is narrow and winding up and up until we reach the top of the first hill. There are traditional Ghanaian villages with mud houses along the way and people selling food and carved objects. Aburi is famous for its botanical gardens, which were preserved by the British during colonialism.

The purposes of the workshop were to give the opportunity for people to get to know each other, understand in detail the PAR process and to begin to think outside their own

frame of reference concerning social work in Ghana. We began Friday evening by creating life trees that enabled us to identify important stages in our lives and sharing these with the group. Not being aware of each person's background, I was pleasantly surprised at the depth of the people's life experience. Many had years of social work experience and three members wished to become social work lecturers in the future. On Saturday morning we had three prayers for the project, one Christian, one Muslim and one traditional blessing by a visiting representative of the Aburi chief's palace. There was some confusion about the opening of the project involving representatives from Aburi chief's palace. These representatives assumed they were to attend the whole of the residential workshop and I assumed, as we were meeting on their land, that it was appropriate that a representative from Aburi chief's palace come and give their blessing to the project. The situation put the group members into an embarrassing position as they informed me that this was not appropriate to ask the representatives to come, as we were not staying in the village but in a hotel in the village. They were willing to sort it out for me.

At 8:30 am the local representatives of the chief's palace arrived and gave a blessing to the project. There was some confusion about why the representatives were there and eventually we sorted it out thanks to several group members and the representatives left at the morning break.

After this experience, I realized I needed their help to guide me through the cultural issues within the research project, in particular regarding traditional authority.

Saturday was spent engaged in various exercises to help us think outside our own personal experiences and frames of reference; studying the principles of PAR including the purpose of research; deciding on remunerations; and then setting meeting times and places. Of particular interest was a map exercise in which three different views of the

world were presented to the group. Questions were asked as to who had drawn the maps and from whose point of view. We then talked about what is truth, what is normal and what is right and wrong and who decides these questions for society. I also introduced the group to literature concerning African social work. I brought these from Canada and set up a loan scheme by which members could take the articles home, read them and return them later on. Finally, all group members gave their oral consent to the research project. I wrote my thoughts concerning the first evening.

I was pleasantly surprised at how people got involved in this activity and how much they shared about themselves. I think over all people got to know each other and where we each come from. I was particularly amazed that everyone brought a proverb or poem to share.

At the end of the workshop, several people commented about the experience.

When I received this agenda and it said 8pm getting to know each other and under it was something about a tree I said "What are we teaching by the fireside"? ... but later on you realize it is to help us think differently and I think the map is a very useful exercise... what I learned from the map exercise is that we should not kind of look down upon certain people and their values and how they think society ought to be run and we should always strive to import whatever each other says into the mainstream.

Looking at our trees last night, if you had the time to go through all of them, some of us are aspiring to be researchers, consultants and we are about to use a research methodology which is very new to some of us and I think it is going to enrich our knowledge and experience in social work.

Of the four people who did not attend the workshop, two were eventually integrated into the research project and two did not continue with the project. The frequency of meetings, remunerations and group rules were established at this workshop. The group agreed to meet twice a month on Saturdays and Fridays alternately, to cater to different religious orientations. The rules that the group established were as follows:

Group Rules

1. All discussions will be tape-recorded and if someone wants to say something that they don't want recorded, they can ask that the recorder be turned off. Linda will transcribe all sessions and give copies to each member so they can read the transcript and make any corrections.
2. If we have any more residential meetings, two weeks notice should be given to all group members.
3. All mobile phones are to be turned off during the meeting but can be turned on during the break for a minimum of distractions.
4. There should be minimal movements by members during the workshop, as we need to concentrate our efforts and energy on the discussion. Restroom breaks are acceptable.
5. Tolerate each other's views and not interrupt each other. We are engaged in dialogue and not debate.
6. Group members should be cautious to avoid irrelevant issues. Comments need to be focused and to the point.
7. Group members need to be conscious of the time and make sure we do not go overtime,
8. The group will decide when it is necessary to extend the time if it looks as though we will be going overtime
9. Respect public decorum.
10. There must be full participation on the part of the group members in giving comments within the meeting and fulfilling information data duties on time. It is

Important that all members have a part to play in the information gathering part of the research.

11. A fixed rate of 50,000 cedes (\$10 Cdn) will be provided for people travelling in Accra to the workshop. People travelling outside of Accra, i.e., Tamale and Wa, will have their tickets reimbursed. If you do not attend the workshop, you will not receive this travel allowance.
12. It was agreed that 150,000 cedes (\$30 Cdn) remunerations would be given to each person attending the workshops. If you don't attend, you will not receive this money. It was agreed that these rules could be altered according to need and would be revisited at each workshop. The remunerations would be revisited in April by the facilitator. (In April the remunerations were changed to 200,000 cedes (\$40 Cdn) however the transportation allowance remained the same throughout).

The workshop was paid for out of the project money and the group appreciated this very much. The workshop challenged people to think about cultural differences, communicating their feelings and concerns and thinking outside their own frame of reference. Three group members share their feelings about the weekend.

I have learned some different kinds of ideas, I believe in sharing and we shall continue to share in the research.

It has been a rich experience. Actually we learned.

I also think it has been wonderful being together, tapping one another's information and knowledge. Knowledge is what they say is PAR. I bring something small and it has been great and getting to know ourselves and...getting to know the interactions and all of that.

One group member summarizes the work we did at Aburi:

We should bear it in mind that when things are different it doesn't mean they are wrong. As social workers we must be accommodating and then we should listen to other people's points of views and philosophies, you know, different things that are in the world.

What these group members learned at this workshop would influence the rest of the project and set the stage for positive consensus and dialogue.

The evolution of the group research project

Introduction. In order for the PAR process to emerge and evolve, the facilitator had an important role in planning activities that would generate critical thinking about Ghanaian history generally and about social work in particular. Each of the first four workshops was planned only after I had transcribed and reflected on the words and general feelings of the previous workshop. The tables were arranged in such a way that we could sit in a circle thus encouraging a non-hierarchical atmosphere in the room. According to Fals Borda (1988) meeting in a circle “breaks up the rites of submission and dependency...the idea is that those present could see and talk to one another without having to refer to a ‘leader’ sitting in front, like the teacher in a traditional school” (p. 36). Each workshop built upon the others until we decided on a theme to focus on for the remainder of the research project. I wrote about this process.

I am a bit stuck for Saturday and this skit. I wish I hadn't put it into the agenda but maybe between now and Saturday my creativity will kick in and I can make some progress. (After workshop) Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and one particular person really came alive during the skit time. It was fun to see.

After each workshop I would take a day off and then transcribe the workshop. This took at least three days and was difficult to start.

Research Group Profile

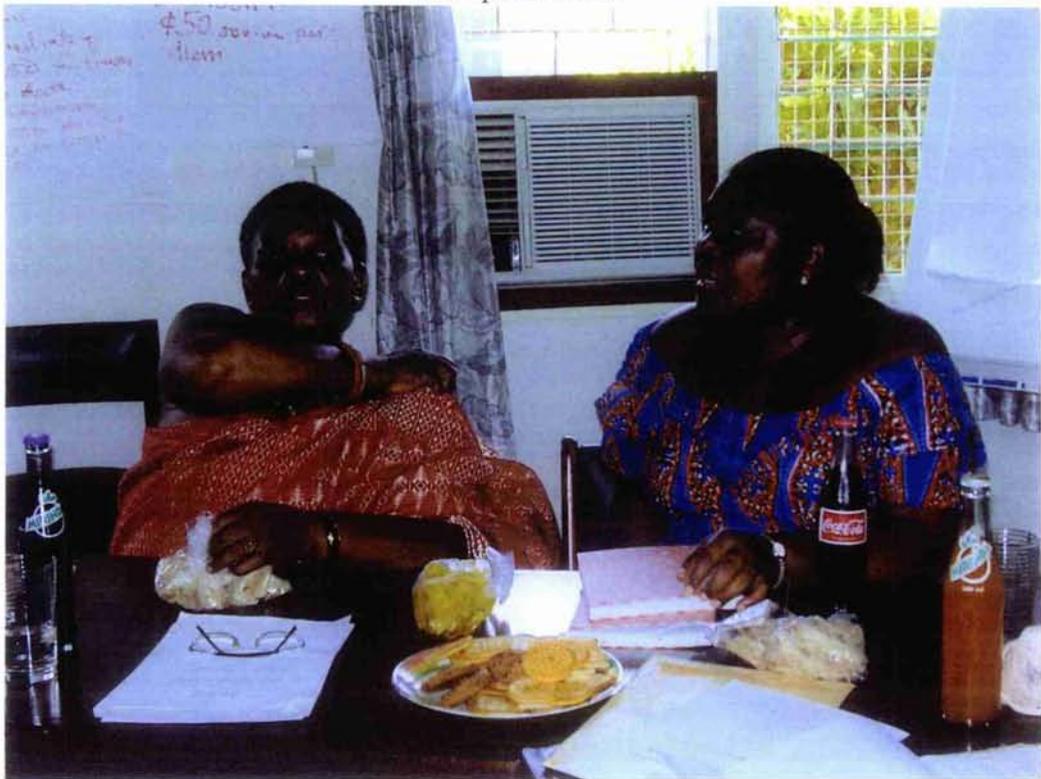
Name	Age	Ethnicity	Religion	Language	Gender	Marital status
Abukari Ziblim	34	Dagomba	Muslim	Dagomba, English	Male	Married with 1 child
Salima Iddrisu Imoro	43	Dagomba	Muslim	Dagomba, English,	Female	Married with 5 children
Patience Antonio	34	Asante, Nzema	Christian	Twi, English,	Female	Married with 2 children
Nana Boatema Afrakoma II	71	Asante	Christian	Twi, English	Female	Married with 5 children
Kwaku Akuoko Afram	27	Asante	Christian	Twi, English	Male	Single
Jones Adu-Gyamfi	26	Asante	Christian	Twi, English Ga, Fante	Male	Single
Joanna Mensah	50	Fante	Christian	Fante, English Ewe, Mina	Female	Married with 2 children
Comfort Sackey	38	Akwapim	Christian	Twi, English Ewe, Ga	Female	Married with 2 children
Dzabuni Dah George	48	Sissala	Christian	Sissali, English	Male	Married with 4 children
Linda Kreitzer	48	Scottish/German	Quaker	English, Spanish	Female	Single

Research Group Profile

Name	Yr. of graduation or involvement with the Department of Social Work	Place of work or study
Abukari Ziblim	Graduated in 1996 – Bachelor's in social work	Opportunities Industrialization Centres - NGO
Salima Iddrisu Imoro	Graduated in 2002 – Diploma program	Department of Community Development
Patience Antonio	Graduated in 1994 – Bachelor's in social work	Freedom from Hunger – Ghana – NGO
Nana Boatema Afrakoma II	Paramount Queen Mother, Juansa, Ashanti Region, community leader and a retired teacher.	School proprietress for Siriboe Memorial School, Kineshie, President of the Ashanti Regional Queen Mother's Association.
Kwaku Akuoko Afram	Graduated in 2001 – Bachelor's in social work	Teacher's assistant for the Department of Social Work, National Service post.
Jones Adu-Gyamfi	Graduate in 2002 – Bachelor's in social work	Teacher's assistant for the Department of Social Work, National Service post.
Joanna Mensah	Part-time tutor at the Department of Social Work since March 1999.	Principal of the School of Social Work – Osu, Department of Social Welfare
Comfort Sackey	Current student in the Department of Social Work	Department of Social Welfare
Dzabuni Dah George	Current student in the Department of Social Work	Department of Social Welfare
Linda Kreitzer	Taught social work at the University of Ghana from 1994-1996.	University of Calgary, Canada



Group Members



Group Members

I spent the day transcribing and only going to the internet café for a break. I get so excited when I transcribe because I can pick things out that I didn't hear earlier on in the workshop... I am going through the same dread of beginning this transcribing but yet am anxious to go over everything again. I have this love/hate relationship with the computer, recorder and typing!... I want to finish this transcribing today but it is driving me crazy.

When I finished, I made copies for each group member and created a package to deliver to them. The package included the transcript, next meeting's agenda and a letter to each person about anything I wanted to communicate to him or her. I then hand-delivered these packs to each person in Accra and mailed the pack to others who were outside Accra.

I made 12 copies of the transcript and copied other material. I hired a taxi to help me deliver the packs to the different places. I dropped the transcripts off to Community Development, Social Welfare, Legon, and Freedom from Hunger and then went to see the Queen Mother. We sat in her backyard and talked for 2 hours. I left and got home late. I think I have had sunstroke and don't feel well.

The mail system was not good and several times group members did not receive their pack and were very frustrated.

As for my script, I haven't read it because it arrived late.

The goal was to get this pack to everyone at least one week in advance of the next workshop. In retrospect, it was a lot of written material and I found members not reading the letter and the transcript. Eventually, they asked me to summarize the transcript and I formed a pattern where I would take direct quotes from the reflection period and summarize points, and make another summary at the end of the second part of the workshop. This seemed to help busy people who did not have time to read the whole transcript. I write in my journal.

The workshop began with a discussion concerning the word for word transcripts and how necessary they were to the project. It was acknowledged that the summaries in the last transcript were very helpful...Linda will summarize when appropriate and people have the choice of whether or not they want to read the whole of the transcript.

I wrote the main points of the last session on flip charts and posted them at the next workshop. This also reminded people of what we had talked about at the last workshop.

Towards June I organized and worked with the group concerning the action plans and helped with the script and filming for the video. Other important jobs for me concerning the action plans were scheduling and pushing forward the video, organizing the Association meeting and organizing the document concerning curriculum changes so that we would finish before I left. I also organized a video to show when presenting the project to the public.

Chronological presentation of workshops

The following is a chronological account of the workshops and my own perceptions of the important learning moments in each workshop.

January 25th presentation. This open presentation to the public allowed for people to come and learn more about the project and to see if they would be interested in participating in the project.

Aburi workshop. This residential workshop brought the group members together for the first time. Activities centred on getting to know each other and to challenge our belief systems in a creative way.

March 8th workshop. This workshop proved to be a good follow-up for the evolution of this research project. People were still not clear about how the research would evolve and others seemed shy to speak. As facilitator, I could understand their concern, as I was not sure how it was all going to come out either. At this session, I introduced the

reflection period. I described it as a time at the beginning of the workshop that allowed members to share their reflections from the previous workshop if they wished to do so. They had each been given a journal to write their thoughts in and they could read from those journals.

I did a lot of reflection and then I made some observations and I noted them down in the journal because I wanted to make the book useful.

As time went on, the reflection period, in my opinion, became the most important part of the PAR process. As people trusted each other and as the group bonded, these reflection times were crucial to the dynamics of the group. On this particular occasion, we did a skit in which a family of four (father, mother, child and handicapped child) took on the role of a family in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Ghana. This skit emerged from a creative moment I had on the TroTro (minivan).

I had a brainstorm on the way home from Legon today. As I am thinking about what to do to get across the idea of how social work came to Ghana, I thought of a play or human sculpturing...we could enact the way social work knowledge came to Ghana through colonialism and modernization.

The purpose was to use drama and storytelling to remind each other what life was like in these three different eras of Ghanaian history through the eyes of the group members. This work began our thinking about the evolution of social work education in Ghana, education issues facing today's government and the effects of neo-liberal globalization on the lives of Ghanaian people. The skit proved very effective in reminding people and in teaching me as an outsider about the changes that the family had experienced over the years. As facilitator, I took a role as a child in post-colonial society. I was able to talk through my understanding of Ghanaian culture with the group and modify some of my

knowledge, particularly concerning pre-colonial Ghana. The following were questions posed to the group by myself to reflect on for the next workshop:

1. What cultural practices, institutions and beliefs in these three eras are reflected in social work knowledge today?
2. How much of the colonial period can we still see in social work education, government and non-government organizations?
3. Did we have a system of knowledge before colonialism that we could have drawn upon in order to develop a social welfare system that met the needs of Ghanaians?
4. Who do the social welfare institutions serve? Do they serve the people of Ghana and their culture or the culture of outsiders?
5. If you were given the task of starting a social welfare system without outside intervention, how would you do it?

These questions were indeed challenging and difficult to address, since colonialism has had such an influence on the culture of Ghana. However, reflections centred on these issues and the next workshop proved important in the working through of these questions.

March 29th workshop. The Queen Mother came to us for the first time. Her role in the group was still unclear, yet group members graciously received her. Our workshop began with reflections from the last workshop. I was pleased that people used their journals to write down reflections. One group member reflected on the workshops so far.

The question of whether there is anything like an African culture, I also tried to make the same point and tried to put something down.

The second half of the workshop was spent with group members sharing personal experiences about their encounters with the social work curriculum. This exercise highlighted how different the curriculum has been for each person throughout a span of ten years. At this point, I suggested that in PAR we do not talk about problems but about issues. This formulation would point away from a negative connotation and promote a more neutral approach to addressing the issue of curriculum.

The importance of this workshop was that major areas for the research emerged and were identified. These themes continued to emerge in further sessions and were elaborated upon. The identification of the main theme for the research project was “Social Work in Ghana: Education and Practice.” One group member drew our thoughts together.

I think Social Work in Ghana: Education and Practice covers the whole thing because the education covers the curriculum that we have and the practice covers the practice.

The group then identified two major areas of information needed for this theme. The first was an exploration of the whole question “What is African/Ghanaian culture?” The second area looked at the evolution of social work training and practice in Ghana. Once these priorities were established, we directed our attention to ways in which information could be gathered. To help this process, I asked the group the following questions.

1. What knowledge or information do we need to know to educate ourselves about this topic?
2. How are we going to collect this information?
3. There are many different ways to collect information like inviting people to come and dialogue with us, interview people one on one, analyze course outlines, participatory observation in classrooms, to name a few. What do we want to do that will give us the information we need and that respects our own time and schedules?

The group liked the idea of inviting people to dialogue with us concerning particular topics and names were suggested as to who would be appropriate. We felt that people from the Institute of African Studies would be helpful and that I should contact these people. I made personal visits to potential speakers to discuss what we would like them to bring to the group. Each person approached was eager to come. We identified people who are knowledgeable about the evolution of social work in Ghana and different group members agreed to approach these people. Finally, two group members agreed to collect course outlines from lecturers for use later on in the project. Much was accomplished at

this workshop and our reflections and dialogue guided us to the way the research project would evolve.

April 11th workshop. This workshop proved to be very active in the reflection area. People presented issues stimulated by the last workshop. We discussed the curriculum and the plight of lecturers. The second half of the workshop was spent in groups of three identifying social issues in Ghana. I explained the purpose to the group.

The purpose of this is for you to begin to think about social issues in Ghana so that as we look at the curriculum we can decide what is missing from the curriculum.

Once this work was completed, we reconvened and the group came up with 36 different social issues that social workers deal with on a daily basis.

I had some positive feedback about my research today. I think people are amazed at the energy and the concept of the research. One group member has been a great help to me and we have gotten to know each other quite well and I am grateful for this.

May 3rd workshop. This workshop was important in establishing a good dialogue between group members and our first speaker. Five of the members had taken the opportunity to read various articles concerning social work in Africa (Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa) and other regions of the world (India and China). The group formulated an important question that sowed the seed for further discussion and action plans:

Why is social work on the periphery in Ghana and how do we change the stereotypes of social workers and broaden the scope, especially in regards to our role as social workers?

The second half of the workshop was spent on engaging in a dialogue with Dr. Awedoba from the Institute of African Studies concerning culture. Group members asked questions around what is culture, what is Ghanaian/African culture, do Africans think differently

than Europeans and how do we transfer our knowledge about Ghanaian society into social work practice? I asked the group the following questions.

1. How do we look at the whole content of social work and make it more useful to our needs and not necessarily to the needs of those people that brought it or people that said we should learn it? How do we make it friendly to our own needs?
2. Is it possible to introduce new ways, which would reflect our lifestyle in our social work program interventions that would make it more receptive to people?

The Queen Mother was able to share her experiences with the group in storytelling form and this added to the dialogue. The group members exhibited great respect for each other's viewpoints and often referred to what others had said during the dialogue to bring up other points or to enhance points. Many local examples were used to illustrate points, something the group identified as missing in their university education. Finally, there was anxiety concerning how we could integrate these cultural sessions into social work practice. My response was as follows:

The group process is the means by which we begin to integrate culture and social work. As we hear more speakers, we will begin to integrate these two areas together through our dialogue and through our reflections and thinking in-between meetings. Integration is a slow and often an unseen process but it will happen!

It did indeed happen and group members became more comfortable with this process as time went on.

May 23rd workshop. The reflections starting this workshop mirrored the concerns about integration from the last session and members very powerfully exchanged their views on integrating culture with effective social work practice. One member explained the importance of this integration.

We need to know the relevance of the cultural aspect of the people we are dealing with because it will enable us to be creative in developing relevant programs and projects that will, as much as possible, be based on their specific cultural values which people will accept as their own and will believe in that.

The workshop then entered into dialogue with Dr. Blavo, a social worker, international United Nations worker and former Chairman of the Refugee Board in Ghana. The dialogue proved to be powerful and significant to the life of the members of the group. He talked to the group about the history of social work in Ghana. The workshop was so powerful that it changed the course of several group members' thinking about social work in Ghana and their own plans for the future.

I hate to say that when I was in my final year or so well as for social work, I only did it as a discipline and I would move to an MB in finance or law. But I think through this particular research method I have learned to love social work. The discussion with Dr. Blavo was actually asking me to stick to social work in the future.

Three major statements by Dr. Blavo affected the group in a sobering way.

To me, the profession of social work is not yet born in Ghana and in the whole of Africa. Social work in Africa has a very big problem in which we have not succeeded in achieving societal acceptability.

The enemies of social work are social workers themselves. They will only be called lawyers when they do work but they will hate to be called social workers. Social workers are shy of their profession and this is why social work is not moving.

Yes we have an Association of Social Work in Ghana. Where is it? Is it effective? Is it working? If you call people to come together, they don't come.

These hard truths penetrated the core of the group and affected the rest of the workshops. As Dr. Blavo explored the evolution of social work in Ghana, it was evident that group members had not received adequate teaching in the history of social work in Ghana and West Africa at university. What was being taught in the History and Philosophy of Social Work course? The question had to be asked. There was a feeling of urgency concerning gathering information from the pioneers of social work in Ghana, because they were in their later years of life. There had to be a good selection of indigenous writing concerning the history of social work written by and experienced

through the eyes of these pioneers before it was too late. I wrote my feelings about the group during this period.

Now I am excited again because I can see that people are really beginning to think about what has been said and the articles I have given them to read. I sense maturity in the group that shows people are really growing.

Culture and social work history were beginning to come together like a work of art where the whole picture was emerging amid the chaos of the workshops.

June 14th workshop. This workshop was full of surprises. It challenged me as a facilitator to be flexible and open to the situation that was presented to us and to use the most of our opportunity, even if events did not go as planned.

Our speaker arrived two hours later than expected. It was a blessing because we were able to discuss other project issues. I felt today that the group was really together and working together. The speaker finally arrived and everyone graciously stayed until 5pm.

Reflections centred on our dialogue with Dr. Blavo and group members were genuinely shaken and disturbed by the thoughts and statements by which he challenged us. While some continued to read articles concerning social work in Africa, others asked the following significant questions concerning social work in Ghana.

What still bothers my mind is the fact that graduates of social work who have passed through this university don't want to identify themselves as social workers.

My concern with Dr. Blavo's challenge is that if we are not careful it is going to be shop talk and it will appear that we will not be able to do anything about social work in Ghana.

Where are we as social workers? I don't even know where we are. Even if it (social work) hasn't started and it is not dead then where is it?

The group then engaged in a lively dialogue concerning the Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW). Dialogue centred around the fact that the Association was not effective as a support to social workers or as a voice to the government on social policy.



Life trees – Aburi Workshop



The group workshop

One group member stated his observations.

There are a few NGOs in this country who are playing a very important role which I think have taken the place of what a social work Association could have done. In fact ISODEC has been a watchdog for the government and any social policy formulated by the government is critically looked at by ISODEC.

Knowledge and ideas were generated as to how we could, as a research group, somehow promote change or a revival with the Association. Time was also spent time looking at what we could do to educate the public about social work. We agreed that we would do a public education video about social work in Ghana and discussed the practicalities of how we would go about doing this.

Our speaker finally arrived and we embarked on a dialogue concerning language and how it is used in Ghanaian culture. Through storytelling and proverbs, we learned about the different indigenous social mechanisms used in Ghanaian society to relieve tension. The use of drama, singing and story telling allow people the space to get rid of their anger and frustration in a productive and often fun way. Conflict resolution can be found in many of the different Ghanaian traditions. We identified four characteristics of Ghanaians as 1) saving face 2) consensus orientated society 3) community based society and 4) a society that encourages an external display of emotions. Concerning culture and social workers our speaker reminded us of the following task.

We are confronted each day with beliefs that have been entrenched in society for centuries of history. If you want people to break away they have to have a good reason why they should not do it... You have to know what is traditionally done and what is the persons' interpretation of that tradition in the communities you are working in.

Finally, our speaker encouraged us with the following words: "Social workers are pioneers because the situation has changed. The ethnic group is no longer the only

authority. People are out there with various options. As social workers you are offering people possibilities so let us expand the possibilities, their horizons.”

June 27th workshop. The integration of knowledge gained from our different methods of information gathering and social work practice certainly displayed itself during this workshop. The conscientization of the group’s understanding of the issues surrounding social work curriculum and the indigenization process was definitely evident. Several people were able to consider articles they had read concerning practice in other African countries and question their relevance to the Ghanaian setting. Critical thinking was beginning to guide this group and as a facilitator this was very exciting to witness. One group member, after being exposed to discussions of indigenous social mechanisms, commented.

The talk we had about how indigenous systems have been built into our system and tension releasing mechanisms, I haven’t heard it before ... I didn’t know.

Another group member had read an article given to the group concerning social work in West Africa.

We have not heard about this. We don’t know much about it.

Another group member, after reading an article on the history of social work in Ghana, questioned why practice had not moved forward. She had previously pointed out the fact that when social work in the Ghana started in the early 1960s there were three full-time faculty members and that had still not changed. Concerning practice, the group member states,

When Dr. Blavo was talking he said that developmental social work started way back here in Ghana. And yes if you read this article we are doing the same thing. It looks like we haven’t moved forward. It is still the same thing and now we have different problems.

The issue of whether social work practice in Ghana reflected indigenous beliefs and practices was now coming to the forefront and was being critically questioned and reflected upon. Another group member shares his views.

I think we can incorporate indigenous practices in what we consider to be the foreign things we do in Ghana ... the ceremonies that we create around our programs could even make it more acceptable to our people... we feel that they are not too acceptable and we understand those things in principle and we accept them and we want to make it more practical, we could create ceremonies, we could change some of the things that go with it to make it more acceptable.

Our speaker was one of the newest lecturers in the department. She explained the Bachelor level courses and the revision of these courses over the past two years. Due to staff shortages the revised curriculum could not be implemented. The rest of the workshop looked at the wider issues surrounding a good social work curriculum and the chronic shortage of teachers. I appreciated the positive interaction between group members and this faculty person and her obvious enjoyment of the time with us.

July 12th workshop. The group decided to meet three times in July and August to finish the research. Group members were getting anxious to see the end of the project and several were leaving in August. The workshop seemed occupied with the "How do we?" or "What can we do?" questions. It seemed that the reflections and the time with our speaker left group members overwhelmed with systems, cultural beliefs and practices that seemed to promote a negative portrayal of society and an apathy for change. Several commented on the university system and curriculum changes.

What impact can we bring to bear on this situation (University system that offers lecturers poor conditions of service) so that at the end of the day the work that we do we will see our fruits being utilized.

How can we relay our action plan here to the University authorities as a matter of fact to give some exception to their standing orders for recruiting social work lecturers?

Our speaker for the workshop was Professor Glover, a professional artist who started the first art gallery in Accra, Ghana. Some of the group members were unclear as to the relevance of art to social work. Wisely another group member explained.

Social work, we all agree, is culture specific. That is why we are even exploring this. That is the sense of this thing. We all have agreed that the social work we have here is not specific to our culture. So, what is our culture in the first place? These talks will help us to bring into perspective the main tendencies in our culture upon which we will then turn our focus onto the curriculum.

Through our dialogue, we were able to understand the difference between a country that is merely surviving and one that is developing. Group members were concerned that the media and the arts were portraying family life and society in a very negative way and we, as social workers, also fell into the trap of accentuating only the problems of life. There seemed to be great concern about the apparent apathy in society concerning poverty. Barriers to change were identified. Although group members were asking these questions, they also took an active part in answering them through their own experiences, thoughts and reflections. After Professor Glover told us a bit about how the artist tries to “capture certain transient things in society ... and tries to paint things that they think are positive to the culture,” I could relate to the social worker as an artist in the work that we do. I shared with the group.

I want to say that I think social workers are artists. Like an artist would go out and see a scene and would have your easel and brush and assess the scene and then you start painting. That is exactly what social workers do. They go into a community; they assess the situation and together with the community create solutions to issues facing the community.

Finally, we talked about how to create a learning environment in which social workers can enhance and build on the inner strength of people. Our speaker reminded us of the importance of dreamers.

If we are going to talk of development in any society in many situations then you must have dreamers. Dreamers are visionaries. People who, when you say 2+2 will not say 4....If there are creative people performing then they bring about change, positive change in the society and that is progress. That is development.

Towards the end of the workshop group members were sharing openly how they used art and media to enhance their own social work practice and how effective this could be in practice.

July 18 workshop. Reflections concerning the last workshop centred on our need as social workers to take a developmental approach to our practice. Two group members share their thoughts.

This is how social work began in Ghana and we need to revive this approach. It is very important for us as social workers and I think that is sometimes the problem or misconception that we have that in helping people we let them become sometimes dependent on us to a point where they cannot be on their own.

We must realize that if we are looking for the development of the people, then we need to put into place structures or systems that will make those people not just survive but will help them to develop themselves to the extent that with or without us whatever process we have started with them could continue.

We finished the workshop by spending time in groups looking at the various course outlines acquired over the past few months. Two group members and I collected the different course outlines. We were such a diverse group of individuals who had experienced the program over a period of ten years. It was helpful that we could learn from each other's experiences, but we were also confused as a group as to what was happening now and how things had changed over the years.

July 25 workshop. By this time, our action plans were definitely evolving, particularly the video of social work in Ghana and the curriculum revision. The meeting began with each group from the last workshop sharing what they had found when analyzing the course outlines. Issues highlighted were the lack of indigenous writing used in the course



Group workshop



Group workshop

outlines and the western approach taken to the History and Philosophy of Social Work, with little African and Ghanaian history taught in the class. The influence of volunteers of past years could be seen in the teaching styles and the organization of the fieldwork practica. The message that came through loud and clear was that generally, teaching is at a theoretical level and there needs to be many more practical examples and experience in the classroom. Our speaker for the afternoon was Mr. Abrefa, the administrator at the Department of Social Work. He reviewed with us the new Master's program and generally, people were pleased with what was to be offered. However, the big issue remaining in everyone's mind was the university system and issues that keep potential faculty members from applying for teaching positions. The overall feeling of the group was that positive changes were happening and that we were privileged to be part of this process.

August 9th workshop. We spent our time developing action plans for the research project. We talked at length concerning the purpose of the public education video. One group member reminded us of the purpose of the video.

The exercise is meant to explain to the Ghanaian public about what social workers can do and what they are doing.

One member was concerned whether or not their participation in the video would be appropriate and this person was given support by the rest of the group to participate. By this stage, most group members had a good idea of where they wanted to be filmed and what they wanted to say.

August 16th workshop. This was our last information-gathering workshop that included a guest speaker. Professor Nana Apt talked about the evolution of the curriculum and shared her own personal experiences over the years concerning social

work education. We also shared with her our thoughts and views about the future of social work in Ghana. It was apparent that institutional bureaucracy, different personalities and difficulties in retaining staff were impediments to the implementation of the curriculum. We were pleased that much effort had gone into revising the bachelor's program and creating the master's program. Faculty, staff and NGOs were involved in planning for the revision of the Bachelor's program and the creation of the Master's program. As Professor Apt explained,

We wanted the kind of bachelor education that would train the social worker to be, in a way generic, and also a specialist. Generic but what you pick in your elective you can then do more... We have moved from the typical social welfare community development programs to a mixture where...the whole idea of working with an individual, working with groups and working with communities is combined in practice.

Concerning the Master's program, the emphasis would be on critical thinking and independent study steered by the student. A more macro emphasis concerning social issues in Ghana would be required. Concerning the GASOW, Professor Apt encouraged the group to engage in positive change:

Go out there, have a revolution, a coup and set up a national organization. I mean I have no objection to this but it has to be a national organization...one that is not so much a departmental thing but is national and is not necessarily for people who work in the government.

We then confirmed all the scheduled video filming that would take place in the next few weeks.

August 22nd workshop. Our time was spent reflecting on our last workshop and on some of the barriers to developing social work. The issue of poor pay and conditions for lecturers was highlighted as well as the issue of the inactive Association. We then planned our strategy for creating a new Association. Once that was completed, we

continued our editing of the recommendations for changes to the curriculum. A draft had been written and distributed to each member between workshops.

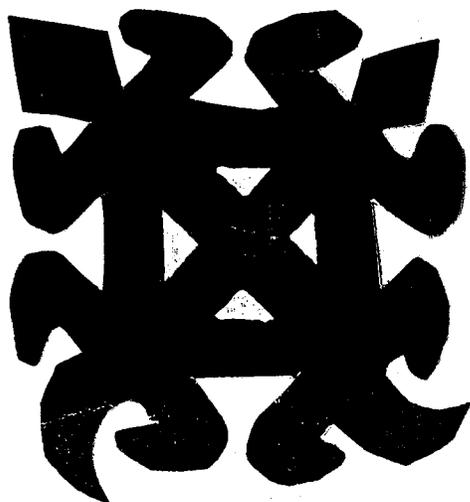
We met on two other occasions to edit the public education video, edit the recommendations for changes to the curriculum and plan the Association meeting. We agreed to have a presentation day at the Department of Social Work on October 17th to share our research project with faculty, students and the general public.

Summary

Although the research questions at the beginning of this chapter guided the initial phases of the project the group went beyond these to critically look at issues concerning their own lives and Ghanaian society. Critical theory is concerned with societal structures that cause oppression and which prevent humans from fulfilling their creative potentials in life. PAR is a research method and philosophy that creates space to critically think about power relations and how they affect our lives. It is an avenue by which new knowledge is produced and where people are empowered to change their situations. Gramsci, Freire and Foucault offer a link between theory and research with an understanding of and commitment to critical/participatory education.

An important part of this research is the growth and learning experiences of the group and a chronological description of the workshops provide one perception of the learning that took place in this research project. Another way of looking at the learning experiences of the group is provided in the next chapter.

Adinkra Symbols reflecting the research project



Afuntummireku-Denkyemmireku

The plural headed crocodile with a single stomach
 Symbol of unity in diversity. Democracy, oneness
 of humanity in spite of cultural diversities (Quarcoo, 1972)



Sank fa

Return and pick it up. Learn
 From or build on the past.
 Pick up the gems of the past.
 (Quarcoo, 1972)

Chapter Five

The group process in knowledge production – Layers of Learning

From the very day we started here, when we had the introduction up to now, I have been thinking about how we are going to conclude this exercise...I am still thinking about how, at the end of this exercise, what we are going to come up with? Because so far what we have done is through consensus, where we reach a point where everybody will agree before we move on (group member).

Journey of a lifetime

Over the past few years, particularly since embarking on this research project, I have sought to live life day by day, trusting my intuition and to live the evolutionary process of life. During the project I became more sensitive to the times in which living and working were in harmony and when disharmony prevailed, making me feel frustrated, frightened and out of control. I learned that disharmony was often due to my impatience as well as my dislike of not being in control of life around me and within me. I learned that if I relax, feel the world around me and accept the timing of life, and accept that it is okay to feel out of control, that a new understanding of my life and work would emerge and often the disharmony evaporates. As my own words state at the beginning of this thesis, I have begun to learn to harmonize the different worlds that I come into contact with and the balancing of these worlds will continue to challenge me wherever I go. Through this project I gained insight into myself, the intuitive timing in life and the importance of quietly waiting and patiently listening to the rhythms of the seen and unseen worlds around me. In Ghana, my refuge was Aburi Gardens and there I found my harmony and balance.

Introduction

The PAR process is an evolutionary process in which the group navigates the course of the research and determines its destination. Park (2001) describes three forms of knowledge as representational, relational and reflective. Representational knowledge includes the functional and interpretive aspects of knowledge; the relational is the “act of relating and shows itself in words, expressions, actions and other forms of doing relationships” (p. 85); and reflective knowledge when people “critically analyzing and evaluating questions of morality and values relating to their life conditions and the proper actions to take” (p. 86). These forms of knowledge are interwoven in the experiences of this research project and can be identified as knowledge generated concerning social work education and practice issues (representational); knowledge produced through the group’s relationships with the PAR process, with each other, with Ghanaian society and with Ghanaian social work (relational); and knowledge generated through critically analyzing new knowledge produced concerning Ghanaian society, social work and ourselves, with the practical action plans evolving from this critical thinking (reflective).

At the beginning of the process, several group members were uncertain as to how this research would evolve and I felt they sensed my own uncertainty about its evolution. Learning to be comfortable with this evolutionary process can be difficult at times and yet can be liberating once this freedom and empowerment is felt. Several people told me before I started this project that my most important and difficult task as a facilitator would be to establish trust within the group. Without trust, the group would not grow. This insight was helpful to me as I tried to create an environment where trust was established between group members.

Like an onion the PAR process has many layers. Each of these layers of learning is important to the overall research experience and to the relationships developed, the conscientization of members and the action plans carried out. In other words, the process in PAR is just as important as the outcomes. One group member shares his thoughts about the project.

What fascinates me is this aspect of, the positive aspect of democracy, in which we conducted this research ... It was very apparent that everybody's views were respected, every contribution critically examined before acceptance or rejection so that at the tail end of it we came out with fruitful issues.

Another benefit that I have gained from this research is the friends I have made. We have all manner of people around, the young and dynamic...and the not too young. Now I can get up and go to a traditional leader without the normal traditional proper paraphernalia. I think I am comfortable and grateful for the friends I have made and for the impact I hope to have.

Each theme, emerging from twelve group transcripts, is separated into sections that capture the learning experiences of the group members and me as the facilitator. They are as follows: relationships with PAR; relationships with each other; relationships with Ghana society; and relationships with Ghana social work. This separation does not, in any way, put me outside the experiences of the group, but the facilitator's sections expresses my own experiences as a facilitator that may not be known by the group. There will be some repetition from the previous chapter concerning events of the project. In contrast to the previous chapter, which is a chronological summary of the workshops, this section relates to the themes of the research. The words of the group members are in shaded boxes and my own thoughts, taken from the transcripts and my journal, are in non-shaded boxes for easy identification.

Relationships with the PAR process

Relationship between group members and the PAR process.

Introduction

None of the group members had heard of PAR as a research methodology. I introduced the whole concept at the Aburi workshop in February and gave a few articles out for the members to read. At first the situation was confusing.

<p>Member: I want to know how the research will be carried out? Facilitator: That is something the group will have to decide together...it is supposed to be a group consensus process.</p>

The important learning experiences concerning the PAR process and means by which knowledge was produced can be identified in various themes in this section: dialogue, consensus, group commitment, information gathering, and evolutionary process. This section is followed by my own thoughts of the PAR process through the eyes of a facilitator. Themes emerging are a sacred place, creating space to learn, speakers, learning about culture, emotional ups and downs, the outsider, integration, support from inside and outside and action plans.

Dialogue

The dialogical process includes different relational experiences and is an intricate process. Freire (1997) describes dialogue as an “encounter between men and women, mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (p. 69). It unites reflection and action, to transform the world and it “cannot exist in the absence of profound love for the world and for people” (p. 70). It also requires faith in humankind and their ability to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human” (p. 71). Fals Borda (1988) describes the dialogical process in PAR as “learning to

interact and organize” (p.21), which includes breaking relationships of submission, dealing with tensions and persisting with the process. Also included in this process is “learning to recognize oneself” (p. 51) through collective research, recovery of history and the production of new knowledge. David Bohm (1993) describes the spirit of dialogue, as “ a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which will emerge some new understanding, something creative” (p. 10). In practical terms this process includes profound respect for each other’s view, without conclusions or judgment. “In dialogue the whole structure of defensiveness and opinions and division can collapse; and suddenly the feeling can change to one of fellowship and friendship, participation and sharing” (p. 10). It is in the sharing and giving that dialogue has its power.

The dialogical process was an important learning experience for the group. We regularly discussed the principles of dialogue, particularly at the beginning when new people came to the group. Learning the importance of respecting other views was an important beginning. During one of the earlier sessions, a new member criticized another’s reflections and this had a devastating affect on the member sharing. It took the help of others and me to mend the atmosphere between these two members. Others were very good at respecting each other’s views and began their responses in ways that honoured each other’s views.

Don’t take it all as if the person is arguing with you... because I was making a lot of sense from both ways. I could associate myself with what she said and I could also understand where she (other person) was coming from.

As much as I agree with you, I beg to differ on the issue of secrecy.

Let me say that I really appreciate what you have said very much. I am just going to wrap up. I am just saying that we are looking at how we can improve the system.

David Bohm (1993) wrote a helpful article called “For truth try dialogue” that educated members on the concept of dialogue. Once people had read that article, there was a noticeable change in the group’s ability to appreciate one another’s ideas. Writing the important points of the dialogical process on flip charts also reminded us of the skill of dialogue.

Dialogue	Debate
1. We are all winners.	1. There is a winner and a loser.
2. Power is with each other.	2. Power is over each other.
3. We are positive about other views.	3. We are critical about other views.
4. We encourage people to share views.	4. We discourage people from sharing their views.

I tried to explain to the group my understanding of dialogue.

Dialogue is where there is not an attempt to gain points, or to make your particular views prevail. People are not arguing against each other but with each other. In dialogue everybody wins. It is the realization of what is on each other’s minds without coming to any conclusions or judgments. In a dialogue we have to weigh the question a little, ponder it a little, feel it out ... it is not necessary that everybody be convinced to have the same view.

Although simplistic, these points helped the group focus on respecting each other’s views, which then allowed the other aspects of dialogue to emerge.

Consensus

One of the speakers validated the view that Ghana is a consensus society and that decisions are made within a group process. “One of our ideals for all Ghanaian societies is that we must arrive at consensus at the end of the day.” The research group took this very seriously when talking about differences in understanding issues as well as deciding on action plans. As our first consensus exercise, we determined when and where we should meet. We had to take into consideration people’s work and family schedules, religious meetings and the fact that some people were travelling from outside Accra.

When it came to identifying a theme for the research, we were able to come up with “Social Work in Ghana: Education and Practice” and this was agreed by everyone. We discussed whether new people should join the group late in the process because I, as a facilitator, was feeling uncomfortable with people joining us so late. Others disagreed. “I think our group is an open group and is very flexible too” seemed to be the consensus of the group toward new people joining us. We also talked about how we could include interested people who could not come; one idea was to send them transcripts so that they could identify various themes and feed back their information to us as time went on. Finally, we agreed together on the people to invite to dialogue with us.

We spent many hours discussing how we could educate the public concerning social work and what options we had in order to bring the profession to the public’s attention. We discussed the best way to deal with the Association and what to put in the recommendations for the curriculum changes. In particular, concerning the Association, some members felt that we should revive the old Association, while others felt that we should start a new one. Consensus was reached when we agreed to hold an open meeting to brainstorm and look at this issue, inviting any social worker in Ghana who wanted to attend.

Group Commitment

The commitment of the group to the research process was very impressive. One person came down from the North twice a month, a 15-hour bus ride, if the bus didn’t break down part way, to participate in the meeting. Most people had full-time jobs or were full-time students. Many experienced illnesses and had families to look after.

First of all I have to apologize for not being with the group last time. I was down with malaria and after the malaria I had Apollo (red eye) so it has been a period of misfortunes.

I didn't do much reading because as I was very busy and I apologize for that because I have exams and that has made me so tensed up.

I am sorry that I didn't have time to go through the script because I was busy organizing, next week we will be having workshop for our regional directors and assistants. I am organizing everything.

Despite these life duties and experiences, we always had at least seven out of ten people participating in each workshop. I remember asking one of my PhD committee members why people keep coming even when they were sick, had hardships, had family issues or were just tired. His response was “What you have created is a ‘space’ where people are free to learn. This is why they keep coming I think” (T. Pyrch, personal communication, May 10, 2003).

Knowledge Production

Introduction. This research concerns knowledge production and unique to this process is dialogical process between a group of people concerned with the topic of social work in Ghana. Through critically thinking together and interacting relationally the group produced important new knowledge. The process of continual reflection and action allowed the group to work through all the information we gathered and were able to produce and act upon this new knowledge. The types of information-gathering techniques consisted of oral tradition including personal experiences, storytelling, drama and proverbs. Other ways of information gathering included reading academic articles, writing in journals and reflecting on what had been learned, listening to and interacting with guest speakers, and looking at course outlines. Some of the group members were surprised at the many different techniques, as these were not the standard quantitative

research techniques that they were used to. All had experienced a rigid form of teaching in the classroom that did not necessarily encourage critical thinking. One group member explains his learning experience.

The system does not allow us to challenge the status quo and if you are with the system it is like a kind of socialization we have, even at the university level, it doesn't even allow you to challenge your lecturer...so perhaps our socialization process has made us not to be able to critically look at the system.

One group member seemed relieved that he could share his thoughts and feelings without the concept of objectivity hanging over his head. I addressed this issue in the workshop.

I want to make sure that people are clear about PAR, that it is okay to be subjective. There is nothing wrong with it...using different types of information gathering, that is where the credibility comes in...we will generate knowledge from our discussions as much as going out and interviewing someone.

Throughout the research, group participants often shared their feelings about the project, everyone spoke highly of the PAR process and it was very clear that this process had made an important impact on each person. One group member explains.

Definitely we can't talk about this research with respect to the positive things without mentioning the methodology...the aspect I find amusing is the fact that I have not been very comfortable with quantitative things. I have not been comfortable with gathering data and then making deductions or conclusion out of the data. I have seen the essence of it and the fact that you gather people, you dialogue, and the fact that you know that you can take information from so many sources is very important. The traditional methods of learning, for the first time, have become very important to me because I used to downplay it.

The main types of information gathering were oral tradition, academic articles, reflections, guest speakers, and course outlines.

Oral tradition. Concerning oral tradition, the play we did about Ghanaian history seemed to remind us all of the impact colonialism had in Ghana. One group member states:

The role-plays that we did, I realized that, that things were going along well with us without the influence of western culture, for that matter, social work. But as soon as this idea of social services was imposed on us, we assimilated these issues without questioning.

Throughout all of the sessions, storytelling and personal experiences were used to illustrate a particular point. During the initial residential workshop, I asked the group to bring a proverb, song, poem or object that meant something to them. What was shared confirmed that this group already understood some of the principles of PAR. I describe this in my journal.

Proverbs and stories had themes centred around a) promoting cooperation instead of conflict, b) working together to solve a problem, c) never ever give up, d) friends are the most treasured people in our lives, e) keep focused on the task at hand, f) it is good to learn and it is good to learn by doing, g) when determination exists failure can never dismantle the flag of success and h) all categories of people are important.

The Queen Mother shared her personal experiences as a Queen Mother in relation to the various topics. At one point, she shared an issue that she was dealing with at the time concerning a young girl and the group was able to give her understanding into the situation and offer some guidance. Other members of the group, particularly the members who had graduated and had been working in the field for some time, were able to bring their own experiences to the group. The faculty person was able to offer support and advice concerning the Ghana Association of Social Workers and her vast experience in the social work profession as a social worker and educationalist. The students were able to give up-to-date experiences on the present curriculum and some of the problems they were encountering. One was actually head of the Ghana Student Association of Social Workers and could share his experience in that role with the group. The two researchers were in tune with the administrative part of the Department and with students and their concerns. Using the technique of brainstorming, we gathered together ten years of

curriculum experience and brought out many of the issues that group members had about their experience with the social work curriculum. Some of the thoughts expressed in that session by the group were as follows and are presented together in one box:

I have been thinking that social work in totality has been put on the periphery.
 I really think that we need to change our mode of teaching.
 How consistent are the course outlines from year to year? Some of the courses are so abstract and difficult to apply to social work practice... it has no traditional flavour.

Guest speakers used proverbs, personal experience, historical examples, singing and storytelling to relate their own thinking in a practical way. For example, one speaker gave many examples of ceremonies, practices and community building exercises to relieve societal tension. In particular, she spoke of the ceremony of Asafo, a day when all men in the community can forget “protocol, speak as you like however rude it is, dress any way you like and use a lot of very very profane languages” towards the chiefs and elders. This is usually done in a singsong fashion. Other examples were of women forming a circle, usually pounding fufu (ground cassava); they “sing about life, about birth, about their lovers and husbands and so forth ... a space is created in which the release of tension through song or chants or through language is provided.” Other parts of Africa were also used as examples and in particular one of the speakers told us about Nigeria where a virtual battle is played out.

The purpose is to displace your anger and displace what you anguish or whatever it is in the artistic realm ... they have a festival in which there is a battle between the two protagonists ... it is a mock battle and then both of them and somehow they managed to conquer each other and then they eat together.

Storytelling, practical examples and proverbs are so much a part of the indigenous social mechanisms of Ghana. Some group members seemed unaware of these particular ceremonies in relation to social work practice and interventions.

The informative talk we had with (speaker) and the discussion on how indigenous systems are built into those systems and tension release mechanisms, I haven't heard of it before.

One thing that has registered is the fact that we were able to incorporate indigenous practices in what we consider to be the foreign things we do in Ghana ... if we want to make it more practical, we could create ceremonies, we could change some of the things that go with it to make it more acceptable.

Concerning an artist's view of the community, one group member found this idea useful when looking at social work practice.

The picture he (speaker) drew about the strength of women and the things that go on in the community unnoticed are worthwhile. I have been prompted to look at things, which people don't actually notice but are sources of inspiration so that maybe in the future if you are doing casework or community work that we need to build some empowerment in the people we work with.

These examples inspired us to think about developing indigenous practices that included these ceremonies. In fact, we did recommend that a course be given on indigenous mechanisms for social change, to be co-taught with someone from the Institute of African Studies.

Academic articles. The availability of academic articles was definitely an important part of everyone's learning process. Academic writings are extremely difficult to access in Ghana. Fortunately, I had brought articles from Canada that pertained to Africa and group members were able to borrow these to read. Towards the middle of the project, members' reflections often centred on the articles they read. To be able to read about social work in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt, Zambia, India and China was incredibly liberating for people. Several group members expressed their appreciation for these articles.

I also read the casework article ... the challenge is how do we look at the whole content of the social work and make it more useful to our needs and not necessarily to the needs of those people that brought it ... how do we make it friendly to our own needs?

I was looking at the Zimbabwean experience ... I think we have something in common. Looking at their experience, based on the article, they are moving from institutionalization. They are moving away from it and rather towards developmental. So then I related it to our situation here.

The second positive thing about this research project is that it will benefit me in my Master's preparation because most of the articles given to us contained information about things that I have been looking for for quite a long time which I had not been able to find.

The reality of the library situation at the University of Ghana cannot be imagined until a person sets foot in it. The atmosphere is bleak and the selection of books is dire.

Concerning the social work library, only 1% of the books are indigenous, with the other 99% being from Britain and the United States. No wonder that group members gained so much from reading the articles I brought with me.

Reflections. Members made use of their journals and the first hour of the workshop was spent allowing group members' to share their reflections.

I would like to apologize for not being able to make it the last time you met. I just couldn't. We had so many things coming up the following day and I couldn't leave the people. I took time to read the script and I wrote down some few things.

I also did a lot of reflection. I made some observations and noted them in the journal because I want to make the book useful.

I thought this was a good statement and something I should put down in order to reflect on.

It was important to protect this time for people to share and be free to work through issues that they were thinking about, knowing that they may change their mind the next week. This is what I said to the group.

Reflections are your own personal feelings. They may totally change the next week, you may disagree with yourself the next week. It doesn't matter. It is a process of reflecting and trying to work through things so I want people to be extra sensitive during this time not to be critical or anything.

Group members agreed that we should refrain from commenting on each other's reflections because it felt like such a sacred time for people and respect should be given to people's own thoughts and reflections.

Guest speakers. Once we had decided to center our thinking on "What is African/Ghanaian culture?" and "What was the evolutionary process of social work education and practice in Ghana?", the group agreed that we would ask certain people to come and talk about one of these issues. Most speakers were surprised at the level of dialogue experienced with our group process. Several commented about their experience with the group:

It has been so much fun being here. It is a very lively group and I don't want to leave. I think it is very interesting and I have enjoyed myself.

I have enjoyed myself and I have learned a lot about social work.

Fortunately for me, I have not been called upon to give a lecture so this is meant to be participatory and a kind of dialogue... what I will simply do is ask you to do all of the talking and I merely come in and summarize one way or the other (laughter).

Many of the speakers took the idea of dialogue to heart and only started a topic and then let the group ask questions, give their comments and offer a space for dialogue to happen.

I will pause here but what I want to do also is to ask you whether in the different languages that you speak as mother tongues whether there is a word for culture?... I will leave the floor open. So shall we go around and see whether we can do this?

Member: Will you answer a question for me?

Speaker: Well we are supposed to be dialoguing (laughter). So, okay if you ask a question I guess we can all try to answer it, not just me. All of us can put our heads together and try to answer the question.

Generally speakers affirmed our PAR approach to looking at curriculum and also encouraged us to think beyond our topic. "Before you will talk about the curriculum, try

and convince yourself what you think is culture. As we have already said, culture is dynamic.” Another speaker was very pleased to see the painting of a famous artist in the seminar room where we met for our workshops.

I am pleased to come to this room and find Larry Otoo’s painting on the wall. I think this is the most civilized place in the university (everybody claps). You don’t find these things in the academic areas because people just don’t look at the arts and it surprises me.

One of the group members asked him to interpret the painting for us.

He is capturing aspects of society, what happens within the society ... but when you approach any painting just ask if you like it. That is all there is to it. If you like it then you go and enjoy it and if you don’t like it then forget it.

The speakers also used their local languages to express a proverb. They would lapse into this style of talking and then apologize to me for doing this. This was fine, as some points could not be described in English. Afterwards, some did interpret the proverb or the Queen Mother was able to do this for me when I met with her after the workshop. These forays into other languages showed that the speakers felt comfortable and secure in the workshop setting.

Some group members were worried about how to integrate the topics and felt we should have community social workers come in and talk about culture and social work. Others felt it was up to us to integrate our knowledge. As a facilitator, I wrote the following at the end of one of the transcripts to address this issue.

The question is how to adapt what we are learning from people who do not have a social work background to the social work curriculum? ... The group process is the means by which we begin to integrate culture and social work. As we hear more speakers, we will begin to integrate these two areas together through our dialogue, our reflections and the thinking in-between workshops. Integration is a slow and often unseen process but it will happen!!!

One group member challenged the group concerning adaptation, by identifying the fact that most of the social work practice is western and individualized instead of communalized.

How can we possibly maybe look at aspects of the programs that we run in terms of making it more relevant to us? Is it possible to introduce new ways, which would reflect our lifestyle in our program interventions that would make it more receptive to people?"

Member: We try to use very indigenous practices so that people will be very comfortable with the institutions ... some of them are ideas brought into Ghana and are not quite applicable to our situation because they try to promote individualism and we want things on a communal basis. How do you think we modernize old practices so that we could improve on the way that we do our service?

Speaker: Get to know the principles, the essence or the basics of culture and then build ceremonies/practices around them.

The group members appeared to have a positive relationship with all of the speakers. There was the normal behaviour of wanting to impress the speakers, particularly if they had taught at the university or held a high office there. However, on the whole, group members felt comfortable to share their thoughts and ideas with the speakers and to question what was being said and to disagree with what was being said. One group member said this to one of the speakers.

The last statement you made seems to simplify or oversimplify the issues involved in trokosi (Religious slavery in Ghana) (Amponsah, 2004).

It was often the case that in a workshop, a speaker from the previous workshops was referred to concerning a particular point made or wisdom spoken. Within the workshops themselves, the group members referred to what the speaker had brought to the group.

I see culture to be a loaded word. Because as Prof. said, even if academicians are coming up with as much as 150 definitions of culture... I am finding it difficult to place my hand on any word.

I am trying to enhance what the Prof. is saying about the Ghanaian ness that we are talking about.

What the professor has said has really touched me, that something intangible which makes you a distinct person.

There was also a great appreciation for the pioneers of social work. A group member conveyed this appreciation.

We must understand where he is coming from. He is a pioneer and if he says that social work is not even born, maybe he had a vision from the inception that this is what we expect social work to be in the next five years or ten years. And maybe it is not what was predicted... I appreciate the challenge because if we recognize that we are not even yet born then we will try to crawl and then walk.

Concerning the curriculum, group members questioned the faculty speakers concerning the process by which the Bachelor's program had been revised, how the Master's had been created and the different changes in the new system of education introduced recently. Issues concerning the selection of students, fieldwork placements and the hiring of lecturers were all discussed and looked at critically. People shared their personal experiences with these speakers and were extremely honest in some circumstances. One group member expressed concern that now that the new revised curriculum was out, he would no longer be a qualified social worker. The speaker very sensitively reassured him that this was not the case.

I wanted to put him at ease. I realized that no matter what kind of education you received at University, you have to work to improve yourself, better yourself. You know workshops are very important and short courses and conferences and reading...acquiring knowledge is unending.

Finally, the workshops stimulated the speakers to go and think about what was said. I had several speakers comment on how much they had learned from the group. "What you have said has given me some ideas about the concurrent placement ... to make it more meaningful. I think it is very good and I will note it down." Another speaker commented on her time with the group and I wrote in my journal.

We (the speaker and I) talked about yesterday's workshop. She feels I have been very lucky in getting such good people and she enjoyed herself a lot. That was nice for me to hear.

Course Outlines. Several in the group including myself gathered course outlines from as many faculty members as possible. We then spent two workshops looking at the course outlines and analyzing their content. This gave us practical documents to confirm our own experiences with the curriculum and helped in identifying gaps in the curriculum, including the need for video equipment for teaching in the classroom.

Evolutionary process. At the beginning of the research project, the purpose of the research was stated very clearly to the group by myself.

In the end the reason you are here is because you have a passion for social work curriculum. And most of you that I have talked to have concerns about the curriculum and I have concerns. So this is our objective and we are here because we have this common objective.

However, as time went on this objective assumed a less important role as other more important issues concerning social work in Ghana emerged. The curriculum changes would not have happened if we had not dealt with the other issues important to the group. The topics we decided to focus on, African/Ghanaian culture and the evolution of social work in Ghana, seemed sensible at the time and worked well. The action plans emerged quickly and group members were eager to implement these plans.

Towards the middle of the research process it was important to check if we were fulfilling our research goals and if we were on time as far as developing our action plans. One member asked whether "we are doing what we are supposed to do."

In looking at what we have achieved so far and what we have yet to achieve, we just want to feel the time so that perhaps we have something to do and we want to know what your sentiments are so far, are we meeting our deadlines and are we doing what we are suppose to do, is there a need for us to do something, I mean definitely so we know where we are and what we are left to do.

After I assured the group that we were on track, we agreed to meet three times a month during July and August in order to forge ahead with our plans. This proved to be necessary. We also had two people leaving the project in August and September and we wanted to make sure their input was recorded in our plans.

Relationship with facilitator to PAR process

I feel very much part of this setting again. The difference is that I have grown, matured and changed. It is like coming back and seeing old things in new light again. Like a child going back to see where she was raised: the rooms and house are different, smaller and not quite as big as one imagined (facilitator).

Introduction

When I first began reading about PAR during my course work, I remember thinking that this type of research seemed too difficult and time consuming and would not be appropriate for my research. However, as time went on, I realized that this was the type of research that would be most effective for looking at the revising of social work curriculum. I liked the idea of a group process that provided space for Ghanaians to look at this issue, with the hope that the combination of critical thinking, conscientization, and dialogue would be life-changing for group members, including me. Once I had decided on this method and philosophy of research, I looked forward to experiencing PAR in a Ghanaian setting.

My feelings on arriving in Ghana were mixed. I came with few expectations and was quite prepared to go back to Canada if no one was interested in this project.

<p>Here I am in a new yet familiar place but feeling frightened. Part of me doesn't want to take this new adventure and would like to turn around and go back to safe Canada where I want to settle and yet half of me needs this adventure to stay alert, progressive and challenged. What do I fear? Acceptance or rejection of my project, things falling apart, questioning my existence here, why am I here doing research in Ghana and not in Canada? What keeps me going is the absolute intuition or spirit that tells me I am in the right place and things will work out.</p>

On my second day in Ghana, I met up with a former student of mine and he showed interest in the project. I was relieved and this encounter helped build my confidence that other people would be interested.

After the two contacts I have made I really feel like all my preparations for this research project were correct and that it would fit well within this setting. I realized how heavy the burden I had been carrying in Calgary with writing and working on this proposal without being here. It was all done through intuition, instinct and from my own personal experiences.

Throughout the whole project I often felt as though I was walking gently into known and unknown territory and experienced the challenges around my own desire to control the process. At the beginning of the project I wrote my frustrations in my journal.

Concerning the project, it feels like it is in slow motion and this is frustrating me. I want things to go faster.

During the first few months, my emotions were up and down. Here is a down moment in which a Ghanaian lifted my spirits.

How do I feel about the project? I feel like an outsider and person intruding into the culture and life of another world. How dare I come to study this culture in which I am so not a part of. I feel as though I am another westerner wanting to come and study Africa. I want out. However, as I talked to Ben, describing PAR, I felt him warm to this approach and it really made me feel okay about the research.

As a facilitator I was pleased to see how much we had progressed in the conscientization process and how much information we had gathered and knowledge produced. As time went on I found myself feeling happy and content with the project and feeling more comfortable with chaos, uncertainty and trust in the evolutionary process. The following themes convey my own journey as a facilitator and include the following: sacred places; creating space to learn; speakers; emotional ups & downs; the outsider; integration; support from inside and outside; and action plans.

A sacred place

One of the most important places in Ghana for me was Aburi Botanical Gardens. Set in the hills near Accra, this sanctuary of rainforest trees provided a spiritual and restful home for me to think through the PAR process, to reflect on how things were going, to themize the transcripts and to plan future workshops. I have never been so affected by a place. It was truly a sacred place that shared energies with all who visited there.

I found the day at Aburi very inspiring. I want to go back. The trees reach my soul there. I know it is the place to begin the workshop and this makes me excited...I keep thinking about the interconnectedness of things here. How the trees, plants, people and animals live together, the unseen forces around me as I go about my business. What forces are working for me and against me?

As I walked up the long narrow road lined with palm trees, my mind would clear and I would experience the essence of the environment around me. I was revitalized by this energy to keep going. It was here that the purpose of the research was continually made clear to me.

I arrived at Aburi and immediately felt good and at home and at peace. My mind and body are bursting with creativity and writing so I will get started straight away.

I would book a room at the guesthouse, with water only in buckets and often with no electricity and I would sit during the day under the magnificent trees on a bench and take in the beauty around me. Without this place of solitude, the PAR process would have felt much more stressful.

Creating space to learn

Once the research started I found myself organizing adult education exercises. The purpose was to get us to the point that we could identify particular issues to concentrate on and gather information about. I found this process to be very creative. I organized brainstorming exercises, group work, drama and reviews of our gathered knowledge

through flip charts and the sharing of personal stories. I also encouraged the group members to use whatever I had introduced to them in their own work setting.

Anything I use here, feel free to use in your work. It is totally open.

I used a simple understanding of the archeology of knowledge (Foucault, 1980) as a way to explain the critical process.

You all know what an archeologist is? An archeologist digs the layers of the ground to find the layers of different eras in the world. We are social archeologists. We are trying to dig underneath the statements that we make to find out where they originate. Questions like a) What is below the surface of that comment? 2) what are the circumstances or context behind this comment? 3) whose perspective or point of view is being stated?, 4) who is in control and 5) what are we actually trying to say? are appropriate to ask as we gather and talk about our knowledge.

One of my worries about being a facilitator was my ability to deal with conflict within the group setting. This came through during the first workshops and in particular in an incident in which, during reflections a person was very critical of another's point of view. As a facilitator, I froze. I was trying to figure out the cultural implications and just did not respond. I felt guilty and wondered if I had failed as a facilitator. What I learned was that in my weakness was the strength of others and as a result group members took over and mediated in that situation. One group member showed natural ability as a mediator and negotiator and I learned from him. He became my barometer for many of the sessions. Here is an example of his mediation skill.

One thing I want us to acknowledge is the fact that we come from different backgrounds and so because of that we may find reasons why certain things are happening. If somebody else also finds other reasons why it could result in what is happening, don't take, don't feel offensive.

Concerning this incident, another group member and I later visited with the person who was being critical. As a result of this experience, there was a dialogue about the role of the facilitator and I tried to explain as best I could what my role was in the group.

My role was to plan the sessions, make sure an agenda has been made, facilitate group dialogue making sure that everyone has a chance to speak. Finally it is about generally running the sessions.

As a facilitator, I found myself mediating between different viewpoints when I felt that one person had not understood another's viewpoint. People can exaggerate or misinterpret the views of others, and it was important to stop and clarify a point when it was felt that the view was misrepresented. I also tried to bring out different points that group members had made during the workshops to encourage members to share their thoughts and feelings.

I am going to try and do what I just said I would do with something (group member) said the first time we met...I was going through the manuscript and highlighting things that struck me...I hope you don't mind if I use one of your statements.

I want to share with you two reflections that I had. One was that I was really touched by (group member) and your passion last time about culture. To me you were hurting because culture seemed to be going away. My question is "How does one grieve the loss of culture?"

I would try and clarify a person's statement if I didn't understand what they were saying, particularly if it had to do with cultural issues.

Okay your point, you were saying and I think it is important, is sometimes we idealize the past. Is that what you are trying to say?

I also made sure that everyone had a chance to contribute to the issue being discussed before we went on to another issue. This was hard to control as everyone, towards the middle of the research, had a lot to say.

As a facilitator and someone new to PAR, I was not aware of the powerful impact that the reflections and journal writing would have on the research process. Personally, this was my favourite time, as it allowed us to see how we were all experiencing the conscientization process. I write about this in my journal.

I have to say that this part (reflection) of the knowledge production has surprised me. At first I thought this would be one of the least used knowledge generation tools and I now feel it is the most important one. Most people do share something, which is encouraging.

Learning to give over responsibilities to others was another lesson for me. I found facilitating the session meant that my mind was on other things and in one session the tape recorder went off without my notice. We lost valuable information as a result. From then on, I gave a group member the task of looking after the tape recorder. I also brought food to the workshops and after while one of the group members took that task over, partly because no one liked my taste in snacks. We opted for fresh Ghanaian food and Coca-Cola.

I remember the time when I could see that the group had taken over the process and I unconsciously used the term “we” instead of “I” when talking about the research. In fact, at the Aburi workshop a dialogue about PAR between two group members was encouraging.

Group member 1: I like the method and I hope I can add it to the methods I know. I have learned some different ideas and I believe in sharing and we shall continue to share in the research. I hope that we will assure you that you will get what you want, by the grace of God.
 Group member 2: What we want!
 Group member 1: Yes, what we want. What we want.

Other roles I had as a facilitator were to be the contact person for the group when people were not able to show up at the workshop and to inform members about the well-being of others in the group.

I have talked to everyone over the past three weeks, Mr. (group member) said he would come as well and I think (group member) was planning to come too. Maybe they have gotten delayed. (group member) is the only one I knew wouldn't be here.

I organized our meeting place and made sure people were happy with the venue. I approached each speaker about coming to the group. I felt a bit uncomfortable about this, but the group felt it was important that I, not they, approach perspective speakers. Hierarchy and protocol were adhered to.

Creating space to learn was difficult to do for myself. I was frustrated with what seemed like time on my hands to read but felt incapable of reading anything academic.

I realize how isolated I am and I need to read more but the motivation is not there. I feel I have wasted so much valuable time and not taking the opportunity to read. Sometimes I feel I am losing what I know and I need to refresh myself about issues concerning my thesis I tried to read Foucault but I am lost with this book and feel I am losing my intellectual abilities.

After a while I was not bothered that I could not read academic books and enjoyed my free time. I realized that I was learning many things, but not via the books, and this was okay.

Speakers

As I approached potential speakers, I was warmly welcomed. Most were interested and willing to take the risk and come to the workshop even though I was vague about the organization and topic. I wanted the workshops to be as open and free to go in the way they should go, so I left it up to the speakers to prepare what they thought was appropriate. However, I emphasized the importance of dialogue and this seemed to sit well with the speakers.

When Linda and I talked about this workshop, we agreed on a number of issues. So we talked about culture in terms of Ghana and Africa ... we drew attention to the ways people think and whether we can say there is a Ghanaian way of thinking ... and after Linda left I said it might be possible to illustrate ways and differences.

Some of the group members were a bit confused about why we were inviting some of the speakers, in particular the artist. But it was felt that if we were talking about culture,

art is a very important part of culture, and could give us insight into society. I felt that at the end of the day, most group members learned much from the artist. I think it was particularly challenging and satisfying for him as well.

I asked Prof. Glover to come as part of our series on social work and culture and I think I have given him a tall order so we will do what we can. So there were areas that I thought we could gain, as social workers, from his experience. . . as social workers coming into a new community how can we understand that community better through the arts? Through music, artwork, dance, whatever.

I tended to be overly enthusiastic about making use of the people at the university and suggested we have more speakers; and the group members tempered this enthusiasm. It can be easy to rely heavily on the wisdom of the intellectuals instead of the wisdom of the group. That was an important lesson for me to learn.

Over the last week I have been thinking that we need to have more speakers and suggested another speaker. I got the impression that people are overwhelmed with the information we have so far and that maybe we need to wait and see how much information we collect before scheduling any more people. I felt a bit strange about this but am glad people told me to cool it a while.

The group agreed on a certain honorarium that each speaker would receive at the end of the day. Here another cultural difference was evident. I assumed the responsibility of giving the money to the speaker at the end of the workshop in front of everyone. The group took me aside after the first speaker was given their envelope and I was told that it was more appropriate for a group member to escort the speaker out to their car and give them the honorarium quietly. This was done for all subsequent speakers and I was glad for the advice. This meant that everyone could be involved in thanking the speaker and it also gave members time to say personal things to the speaker on the way to their car. At the presentation day, one of the speakers commented on how shocked she was that she was given an honorarium. This really confirmed to her that the project money was being

spent in the right way, to encourage and support the local people as we worked on issues surrounding social work in Ghana.

Learning about culture

During the first few months of the research project, I found myself making cultural mistakes that embarrassed the group and me, particularly at the residential workshop in Aburi. One of the issues concerned the Aburi workshop and the local chief's palace. I had asked them to come and bless the project.

The first crisis was that the chief's people didn't arrive on time ... when they arrived they thought they were to stay at the conference and talk about traditional authority. They thought it was a big conference. I had not talked to the group about this arrangement the night before and I should have. They were embarrassed, I was embarrassed and the chief's people were embarrassed ... a group member explained that if we had been staying in the village and not a hotel then it would have been appropriate that the palace come and give a blessing.

These mistakes could have affected the progress of the group if I had not dealt with them in an appropriate and honest way. Once the group was formed, they advised me on cultural issues and I relied on them to help me with cultural practices, writing letters, approaching people to speak and protocol.

I wanted to ask you, the one part of the group that I have had difficulty with is finding someone who is a beneficiary of social welfare who would not feel overwhelmed by the group. Does anyone have any suggestions?

The group was very helpful in advising me and telling me if I had not conducted myself appropriately. One constant learning experience for me was using my right hand and not my left, as it is an insult to use the left hand in Ghanaian culture.

Emotional ups and downs

Robert Chambers (2002) speaks of five lessons he has learned concerning the role of a facilitator in a group project. The first is the ability to "ration nervous energy" (p. xiii).

This was difficult for me to do. My emotional ups and downs were very apparent to me and the first three months consisted of a combination of feeling free, being homesick, questioning my research and enjoying a different lifestyle. My journal reflects this.

Tonight research feels selfish to me. It feels like I am doing my own thing and this is waste of everyone's money. Am I just another foreigner coming to fulfill their own dreams of research and how relevant is this going to be to Ghana? However, I have to say that the use of PAR is the one thing that keeps me going and I truly believe this is the right approach.

The group is now at the stage where everyone wants to talk and I am having difficulty facilitating ten people who all want to talk. By the end of the afternoon I was exhausted. I felt the whole meeting was in chaos but it really wasn't. I was annoyed with myself because the last part of the workshop, the record button on the recorder was not on.

I can't believe this is happening and I am so hooked on this method now that I think I won't want to do anything else. It has been hard for me but the rewards so far outweigh the difficulties, anxieties and frustrations. I am constantly amazed at the inner guidance I feel about this project and the strength and guidance I get from the plants and trees around me. The patience that is needed to allow things to evolve is inside me but at times I feel very uneasy about the process of evolution ... tonight when I got home I was exhausted, elated, ecstatic and tired.

As time went on, these feelings were replaced by the excitement of beginning the project and seeing how it evolved. At six months, my energy was beginning to wane and it was time for a much-needed break.

It is the six-month blues and typing this transcript has been hard. The excitement is over and we are getting into a routine...I am not in tune with my research at the moment. I feel totally alien from it...at the moment it feels like we are all in a muddle as we work through this project.

By September I had learned to live with whatever came our way in the research project.

We have finished around 5pm and like all the other workshops, it was very chaotic. However I have learned to live with chaos and I think it signifies an openness to share and to be creative and to speak ones mind.

Billy Connolly, the Scottish comedian, speaks of the emotional ups and downs of performing on stage. His wife speaks of the excitement and build-up to the performance and the “downer” that he experiences after performing.

Our on-stage experiences turned out to be very similar: a period of intense fear and panic followed by a heady surge of adrenaline, then a highly enjoyable rush of endorphins and finally, if all went well, a powerful sense of validation. The good feelings would last for a few hours after the show; but in the morning there would be a sense of loss, an uncomfortable physiological experience of our bodies still being overpumped with adrenaline, torturous regrets about imperfections the night before and renewed anxiety about the next performance (Stephenson, 2002, p. 249).

Although not as extreme as their experience, I could relate to her description quite well. A week before the workshop, I would begin to prepare. This preparation included sorting out snacks, putting themes on flip charts and making sure the speaker remembered that they were to come and be with us. On the day of the workshop, I was very high emotionally and that evening I would hit a low point. At first I thought I was going crazy, but after while I realized this was my pattern and I needed to deal with it appropriately.

After the workshop I felt very down about the day. I felt I had said things that were really stupid and felt that the day had not gone well. After doing the transcripts I realized that it was a good day and that I didn't say anything stupid. In fact, there was so much information that was said on that day that it would take a while for people to digest it all.

The evening of the workshop I would take the time to care for myself, enjoy my evening with my landlady and just relax. I would take the next day off and do something special for myself and the following day I would begin transcribing. This pattern seemed to disappear once I had my holiday and I was used to the workshops and how they affected me.

It was important for me to care for myself not only after the workshops but at other times as well. I had friends to talk to and outings to go on that helped keep my emotional

life in perspective. One of the best decisions I made was to go to Mali around the six-month mark of the research project.

I met up with Mary and Dennis and we are planning a trip to Burkina Faso and Mali...this is getting exciting for me. I feel bad because I will be spending a lot of money and I know my friends could use it but I am putting myself first now and going on this trip.

I felt so rested after that holiday and felt re-energized to see the project to the end. It also gave me the opportunity to see another part of Africa I had not seen and to compare life there with life in Ghana. Near the end of the project, I wrote my thoughts concerning the project.

As I sit here and think about the positives of the research, two things come to mind. 1) The conscientization of the group has been a constant source of strength for me and 2) I am so grateful that I have the money to do this project the way the group wants it to be done. It is such a pleasure to have money to spend. The video will cost quite a lot of money and the fact that I have been able to give per diems to everyone has made this whole project a pleasant experience.

The outsider

Whitmore & McKee (2001) point out that the outsider can be of value to the PAR process even if they do not fully understand the culture. At the fourth workshop a group member reflected upon one of the important issues concerning this research process

I have been thinking about why Linda has to come to Ghana and study about our curriculum and this project ... why should Linda come to Ghana and then even let us in on our own curriculum ... is it that we don't have the resources or that nobody has thought of it?

Over time we came to the conclusion concerning why I came to do this research and one group member voiced this conclusion.

Your contribution has also brought a lot of things out. We learned something about conscientization and it is very much of what you are talking about. You see even though it is inherent in us and we can be critical about situations. But something should trigger it. So perhaps you have come to trigger our mind for us to look at our system and see what necessary changes we could impact on our system.

I also addressed this topic by stating that I would not have come to Ghana if I had not had the history of being here in the past and if I had not had an appropriate research method.

Apart from my interest in social work in Ghana and that I taught here and have a personal interest, I wouldn't have come if I had not had the right research methodology ... because this type of approach empowers people and gets people to think about their own situation much more than if I had just come and conducted interviews ... Should an outsider come into another culture and conduct research and I think it is useful if the approach is correct.

At times I felt I was this person advocating an African view. It was almost as if I was the African and the Ghanaians were the westerners.

At one point I experienced a reverse outsider situation. The few times this occurred was when I felt I was speaking about African ways of knowing to Ghanaians immersed in western thinking.

I found this fascinating and I talked with people about what they felt about Ghanaian traditional knowledge. It is unusual to hear someone refer to traditional knowledge in a positive light. Labels of primitive and uncivilized seem to remain in everyone's minds. Other times I just felt a bit like an alien visiting another planet.

I am not sure I will be doing this type of research again in another country other than my own. I think I am tired and feel like an alien, like a fish out of water, like an inappropriate implant. It is good for me to question my motives.

Being the outsider can be a lonely existence and yet it can be of use to people who have lived in their own culture all their lives. I asked many questions and listened to what people were saying, no matter if it was in the research group, on the Tro-Tro, in the shops, waiting in lines or just stopping someone on the street to talk. This is what is so nice about an open culture like Ghana's.

Integration

As far as I was concerned, I was as much a part of this group as anyone else and participated fully in the reflection periods and the dialogue with the speakers. I brought in examples from Canada as a way to look at issues perhaps differently and participated in the skit concerning pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Ghana. I also asked many of my own questions concerning cultural and historical issues that came up during the workshops. I also asked challenging questions to the group for them to ponder between workshops.

As time went on, I found that my own voice was less needed as others took over the research process.

One thing I have noticed is that my own voice is not being heard as much. I am okay about this, as I don't feel I have a lot to say at the moment.

Support from inside and outside

When you climb a tree, they will push you (Ghanaian proverb). (Translations: If you want to climb the ladder of success your friends will help you).

Facilitating a PAR group on one's own can be a very lonely experience, particularly at the initial stages of the group process. Once the group was formed, the support naturally came and was very helpful. However, I needed other support systems during this time to sustain me throughout the research process. In Ghana, I had the support of Professor Apt. I spent Christmas with her in 2002 and we met regularly to discuss the project. Once in a while we would get together for lunch during the course of the year and she was always very encouraging and amazed at how the research was going. I also had the support of the staff at the Department of Social Work.

I went to Legon today and gave the staff some Christmas cookies and wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a good New Year. I think they really like me and the administrator's assistant will take me to the bead market in Kofouridua in the New Year. Others are talking to me more about life, family and illnesses.

Other supports I had were Professor Shinnie and his wife, who spend part of the year in Calgary and the other part in Kumasi. I have visited the Shinnies on many occasions and am able to talk to them about my research. I also found a former friend of mine from Armenia and her support was invaluable during my time in Ghana.

I went to Aniko's house and I talked a long time with her. She is feeling frustrated with her husband being away all of the time. I sat and listened and sympathized with her about living with an international worker. It was good for me to be there.

I had another friend who supported me on a daily basis and, particularly after a mugging I experienced, made sure that I was home safe every night. This person was also a sounding board for cultural issues I was grappling with and encouraged me in many ways. We used to sit outside my house and talk about colonialism, the progress of Africa and his desire to make a contribution to West Africa. During the course of the research, I was involved in helping him get a student visa to study in England so he could return to Sierra Leone and help improve the Information Technology (IT) situation there. Other Ghanaians such as my landlady, other faculty at the university and people on the streets and local businesses helped support me during this research process.

I have made some really nice close friends and they support me as I try and work through this system of trying to survive daily in Accra and plan and implement a research project.

I was also involved with the Quaker community in Accra. This gave me the opportunity to meet people outside the research project and to share and contribute to this meeting. The meeting was a life support system for me.

I went to Quaker meeting and Nana Apt was there. We discussed the reasons of life and what makes life worth living. I was able to share about my spiritual journey and that I felt my spirituality goes beyond the Christian dogma now into a more interconnectedness with nature and other human beings...I learned about dialogue through the Quaker meeting although they were not good at it some times.

Relationships came and went for me in Ghana but they all served as a centering point for my personal life.

In Canada, I had the support of my PhD committee. I sent them monthly reports sharing my personal and project experiences. I was always open to their advice and they would respond to me with helpful wisdom and encouragement throughout the project. I also had some great support through the Internet. Before I left, I arranged for a group of eight people to be a "Committee of Care" within the Quaker community in Western Canada. I communicated with each of them throughout the research process and wrote to them a couple of days before each workshop asking for their energies and prayers for the workshop. Some wrote back and offered sound advice and encouragement. This group sustained me in ways that are hard to express.

It has been a good day and I feel the universe on my side. I wrote to my committee of care and asked them to hold in the light the people for this project. I feel so supported by them and am so glad they could be part of this research project.

Several Canadian friends were able to write daily and these were people who helped me through my own personal difficulties, joys, frustrations and the highs and lows of the project. Without this support, I would have found the research process more difficult.

I came home and felt very down and sad. I slept for a while and then decided I needed to go and look at my E-mail. This cheered me up a lot and I really needed to talk with people in Canada...I then realized that I have only been here a month and that I am really pushing myself and I have accomplished a lot in the past month. I need to be kinder to myself...the Internet café is where I connect with people and I continue to be grateful for the Canadian support during this project. It can get a bit lonely at times.

There were several Canadians in Ghana that I got to know and I was able to take some holidays with them.

Action plans

I enjoyed watching the action plans emerge as we met together over the ten-month period. Each seemed to reflect the knowledge produced by the group. I felt very satisfied that the work we had completed was changing the course of social work education. To participate in these plans affirmed my own understanding and conviction of what transformative research is all about. These plans will continue to evolve in the future and I feel confident that they will come to fruition in years to come.

Summary

The group seemed to appreciate the space to learn and financial help for their time. They commented continually on the PAR process and how freeing it was to be involved in a project like this. Their learning of the dialogical process, respecting each other's views and learning from each other grew as time went on. The speakers helped us understand Ghanaian culture and the evolution of social work; much of this knowledge was new to the group. The group was committed to this process and this contributed to our finishing the research project by November 2002. My own learning experiences as a group member and facilitator were immense. One of my committee members told me before I left that the most important issue I would face with this research would be to create an atmosphere in which people could learn, share their thoughts and feelings and feel okay to grow and learn. I was amazed at how this evolutionary process played out in the workshop setting, how people responded to learning and sharing together and how these members were committed to the group and the idea of its importance for social

work. At times the workshops felt chaotic, unfocussed and disorganized, and yet I was excited about the level of knowledge production. I enjoyed watching as group members entered the workshop after a long day and week, looking tired and strained, and how their energy and enthusiasm rose as we pondered the issues at hand. Out of chaos came profound creativity and over time I felt that people did feel comfortable in sharing their lives and thoughts with each other. The support I received from the group and friends sustained me through the ups and downs of the project. I felt accepted by the group and friendships were made that I hope will last a lifetime. I also hope this core group of social workers will take Ghanaian social work forward into the 21st century in a fruitful and productive way.

Relationships with each other

Relationships between group members

Lack of companionship is worse than poverty. A single hand cannot lift the calabash to the head (Ghanaian proverb).

Introduction

Breaking relationships of submission in this type of research (Fals Borda, 1988) and not having one person dominate the group (Freire, 1997) are important aspects of the dialogical process. People who “think together in a coherent way...have tremendous power (Bohm, 1993). Very few group members knew each other at the beginning of the project. This allowed for diversity in the research project and included representation from government, non-government and educational settings. Themes that emerged were the Aburi workshop, space to grow with each other, a caring environment, tensions within the group and the Queen Mother.

Aburi Workshop

The first time we met as a group was at Aburi for the residential workshop. It was clear, through the life tree exercise, people had also come from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and geographical areas and all were interested in social work. A way to encourage each other during the research process was introduced to us at the Aburi workshop. We learned how to give each other a “shine” when someone said something profound, worked extra hard or made a special effort to attend the sessions. I describe this action.

It involves rubbing our palms together three times and then striking our palms three times with our hand and using that hand to point to the person being shined.

This enabled the group to give positive acknowledgements to each other when appropriate. Group members felt disappointed that two of the members had not been at the Aburi workshop. However, those two members were warmly welcomed and were able to ease into the research.

Space to grow with each other

Towards the middle of the research process we decided to meet for lunch in order to get to know each other away from the research project. People were very busy and did not have a lot of time but everyone made an effort to attend. These lunches provided opportunities for people to get to know each other better and to forge friendships that would last beyond the research. They also provided time to laugh, particularly at my living situation as I relayed stories about the daily bizarre events taking place where I was staying.

Caring environment

As the research progressed, members became more caring of each other and met each other outside of the workshops. This caring attitude was evident at the beginning when we were deciding on the time to meet. Members were concerned about family commitments.

I was reminded by several members that leaving at 6p.m. is not too safe to travel to Accra due to the risk of being mugged. It also gives people a chance to have the evening with their families.

Group members called each other up to remind them of when we would be meeting. We shared lists of names, telephone numbers and addresses at the end of the research. The student group members were going through exams during the research and were stressed at times. One student gained encouragement from the other to speak about what pressure they were under as a student.

Yes, I think (group member) has given me the courage (laughter) to say that in fact some of us are sitting on thorns.

Another way that the group members showed their care for each other was by supporting feelings of inadequacy concerning the revisions to the curriculum that occurred two years earlier. One group member felt as though he had been cheated out of a good education and was no longer skilled to be a social worker. The group came to the rescue in a very important way and assured the group member that in fact he was an excellent social worker and that as social workers we are always learning. This was a nice testimony to the group's sensitivity to the feelings of a group member.

I want to assure (group member) that the program he undertook as a social worker is still as good and valued as the proposed one... as society changes and new problems come up, it is better that the curriculum changes to meet the aspirations of the society. So you don't feel lost and I think you are one of the greatest social workers I have met.

Towards the end of the workshops, group members were sharing personal issues concerning their work in social work and the group took on the role of advisor to these issues. The appreciation of views became more apparent as the research project continued and the dialogue was more positive and mutual. Two group members shared their feelings about the research project with me and I wrote about this in my journal.

I spoke with two group members after the workshop and they both said how much they enjoyed it and have learned so much from it. They never want to miss a workshop. That felt good to me. One group member was very sensitive when he said that I must be missing home. I guess I am a bit.

Group members appreciated the fact that I was away from my home and family.

Tensions within the group

There were elements of tension between group members who were associated with the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Community and NGOs but these tensions were minor and everyone, on the whole, accepted and respected each other's knowledge, experience and views about social work. At the beginning of the research we had tension between members who were unfamiliar with the principles of dialogue and, due to hierarchical issues, challenged other members. I wrote in my journal

I am feeling unsettled and very worried about this conflict and am wondering how to resolve it...it is an issue of a lack of communication...It occurred to me that the group member is not clear about the difference between dialogue and debate and the purpose of the reflection period...I went and spoke to the group member and she seemed to understand the negative impact of her aggressiveness. I am relieved.

But again, learning the dialogical process helped the group calm down and members listened to what others were saying. Also, money issues were a tension. One group member expressed his anxiety concerning money.

When you start to talk about money and issues like that everything freezes and there is tension.

At the Aburi workshop, there was a misunderstanding concerning how much would be paid to the group for participating in the workshop. As the facilitator, I assumed that paying for food and accommodation was enough for the group members. The group expected something more and as a result there was tension within the group. It was pointed out to me that members expected that they would be paid an additional amount for their time at the workshop. I felt awful and wrote about this in my journal.

My heart sank and I just died inside. What a way to ruin a nice weekend. I should have called everyone back and we could have discussed this but I didn't. I waved good-bye to everyone and two people didn't even look at me or wave so I just went to my room and sat there numb.

At the next workshop, we talked through this misunderstanding and people were paid for their time at the Aburi workshop. However, we did make another rule.

If someone comes up to me afterwards and wants to ask something that is a group decision then I will tell them they should have brought it up and it will have to wait until next time. Personal issues can be brought to me but group decisions are to be brought up with the group.

Group members were able to share their experiences and thoughts honestly with each other and most felt comfortable joining in the various adult education exercises, including group work, drama and brainstorming with laughter. If someone didn't understand something, they were able to share that confusion with the group and the group would try and explain the point again to the member. The transcripts show many times when we laughed with each other and shared secrets that we knew would not be taken out of the room. One of the most important lessons for the group was to be open and honest with each other.

The Queen Mother

One of the most impressive qualities of the Queen Mother was her willingness to be an equal colleague in the group situation and to take the risk of joining even though I was not sure of her role in the group at the beginning. I write about this ambiguity.

What amazed me was her ability to summarize what we had been saying, share her wisdom and experience and bring such important knowledge to the group. I have spent time with her about her role in the group as I felt that was preventing her from coming. Once we clarified her role, she felt comfortable in coming along to the workshop.

The group members had their own ideas of what a Queen Mother represented and her role in the community. One group member writes the following.

The Queen Mother is a symbol of authority and power. She provides social services in the traditional setting. She ensures that there is peace and unity among her people. It is her responsibility as a leader to encourage her people to obey the laws of the country and carry out their civic responsibilities. She summons meetings with sub-chiefs and the elders to discuss the problems of the community. They also plan towards the development of the people, participate in communal labour and settles disputes and conflicts of members of the community through arbitration with her elders. They play a very important function as social workers in the traditional setting.

Another shares his understanding of her role by stating that

we examined socialization at pre and post-colonial times in Ghana and she's particularly informed in traditional and customary information.

In short, she represented traditional culture and enlightened us about this part of Ghanaian society.

The Queen Mother's attendance at the meetings seemed unusual at the beginning, as she was not a social worker. In fact, most group members saw her as a guest speaker and not a group member. Also, it is not common in Ghana to work in this capacity with a traditional authority figure, but over time people felt more comfortable with her presence there. In the beginning, the group, respecting how busy she was as a Queen Mother,

invited her to come to as many workshops as she could and said she could opt out on the workshops that were not of interest to her. I felt this was setting her apart from the group because of her status. However, she attended all the workshops enthusiastically and became as much a part of the group as anyone else. She found the whole experience educational.

Linda was able to give us pieces of materials from other countries. I thought I would not be able to read, because of my schedule of work, but I made time and read all...now I know the work of a social worker... now I appreciate the work of the social worker in the community ... I am going to sing their song about them wherever I go.

The group members saw the Queen Mother's role in the group as 1) a way to promote social work in Ghana through traditional authority; 2) a resource for sharing knowledge about Ghanaian culture and her role in society. "She tried to explain things in a practical way to the group and link them to our daily life in the traditional setting"; 3) as an opportunity for group members to work closely with traditional authority; 4) an interpreter of the motives behind traditional practices; 5) a contributor of knowledge from a non-social work perspective; and 6) an educator of social workers as to the importance of working with traditional authority in the work that we do. Several group members felt that the group had educated the Queen Mother as to 1) the role of a social worker; 2) a new way of group work that respected the authority of the traditional ruler but in a non-hierarchical way; and 3) respect and acceptance of divergent views and opinions. At one workshop, much time was devoted to a situation that the Queen Mother was dealing with in her village concerning a teenager who had become pregnant. The group was able to give her advice on how to deal with the situation. "She had a very cordial relationship

with everyone.” This positive attitude came out at her the first meeting, when she apologized for not being at the first two meetings.

I am a very busy body. I am sorry from the very beginning of your meetings I have not been able to be with you. Even today I should have traveled but I had to cancel ... because missing meetings I didn't like it that way. I am just one piece and I am glad today that I am here to meet all of you. I hope I am going to do my best to help in my small way, since I am not a social worker but a Queen Mother (laughter).

Very little has been written concerning the positive relationship that social workers have with traditional authority. The group project highlighted the importance of this relationship in a community and how interacting with Queen Mothers, in particular, can be of benefit to the social worker. The Queen Mother links the two professions.

Whenever the Queen Mothers meet, I will talk to them about the work of the social worker. Whenever they have a social worker in their community, they have to help, to accommodate that person, invite that person to talk to the community members and discuss about their issues ... so by inviting them and making them comfortable in our communities they will make the community's life more enjoyable... and we all now love and will work hard to help the social worker do his or her work in the village without tears.

The role of the social worker and Queen Mothers overlap in many ways and this has positive implications for communities.

Relationship between facilitator and group members

Introduction

As facilitator of the group, I was responsible for selecting the group and for organizing and facilitating the workshop. Again I remember being conscious of the evolutionary process of talking with potential group members and feeling intuitively who might or might not be appropriate for the group. At the beginning, I created opportunities for group members to challenge their own beliefs by organizing more structured workshops and gave them the space to learn and grow in their knowledge. I was

interested particularly in how I merged with the group, my personal contact with the group, and my role with the action plans.

Merging with the group

One group member wanted to know why I chose Ghana to do my research when I could have gone elsewhere, to another country.

Maybe we would be interested in knowing why you chose Ghana of all areas that you mentioned so far. What exactly do you want?

I explained my long-term interest in Ghana and my time spent here as a volunteer and researcher. It seemed sensible to facilitate a research project in a place that I knew well.

As time went on, I felt my role as facilitator changing. Initially I had been the main person planning the workshops but eventually I became a resource person able to provide financial and material resources as well as constant encouragement to the group.

I want to make you aware of this journal, International Social Work Journal ... the International Federation of Social Workers website is the following...I have these articles for you to sign out to read ... I have this book if anyone is interested, this gives a good summary of social work around the world.

I was very conscious concerning my language and accent with the group. I tried to speak slowly but after a while I was aware that people might not have understood what I was trying to say.

Okay, thank you for coming and I want to say Akwaabe Aiyeko (laughter from the audience) ... When I taught here in 1994 and 1995, my students told me I talked too fast. I am going to try and speak slow. If you don't understand what I have said, please stop me.

On some occasions, I would share my own experiences in the workshops. I used examples from Canadian situations as well as from other parts of the world in which I have worked.

That's why the Armenian situation is very interesting ... according to the video the curriculum was brought to Armenia and started there ... why didn't they take the Armenians and take western social work and mould it to make it for Armenia... in Nicaragua the schools of social work were shut down and they spent a lot of time redoing the curriculum.

Personal contact

I tried to make people feel welcomed and special at the workshop and kept continual contact with group through the delivery of transcripts.

We are very glad to have Abukari here because he is from Tamale and he is interested in travelling down for this ... It is nice to have someone from the North. We really appreciate you (Queen Mother) being here and I know you are busy. It is very important particularly as we are looking at social work education and how much tradition and Ghanaian culture is included in it and you are a person that knows traditional culture very well. We look forward to your participation as best you can.

I visited group members and asked them how they felt concerning the research project.

This was good personal time and I was able to get to know people better. Sharing of any anger, hurts as well as joys was encouraged.

When I delivered the transcripts, I ask people how they are feeling about the project and most people are being challenged by the project. They are becoming critically aware of the issues concerning social work in Ghana and a possible appropriate curriculum for the future.

Everyone showed up to most of the sessions and if they did not, they expressed the feeling that they had missed being with the group. One person missed two sessions in a row and really felt at a loss. Some were unable to come for serious reasons.

I heard from one group member about the conflict in Tamale that has flared up this past week. He wrote to me to say he was fine and things have calmed down again but security is tight for a while.

If people did not attend a workshop, it was important to keep them up to date on future workshops and the dates and times.

Although I would have loved to spend more time outside the workshop with group members, we were all busy and it just did not happen. However, I did go on a Victims of Violence march with one of my group members and this was an invaluable experience.

One of the nicest parts of the research project was getting to know the Queen Mother in her own home in Kineshie. We would sit in her lovely garden and talk about the research, her role in the group and life generally.

I went to see the Queen Mother. We talked about the workshop and I told her that I was pleased people have taken her as their own. One of her purposes of being in the group is to establish links with traditional authority and social workers. We talked about the beads I bought, as she is an expert on Ghanaian beads.

She educated me in the ways of traditional leaders and told me stories about her own life and work. The greatest compliment she gave me near the end of our time together was that I was like a daughter to her. She was helpful in translating proverbs used in the workshops and also helped me understand Ghanaian words that I could not understand from the tape. Sitting under the tree and sipping Fanta, with the headphones on, she would listen to and interpret different words in Akan or Fante. Then, together we would write them out on the transcript and translate them into English. I felt very fortunate as a person to be able to spend so much time with this amazing woman and to have her as part of our group.

Action plans

I was surprised at how many action plans we developed. As time went on, group members began to think 'in a big way' about how they could positively change social work education and practice in Ghana. The action plans brought the group together and gave a common purpose to our hard work. As each action plan was carried out, the group drew closer and worked together to make these plans happen. I felt very much part of this

group; we worked together to form important action plans so that the research could be effective and important to social work education knowledge.

Summary

In the end, the group members formed good and positive relationships with each other that will be important in the years to come. One of the group members summed her experience up very well.

Another benefit I have gained from this research is the friends I have made. We are all manner of people here, the young and dynamic and the not too young ... I have met a few for the first time. Now I can get up and go to a traditional leader without the normal traditional paraphernalia. And I think I am comfortable and grateful for the friends I have made and for the impact I hope to have.

The group was dynamic, strong and passionate concerning social work development in Ghana. This group worked together through the positives and challenges of group work and this was strengthened over time. For me, bringing people from different backgrounds, job situations and geographical areas together to work as a group on a particular issue was both an anxiety-provoking experience and an amazing experience. As the group met and experienced the PAR process together, I felt privileged to see all of us grow and develop into richer and more conscientized people. Although we had our tensions, struggles, and disagreements as well as joys, we supported each other and worked together to come to grips with the issues surrounding social work education and practice. The caring that went on in the group touched me and I hope that the group members will continue to care for each other.

Relationships with Ghanaian Society

Relationship between group members and Ghanaian society

Introduction

Throughout the research process, we learned much about Ghanaian/African culture and were encouraged to express our thoughts and ask questions concerning cultural issues. At most workshops the words “I didn’t know that” could be heard. It was apparent that this was, in fact, the right place to begin as we talked about indigenizing social work curriculum was with the following questions. “Is there any such thing as African culture? And if so, what is it? What is African culture?” One group member shared his experience about being forced to take a course in African studies during his social work education.

Ghanaians tend to have more interest in what is happening outside than in our own country. And coming back to the university, even look at our curriculum here... but when we came here in the first year we were asked to do African studies and it was something we were forced to do. We didn’t have interest in African studies.

The hegemony of western knowledge that Gramsci and others talk about seemed a reality in Ghana. This hegemony continues in Ghana and is reflected in all stages of education. Most Ghanaian adults, during childhood, learn more about the western world than about their own country and the African continent. To be enlightened was and still is, to some degree, seen as synonymous with acquiring western knowledge. African knowledge, often the hidden and suppressed knowledge (Foucault, 1980), is still considered by many as primitive. However, African beliefs are also alive and well, and the example below illustrates the tension people experience living in both western and African worlds. I remember sitting in a TroTro (public transportation) with twenty other Ghanaians. As usual the radio was blaring with the local Christian preacher preaching in his loudest voice so that everyone in the city could hear his message. He was talking

about the fact that Ghanaians are western on the outside (wearing their western business suits) and African on the inside (wearing their spiritual beads to protect them from evil forces). Of course this was seen as very primitive, unhealthy and un-Christian and he made people feel guilty about their own belief systems. However, people on the TroTro laughed as though they understood the dichotomy and accepted this as part of life. I was outraged and wanted to say something but did not. However, here are my journal thoughts.

Is there a negative side to traditional knowledge? Is some if it harmful? What about the village mentality? I don't see these as necessarily negative...the preacher spoke of the destruction of the forest due to village mentality and yet how many more forests have been destroyed through western scientific knowledge and western profits including colonialism. He spoke of the businessman who wears suits but has all sorts of beads, body marks and other fetishes under this suit...it is being white on the outside and black on the inside. And why shouldn't they be!!!...Africans are supposed to feel bad because the western world defines them as diverse, primitive but not progressive!!!...if there was more African pride and not so much emphasis on how the west views Africa, maybe Africans would rise up and do something.

This example expresses my own questions concerning the balance that Ghanaians seek to achieve between western knowledge and beliefs and indigenous practices. One of our speakers described the mixed messages in society.

We have situations where there are antagonisms in this sort of cultural milieu where some people are condemning. So you go to church and the priest is saying that everything in your tradition is wrong. And so you ask yourself, "Were there no good people, did we not have honesty, did we not care, was there no love and that is ridiculous. We have to begin to understand that this is what we have to deal with.

A Canadian nurse put another perspective on Ghanaian life paralleling it to Canadian life.

I wrote her thoughts in my journal.

Many Ghanaians see the positives and negatives of colonialism. Many want to move on, learn from the past and look to the future. She said that this did not surprise her in the least. She thinks Ghanaians are a little like Canadians. We like to be the peacemakers and make the most of all the worlds that influence us.

Themes concerning Ghanaian society that were important to the group were colonialism, modernization, globalization, and western knowledge.

Colonialism

Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1997) are concerned with education that is critical and emancipatory. Feeding information to people without allowing for the critical process to unfold only supports the dominant knowledge of society. Critical education is the creative struggle to regain ones humanness. During the Aburi workshop I introduced a map exercise that helped the group identify other points of view than the knowledge given to them particularly at the university. In fact, the group confirmed one of the Sociology professors who taught them was biased towards a pro-colonial view of history. The exercise also exposed the group to how western knowledge through colonialism shaped the way we all look at the physical world. One of the first workshops after Aburi, I was challenged by a group member concerning my view of colonialism.

I think the exercises were to shape our mind, to bring our mind in tune with the way you reason. And I saw that it was like you were preparing our minds for the fact that you saw that western imperialism is dominating social work and there is a need for us to adjust. Maybe, we have not had the opportunity to reflect on it yet but my personal conviction is ... where do we start?

During the map exercise, one group member saw clearly the motivation behind Europe colonizing Africa.

Those people used the Mercator map as a way of partitioning Africa, which directions they would go and Europe is up and Africa is down... so they were thinking that crossing all the way to North America areas, so it was direct to come to Africa and to take over from there... Linking to the map where you said that colonialization occurred and then those who put Africa at the bottom meant that they didn't think that we were good enough or useful, kind of thing.

This strong anti-colonial beginning did challenge group members to think about their colonial past and its relationship to social work.

While the negative aspects of colonialism emerged, the positive aspects of this historical event also emerged. This was brought out at the workshop in which we acted out pre-colonial, present and postcolonial societies. Highlighted were issues concerning land takeovers, individualizing work and thus society, teaching that anything traditional was negative, introducing western technology and movies, the influence of western and eastern religions and use of western medicine instead of traditional medicine. One of the positive aspects of colonialism that came out through the skit was that of human rights. One group member explains.

With our traditional birth attendants, in those days (pre-colonial) those who were helping mothers in labour, if they identify some disability and they think it will be a bad thing for the family they would take the child and throw it away and tell the parents that the child was so bad that it died... when you were born with certain fates, this is punishment from your god, or your god has come in a different way to punish the family.

Another group member agrees.

Through the influence of missionaries and Europeans, the right to life was introduced and encouraged.

As we met for workshops, particularly the first five, this theme of colonialism appeared and reappeared time and time again until it was time to move on. The following group members shared their thoughts on colonialism.

I was reflecting on what colonialism did to us ... what did white people bring to us?...I came to the realization that maybe the education that they have brought to us has helped in a way and has also in a way inhibited us in just a way that we sort of can't do things on our own ... After independence we are still hanging on to what colonialism brought.

Now we are living in a situation where colonialism has already come. All the things modernization, technology everything has come. Now we have our traditional system and we have our formal system. How are we going to integrate these things and make social work more practical? ... whatever we say colonialism has some positives and some negatives. How are we going to use the positive side, use the positive things from our traditional system and blend it so that we make social work more suitable to the condition in which we find ourselves?

I want to ask the group has westernization or colonialization done anything positive to social work? Because I think the emphasis was so much negative that the western or colonialism has done to social work. My questions is "can't we see anything positive? Hasn't it contributed in a way to probably bringing in the social work?"

I think we should stop referring to the past because it has already happened. So what we have to do now is to accept the situation as it is now and then see what we can do about it. We should let the past guide us in our march forward ... we have lost some aspects of our culture through colonialism and at the same time I think we have gained some knowledge and skills and that is beneficial to our society through colonialism. And we can learn some lessons from these two distinct periods of time in our history to plan a better social work program that can stand the test of time.

Other group members were not so positive about colonialism, but generally, I sensed that people had been challenged and used the workshop and reflections to work through this issue. It seemed as though people were in different places about how colonialism has affected Africa. We did talk about colonialism again during our dialogue with various speakers but not to the extent that we did in our first few workshops. The group seemed ready to move on and leave this topic as it was.

Modernization - Mixing cultures

The dialogue in many workshops centred on the adaptation process in Ghanaian society concerning mixing African and Western knowledge. For many group members, it was the first time we could critically look at this process and identify what types of cultures were present in Ghana. Not only are Ghanaians living more western lifestyles in the mainly urban settings, but also there are different traditions and lifestyles because of the many ethnic groups within Ghana. One speaker, who was a deputy minister of the

government and travels quite frequently to the western world, described the many worlds she lives in. In one day, she may be making important government decisions during office hours, and then, in the evening, she may go to her sister's house where she is told to "carry things on my head and let's go". For her sister, the deputy minister's title and daytime responsibilities do not matter at all. Another speaker puts it this way.

Culture is something that is not static but dynamic. When we are talking of culture we are talking about so many different things coming together ... you also discover that there are some of us who are beginning to be more in tune with the western way of looking at things than the traditional way of looking at things.

The African family has been influenced by westernization and its emphasis on the nuclear family, in contrast to the indigenous African family that includes the extended family and rules concerning property. Nowadays, some Ghanaians disregard traditional property rights and give their property directly to their children, a more western approach. Another example of cultural differences concerned ideas around misfortune. In the western world, when misfortune happens, it is considered bad luck. Ghanaian culture would say there was more to it than that. Something else is responsible for the misfortune. It is extremely useful to identify differences in cultures when many are represented in one country. These different beliefs and knowledge bases are important to identify in social work education so that the development of practice acknowledges these differences. One group member shares his view.

In Ghana we were able to incorporate indigenous practices in what we consider to be the foreign things we do in Ghana. These ceremonies we create around our programs could even make it more acceptable to our people.

For example, another group member spoke of the reluctance of people to come to a western style social service for help.

People are scared or people do not see why they should carry their problems to the social work agency... because they feel one way or the other that maybe if he does that the wrath of the ancestors may come upon him...we have certain religious and social control measures that also limits them from patronizing social work services like the pastor or imam.

The group members asked questions such as the following.

a) How do we deal with these beliefs and how do we decide what cultural practices are appropriate and what practices need changing through education? b) Should we even be changing these beliefs or create new social services systems that are more acceptable and conducive to these beliefs? c) What harmful practices, like trokosi and female genital mutilation, could social workers change by creating alternatives that would address the issues behind these practices (adult initiation rights) in a more healthy and positive light?

One speaker summarizes our thoughts.

We are talking about ways of doing things that are entrenched. That begins to be a problem in the first place ... you as social workers are confronted with centuries of history. Years and years of practice that you have to, you want to try and get people to break away. And they have to have a very good reason why they should not do it. So it is very important that you know what is traditionally done and what is the person's interpretation of that tradition...you have to know what certain philosophy or view of life people have.

What new ceremonies can we as social workers include in our practice that would enhance the traditional ways of thinking? She continues.

There is this whole idea that you need to be cleansed of the old life and move into the new life kind of thing so you can build some new ceremonies yourselves. And when I say ceremonies it doesn't have to be a huge ceremony, you can create ceremonies around some of these notions.

What western social systems are appropriate in Ghana? Who is the dominant group who decides what knowledge is or is not relevant and important? The confusion of living in a mixed culture and the difficulty of knowing which cultural beliefs are appropriate and which are inappropriate challenged one group member to ask the following questions.

How do we get to the source and who is the actual source that we should go to if we should have conflict in dealing with our culture. Who is really the authority, the pointer?

Our speaker pointed out that indigenous writing and research kept at the Institute of African Studies and in Sociology would help. Also, traditional leaders can actually guide us in our understanding or can direct us to the right person to go to for help. “They know who the experts are but you must ask ... so one of the basic issues we have is that we have to start writing some more and work otherwise you end up with distortions for films and so on.”

Cultural issues are not easy. Relating them to social work education and practice is a challenge to us all when we live in a culture that has so many different influences. One speaker challenged us to think about changes in society.

You are all pioneers because the situation has changed. The ethnic group is no longer the only authority. The home, the family, the lineage is no longer the only authority. People are out there with various options...the ground has shifted considerably. The things you hold on to have shifted...you and your husband are in a situation where abuse is much more possible than when you were living near extended family and you as a woman are abusing a situation because your mother's and aunties are not there. So what do we do under those conditions?

The importance of a closer link between traditional authority, the Institute of African Studies and social work was suggested as a way forward with social work education. With such links in place, students would be challenged to relate their studies to how social work and Ghanaian culture really link and how we would be able to help people live in a society influenced by westernization.

The conscientization that Freire (1997) talks about was evident in these workshops. People were introduced to many different Ghanaian and African practices and issues and were challenged to see how social work education and practice could be adapted to indigenous practices that might be more appropriate to the Ghanaian people. One group member concludes with the following statement:

You know I have been struggling that most of the ideas are individualistic, they are western. But I came to the conclusion that something could be done about it. If we feel that they are not acceptable and we understand those things in principle and we accept them and we want to make it more practical, we could create ceremonies, we could change some of these things to make it more acceptable.

As the world becomes increasingly linked through technology, health issues, global politics, economic issues and social issues the dialogue needs to continue in social work education concerning the balance between western knowledge and African knowledge.

Globalization

If globalization is about internationalization, liberalization and universalization, Africa has a long way to go in order to benefit from this phenomenon. Foucault (1992) identifies ways of analyzing power relations and this includes institutions and their uses and motives, economic gaps in trade and production, and the maintenance of the dominant society. The present neo-liberal economic policies do not give a fair share of the economic market to African countries. During our skit, we highlighted some of the negative effects of neo-liberal globalization and the hardships it has had on families. From a pre-colonial society where the immediate family and extended family took care of the children to the present day reality of both parents working full-time, leaving relatives and friends to look after the kids, life has truly changed. Group members were aware of these affects on their society.

The free trade agreements have adversely affected the economic conditions of Ghana.

The other factor that affects our economy is the unfair world market system...you have no control over prices of your goods...you decide to sell your goods at a particular time, then once in a while they double the price and then we should be appreciative?...then at the moment it falls on us to make up for the appreciation they talk about...they buy our goods the way they want it and sell theirs to us at their own dictates...give us alternatives beside diamonds and clothes like bananas. Those things we can benefit from and they are not helping us.

Strong feelings were also expressed about the IMF and Ghana's labeling of an HIPC country. One group member states.

HIPC is a government policy; maybe we should say the foreign influence. Even when they are giving you the loan, they decide how it should be used, irrespective of the need and that goes a long way to affect our economy... Yes and they made good use of some of the money... traitors!!

Along the same vein as the IMF's structural adjustment programs was a theme that ran through all of the workshops was the affects of government policy concerning the pay and condition of lecturers. "The university is crying out for lecturers" and yet people applied found the pay and conditions too poor to take a job there. Many felt this was a direct result of government cuts to education. One speaker gave their opinion about this issue.

It is just the economic situation in the country and also it is the, should I blame the government, yes, maybe I should, it depends on the importance we place on certain things. The improvement that you have brought to the person's life is not something that can be seen, touched. But when the government comes and builds roads and puts up nice, nice buildings you can see those things and then next time you vote for them...we forget that if we want development then we have to develop the people who will bring about development...I don't think we value people as much as we should.

Another speaker comments. "At that time, early days of university, we had the money, resources to bring the people and all were paid for. Since the university went down, government withdraw, withdraw, and withdraw so everything collapsed, we didn't have money to do these things".

The lack of support to educational institutions mean that staff members often held two jobs, while people with a desire to work at the University of Ghana but are unable to live on the salary. One group member explains.

They (lecturers) have more than they can handle... you can count only two or three who solely teach ... they do a lot of consultancy work

One lecturer pointed out that she made more money in one month in the United States as a caseworker than in a whole year of teaching at the University of Ghana. “If I am young and strong and I could work with an NGO and earn three times what I am earning now then why waste my time here. So the job is just not attractive.”

Frustrations arose not only from the government’s lack of spending on teachers but also from the bureaucratic system of the academy. The University of Ghana continues to be ruled by a mainly male academic board copied on the Oxford/Cambridge style of teaching and administration. One rule that the group identified as adversely affecting positive social work education was that to be a lecturer, a person must have completed a thesis at the Master’s level. Many good social workers, who have combined practice and education, and who want to teach are left out. Until this last year, a Master’s was not even an option at the Department of Social Work. All of these structures and rules, according to the group, were hindrances in hiring good teachers with practical experience, something they identified as lacking in most lecturers and professors, not just in social work but in other departments as well.

Concerning social welfare and poverty, group members had much to say. At the beginning of one workshop, group members came in very angry concerning a senior minister who was on the radio and said that Ghana “cannot be a social welfare state and the people would have to take care of themselves”. One group member was challenged by the government’s position on welfare.

Is it the social development to bring about economic growth or is it economic growth that brings about social development? Which one must we pursue first? South Africa has realized that the social development will lead them to economic growth. What kind of situation are we in, our system?

Another group member had been reading and digesting the South African White Paper on Social Welfare and gave us a good understanding of what this document stated. He asked an important question as to the role of economics in social policy.

When they (South Africans) are able to prevent social problems, people will live a more just, stable and humane society in which people will work happily, stress free in order to contribute to the economic development of their country. However they said social development first with regard to economic development ... their priority was on the prevention of social problems in which they pumped a lot of resources into their social investments ... If Ghana says it cannot be a welfare state and there is much poverty then how can people contribute towards economic development? At the Moshi conference it was established that it is not automatic that economic development benefits all of us. So why are we in Ghana stressing so much on economic development in our system?

Another states his ideas.

The idea that both could happen at the same time was discussed but it seemed as though the Ghana government had gone the way of the IMF and World Bank and chose economic development as the means by which people will rise above poverty.

Another group member gave an example of the type of cultural worldview that was a serious problem in Ghana and perpetuated apathy of poverty.

I think that in some cases people, through traditional beliefs, religious beliefs or cultural beliefs think that poverty as a condition or situation is natural ... once you are born poor you can't change. A proverb was shared from the Ga ethnic group that also underlies this belief. "ohia ε mantse e ni-shika le ehoz". Poverty is king, money is like a stream, it passes so don't worry, it passes ... we think it will pass so nobody touches it. The minute you die it means it is gone. Your children will dissipate it, have it and go. And that is an aspect of our culture. That is our worldview, our thinking. And until that kind of thinking is disabused, taken out, it is hard to develop.

One speaker shared her experiences concerning poverty in Ghana during a fieldwork experience in a criminology course at University.

Fieldwork wakes you up. It makes you see how poor people are, how people are suffering. You see a child very hungry; some children even don't eat for days because they don't have any money. Their parents don't have money to spend on them. So when you see these things, then you start learning how to deal with real issues.

Another speaker pointed out exclusions that influenced poverty.

When you talk of particular problems in Africa and our world there is a lot of exclusion, gender exclusion, class exclusion, rural/urban divide, and exclusion just by where you were born as well as the exclusion of individuals and communities who are being developed.

Concerning the social worker's role in society, there was frustration at the fact that social workers often do not participate in political discussions and if they do, they do not identify themselves as social workers. One member admonished and challenged us to

know what is expected of us, read more and be interested in government policies and what is happening around us and to inform ourselves so that when we talk people will know that we know what we are talking about.

Members encouraged each other to participate in radio phone-in discussions, as one member had done recently in a program concerning child labour, and to proudly state our profession as a social worker.

Although technology has brought information to our homes via the Internet, many countries do not have access to this information or cannot afford this luxury. I was struck by the information gap between Canada and here.

The one thing I feel so much here is the gap between western journals and knowledge and the local Ghanaian scene. There is only one computer in the whole of the Department of Community Development in the country and this is not hooked up to the Internet yet.

Even travelling to conferences could be difficult and is just one of many hurdles to overcome for Africans in the so called globalized world. As one speaker so aptly explained,

In the States there isn't this kind of want, inadequacies, books and all the other things that go into learning or for that matter teaching. In our situation because of the kind of inadequacies, I am not sure the University library still exists, if it exists just the building is there ... You actually tell the student to go and stay in your houses and at the end of three years you come and we will give you a degree. Because where are they going to get the materials?

The growth of technology in the western world and the lagging behind of this technology leaves many people in less wealthy countries with a strong disadvantage to their learning process.

Western knowledge

Most people in the group acknowledged the hegemony of western knowledge and the impact it has had on their own society.

Western knowledge has impacted on our culture and it has changed the views of the people.

Certainly, Gramsci's understanding of hegemony speaks true to the way in which western scientific knowledge pervades Ghanaian culture and society. It can also be seen in the organization and teaching at the University of Ghana. The skit concerning pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial life emphasized the influence of missionaries and Europeans concerning the way we view the world, education and language. Concerning the map exercise, one group member shared her views.

It is a revolutionary map (Upside down, South map) asking 'from whose view are we looking?' So depending on who is in charge then the direction (viewpoint) becomes very clear.

Another states.

Society is dynamic and not static. I have seen that the world can be at anywhere at anytime. I have seen with the Upside Down Map that since society is not static but dynamic things can change at all times and at everywhere.

The introduction of the English language has had an impact on Ghanaians, particularly those interested in gaining a western education. Both traditional languages and English are used quite often. One group member shared her ideas concerning language.

We develop our language based on our experiences ... language is conservative but expands.

Concerning oral language another one states.

In every community and every region they have their own way of mourning or telling the story to the young ones.

The map exercise, that told us about colonialism, showed one group member that in order to facilitate what you want, your own language is important to introduce into a society.

You need language to facilitate whatever you want to carry out. ... you need various languages to facilitate whatever you want to do.

In the case of the British Empire, teaching the colonized how to speak the English language helped in the colonization process. Ghana has struggled with the idea of children learning their own languages before learning English and education policy has changed back and forth concerning this issue. One group member explains

They tell you the policy for teaching should be purely in the local dialects ... then they say no we should have both languages together ... then they say no let's have children from class 1 write in the local language so that they could grasp the indigenous better ... now they are fighting. The government has come out and said English should be used at all times because the standard of English has fallen.

Much dialogue centred around the impact that western knowledge has had on Ghanaian culture. One group member felt this western influence had "taken over our minds (emphasized)" and was the main reason for culture degenerating. The loss of oral tradition, dancing, drumming and singing has been taken over by videos, modern music and discos.

I believe we are experiencing these changes now especially because of the advancement of technology ... with the typical drummer you don't experience the thrill and actions of the video.

There was a sense that Ghanaians were losing their history and tradition. The traditional drumming and dancing is now being taken over by the tourist industry. Another group member felt that the type of social services that replaced the extended family was

set up to provide assistance to somebody...it is like the western knowledge that has been imported into our culture is making us now to be lazy because it is like we are waiting for someone to bring something to us.

This issue of dependency on western knowledge, resources and development was talked about during the workshops. One group member was able to share his experience working in an NGO funded by the United States Government. His insights centred on how the NGO was serving so many different agencies that it seemed as though the people were lost in the demands of the agencies. In particular wheat was being sent from the U.S. as food aid to a non-wheat eating peoples. Concerning social services, the group had different opinions about who influenced these services. Some felt they were organized with both the Ghanaian and western influences; others felt the systems were imposed on Ghana from Britain; and still others felt many of the services were Ghanaian in origin. Another member spoke of her concern that Ghanaians had been taught not to question or motivate people to change things in society. She felt the western world was much better at creating change.

Here if you were doing something for a worthy cause, you wouldn't get that kind of support. I think they (colonialist) taught us something different, I mean negative and then they are doing otherwise. They are motivating their people and they taught us to inhibit our people ... dependency and another word is suppressing ... actually inhibit you.

Another group member related her long experience with community development. She shared how people used to get together do things for themselves and organize themselves, whereas now many villagers wait for government and non-government aid.

I have seen social workers, NGOs, and policymakers also trying to help the government to improve the living standards of the rural poor but they still remain poor.

Other members felt village people were mobilizing themselves but needed the government to direct them.

Concerning the brain drain of Ghanaians to western countries, group members felt this was an important issue for social work education. They “copy blindly and everything that they see they want to do it here.” The question remains as to what kind of society does Ghana wish to have and in turn, what kind of social work education do social workers wish to have. I reflect about this in my journal.

More than anything I sensed a grief of losing one’s culture in a world that is fast becoming technological and western. How much of culture do we change and how much do we keep? What if every country became a clone of the United States and Europe? What kind of world would we live in? Is there a difference between culture changing by force and culture changing more naturally? How much do we keep and how much do we give up to westernization?

Relationship between facilitator and Ghanaian society.

Introduction

There are many aspects to a relationship between oneself and a culture. In order to grow in this relationship I felt, as a researcher, that it was important to live amongst local people and not live a more extravagant life than my group members. I was also able to see for myself the issues concerning colonialism, westernization and globalization and understand better the influences these factors have had on Ghana and are still having on Ghana today. Living here confronted me with my own mortality and the fragility of life. Six friends of mine died while I was in Ghana in the course of one year.

The risk of living is so much more apparent here. In the western world life it is so predetermined that there is minimal risk in being killed. The fragility of life is so apparent here. The west is too secure and this African life is too insecure. Is there a middle ground?

My understanding of and relationship with Ghanaian society included integrating into society, living between different worlds, learning daily skills, understanding culture and learning about Ghana through the influences of colonialism, modernization and globalization.

Integrating into society

As a facilitator for a Participatory Action Research project in Ghana, I had to live and experience Ghanaian society in as real a situation as possible. I opted to live in a residential setting in Accra in a communal living situation. To me this enhanced the PAR process, in that I was interrelating not only with the research group but also with the world around me. My living situation was definitely a challenging one, with many different kinds of people living in the back of a big colonial house where an Akan elderly woman lived. We had Liberian refugees, a Swiss chief, a Russian woman, a Mauritian woman and her son, and the elderly lady's niece all living there at different times, not to mention the chickens, a goat and two dogs. Not only was I learning about Ghanaian society through the research; I was also learning much from my living situation.

There are interesting people who live here and it is like grand central station. People coming and going all of the time...however I am not to trust anyone or give anyone my keys...It is nice to be able to sit out and read and eat on the porch. I feel close to the banana trees, the dirt and everything.

I lived in one room with a kitchen, shower and toilet behind the big house. I used public transportation, ate at local restaurants or cooked for myself. I did not know from day to

day if I would have water or electricity and so much of my time was spent dealing with the necessities of life.

I gradually got to know and appreciate my landlady, who had been married to a British civil servant at the end of the colonial rule. Her life story was intriguing and as we talked about our lives and travels under the avocado tree in her garden, I felt a bonding towards her. I felt that often I was talking with a person of the past who lived during colonial times and had seen the many changes over the years in Ghana. Our talks taught me a lot about Ghana's society and we could discuss the pros and cons of independence. She was also a shrewd lady who knew how to deal with Ghanaians in a harsh or tender way, depending on the circumstances.

In January, while walking home from a concert late at night I mugged and dragged in the street. Over the next weeks, my landlady applied an indigenous cream to my wounds and they healed incredibly well. This experience not only drew us closer together as friends; it also drew me closer to the community around me. I made sure that people in the area knew of my mugging and in a way I felt that I had been properly initiated into the realities of living in Accra. The mugging upset me very much and I had to try to get over my fears and depression as a result of it. My journal was a source of strength in working through this violation of my body and soul.

I am thinking the trauma will come later. However, as I lay awake this morning I rehash everything in my mind and thought what I should have done to prevent this from happening. However it is over and I need to get on with my research project and life. It is good to be alive.

I think about this attack, particularly at night, and can't sleep really well. I haven't cried or gotten angry. I am just a bit numb still. In some ways I am glad that it happened so soon after I came as now I am much more safety conscious. It has also taken the wind out of me. Ghanaians are very upset that this has happened to me and people have been so nice ... I am humbled by my attack and this has made me lose some confidence but not too much ... it feels like the attack has dropped me to a deeper level of understanding with Ghanaians, almost like I have now been initiated into the difficulties of society.

The attack brought me closer to Ghanaian friends and the people in my community who came to my rescue and helped me recover from this incident. I felt that if I survived the effects of the incident, the research would continue to go well.

Living between different worlds

One of the most important lessons that I learned was that all of us live in many different worlds. This is not an easy task when different influences are surrounding us daily. However, I felt much more at ease living in both my western world and the Ghanaian world than I ever had before. I could celebrate both and I flowed freely from one to the other.

Once I had wrestled with my indigenous and rational side, while doing my candidacy exam, I realized I can live with both of them and I have peace in coming back here. It doesn't have to be an either/or situation. I can enjoy life in these different cultures and they don't have to work against each other. I think this is the difference in how I feel now as opposed to back in 1994.

However, there were times when I just couldn't deal with the westernization process. One night at a sports bar, I was eating and the karaoke began. I expressed my disgust in my journal.

I enjoyed my evening until the karaoke began. The singing was great but the video accompanying the songs was so awful. It was this very white pasty couple looking very embarrassed at their affection to each other and it was so western. I wanted to know why they didn't have a video with Africans in it. It just sickened me so I left around midnight.

One of my treats for the week was going to a sports bar owned by a Canadian from PEI, having a burrito and a margarita and watching sports like the Super Bowl, hockey, and tennis. I was comfortable spending time with Canadian nurses as well and halfway through my time in Ghana, we spent several weekends together travelling to different parts of Ghana. This ease comes from my own acceptance of who I am in this world and my belief that no matter where we come from, we can all make our own contributions to this world.

Still, there were times when I felt like a sponge, giving all of my time and receiving very little in return. This was a direct result of my being a westerner and the local people's belief that I could do anything for them.

I always feel used here. It is like I am paying for the sins of my colonial ancestors. I don't mind it but it gets to be draining after while. There is something about Africa that brings me alive but also exhausts me. Can I live in both worlds? Do I want to live in both worlds? My soul is split in so many directions and each place brings out something in me that the other place doesn't.

One of the hardest world events to observe from a distance was the Iraq war. I wanted to be part of the protests in Canada and felt helpless to do anything about it from Ghana. Listening to the radio, I felt I was hearing about a war on another planet that had little to do with life in Ghana. During the time leading up to the war, when the U.S. and Britain were trying to get support for a U.N. resolution, it came down to three African countries as to how they would vote concerning going to war. How ironic that Africa would be so important when it is usually ignored. Watching the hypocrisy and arrogance of the western world made me feel the hurt and pain of so many people displaced and affected by war as a result of western foreign policies as well as the practices of their own governments. I reflect on this in my journal.

I am really down and saddened by everything that is happening in the world. The earth is being destroyed and the earth's people are being destroyed. All of nature knows that the earth is under attack and this can be felt throughout the world ... I am sorry for my friend who saw war in Sierra Leone and for all of the people of the world who have to endure war and the affects of war. I am so sorry for all of the pain in the world. I am crying because I feel that pain very much and don't know what to do about it ... I am so sorry for Africa and the abuse and turmoil the world has caused you and that your own people turn against you.

I was glad when Nelson Mandela spoke out against the war and slowly other African countries had protests about the war. But when I asked a friend why Africans were not more vocal about the war, his reply was, "the world doesn't care about Africa so why should we bother?"

Daily skills

My skills in living in Ghana had been dormant for five years and it took a while for them to re-emerge. There is a well-known saying in Ghana "Thou shall not cheat a person except if it is a white man." Negotiating for every thing you buy, talking in the streets to people you do not know, dealing with corruption and learning to plan in advance for any situation were a few of these skills. In regard to the research, I never knew if we would have electricity for the workshop, what money would be needed for the project money, whether we were being cheated when exchanging money and when sudden changes in situations might arise that concerned the project. A Canadian archaeologist stated my situation very well.

Most people in our western world don't understand the daily experiences that we go through here. From the time we get up in the morning we are negotiating our way around town, negotiating prices for taxis, bombarded by people who want to sell us things, being reminded that we are white or obruni, trying not to get cheated all of the time, dealing with poor infrastructure when walking and trying to avoid getting sick, all in one day! No wonder we feel exhausted at the end of the day! And we haven't even begun our work.

Several examples of these daily experiences are given below. One particular incident occurred when I was planning for the Aburi workshop. I had negotiated with the guesthouse concerning accommodation and food and all was set for the weekend. Two days before the workshop started, the guesthouse informed me that we would have to cancel the workshop as the Government of Ghana needed the guesthouse and they took priority. I was furious and felt helpless.

I couldn't believe it. How dare the Government of Ghana come in and wreck my weekend!! I was angry by now and told him I would be up to the office as soon as possible to sort this out. What bad business to kick people out just because the government wanted it for the weekend. Couldn't they have picked another weekend?

As irrational as this sounds now and although the guesthouse found alternative accommodation for us, I felt abused, violated, frustrated and helpless. I could do nothing about it. On another occasion, I was accused of giving a fraudulent \$100 bill to an exchange bureau employee. That experience left me feeling hurt and mistrustful. Finally, I had the opportunity to sponsor a friend of mine to study in England and the experience we had with the British High Commission in Ghana was at least as frustrating as our experiences with Ghanaian bureaucracy. One of my close friends in Ghana always reminded me of a saying he used each day when the frustrations of life were too much: "Life is a mixture of what suppresses us and what pleases us."

Cultural humility

The more I understood about Ghanaian society, the more I realized how little I knew about Ghanaian society. I would try to clarify things I did not understand with the group or with my landlady or friends and often I found that I had misinterpreted what people had meant. This was frustrating to me. I would often test out my knowledge from my readings in Canada to see if people agreed with my understanding of an issue. A

teachable spirit along with humility was the order of the day. This was where I found my relationship with the Queen Mother so helpful. I would go to visit her and we would sit and talk about culture, the role of the Queen Mother in society, politics and research. This gave me a chance to ask questions concerning issues I didn't understand and we would talk about them together.

I also found that being an outsider gave me insight into aspects of Ghanaian culture that insiders could not see or took for-granted. One example was the influence of western knowledge and imperialism on society, in particular the educational system and how that remains today. I could see how much the University of Ghana was and still is trying to copy the British system. What would it have been like if that university had been created from an African perspective with a bureaucracy more congenial to African culture and realities? I told the group.

I am sorry to say this but you guys are so immersed in the British educational system. If you went to the U.S. or Canada you would realize that the whole hierarchy is very British. Remember that when you are lecturers here (laughter).

I loved the freedom and lifestyle I had in Ghana. The rules and restrictions we have in our western world can be inhibiting to our creativity. Living in a vibrant and creative society was something I cherished very much.

I feel good here. I feel young and free and a woman. It is so nice and wonderful to be like this. I feel I am young and attractive. This environment makes me feel so good. My bones don't ache and I am tanning.

During my time in Ghana in the 1990s, I had felt that people were watching their backs all the time and freedom of speech and expression were limited. This time around, there was freedom of speech and expression that was apparent and I felt a sense of freedom to create and produce.

Colonialism

My own studies for this research project centred on different writings concerning colonialism and its devastating effect on many cultures and societies of the world. Only one African country claims to not have been colonized (Ethiopia) and therefore the African continent was particularly affected by the abuse and misuse of resources by Europeans. One only has to read *King Leopold's Ghosts* (Hochschild, 1998) to see the devastation brought about through colonialism in Central Africa. Through post-colonial writing and my exposure to First Nations writings, I went to Ghana with a negative view concerning colonialism. As has been explained earlier, the group challenged these views and as a result my understanding of colonialism has changed slightly. However, I believe that when a foreign country invades another country and takes away the identity of the people, this is one of the most evil events in history. At a conference concerning traditional authority, one of the speakers stated the following, reflecting Freire's understanding of the culture of silence.

We know all there is to know about colonialism. Africa is still blaming imperialism for its problems. We need to take responsibility for our own culture and tradition. Our own people have oppressed us. There is a culture of silence in Africa. We need to make a contribution to the social and economic situation in our country (Personal notes, 2004).

At one point during my stay in Ghana I went to the coast to see the slave castles at Elmina and Cape Coast. Travelling along the coastal highway watching the palm trees swaying in the wind while villagers actively sold their produce on the side of the road, I wondered what it was like when the first Europeans came to the Gold Coast. These castles are now pilgrimage for African Americans and African Europeans to find healing from colonialism, racism and abuse. I shared my views with the group.

I went to Cape Coast and Elmina and so I had another dose of colonialism (laughter). I kept wondering what did the governor of the castle thinking when he was on the top of the castle living in luxury when those people were below in the dungeon ... we think we have learned from our past experiences, I think with Iraq we are still colonizing.

I believe that Africa continues to suffer from an identity crisis. As long as Africans aspire to be white and western, Africa will not develop into a continent of strength and stature. I reflect on this in my journal.

I am amazed at how many people still see Britain as their colonial master. Ghanaians should not be thinking like this anymore ... Ghanaians call their traditional knowledge primitive and backward. Where does this come from? Is it the fact that many Ghanaians have experienced the western world and have been taught that traditions there are better than ours (Africa)?

When will Africans take hold of their knowledge and make it number one in the world or as equal to western scientific knowledge? It is so hard to stand up after being downtrodden for so long and told that your knowledge is no good and is primitive.

The group challenged me on my own views of colonialism and through this process I came to some conclusions about colonialism and Ghana.

1. Ghana experienced a mild form of colonialism. The genocides that have happened in other places in Africa, Canada and around the world did not take place in Ghana. Although weakened the society, Ghanaians were allowed to keep their traditions.
2. When studying colonialism, one must recognize the different experiences that different countries have concerning this historical event.
3. Ghanaians want both the western and colonial influence and their traditional beliefs. They have tried hard to keep both alive and in balance in Ghana. The emergence of a traditional authority commission in the present government shows the willingness of the government to increase the presence of traditional beliefs

and practices. As one speaker pointed out “Our president carries a sword and a Bible in any ceremony. They try and go back and pick things up and combine them. So that you are right in the middle of the modern world but at the same time certain principles are upheld.”

Whatever one believes about colonialism, it was very clear in the research group that although colonialism was an evil event, some good came out of it. Group members believed that it was time to leave the past behind and take the positive aspects of that past, learn from them and move ahead. Although the dehumanization process that Freire (1997) speaks about can be seen in Africa, the culture of silence is slowly melting away through cooperation, unity and good governance. I hope Africans will find their true identity for the future.

Modernization

As stated before, Ghana is a country that likes to balance the traditional world with the western world. I saw many positive changes this time in Ghana manifested in new roads being built, purified water being sold on the street and shops and boutiques doing business in many parts of Accra. My impression was that there is more of a middle class now than before; and that this could be a result of the economic situation in Ghana or the financial contributions of the diaspora. However, social and educational systems continue to be depleted. A good example was that after my mugging, the police needed to come and see the site, but did not have money for gas for their car. I paid for the gas so that they could come and investigate. My travels to Burkina Faso and Mali showed me the difference between Ghana and two more traditional African countries. My travels to South Africa showed me a country that felt very European. I wrote in my journal.

What I came to appreciate more than anything is how Ghana has westernized in the past ten years in comparison to Burkina and Mali. True, it is a harsher climate as you go north, but after spending time in those two places, Ghana seemed like an affluent country and is very western. This is helpful in order to put the whole colonial, westernization and globalization processes into perspective ... After being in South Africa I am very grateful for Ghana and have real appreciate this country. The segregation in South Africa is still very present and the crime is very bad.

I was also encouraged to see traditional knowledge and authority taking a more vocal role in society. As mentioned earlier, a government commission concerning traditional authority was established while I was in Ghana. Gramsci speaks of the organic intellectuals who, through critical education, counter-act the dominant hegemony (Mayo, 1999) and these could be the traditional leaders and people interested in indigenous practices and beliefs. Ghana needs to spend time educating and promoting indigenous knowledge and practice so that the country can gain from both worlds. They seem to be in a unique position to do this in a productive way. However, there is a long way to go. For example, one of my group members stated that if he had not been required to take African studies in his social work course, he would not have done so. Many Ghanaians continue to know more about the western world than about their own continent.

Globalization

What was strongly highlighted during the workshops was the plight of teachers due to poor pay and conditions. New roads are being built but the social and educational needs of the country are still largely unmet. The government has an active policy that social welfare should be provided by family or NGOs. Yearly cutbacks are seen in community development and social welfare. Group members spoke of the unfair trade laws that do not allow Ghanaians to trade fairly in the world market. What seems to be

happening, as in Armenia, is that the diaspora are returning with money in their pockets, building new houses and living on their income from Britain, the U.S. and Canada.

Indigenous knowledge

I got the impression that some group members had not thought about the fact that indigenous writings were missing from their social work education. In fact, it seemed as though few people had looked at the issue of indigenous knowledge and western knowledge and the imbalance between the two. Only one group member had really thought much about it and was actively encouraging her colleagues to write for a social work newsletter.

Concerning the library resources, I found both the university library and the social work library under resourced. Not only is the university library insufficient and lacking in funding; social workers and students cannot financially afford to download articles from journals. My account of my trip to the university library explains this lack of resources.

To my horror nothing seemed to be in the right place and everything had dust on it. I looked for all three journals but was unsuccessful. I asked a person who knows the books but he had gone to the bank and the person at the desk was sleeping. When I woke him, he tried to help me but to no avail. He promptly went back to sleep. I too laid my head down in despair and fell asleep for a while as the wind blew the shutters of the library back and forth, bang, bang, bang. I asked the librarian if someone could take my list and look for the books and he said that there was no one and that probably these books had been taken and not returned.

Concerning the social work library, only 1% of the books in the social work library were local. There is an urgent need to fill the library with indigenous books and writings, even if they come from different Ghanaian sources inside and outside the university. The only indigenous understanding of social work in Ghana was taught through oral stories and traditions given by teachers. The disproportionately heavy reliance on western social

work knowledge continues; I hope that through the Master's program, students will be encouraged to publish in journals, thus establishing local writings for use in classrooms.

Summary

The understanding of Ghanaian society expressed in these workshops reflects the ongoing process of conscientization and reflection by the group members. No doubt each person has moved forward from comments made in this thesis and that is the wonderful nature of evolutionary learning. The fact that space was given for people to critically look at their own society and reflect and grow in their understanding of societal issues will remain with them for some time. One of the speakers spoke about the development of society.

Survival and development are two different things. Survival is just existing, eating, breathing, getting up, going, finding food, eat, and come to this...in order for society to develop it must go beyond just survival...people must be nurtured within the educational system to begin to dream wild dreams...if there are creative people performing then they bring about change, positive change in the society and that is progress, that is development...Creativity is nurtured by exposing individuals to challenges that have no answers necessarily...we must create creative situations that will challenge people's minds. And it is out of these challenges that people begin to think...training people who can look at things and see something else other than what everybody sees.

The group members challenged each other to look at their society in a critical way. Who is making decisions about culture and government policies that run this country? What are the concerns of people in the streets and what are your colleagues at work saying about social issues in Ghana, their pride as Africans and their attitudes towards western society? I noted this challenge in my journal.

<p>Continually think about how your culture is affected by, how you feel about your culture and how that is affected by other people, the media, reading and all sorts of different avenues...I am amazed at how traditional culture is still seen as wrong...People are bombarded with this kind of idea and so just be aware of who you are listening to and how that affects your view of you as an African and Ghanaian.</p>

Ghanaian society will continue to change and develop as outside and inside influences help shape that country. The balance between western knowledge and practice and indigenous knowledge and practice needs to be continually addressed. Learning from past influences in order to create a better society is the challenge for all, including the profession of social work. This time in Ghana, I had a sense that the country is economically better off than it was in the early 1990s. There appeared to be more middle class people, more businesses and better infrastructure. However, the poverty rate is still high in the country and this can be seen in daily life. What really stood out for me was the importance of both the western influence and the traditional influence in this society. Both of these sometimes conflicting ideologies are constantly being tried and tested, with the current society trying to balance both worlds. I went to a spa in Tema and was swimming in the pool. I looked up to the diving board and underneath it was a picture of the Queen of England and of Kwame Nkrumah (see photo on page xi). As I swam up and down, I realized that this was an appropriate image of Ghana, where the West meets Africa and vice versa and the two live side by side.

The greatest privilege for me personally in this process was seeing us as group members grow in our understanding of Ghanaian society and watching the conscientization process so apparent within the group. The struggle to integrate new learning into our lives was impressive.

I continue to be in awe of this process and how the group is coming together.

I learned much from living in a local setting and experiencing life in Accra. In the workshops, I would have preferred to spend more time on colonialism, differences between western and African thinking and the effects of neo-liberal globalization. But I was sensitive to the fact that I did not want to push my agenda onto the group. I took a

back seat and experienced the research evolving while it addressed issues important to the group members and social work in Ghana.

Relationships with Ghanaian social work

Relationship between group members and Ghanaian social work.

Introduction

When I first arrived in Ghana and talked with people about the research project, emphasis was placed on looking at the curriculum, assessing how western and how African it was, and setting the task of the research group to recommend changes to the curriculum for the Department of Social Work. However, no issue can be contained in a box separated from other aspects of the topic. The group process allowed for the flexibility and took on a life of its own. Other aspects of social work in Ghana were intertwined with the issue of the curriculum. The group members were passionate about social work and felt deeply about the reputation and effectiveness of social work in Ghanaian society. Dissatisfaction with the present state of the profession and its influence in Ghana had been simmering for many years and it was about to explode through this research. Of concern to most members was that social work was on the periphery in Ghana and that the Ghana Association of Social Workers was ineffective and corrupt. As the research progressed, these issues grew and emerged into action plans far beyond the recommendations for curriculum change. Other concerns emerged, including the lack of indigenous writing in social work, the social workers' own view of their profession, and the effectiveness of social welfare institutions and social work practice in present-day Ghana. The questions on everyone's minds during the first workshops were "Where do we begin? 'How do we do it if we want to make it very African?'" Is there a balance

between both worlds in regards to social work education and practice? Can we disregard the western influences? One group member shares his question.

If the profession of social work was introduced as a result of western influences would it be logical for us to say that we want to start this on our own without having a basis from the western world because social work was not in our vocabulary... just as a lot of things are introduced and then we adapt it ... we had to borrow it from somewhere?

These initial questions were the basis for continual dialogue concerning the indigenization of social work education and practice.

Social work on the periphery

One of the main concerns regarding social work in Ghana was that, despite the rich history of the profession and its influence in West Africa, the profession remains on the periphery. It was not understood by the public and had diminished in its priority with the government. Several group members voiced their concerns.

I have been thinking that social work in totality has been put on the periphery ... from time to time the department (social welfare) was aligned with other departments and now it looks as if the name of the department is diminishing gradually and it is now under the Employment and Manpower Ministries.

Why is social work in the peripheral and how do we change the stereotypes of social workers and broaden the scope especially in regards to our role in society?

Why is it that we are still on the periphery, people don't even know about us? Now that we are getting into the 21st century and people don't know about us.

Once when a Ghana TV employer came and talked to us about the video we wanted to produce, he gave his views of social workers in the Department of Social Welfare as people with their heads down on their desks sleeping. A group member responded to him.

I think the public doesn't have much knowledge about social work... People don't know much about the work being done.

As already mentioned one of our speakers challenged the group concerning the profession of social work. His ideas made a huge impact on the group.

To me social work, as we know it, is not yet born in Ghana to live much more to die. (general laughter) In the whole of Africa, and I am serious about this thing, not only in Ghana but in the whole of Africa ... social work has a very big problem, which we have not succeeded in achieving ... that is societal acceptance. Social Work as a profession is not accepted in Africa up to now.

This speaker put the blame squarely on social workers themselves.

We are struggling. The struggle continues unabated. We are still struggling to have social work accepted by the society. But it is our fault, social workers do not come together...we have to advocate and we can advocate if we come together.

Not only was this disheartening but it was felt that the work of the social worker was not appreciated by government or the public. Several members felt strongly about this.

They fail to see that social work cannot be measured just like how they count money. They don't see our impact. They don't see that maybe the behavioural patterns that we try to change in society, to enhance peoples functioning, this is something we are doing for the good of the country.

The departments (social welfare and community development) keep diminishing all of the time. Now we are short on logistics but the government is not responding to our problems. I don't know whether it is because the government doesn't get anything from us whether they think we are in the field maybe working on development and physical cash is not coming to them ... they don't give us anything as compared to the past that they used to allocate to the departments.

One solution by a group member to this problem was the basis for one of our action plans.

I think it is also about time that we advocate and sensitize and conscientize the general public about our effectiveness when we are put in responsible places ... it appears these days that anytime there is a focus on something it is turned into a ministry ... women get ministry, girlchild gets ministry and now the private sector has been given a ministry. Perhaps we could keep on and bring situations to light and then maybe in time the government will also take it to task and create a Ministry of Social Welfare.

Not only does the public not understand the education and work of the social worker; often, community development training and practices do not often fit with the rural Ghanaian community. One group member states.

I looked at the issue of the ways or methods being produced to cater to us by the western world and these are not in relation to the work that we are supposed to do at the community levels. It is different, we cannot apply it and I have seen it.

On a more positive note, one of the group members shared her experience concerning NGOs and the image of a trained social worker.

If the government has no resources to push social work forward, wherever we are we can push social work forward. I am saying this because I have worked in about four or five organizations and everywhere I have worked when they are doing adverts, they will add the qualification in social work because they are beginning to understand the potential of the social worker.

She goes on to place the responsibility on social workers to educate the government and public as to what social workers can do in Ghana.

We need to change people's perception, nobody will change it for us. If you are looking at government, most of them maybe have a wrong perception that other outsiders have about social workers. A lot of people ask me what social work is all about because they don't see that I am holding a sick person. I tell them it is not only dealing with people who have problems but even to empower people who will want to aspire to something greater than what they are doing. We need to broaden the scope and we need to make people know what social workers are doing.

Social work's identity in Ghana was an important issue facing the group members. They struggled with the reasons for a lack of identity and our speakers were helpful in guiding us through some of the issues. Linked with this identity crisis was the disappointment expressed about GASOW.

Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW)

Foucault (1992) speaks of institutional power relations and the impact they have on communities and societies. The example of the power relations concerning the

professional Association highlights this point. Who is in control here, what are the objectives of the Association and why do people feel oppressed by this organization? Most group members were very concerned about the state of GASOW. It was clear that the organization was ineffective, had no voice with the government of Ghana, and was not functioning as an Association should function. One group member shares her frustrations concerning the Association.

Any professional is formed by the professionals ... and we are still saying that the Association of social work should be formed by professions... but the professionals are missing ... if we can't even form an Association for social work then how do we progress from here?

In fact, the watchdog for the government concerning social policy is an NGO called International Social and Development Centre (ISODEC). A group member explains this organizations role in Ghana.

They have those who analyze the government budgets and other social policies that the government comes out with. So I think we can play a better role in that respect. This Centre is well respected and we will have to do much to work along side them as an Association.

However, the blame for the ineffectiveness of GASOW did not lie purely with the executive. As one speaker pointed out: "Everyone here is to blame for GASOW not being what it is. Because I believe it is due to apathy on our part." Other group members agreed.

We have to advocate and we can advocate if we come together. You were talking about certain things that should be done. And I thought 'yes, that is the job of GASOW'. A lot of things to be done to push social work forward. But we are not doing it.

I think that apathy to meetings and even membership of Associations in this country is a general problem...it permeates all sectors of Ghanaian society even at the ministerial and governmental levels ... it is a wakeup call to all of us, especially we the young social workers who are thinking of the future of this profession in this country.

If social workers were to be partly blamed for the state of the Association then why does it continue to be in this state? Attempts to change and revive it have taken place with no success.

The Professional Code of Ethics agreed to by the Association demonstrates a direct adaptation, with little change, of the USA National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Some important dialogue centred on the universality of these codes and social work values in general. Is it appropriate to accept blindly the western social work values given in western social work books and codes of ethics or do they need to be adapted to the Ghanaian setting? Some felt that confidentiality and self-determination were inappropriate and others felt that they were appropriate but just needed to be adapted, particularly from the individualistic thought to the communal reality of Ghanaian society. One group member explains her position.

If you take the principal of confidentiality and self-determination, under what situation is it not workable in our culture? Confidentiality and self-determination, it is in our cultures, we deal with it, we propagate it but they have their limitations.

Either way, it was felt that one course or part of a course should be devoted to this issue. This could then encourage a change of the Code of Ethics to reflect the Ghanaian situation.

Another issue concerning the Association and the social work profession was the idea of introducing a licensing scheme. One group member felt strongly about this.

If we could bring this in it would weed out a lot of people ... we have social workers doing things that are not expected of them ... we have to know what we want for the profession. Until people know exactly what it entails and what we do they will never recognize us so we have to start working and working hard.

Whatever the issues that arose concerning the Association, there was a passionate belief that something had to change and that a move toward such change should be part of the

research project. All group members agreed with this thinking and realized, as with Foucault's understanding of the potential of power relations, that the group could make a difference in regards to the Association. Here are some of their comments.

So is the professional Association alive or dead or somewhere in between?

There is an Association of social workers but it is not an active Association and it needs to be revived...and it should dawn on us as young people to revive it because some of them are old and they have contributed enough to it but things are not going on the way they expected and if we get them involved or we want to call upon them they will be prepared to help us.

If we are going to start then we should start. And those from the old system will want to join because it looks like it is even dead. So identify those people and ask them whether they are still interested in joining the new one.

My own thought was this:

We are going to start a revolution here.

There was discussion concerning whether the Association should be revived or reborn. As the group progressed in its thinking, people felt that instead of a revival of the Association, there should be a new birth, and that this new Association should have different criteria for membership. It was suggested that the office be at the university so that this new Association would be seen as politically neutral, and that two of the full-time faculty could begin this process. This was discussed at length, with members going back and forth on what they felt was the appropriate way to deal with the Association. Once this was resolved, the journey of one of the action plans went forward.

Indigenous writing in social work

One of the main issues concerning education in social work was the lack of knowledge about and availability of indigenous writing to students, partly due to lack of publishing opportunities. This was highlighted by one of our speakers. "We have written

a lot of things about poverty, we can't get them published for us ... our problem is the lack of funds and lack of connections to get people to do things for us." Another group member shared this frustration.

The problem we have here boils down to a lack of writers, lack of Ghanaian writers ... the problem of writing, it isn't even easy. The money is not there. Even when people have the stuff, they don't have the money and maybe they don't have the motivation ... and maybe the university could get some of these people ... try and bring them around like you are doing and motivate them enough and give them the assurance that their article will be published for them.

We looked at the Introduction to Social Policy course and there was not one single Ghanaian writer on the list ... we have some prolific writers such as Prof. Apt and Dr. Blavo, they have written articles on street children and the like at the Sociology Department. Why don't we have some of their writings as part of the reading list ... when we look at the reading list they are totally absent?

Two years ago the Bachelor's course was revised and one group member asked if, when this was revised, if there was an effort to look at other African curricula to learn from what they were doing and what they were teaching. One speaker told us that "At the time people advised us to go to the internet so I relied on two lecturers and they were checking, checking and they were not getting anything from there and that kind of thing." This was not encouraging, but several African professors were visiting Legon and he went on to say that "we are linking up with some of these social work programs in Africa so that we can get some materials from them and then compare and see which ones we can also pick up into our curriculum." One positive element is the Social Welfare Policy Journal that Professor Apt began a while ago. Situated at the university, this resource can be used as a good avenue for creating a large amount of local indigenous writing.

Also important is the lack of local examples used by lecturers in class. This was a source of frustration for many group members.

In the classroom we can't get examples because the examples are western examples.

Some of the courses are so abstract and difficult to apply to social work practice. For instance, social welfare and social policy...it has no traditional flavour.

Another group member shared the experience she had had when in the program.

When I was in the university you had no book at all from the Ghanaian perspective on social work. All the books that were available were all from the western countries and involved processes coming out of their experiences and how they relate to people and how they want to solve their problems. Our approach should be different because it could be the same problem but the social setting makes the approaches to the solution a bit different.

One of the core courses in social work is the History and Philosophy of Social Work.

Most group members agreed that very little course time was spent on African social work and philosophy and that the majority of teaching centred on U.S. and British social work history. Group members felt that, although it is important to teach Western history, more time should be spent on the history of social work in Africa. Few group members knew about the work of ASWEA and GASOW back in the 1960s. One member explains.

We were taught of social welfare in Ghana...that is all we were taught in addition to the social work in Britain. But it was very brief.

Also lacking was African philosophy in relation to social work in Africa and a critical look at similarities and differences between African philosophy and western social work philosophy. Another member shares her experience.

Most of it was western and we had to draw inferences from our own culture.

The hegemony of western knowledge, including social work knowledge, has been maintained through the continual brain drain of Africans to the West, who often end up working there, thus perpetuating the dominant knowledge. Due to the brain drain that has crippled Africa and impeded its progress in today's world, social work education in Ghana has relied heavily on volunteers and foreigners to teach its social work program. This was one of the reasons why group members felt that the courses were western based

and that lecturers were unable to give local examples. Complicating the matter was the fact that the Ghanaian lecturers who did come back from Europe, the U.S. and Canada to teach were not aware of the local issues in Ghana and used examples from their experiences in the western world. One group members shares his experience here in the classroom.

Those who have been trained over there ... when they come back and have no experience in community work they are just in the classroom they are not able to relate it to practical realities ... most of the curriculum is decided by the lecturer ... what is being taught in the books and what is experienced in the field doesn't always go together.

Another group member puts his experience in practical terms.

You see some of the time lecturers make their topic too abstract ... I did social policy for two semesters and after the completion and if you asked me to give you an example of social policy in Ghana, I couldn't.

However, there is a feeling in the department that it is important to have Ghanaian lecturers but not to exclude people from other countries. One speaker explains this thinking.

Though we are trying to indigenize our staff I think I am not saying it will be 100%, we also need to have the experiences of other academic staff from other countries so that we blend the two whilst we are encouraging local staff to come in. In social work, when you are organizing a program of training in social work, you have to rely on local materials, literature that reflects what is happening in society...the course on conflict management and resolution we are going to use local materials for lectures.

The statement confirmed a feeling among the group that Ghana is a society in which different cultures exist beside each other; that there is a need to have a balance of these cultures in society; and that such a balance should be reflected in social work education. Efforts continue to be made to have Fulbright scholars and other foreigners come to teach in the Department.

Another issue that was revealed was that some of the official documents belonging to the Department of Social Work disappeared and no one could find them. These were documents concerning a new education policy of upgrading programs. There are different theories as to where these documents are, but the important fact is that they are missing. One wonders what other documents and important indigenous materials are missing or have been destroyed.

Introducing other African social work articles that deal with issues particular to the continent was also important in the indigenous process. The group all learned from these articles and the idea of the need to interconnect with other countries and their social work programs was discussed. Two group members share their learning experiences.

In South Africa they had apartheid that turned them upside down but they have this White Paper on Social Welfare that they are moving forward with it. So what I really ask is despite the colonialism, what are we doing? Should we go and study the South African system, what they did and what kind of knowledge they incorporated into this White Paper that they put into place so they also will look at it and try to move ahead.

The article tries to bring critical thinking into the use of social work in the context of a developing country where you have so many people to deal with and how you can use it appropriately and not as it was developed but in your context. How do you modify the casework system so that people really benefit from it?

One group member read the proceedings of the first ever social work seminar held in Accra in the 1960s. She noted that issues they were dealing with then were still being dealt with today. She was also concerned that she had not known about this conference.

We have not heard things about this. We don't know much about it and it should provoke us to think about what has happened all of these years within the institutions, that much is not known about it yet it existed even at the University.

Over the course of the research, the conscientization of the group concerning indigenous knowledge and writing was apparent.

Our foundation of education should be creating visionaries... I think gradually we are realizing that and so this research has really created in us a challenge... I for one want to write! (said enthusiastically)

The social worker's own view of their profession

Group members were honest about their feelings towards the profession of social work, which were not always positive.

What still bothers my mind is the fact that graduates of social work who have past through this university don't want to identify themselves as social workers ... I think social workers who are trained to deal with social problems; we ourselves are now creating problems. Because if we fail to come together as a professional body I think it will be very difficult to deal with certain social issues which need collective action.

That's why we don't hear of social workers coming to meetings, people aligning themselves to social work because I know a lot of people have passed through here. But then they go and train as lawyers or maybe they do MBA after this program. We have to find a solution to it.

All were passionate about the profession, but felt that the way it is portrayed in Ghana tends to make people not want to admit that they are social workers. One speaker shares his frustrations about the attitude of social workers in general.

I am telling you in Ghana (pounds table) the enemies of social work are the social workers themselves. They will only like to be called lawyers when they do work but they will hate to be called social workers when they are professional social workers...social workers themselves are shy of their profession and this is why social work is not moving.

A group member responds to the speaker's comments.

Because we don't have a well-meaning organization going on, the recognition is not there, so individuals go into separate places and they don't sometimes even want people to know they are social workers ... it saddens my heart that some people like Dr. Blavo and Prof. Apt, when they are no more around the social work unit or they are not there for social workers, what happens?

The institutions of welfare are not always easy places for people to work as social workers. A group member saw this when working for the Department of Social Welfare.

When I was studying at the university, one thing I promised myself that I would never work in the government department (laughter). Why? Because we have always perceived social workers as people following up on things that are not relevant and who have nothing to do and so no attention or no priorities placed on our services.

When we are taught social work at the University of Ghana we don't think about the Department of Social Welfare because we know that there are frustrations. There are people who will bring you down . . . when you go and you are so dynamic they have their own ways of bringing you down . . . they feel threatened by your presence.

Another group member asked the following question about our education:

Who do social workers in Ghana serve? Are we trained to deal with the problems in our society or are we just giving training for the training's sake.

One group member pointed out that the issue of social work education and practice has been debated since the 1970s, and she felt that it still had not really been sorted out.

If the Association must be vibrant it depends on us. I think we still have a problem of who a social worker should be and the training and I think that some blame must also be on those who trained social workers.

Another group member asked about the state of the profession. Reflecting on the dialogue about whether social work is alive in Africa, she felt frustrated by this ambiguity.

Where are we? I still haven't found the answer. I don't even know where we are. Even if it hasn't started and it is not dead then where is it. . . I just don't know.

It is important to have an organization that addresses social policy issues in Ghana.

However, it is also up to the individual social worker to offer advice and expertise when the opportunity arises. Professor Apt gave this challenge:

Many people say they do not bother to voice their views because they are not called upon. They are not recognized and their opinion is not asked. I would like to put the question back, 'Why do you want to be asked?' Why do you want to be recognized? You are the professional. If there is something happening what is preventing you sitting down putting your thoughts together and sending it to the relevant agency.

Clearly, there is more that individual social workers can do to enhance the profile of social work in Ghana. Proudly admitting that we are social workers is a beginning. Social

workers can make themselves known by making call-ins on the radio or writing comments to the local newspapers. The Ghana Association of Student Social Workers is an active organization and this enthusiasm and commitment for social work needs to be carried on into the professional workplace and the national Association.

The effectiveness of social welfare institutions and social work practice in Ghana

Society is dynamic and the social work profession needs to continually review and revise education and practice to meet the needs of the society. Commenting on the map exercise that challenged people to see things differently, one group member related this to social work.

Social workers, for instance, as change agents should be ready to adapt new ideas and new ways of looking at things. When looking at the map, when looking at it for the first time, it is like it is wrong. But if you take your time and exam it critically, nothing has changed. So I think as change agents we should be ready to adapt to changes.

Group members were able to see that the types of social welfare institutions, particularly the remedial ones from Britain, often created a dependency upon the institution that was unhealthy.

An institution is set up to provide assistance to somebody and it has even created a situation where some people have taken to begging as a full-time job...we continue to wait for someone to bring something to us.

Other group members agreed.

I have also seen that social workers, NGO's and policy makers are also there to help the government to improve the living standards of the rural poor but they still remain poor. Is it that the methodology being used is not corresponding with our traditional culture?

She went on to give an example of a western NGO coming to the village and handing out second-hand clothes. As soon as they left there was a change in people's attitudes

(especially participation) because the government couldn't continue giving this welfare assistance to the people.

Another group member felt that our work as social workers only exacerbates the dependency cycle of clients.

We need to develop a system where people will not be dependent but will be independent of themselves, to be able to also contribute to society irrespective of their handicap ... we must realize that if we are looking for the development of the people, we need to put into place structures or systems that will make those people not just survive but will help them to develop themselves to the extent that with or without us whatever process we have started with them could continue.

One of the guest speakers shared her opinion concerning this problem of dependency and offered a new way of teaching in the department.

We are deliberately moving away from the welfare syndrome because we do not want our graduates to go into this problem syndrome. I consider this to be the downfall of social work in Ghana and in Africa. Because we are only waiting for a problem and then we go and do something instead of actually ensuring that there is no problem...it means looking at the positive, the strengths and we hope we can bring social work into the realm of development...whereby you build the capacity of the family in such a way that they don't maltreat their children.

This dependency issue is seen in the realm of research. One group member shared his experience as a researcher out in the villages and the frustrations he experienced due to the villagers' expectations of him as a researcher.

Everybody thought that when you come into a community to come and do research you have to give them some help. And unfortunately, people come and make all of these promises and so it affects subsequent ones, when they are coming the villagers are not willing to give information, because people have come to make promises they can't fulfill.

The other honest question posed by group members concerned adaptation issues. Concerning social work in pre-colonial Ghana, are there indigenous social mechanisms we can incorporate into social work practice? One speaker states that in the beginning of social work in Ghana indigenous methods and writings were used. "In Ghana the first

approach to social work was developmental...it started with education, teaching people to read and write and women's development."

One group member asked this question.

If colonialism had not taken place in our system, could we have strengthened our traditional institutions, taking into consideration advancement in technology, increased migration, economic independence. Now our people are kind of concentrating more on themselves and their immediate family. Could we have kind of had this by the old system back that we retain to cater for each and everyone in the community? Could we have succeeded in that particular practice in this very era?

How realistic is it to go back to the old way of life when western society has had such an influence on Ghana and the development of social work? Are we idealizing the old ways?

One group member asked the following question.

Now we have our traditional system and we have our formal system. How are we going to integrate these things? Where do we start from?

Another member speaks her mind concerning indigenization of social work education.

It means professional social work rules must be appropriate to the needs of different countries and social work education must be appropriate to the demands of social work practice...it is realizing the indigenization of social work by focusing on the practice of social work on the actual social problems of the developing countries, taking into consideration local values of these countries and choosing those ideas that can be adapted properly to the environment in which they were destined to be used.

She went goes on to say that we should

withdraw social work from the remedial and rehabilitative corner of western casework and adapt group work and community organizing methods in support of national development goals that are more focused on the preventative and developmental aims.

Another comments.

As social workers, we try as much as possible, even in conflict resolution and other interventions to respect traditions so that at the end of the day the people are going to live together so we don't create a lot of confusion...we try to use very indigenous practices so that people will be comfortable with the institutions and they see these things to be friendly.

An example of an adaptation process that was shared with the group was the opening up of social work to students enrolled in other programs. Art and religious studies were two examples of disciplines that the students were able to study along with social work to obtain combined degrees. One speaker describes the trend in combination degrees.

Now we are getting some applicants with social work and religion. We are trying to market social work in certain areas of our life so there are some religious organizations that need a professional social worker in their set-up to handle certain issues...churches are coming up with all sorts of programs.

Over the course of the workshops, group members worked on this issue of the relevance of social work education and practice, bringing their ideas and thoughts to the reflection period. As the present government cuts back on government spending in social welfare services, alternatives need to be considered in regard to social welfare services for the future. Certainly one area of growth is the NGOs, which offer services to the people in Ghana and are quickly becoming the largest employer of social workers.

How do we decide what social welfare programs are useful and which cultural practices, are healthy/unhealthy or harmless/harmful? A Ghanaian example was given concerning our role as educators within social work practice and policymaking, concerning three of the more unhealthy indigenous practices, female genital mutilation, witch villages and trokosi system. Dialogue centred on the importance of educating people concerning behaviour change and offering alternatives to some of these practices. One speaker explained the present system. "The problem is that people think the solution to all of our problems is by means of law. You rush parliament and pass a law and that is it...nobody understands why they can't do it so they will still continue to do it." A group member responds.

Yes education should have gone first. So here again we have lost sight of the importance of social work, the aspect of social work could have been used to play before that law was brought in so that the necessary education and the acculturation could happen...we sort of put the cart before the horse.

The importance of social workers being involved in these educational endeavours and keeping in touch with the local leaders to dialogue about these issues cannot be overestimated. One group member felt the need for social workers to become more involved in the alternative medical systems and in work with traditional healers concerning our clients and cultural practices.

It is time that we brought this program to bear on other alternative medical systems, that is our traditional system.

There also seems to be a mistrust of different agencies dealing with the more vulnerable in society. Agencies do not want to share their work information about funding sources, successes and failures with each other. One speaker shares his experience.

Even in some situations where NGO's have to share ideas as different agencies, they don't because they don't want to let out any secrets, sources of funding ... how I am succeeding with my programs and how I am failing ... those who are failing will be interested to know the experiences of others but they are not giving out the information because others may capitalize on it and let me down.

One speaker urged us to look for mechanisms in society that deal with tensions in society. Can these mechanisms be adapted from a rural to urban setting?

Is it that some of them cannot be shifted? If you shift them do they still make sense? Or do we have to abandon them and try something new ... if you look within a conflict, any situations of conflict resolution and among the elders and the court you should be able to find mechanisms that have been devised to deal with tensions in our society. Those tensions relate to so many thing but some of them are to do with power. Dealing with issues of power ... whether they are gender related, politics, social politics and these have to be resolved.

She continues.

As social workers, we need to know the ideals within society. That is where learning about our culture is so important. We deal with entrenched ways of working and also

we are dealing with people's mentalities. Culture means that somebody thinks in a certain way, has a certain philosophy, has a certain view of life. And what we have to recognize is that our culture is one of those things that changes very rapidly even though we want to hold on to the principle.

The artist that came to speak with us about art and social work challenged us to look at the positive sides of life, as an artist does when painting a picture of society. "We often think that community members and people in the rural areas are not susceptible to change." As social workers, our job is to identify the inner strengths of the clients so that they are empowered to make good choices concerning their own lives. Two group members reflect on this idea.

I am looking at a situation where we could be able to look at things in the community, which are transient ... things that we can't actually tap on. Is it possible for us to be able to draw a lot of lessons from things that are in the community, which demonstrates a lot of strength ... Can we look at instances in the community, things that we don't see, to be able to train people, to build people's capacity and to be able to empower people that we work with?

We need to realize that as individuals we all have inner strength and the community has inner strength for that matter ... sometimes the things we take there undermines that strength... when you confront a situation, the solution is inside the problem ... but sometimes it is the courage and confidence to say that 'I can do it'. I think that can be the problem. If we have confidence we can deal with the situation.

Concerning fieldwork practica, a group member found a South African article concerning a new way of approaching field practica to be very exciting and challenging. The community-based approach to fieldwork caught his imagination.

They (South Africa) moved away from the World Visions, Department of Social Welfare and Department of Community Development and decided to send students to Communities ... community based student units. So a group of four students go into a community with all the problems and the case example that they gave out were ideal situation for anywhere but yet the students were not deterred. They went there and they did much ... I think this is very inspiring. I don't know whether it would be made available to our department so that they can look at the articles and see whether we could bring some vibrancy and dynamism to our practices.

We were told that there is several community-based projects being developed that could include social work students as part of their practicum, as we had recommended in our curriculum changes. This was encouraging to the group and they showed their excitement with the speaker who was told of these events. “I am setting up a community resource center in the western region (we give her a shine) where fisherwomen, fishermen, school children, youth all everything is there...so we are moving into this community-based where there is a lot to be done and where students will be monitored.”

Another idea to improve the social work situation is to have a consultancy type service linked with the university. One group member shared his vision of this service. It is a place where

when we hear issues or even people bring, like students and workers out there can come, we discuss it and then we write a proposal or memo or something concrete and then present to government.

Clearly, good ideas were generated through this group process concerning social work in Ghana. There is much to be done to improve the image of social work and to create a profession valued in society.

Relationship between facilitator and Ghana social work

Introduction

Due to my past experience living and teaching in Ghana, I had come with some preconceived ideas about the curriculum and about social work in Ghana. While a VSO volunteer, I travelled to many places in Ghana and talked to social workers in order to understand what they did as social workers. I wrote an article about this experience (Kreitzer, 1995). I came back from my first trip with thoughts concerning the curriculum as being western-based and lacking in indigenous writings including Ghanaian social

work textbooks. However, I wanted to come with an open mind and see for myself if these reflections could be substantiated. In many ways, I felt as though it was a leap into the unknown, as I had to think about the fact that maybe my reflections, memory and opinions were not correct. Many of these memories were subsequently deemed accurate and highlighted in the research project. The three important issues for me were indigenous issues, passion for social work and the issue of GASOW.

Indigenous activities of social work

Many surprises came out in the course of the project that gave me more insight into Ghana social work. In particular, I learned more about the history of social work in Ghana, how it emerged as a profession in the 1960s and its influence on the rest of West Africa. Although Asamoah brings this out in her various writings mentioned earlier, it was not until Dr. Blavo and Professor Apt told us how vibrant and exciting social work had been back in the early days of independence that I believed this to be so.

Those days it was amazing. It was known, even Ghana's example, people were coming from other countries to study Ghana's example ... Ghana developed models for community development that were written about ... GASOW was hitting the headlines year by year. We were running intra-African seminars. Social workers were coming from Africa to attend GASOW seminars. We were famous, social workers were leading.

The challenge for the group members and Ghana social workers is to build a vibrant Association where seminars, conferences and dialogue between African countries is promoted and social work again has a voice in the African continent.

Commitment to social work

The group discussed the concern that social work, as a profession, was not doing what it should and that it was not really appreciated or known amongst the people in Ghana. I felt heartbroken for the group members as they tried to come to terms with this

reality. And yet they were all so committed to the profession and its reputation and usefulness in Ghana. It seemed to me that social work had made good strides, particularly in the NGO sector, and that more trained social workers were being hired by these organizations. For me the question was how relevant the Department of Social Welfare was to present day Ghana. I could see the relevance of community development but it seemed to me that the Social Welfare Department needed a good overhaul and that even the drastic move of getting rid of it and starting over again might be necessary.

GASOW

I was also surprised at the passionate discontent with the present GASOW. Every time we discussed the Association, the place came alive with frustrations, anger, misunderstanding, and eagerness for change. It was electrifying at times. When the idea of starting a new Association arose, I was very cautious about this approach. In my world, you do not just overthrow an association; you work to make it more effective. As we discussed the various ways of dealing with the Association it became clear that negotiating and attempting to revive the Association had been tried many times before to no avail. Although eliminating the Association would not have been my approach, I kept quiet and let the group decide how to go forward with the Association. Part of me feared a revolution and the other part was excited about it.

Summary

There is a need to unite as a social work profession in Ghana. The Association needs to be revived or replaced and a new more effective one put in its place. "Establishing a professional organizational structure or national professional association has always rested and continues to rest with social workers themselves" (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004,

p. 131). Social work needs an identity in Ghanaian society so that government and non-government organizations take notice and use the Association as a sounding board for social policy issues. It is up to social workers themselves to stand and be proud of their profession and to speak out on social issues that are affecting vulnerable people in society. Indigenous writing needs to flow from social workers inside and outside the university and these writings need to be used in teaching social workers. There needs to be a critical analysis of the social welfare institutions and their effectiveness in Ghana. Finally, a continual evaluation of the curriculum, including fieldwork practica, needs to take place to ensure its effectiveness for Ghanaian society.

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlights the many layers of learning experienced by a group of Ghanaians and one western person through the PAR process. Over a ten-month period the group met at least twice a month to share our lives with each other and to share our knowledge and experiences concerning the social work profession in Ghana. Through the rich voices created using a dialogical process of knowledge production, the group experienced the challenges of looking at their own culture and profession; issues of working as a group in producing knowledge; and learning a new type of research unfamiliar to their own learning experience. Par “is an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge-making enabling us to take control of our lives by combining formal and informal knowledge...and using that new knowledge to transform our realities” (Pyrch, 2001, p. 4). Space was created for the group to critically think about their own realities. The themes emerging from the transcripts were relationships a) with the PAR process, b) with each other, c) with Ghanaian society and d) with Ghana social work.

Concerning the PAR process, the group found the different approaches to producing knowledge liberating. These avenues by which information was gathered and knowledge produced allowed the group and the speakers to share their own knowledge and experiences in a non-threatening way. Their commitment to respecting each other's views through dialogue and consensus coupled with the time commitment of the group reflects the positive experience this research had on the lives of the members. Meeting in a circle also enabled people to speak freely and openly. PAR is a chaotic process and my own experiences as the facilitator of this group are well documented in this chapter. At times I could relate to the title of Chinua Achebe's book *Things fall apart* (Achebe, 1958) as I experienced the ups and downs of the research project. However, the group and individuals outside the group supported me concerning these ups and downs. At times I was excited and frightened as I experienced the evolutionary process of this research.

Concerning the relationships with each other in the group we had a good beginning at the Aburi workshop. As we continued to meet throughout the year, tensions within the group as well as times of unity flowed through the process. "How can one explain these periods of fatigue when interest was lost in the interaction and organization process?" (Fals Borda, 1988, p. 39). The ebbs and flows of group work were evident but it appears that good relationships were established between group members. Although the role of the Queen Mother in the group was ambiguous at the beginning, she became an important part of the group. My own relationships with group members deepened over time as I spent individual time with each member throughout the process.

Concerning Ghanaian society, cultural issues were integrated into the workshops and it was evident that we all learned much about Ghanaian society. This included indigenous

beliefs and practices and western practices that all influence this society. Issues concerning colonialism, modernization and globalization were interwoven through most of the workshops. The thoughts concerning colonialism were mixed and the conscientization of the group concerning the positives and negative effects of modernization developed as time went on. Power relationships and the dominance of western knowledge continue to affect educational institutions and social work education. University institutional barriers to teacher's conditions and the continual lack of resources were also of concern to the group. Issues concerning development, the effect of neo-liberal policies on the country and the urgent need to address poverty were expressed by the group as important to social and economic policies in Ghana as well as their work as professionals. What seemed to be a thread running throughout the dialogue were the experiences we each have had with living in different worlds and how the country of Ghana has tried to balance the many influences in their society. Important questions expressed by the group were: Who defines culture and where are the reference points? As an outside researcher, my experiences in living and facilitating a research project in another culture challenged and yet affirmed my own thoughts concerning colonialism, modernization and neo-liberal economic policies of globalization. I was confronted daily by the realities of living in a country still lacking important infrastructure, who is experiencing poverty issues as well as my own ignorance of cultural traditions. My own growth in living in different worlds was strengthened by this research process. I became more aware of the imbalance of knowledge production and of the voices not being heard in society.

Finally, the topic of the group centred on social work education and practice. The consensus by the group that social work education continues to live on the periphery of Ghanaian society was of great concern to the group. The imbalance of power relations with the Ghana Association of Social Workers and the frustration with its ineffectiveness caused the group members to seriously consider what the group could do to change this situation. The group was concerned with the plight of Ghanaian teachers and the lack of indigenous writings; and the institutional barriers causing these issues to continue to exist. Also, important discussion centred on creating alternative approaches to the present social welfare programs that tend to be remedial and cause dependency to programs that promote social development. As a facilitator I was pleasantly surprised at the rich history of social work in West Africa and in Ghana. I was also surprised at the deep concern around GASOW and the willingness of the group to consider stepping out and taking a risk to change the present Association or to create a new one despite the political implications to this action.

Clearly, many important issues were highlighted in this chapter concerning Ghanaian society and social work. The group appreciated experiencing a new type of research that encourages critical thinking concerning the causes of these issues in an environment that enabled them to critically look at their own country and profession.

PAR strategy has a double objective. One aim is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people-through research, adult education, and sociopolitical action. The second aim is to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge (Reason, 1994, p. 328).

The importance of the knowledge produced by this research adds to the rich history of social work in Ghana and in Africa.

Chapter Six

Putting our learning into action

What is the way forward? Or what are the next steps as group members? Are we going to keep this knowledge to ourselves or are we going to use it to better the lot of our Association, which is in limbo and that of the general well-being of the people that we deal with? (group member)

The journey of action

When I was in the Liberian refugee camp in Ghana in 1997, I was conducting research concerning women's issues in the camp. I wanted a map of the refugee camp that I could include in my thesis and I was told there was not a map of the camp. I was surprised by this fact and my supervisor encouraged me to hire a refugee to draw a map of the camp. I found a man who had been a road surveyor in Liberia and on the boat coming over to Ghana, his equipment was stolen and he had never had the chance to survey anything in Ghana. He told me it was his dream to be able to survey the camp and make a map of it. I hired him to do this and over the next few months I had the joy of seeing a fulfilled man going around the camp, surveying every little bit of it and sitting under the tree drawing for hours a map of the camp. I will never forget his enthusiasm and delight of being able to practice his profession again. He had ownership of the map and took great pride in showing it to many people. From this experience I knew I could never do research again without practical and meaningful actions emerging from the research. This is why I have embarked on this journey of PAR.

Introduction

“PAR translates into action” (Pyrch, 2001, p. 9) and this chapter explores the actions affecting the infrastructure and political structures within the context of the Department of Social Work, the Ghana Association of Social Workers and the wider society in

Ghana. Foucault (1980) speaks of the gap between academic knowledge and practical use of this knowledge when he writes about academic work.

A typical affliction of those enamoured of libraries, documents, reference works, dusty tomes, texts that are never read, books that are no sooner printed than they are consigned to the shelves of libraries where they thereafter lie dormant to be taken up only some centuries later (p. 79).

This scenario was confirmed by one of the group members.

It had always been the case that students do research and they keep it on the shelf and even people are not allowed to go and source information from those research.

This scenario of academic research and writing is a sad reflection of the gap between theoretical knowledge and research as it relates to practical experiences of life. The group members found this gap frustrating in their own social work education and we felt very strongly that practical and political actions emerging from the project should be useful to the future of social work education and practice.

As the themes of the research project emerged, action plans were thought about and decided upon. However, one member was worried about the fact that nothing tangible would be accomplished at the end of the project.

My problem is that if we are not careful it is going to be a talk shop and it will appear that we will not be able to do anything about it. And then we also one day sit here with the next generation and tell them how social work was in our time and here too we were not able to do anything about it.

Others in the group voiced this same concern.

The consensus process was used to decide on the types of actions we would be involved in and how we would implement them. Of the four plans, each had its own unique way of evolving. As a facilitator, I felt the Association issue was the nearest and dearest to people's hearts. There was a sense of urgency in getting this sorted out and establishing a new Association. Concerning the video, we talked about different avenues

to make our profession known to the public and everyone agreed to do the video. I felt that the drive for it came more from me than the others. Also, I do not think that people believed it was possible to do a video in the amount of time we had, and so they were reluctant to get excited about it. The following describes the way in which each action plan emerged, unfolded and was implemented. The plans were presented to the Department of Social Work at a Presentation Day held at the University. The two final plans evolved from my own work in Calgary.

Recommendations for changes to the curriculum

Throughout the research process, we talked about the curriculum and our experiences with it. Three workshops were specifically designed to allow group members to share their experiences with the program and to comment on the course outlines. Towards the end of July and in early August, I sent out a guideline for changes to the curriculum, giving space for group members to put their thoughts down about each course and the curriculum generally. That did not seem to work very well, so one weekend I went up to Aburi to look at all of the transcripts and write down my own thoughts about the necessary changes that emerged from the transcripts. While I was there, a forceful energy, almost supernatural, took over me and I ended up writing a complete draft of the recommendations. I wrote for two days and the creativity inside me flowed. I felt guilty afterwards because I felt I had overstepped my boundary in writing the draft, but the group members did not seem to mind. They were pleased to have a working draft to edit and change around. I expressed my feelings to the group at the next workshop.

Now I have to make a confession to you all. This week I went to Aburi for a couple of days, my favourite place in Ghana (laughter). You know I walk into that place and my mind clears and I start being so creative it is unbelievable. It really has an effect on me. So, I went there to write the introduction and the acknowledgments for the recommendations and ended up writing the whole thing (general laughter). I picked out everything from the transcripts and from the feedback from analysing the course outlines that seemed important to the curriculum. I worked quite hard and produced this (shows draft of recommendations). I need you all to go home and really scrutinize it, edit it and don't have this idea that you can't edit my work.

At the end of the project, a copy was presented to each of the part-time and full time lecturers, as well as lecturers from other departments who taught social work students. A copy was given to the library so that all students and the general public could see our recommendations and how the research was conducted. Each group member received a copy as well. The importance of the transparency of the research came to light at the Association meeting. It was suggested that the idea of starting a new Association was the work of a Canadian researcher (myself) and this was seen in a negative light. I was able to stand up and say to the public that in fact, the research was a group process with nine Ghanaians involved. I stated that if anyone wished to see the results of the research project and how it was conducted, they could go to the library and read it themselves. I invited and encouraged everyone to do this. (See Appendix A for a copy of the recommendations). In May 2004, the recommendations were incorporated into the curriculum for next year.

T.V. and Video recorder

One of our recommendations was that the department should invest in audio-visual equipment to be used as a teaching tool in the classroom. The group wanted to begin fulfilling the recommendations we presented to the department in a practical way.

Towards the end of the research project, the group asked me if there was enough money

to buy a T.V., video recorder and stand for the department. I looked at the budget and told the group that if they wanted to use the project money in this way, we had enough to buy these items. The group kept this a secret, even from the faculty, and it came as a total surprise to people from outside the group when we unveiled these items at the Presentation Day. As Professor Apt shared with us on that day, these items were very much appreciated by everyone.

This T.V. is amazing because I knew that we would get the product of this research and I also knew that we were going to get a copy of the video. But this was hidden from me. I didn't know that Linda was going to take again some of her resources to actually buy a T.V. video for us to use in the classroom.

Although I was given acknowledgment for this, it was actually the idea of the group. I was grateful that we had the money to provide this very important practical equipment for the Department of Social Work.

Public Education Video: Social work in Ghana: Education and Practice

One of the main themes that emerged from the research project was the concern that social work was on the periphery in Ghana and that we needed to do something about this. Two group members voiced their concern about social work being on the periphery.

Why is social work in the peripheral and how do we change the stereotypes of social workers and broaden the scope especially in regards to our role as social workers? Because we looked at the social problems and we realized that there were a lot of problems that social workers could be involved and do we see ourselves in those areas.

Why is the social work profession on the periphery? Even though I have something else to talk about, but this is really on my heart. How can we make it even more known to the citizens of Ghana?

I explained to the group my vision.

We spent a lot of time thinking about the different opportunities we had concerning making social work public. Radio, T.V., talk shows and a video were discussed. My vision and again it may be too far out, is if we could get a camera crew and they could go to each of your work sites. Because we are so varied here, NGO, government are represented here. So, let's think about it.

Support was given by members of the group to look further into these options.

I think this idea will be a feather in our cap. I suggest we do the homework, getting over there and finding out first hand information as to exactly what to do.

It was also important to ask the Student Association of Social Workers their opinion concerning this project and one of the group members took this on, as he was the present president of this group. I was very sensitive to the necessity to make sure this was not just my idea but that the group members were interested in doing the video. I asked if members thought this was a good idea.

The idea has been floating around about doing a video for one of the TV stations. So the first thing we need to do is to see if anybody really disagrees with that idea? Do people think it is a good idea or are we going in a different direction? Do we need to go in a different direction?

The group agreed that it was a good idea and dialogue centred on how to do the video, what should be in it, who should be in it and the length of the video. A group member explained.

We may want to let them know the fields of which social work operates... and then we also want to let them know about social work education. What are the qualifications?

Once we had decided on producing a video, each person was to write a three-minute script on what they did as a social worker. Once the script was collated, I narrated the larger script, bringing the different scripts together. The group then looked at it and made corrections. I reminded members that we were targeting a general population and they need to keep their language as simple and straightforward as possible. Once we decided

we would do the video, I approached Ghana T.V. (GTV) and negotiated a price for the filming. The group members requested that I write letters to their agencies explaining the video and the purpose of it and asking permission to film on their premises or to film their group projects. This work was completed with no problems. A producer from GTV was invited to come and we organized a schedule for everyone. People were beginning to think creatively about the video. I wrote about this enthusiasm in my journal.

The Queen Mother is thinking about doing something with the school and the social worker for the video. She wants another group member to help her out.

This schedule included travelling to the north of Ghana for a weekend of filming in the rural areas. I describe this filming experience.

We made our way to a village outside Tamale to where a group of women who are producing shea butter were waiting for us. There was about 25-30 women and children and it was fun to see how they make shea butter ... We then went 35km to a village where one of the group members had organized a farmers association, a pottery group and beekeepers.

In the end, everyone did their own adlibbing on the day of the filming, but the script was helpful in preparing people to think about what they wanted to say.

Another issue that came up regarding the creation of the video concerned hierarchy. One of the group members designated to talk about the educational requirements of a professional social worker did not feel comfortable talking about this on the video when other more senior people could do so. Much discussion followed, with all group members expressing their views, and eventually the group member felt comfortable enough to take on this role in the video. This experience showed me how ingrained the academic hierarchical system is with students and former students. There was also a dialogue concerning how personal the video should be. Some members were very personal about what they did as social workers and others were more objective. It was agreed that the

statements should be personal and that it is appropriate to say "I." I explained to the group about being personal.

This is what I do as a social worker because I hope the beauty of the video will be that it is personal and that we are human beings and we are not just objects out there.

A group member summed up our intentions quite well.

I feel the exercise is meant to explain to the Ghanaian public about what social workers can do or what they are doing. And we are trying to portray as many different professions or different activities or social services that social workers are capable of doing. So, the group here is a mixed group and you can portray yourself as a social worker, research or teacher.

The video was a way for the group members to participate in a practical educational activity and to show their own work and skills as social workers. I wrote in my journal.

I am so excited about this video and I can see through the interviews of the group members that they have learned a lot through this project. That is very satisfying to me.

As of August 2004, the video has not been shown on national T.V. as was promised by the GTV director. The reasons for this are unclear. From January 2004 to the present time, we as a group have continued to phone and remind GTV of the importance of showing this video on national T.V. and to encourage them to do so.

Encountering the Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW)

By far the most pressing issue was the state of GASOW. Some group members were fed up with the Association and others didn't even know if we still had one.

I had a visitor from Bolga, a white lady, who is working on this shea butter processing...she told me she wants to know whether social workers here have an Association...I told her I didn't even know if we have it or not.

I knew there was a student social workers Association but not the national one.

The article I gave to you it has something on GASOW, how it started and all of that. So as far back as that time GASOW was there and now we can't find it.

The group used the workshops with different speakers to discuss the idea of starting a new Association. A group member approaches the subject with one of the speakers.

What we were kind of hoping for as one of our action plans for this particular research group was to set up a professional social work association on campus. We see that the National Association would always be bedeviled with problems, so if we say we are going to wait for them, we may not get anywhere. And we are seeing that the situation is getting out of hand.

The speaker's response was as follows:

I have told many graduating students to go out there, have a revolution, a coup and set up a national organization. I have no objection to this but it has to be a national organization. You see the problem of GASOW is that they ... you see every time you are attached to a department it is also your downfall. Get a national Association going and run it outside the Department of Social Welfare ... a national Association of social workers is not necessarily for people who work in the government.

All relevant speakers thought that starting a new Association was a great idea and plans began to emerge as to how this could happen. As a facilitator, I was very careful to make sure that all group members agreed on starting a new Association.

The only thing I am concerned about is that I don't think as a group we have come to a consensus about what we should do. There are people who think we should start something on campus and other people who think we should revive the old one.

It was clarified by everyone that indeed "we did come to a consensus."

The pioneers of social work were not willing to be personally involved in the new Association but were willing to give it all the support that they could, from a distance.

One pioneer explains their feelings on this issue of involvement.

I have deliberately refused to come to any resurrection of GASOW, I will pay my fee, I will support but I will not come so that they appoint me president or something...I am waiting for somebody, some bright person, to also get it going so I can be behind to help wherever.

Two group members respond.

Okay, they can form two Associations if they want. They can have the national one and the professional one so that we can all join and we can start doing something about it. But if we sit down and worry about it and always talk about it, it is never going to solve the problems. So until the time we start the professional one based on campus we could make a difference. Maybe if we start it will force the other national one to also sit up.

I think it is was made clear, the last time we met with the speaker, that they started something but it looks like it is no more active ... although there is an Association of social workers it is not an active Association and it needs to be revived.

One group member seemed to confirm the idea of developing a new Association.

We have a lot of problems with GASOW and to add to what the young men are saying, forming a new one wouldn't be a problem at all. . . The university can come up with whatever they want. . . if the national Association is not working those under it can overtake it. . . so I have no problem with anybody coming up with. . . so long as one has the profession of social work at heart and wants to gather us to be a formidable group to be recognized.

One of the speakers, who was also a faculty member, suggested using a vacated room at the university to begin a national Association.

If you get your act together and do your coup d' etat (laughter) you can begin by having this as a GASOW office to start off with ... you have to be able to do it national. Let people know, have a proper election and say that you do not have confidence or whatever and it is time you did something.

One member summed up his vision about an effective association.

We have a place where we could say that 'look, let's call the social workers just like they call the clinical psychologists to respond to social needs so that we always have people representing us at the department. . . So let us charge ourselves and at the end of the day we will form something like that and I believe we will go far.

Foucault (1980) states that "power is neither given or exchanged or recovered but rather exercised and that it only exists in action. . . power is above all a relation of force" (p. 89). The exercise of power through action came through with the idea of creating a new Association. The political and structural implications for exercising people's power to change a corrupt organization cannot be taken lightly. Not only did this action

undermine the present Association and their executive; but it also sent a message to the Association that people were not happy with the Association. Furthermore, it had implications for the Department of Social Work, as the group was associated with this department and the lecturers and pioneers of social work were behind this move.

It was important to find the best way to attempt a “friendly coup” so that a positive action could result from the research. The group decided to hold a general meeting for all social workers in Ghana to discuss how best to go forward with this idea. Project money was used to advertise in two national newspapers and over 250 letters were sent to government and non-government organizations. On November 1, 2003, a general meeting was held and over 70 people came. It was the largest general social work meeting that had occurred in recent times. After three hours of discussion, the meeting adjourned with the challenge for social workers to go home and think about what they wanted to do in regard to the Association. Three alternatives were given. As of August 2004, a follow-up meeting has yet to be organized; but the faculty and group members are working on planning the next meeting (See Appendix B for Association meeting minutes).

Articles for publication

The group agreed to write a joint article concerning the research process. In January 2004, I wrote to all group members asking them to give me their thoughts and feelings about the research, the strengths and challenges and anything else they wanted to include in an article about the research. I also asked them to give their comments on the role of the Queen Mother in the group process for another article concerning the topic of social work and traditional authority. I wrote in my journal.

I really envision that we will do an article for a journal...so everyone in the group can put their name to it. Then you will be able to say that you have a journal article. I think it is very important.

As of August 2004, I am still collecting these thoughts. We hope to produce two group articles about this research.

African articles for courses

I had suggested during the course of the workshops that we collect all the indigenous articles we had or knew about and put them in a reader for the library. No one seemed interested, so I did not pursue this idea. However, since my return from Ghana, I have collected many articles concerning social work in Ghana. I have copied the proceedings of the GASOW seminars held in the 1970s, the ASWEA proceedings from the 1970s, and the four United Nations international surveys on social work conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. These documents were transported to the Department of Social Work in May 2004 for use by students there. I will continue to do this as and when I find new articles.

Technology is geared towards the rich of society and access to information, although improved for many countries, is still not accessible for the average person living in an economically poorer country.

Presentation Day

It was agreed by the group to hold a Presentation Day at the Department of Social Work with the purpose of presenting our different actions to the staff, students and community people. Fals Borda (1988) strongly suggests that a project would be incomplete without giving our knowledge back to the community. There was some disagreement about how large this event should be, but eventually we agreed on who to invite and what the program would be. I wrote about this struggle in my journal.

There were very strong opinions concerning how to present our project action plans and so we decided that there was not a consensus so we would all go home and think about it and then a decision has to be made by Oct. 3, 2003 as to how we are going to present these items and when and where.

Much organization had to be completed in a short amount of time. The Ghana Student Association of Social Workers was willing to help us, which was very important to the transparency of the research. I wrote in my journal about visiting the students.

I found out that the social work student association has planned a huge celebration around our presentation ... I met with the students and they are going to give their support to the presentation day and the meeting about the Association. They all seemed very appreciative of what the research group has done and I went away feeling happy.

On October 17, 2003, from 9 a.m. to noon, we met with all interested people to explain the research project and to present the action plans we had produced as a result of our research. The recommendations for changes were presented to the Department of Social Work. The full video was shown as part of the program and copies presented to the Department of Social Work and the School of Social Work, Osu. The T.V and video recorder were presented to the department, and the presentation produced huge applause from everyone. Finally, it was announced that a meeting concerning the Association would be held on November 1, 2003.

For me, the day was incredible beyond my wildest dreams. The final unexpected event on the day was the rain that came at the end of the presentations. I was told the importance of this by the group and recorded this in my journal.

Right after the video the rains came. It poured for about 20 minutes and so the MC had to think of things to say during the rain. I was told afterwards that in Ghanaian culture, if a work has been completed and the rains come, this signifies the showers of blessings upon the research project. The heavens approve and much will be gained from the project.

I reflected on the whole day and its impact on the group and the social work community.

Prof. Apt gave an amazing final speech in which we were all encouraged to take social work forward...the day was so exhilarating and exciting and we were so elated with it all...Two things have come out of the presentations. People are so down about social work as a profession that people train in social work and end up doing other things. With this research and presentation day, the comment is that now people want to take pride in their profession and are renewed in their determination to make social work happen.

Much needs to happen to fulfill this dream, but the day did feel like a new beginning for social work in Ghana.

Association Meeting

A planning meeting was held before the public meeting in order to decide the nature of the meeting, who would chair the meeting and the purpose of the meeting.

We talked about what we wanted to present at the meeting and how to do that. The meeting took two hours, much longer than I expected. The group members made sure we were in dialogue together and I realized how much they had learned from the project.

The public meeting to brainstorm about GASOW was held at the university on November 1, 2003. Seventy people who considered themselves social workers came from all over Ghana. People from the prison service, education service, community development, social welfare, industry and non-government organizations came to give their thoughts and opinions concerning the future of the Association. Group members and faculty at the university took a risk in supporting this meeting, as it was extremely political. As one member stated:

Concerning the challenges of the project I will say that the first one is one of our action plans. It is a vision of the research group to establish a professional Association. I know it is not going to come very easily. Because we have been doing some running around and it appears that people are not too enthusiastic about it so that is a big challenge ... I am hopeful that at the end of the day we will be able to either establish a vibrant one or be able to revive the existing one.

The one executive member of GASOW who did attend the meeting was not happy with the meeting and voiced his anger at this seeming take-over of the Association. But the group was hopeful that this would encourage social workers in Ghana to take more interest in the Association and to make it a vibrant and useful voice to the government concerning social issues in Ghana.

Summary

By the end of August, fatigue was setting in and people were ready for the research project to end. I note in my journal about this tiredness we are all feeling.

We started at 1:30, people are getting a bit bad on their time and I want to finish the agenda so it may be 4:30 before we go ... I think fatigue is setting in.

At the end of the research project, the group had a celebratory meal at a Chinese restaurant, where certificates and a bonus were given to all group members. The certificates were extremely important and the group suggested this idea (See Appendix F).

Originally I felt that it would be a good-bye party but in the end I felt so strongly that it is just the beginning of a new era in social work in Ghana. So instead of saying good-bye we all assumed that through this research group social work in Ghana will emerge stronger than ever and we will remain in contact with each other.

One of the main concerns of the group was the realistic impact the research might have on the department. Two group members voice this concern.

To what extent can we go as a group because ... I realized that they have even done some structural changes to the topics and this has been on the shelf for sometime. So what impact can we also as a group bring to bear on this situation so that at the end of the day the work that we do we will see our fruits being utilized.

What is going to happen to this whole research if it is given to the Department of Social Work? I see it as a challenge if we will be able to implement our findings and whether the department will take a crucial look at it.

The group felt that the time and energy spent on this project and the development of the group should not be wasted. The group could very easily become a core group of dedicated social workers who could work together to bring about continual change in social work in Ghana. Another shares her concerns.

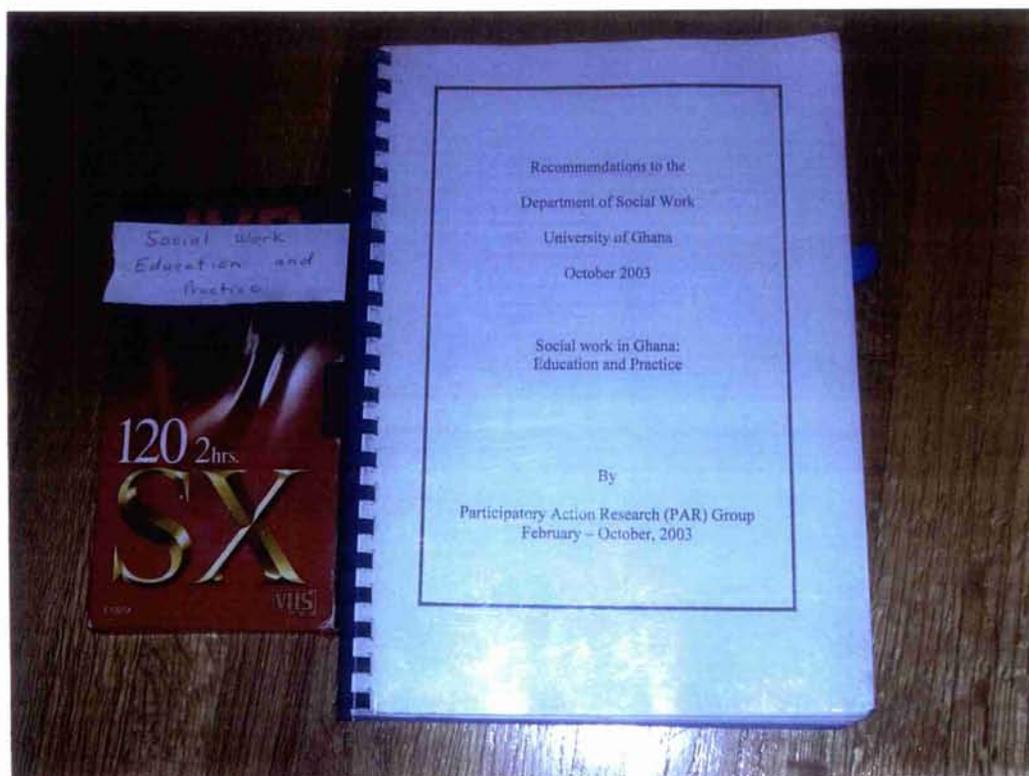
I am afraid, I am anticipating that, when this project is over what happens to us. A faculty member advised us that if it is possible this group should be maintained for future projects and for any other things that we would like to do... so before this project is over, I hope we could have one or two things going on and that we know that this is how much we have achieved so far. If we are not careful, this will be a lip service and shoptalk and then after that it will be shelved and then nobody even knows that any group met before.

This fear that our momentum and our work would be lost to the shelves of the library challenged us to carry out our action plans, but also to keep the group together for future work with projects concerning social work issues.

With any finale as we have had, the challenge to everyone is to keep the momentum going and to build on the research project. People are now talking about the indigenization of social work and I never heard that talked about before the research... the formulation of a new professional Association could potentially be a motivating factor in making social work in Ghana a more positive profession and one with a higher profile.

How practical it will be to fulfill this wish to remain a group will be seen in the future. It is hoped that this group will continue to work with the Department of Social Work and other agencies concerning social welfare in Ghana.

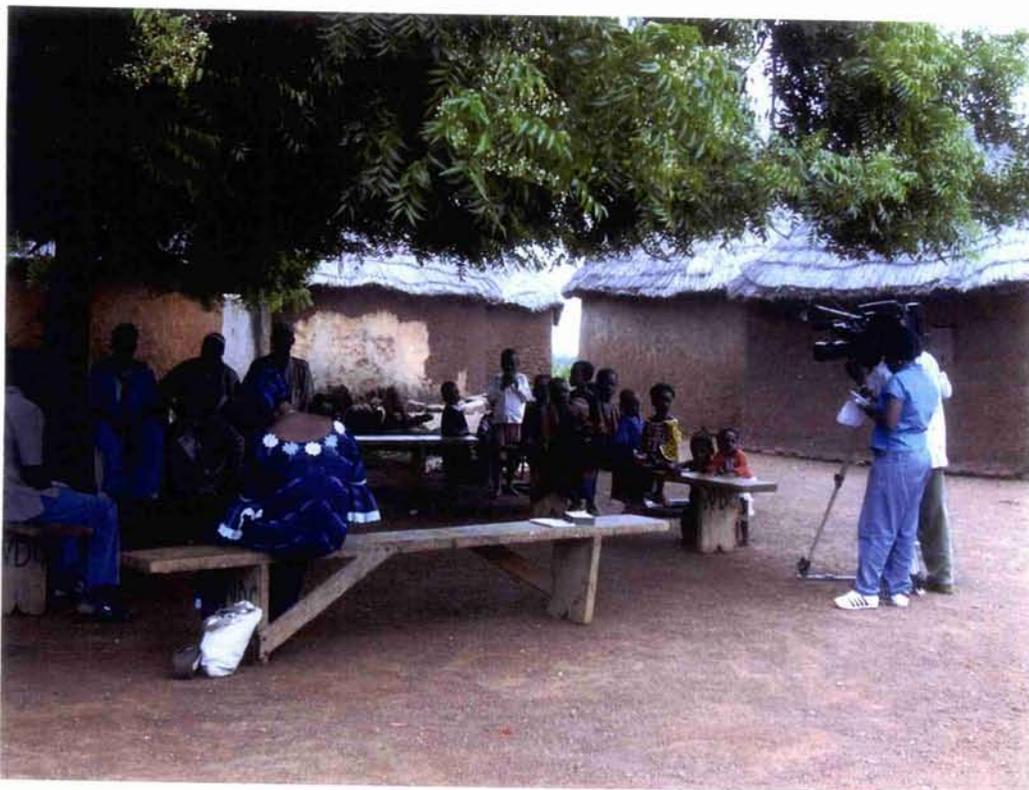
As the facilitator of the research, I want to go back and help these people set up a new Association and continue the work of making the courses more relevant to Ghana. It is hard for me to step aside and let the group develop with all of the frustrations and joys that are part of this process. However, I believe that I can be of better use from Canada and will continue to work on funding for a textbook, collaborative research initiatives and other projects to help the development of this profession in Ghana.



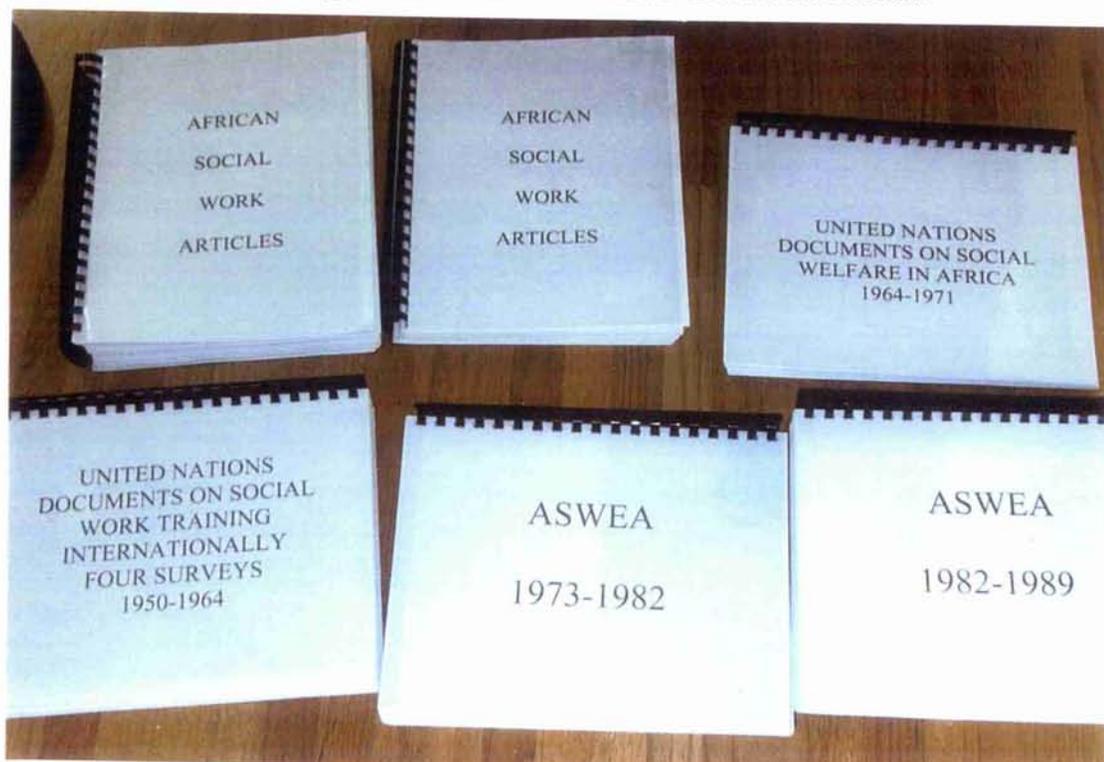
Public education video and recommendations for curriculum changes



T.V., recorder and stand
Presentation Day



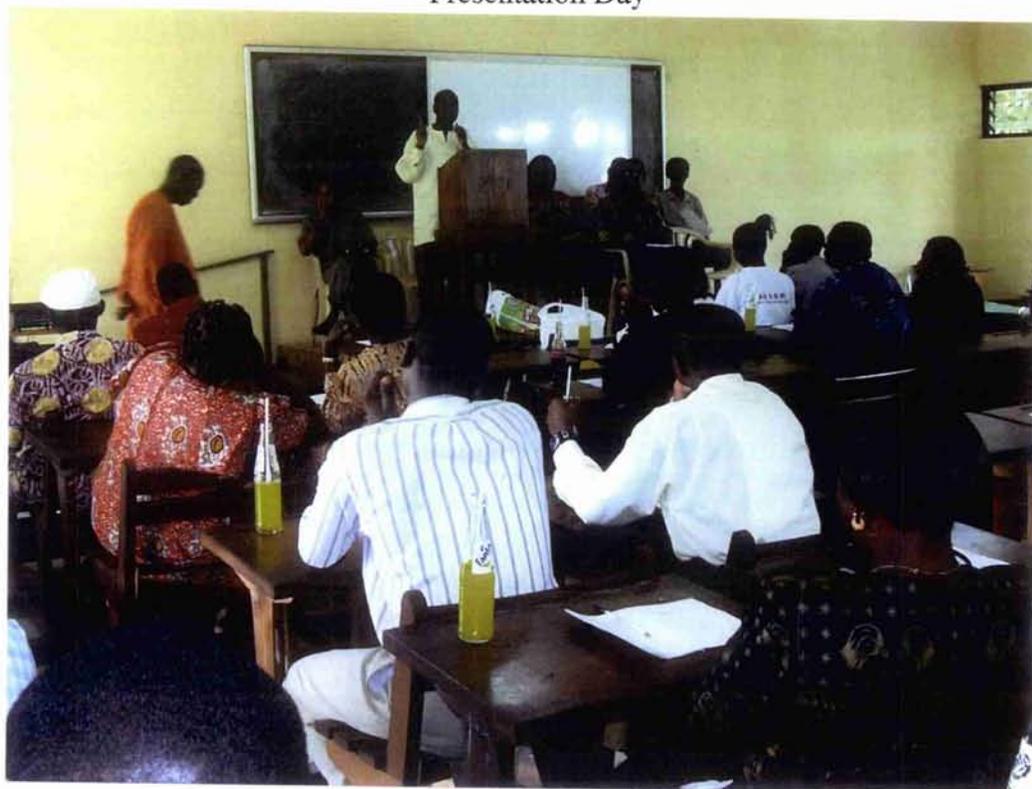
Filming for the video near Tamale in Northern Ghana



Articles sent to Ghana from Calgary



Presentation Day



Association Meeting

An analogy of this type of research has stuck with me throughout this process. It is of a pond, still and silent, waiting to be disturbed by unforeseen forces. A pebble is dropped in the middle and the ripples keep going out in all directions, changing the whole character of the pond. This research is like that pebble. The pond was still, waiting for someone to disturb it. The pond has been disturbed; the ripples are continuing to move and creating change in the Department of Social Work. Some of these ripples are small and others are larger and some have come as far as Canada. On my return to Calgary, I met two Ghanaians who are interested in social work and research. Both will be conducting their research in Ghana and one of them is taking up a topic that we suggested developing in our recommendations for curriculum change, linking social work and traditional medicine and healers. The other is looking at facilitating a PAR project, and could invite people from this project to participate in his project. The ripples continue; thus sustaining the evolutionary process of PAR.

What is so refreshing to me is how in Ghana a group of people can change the course of an organization and department in a positive way. People are now coming up to me and saying that they wished they had been part of the research group and will I be doing another one. Word is getting around that things are happening as a result of a group of people getting together and learning and growing. They also want to be part of this enthusiasm and potential avenue of change. In a society in which people are so used to getting caught up in the fact that there is little money, no resources and lack of motivation as a result, it is refreshing to see a group that actually produced action, enthusiasm and change.

The challenge is now for Ghanaian social workers to take social work into the 21st century and to make the profession an important voice speaking to the government of Ghana and the people of Ghana.

Chapter Seven

Bridging different worlds through knowledge production

Understanding the journey

In 1994, on my first visit to Ghana, I never expected that the experience I was embarking upon would result in a research project ten years later. However, that is the nature of PAR. It facilitates knowledge production that honours life experiences and creates space for ordinary people to change their realities. As I continue my life journey, I hope that this research experience will empower others to change their own situations so that they can be fully human.

Reflections

We all live in different worlds and are constantly challenged by different ways of knowing and living. We try to balance these different experiences so that our contribution to this world is a meaningful one. This is one of the important learning experiences reflected in a group research project in Ghana amongst a group of Ghanaians and one western person concerning our own lives, our cultures, society and profession. Although this thesis emerges from a particular geographical area and has a specific topic of interest, the group all came from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and life experiences. Through the PAR process we were encouraged to bring together our diverse knowledge and experiences in order to change the situations we find ourselves in. "PAR is about power" (Smith, 1997, p. 188) and about shifting power to a more equal power sharing relationship with our own selves, a group, community, society and the world.

One overall goal of PAR is to achieve states of being, in which people are more aware, connected, heard, capable, and productive. People in a PAR process work to integrate shared, democratic power within the group and into society; to strengthen

the personal, inner power of individuals; and to create opportunities for empowering moments of truth” (pp. 192-193).

This research project created space to critically examine the people and institutions affecting our lives in Ghana and the rest of the world.

According to Park (2001), PAR recognizes different forms of knowledge, some of which are not always acknowledged in traditional research. Representational knowledge is knowledge generated from research that can be correlational and causal. This is the knowledge that comes from analysis concerning a certain topic that has been researched through using interviews and questionnaires. In this research project, we were able to use knowledge gained through dialogue with the different speakers, analysis of course outlines, sharing personal experiences and the group process itself in order to analyze knowledge important to social work education and practice. Park (2001) identifies a second form of knowledge, relational knowledge, that he considers very important to knowledge formation. The relationships we have with each other and the world around us is a form of knowledge that is not often recognized as legitimate knowledge but is in fact a way for people to “know one another as human beings affectively, as well as cognitively” (p. 83). It is the relationships that we have with each other, with our profession and with the world in which we live that generates knowledge out of shared experiences and friendships. “Relational knowledge resides in the act of relating and shows itself in words, expressions, actions and other forms of doing relationship...we know with feeling, and the knowing is in the feeling” (p. 85). The relational knowledge surrounding this research includes firstly, the relationship with the PAR process, a new and often uncertain relationship for the group members that evolved into one that revolutionized their ideas concerning research; and secondly, the relationships with each

other and how, as these relationships grew, new knowledge was generated through the relationships people forged with each other. Thirdly, the relationship with Ghanaian society conveyed the tensions, sorrows, passion and joys that group members had concerning issues in Ghanaian society. The struggle with what is Ghanaian/African culture and the issues relevant to Ghanaian society were acknowledged through the frustrations, anger, misunderstandings, joys, pride and love of the group as we came together to interact and grow as a group. Finally, the relationship with our profession, social work, was at times extremely intense and passionate and confusing. "If social work was never born and if it has not died, then where is it" shows the depth of these emotions and concern for the profession expressed by all in the group. There was never a doubt that all group members had a passionate relationship with the profession and were prepared to go far and take risks to create a more effective profession in Ghana.

Finally, Park (2001) speaks of reflective knowledge as a form of knowledge generated from critical analysis and evaluation of issues through looking at the wider, macro systems that affect society. It is through critical awareness that conscientization occurs in order to change the situations around us. Through this conscientization process, confidence is built in order that the group can transfer knowledge from within to the outside in order to take practical actions to change their situation. Thus reflective knowledge is emancipatory and involves the critical engagement of people in order to take social action to improve their communities and situations. The group critically examined historical and present day factors affecting Ghanaian society and the social work profession. Through the dialogical process, more questions were asked than answered thus creating space for group members to critically examine these issues. As

this process evolved, action plans emerged that enabled group members to act upon their new knowledge through organizing a maiden meeting addressing issues concerning the Ghana Association of Social Workers, creating a public education video about social work in Ghana and providing recommendations for changes to the curriculum. All of these forms of knowledge were extremely important to this research process.

The hegemony of western knowledge, identified by Gramsci (Mayo, 1990) and others, continues throughout the world and can be seen in different layers of learning through the ideas and examples shared by the group. The dominant forces of traditional teaching (lecturing and the use of western articles and books) and research (logical positivism) continue to dominate education at the University of Ghana. Freire (1997) describes this type of education seen in his own world as perpetuating a culture of silence. “Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they were kept ‘submerged’ in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible” (p.12). In this project group members responded positively to a different approach to learning and research; they were inspired throughout the PAR process to think about alternatives to the traditional kind of education. They particularly thought about different approaches to social work fieldwork placements and to a participatory approach to classroom teaching. The group highlighted frustrations of living in a country dominated by neo-liberal world economic policies and were acutely aware of how these power relations have affected them as individuals and as social workers. Gramsci (1971) saw the educational process as both critical and political in which the two cannot be separated. The group certainly combined the critical with the political as they saw the imbalances of power and were empowered to act politically on

the new knowledge they produced through this research project. A good example was attempting to change the power balance within social work by confronting GASOW through political means. These researchers became the 'organic intellectuals' (Mayo, 1999) of social work in Ghana in which a critical look at social work and the Association can continue.

Foucault (1992) speaks of power relations in society at many different levels; the group highlighted concerns around the University hierarchy, the economic and social policies of the Ghana government, traditional beliefs and systems and the different power relations within the social work profession in Ghana. The group began the critical process of understanding the objectives of these institutions and how they affected their own lives and the lives of the individuals and communities they work with as social workers.

Foucault (1980) speaks about the 'subjugated knowledge' in the world that is buried, disguised or discounted; through the stories from older individuals who had experience social work in the 1960s and 1970s the group was introduced to social work indigenous writing and activities that are often not taught or spoken about in Ghanaian social work education today. Little has been written about the work of ASWEA and GASOW; this important knowledge concerning social work history should be available to everyone and taught in the classroom. On a broader scale, the lack of library resources adds to the disempowering of people to effect change through their own stories, writings and ideas. African social work articles that I brought with me from Canada were an important source of information, and the group took full advantage of these articles. Often these articles were referred to during the reflection period of the workshop.

Interwoven through the workshops were the historical factors affecting Ghana and Ghanaian social work. The mechanisms of hegemony that Freire (1997) speaks about seemed to reflect some of the thoughts the group shared concerning colonialism, modernization and globalization. Although the group members had positive thoughts concerning colonialism and western influences, through the skit and reflections of the first few workshops it was clear that these factors had had an impact that silenced traditional knowledge as well as traditional authority in Ghana. Through the turbulent history of Ghana other mechanisms that have promoted a culture of silence could be seen through various political and economic situations in Ghanaian history. More recently, the mechanisms for cooperation (Freire, 1997) seem to be evident in Ghana. The country seems to have united in order to create a society that is open and free from fear. The PAR process allowed for the people to express their views and to struggle with these different views affecting them. I remember one group member coming in and saying how evil colonialism was; after hearing others share their views, she came back the next week and stated that she felt the word evil was too strong in describing colonialism. At the next workshop she seemed to have resolved in her own mind what she felt about colonialism. The freedom to question, change your ideas and thinking, and develop other ways of thinking was important to this research process.

PAR values the people's knowledge, sharpens their capacity to conduct their own research in their own interests, helps them appropriate knowledge produced by the dominant knowledge industry for their own interests and purposes, allows problems to be explored from their perspective, and, maybe, most important, liberates their minds for critical reflection, questioning, and the continuous pursuit of inquiry, thus contributing to the liberation of their minds and the development of freedom and democracy (Reason, 1994, p. 329).

The facilitator's role in the PAR process is not always expanded upon in the PAR literature. This may be due to the uniqueness of each PAR experience and the reluctance on the part of the facilitator to share his/her experience. However, Fals Borda (1988) speaks extensively of the issues concerning outside researchers and the importance of breaking the "relationship of submission" (p. 30) in this type of research.

The qualities, attitudes and abilities of external animators in managing and understanding human relations, as well as their political vision, are vital for success. But this success itself depends to a large extent on breaking the relationship of submission or dependence which may exist between [outsiders and group members]... The moments of crisis or the actual disintegration of the tasks undertaken could often be traced to personal failures by the outside and/or inside agents of change to observe these rules of conduct (p.31).

The extensive writing in this thesis that I have done concerning my own experience as a facilitator, I hope will contribute to greater understanding of the facilitator's role and experience. The facilitator has the job of creating space for learning, dealing with group tensions, planning administrative issues and becoming less and less important as the group is empowered to guide the evolutionary process of the research. Through the chronological account of the workshop in Chapter four and my own experiences in Chapter six, I have been honest in my feelings and experiences concerning this project. This includes my living experiences in Ghana and relationships with friends I met outside the research process. I do not see these relationships as separate but as important elements of the whole PAR process.

Political action sets PAR apart from other forms of action research. "At all times and at all points, we are required to translate knowledge into action" (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001, p. 384). The cyclical rhythms of PAR, "the action/reflection, action reflection moments" (Smith, 1997) were apparent as the group evolved. "As one process is emphasized by a

group, the other remains temporarily in the background. Later this reverses” (p. 187). Political action can take place at many different levels of society from individual to societal changes. Our action plans came out of creating new knowledge and the conviction that this new knowledge needed to be made available to everyone interested in the study. Fals Borda (1988) describes four levels of communication concerning the “production and diffusion of new knowledge” (p. 95). “It incorporates various styles and procedures for systematizing new data and knowledge according to the level of political conscience and ability for understanding written, oral or visual messages by the group” (pp. 95 & 96). Always in our minds was the importance of returning our knowledge to the community (Department of Social Work, social workers, students and the community). The action plans were all political in that each confronted power relations from the individual to the societal level. The recommendations for curriculum changes were written for the faculty and teachers, who often find it difficult to have their work analysed, in the Department of Social work and other departments represented by the teaching staff. A copy of these recommendations was left in the library for anyone to look at as an important principle concerning the transparency of the project. When challenged at a meeting about the research project concerning whose project it was and its availability to the public, I was able to explain that it was a project guided by Ghanaians and that I would encourage anyone to read the recommendations as they have been made public to anyone. The T.V. and video recorder was a practical action by which other forms of teaching, less hierarchical, could be encouraged in the classroom. The video was a public education video geared for the Ghanaian public and was specifically positive in its approach to social work, which is often seen by the public and government in a

negative light. The action surrounding the Association was an attempt to confront the imbalance of power relations within an organization and a professional body. The conscientization of the group enabled them to deal with power relations in a practical way and begin to change the perception of social work in Ghana.

In the context of social work education worldwide, the thesis points to similarities between Africa and the struggles of other non-western countries in adapting western social work knowledge to the realities of their own countries. Ghana is no exception, as shown by the work of GASOW in the 1960s and 1970s. Recent changes to the curriculum in the Department of Social work will hopefully continue the process of indigenization of social work education in Ghana. Political, social and economic factors will, no doubt, continue to affect the social work profession in Ghana however the present stability of the country will help in recreating a strong professional presence there.

The group completed a final creative project by making a video that could be shown with presentations concerning the project. One of my committee members encouraged me to make this video with these words:

You are helping them fulfill the universal need for freedom. Near the end of your time with them, you might encourage them to reflect on their learning. In this way, they will understand the importance of creating spaces like yours and become facilitators themselves. This becomes an important unintended outcome. Our work is thereby sustainable (T. Pyrch, personal communication, May 10, 2003).

Each person was asked to express two positives and two challenges regarding the project. Excerpts from this video affirm the conscientization of a group of people willing to critically look at their own lives, society and profession.

Queen Mother: Any time I attended a meeting I would just sit down quietly and listen to them. Now I know the work of the social worker. I am part of the system and I appreciate the work that they do. I am going to sing their song about them wherever I go and wherever I meet the community ... I have learned that we don't say problems, but rather they use the word issues.

Another challenge is with my own thoughts and feelings about social work in Ghana and about colonialism and about these different factors that have affected the evolution of social work in Ghana ... I feel I have made friends with nine people that I hope I will always be in contact with.

Being in this group has enabled me to read lots of articles concerning social work in other parts of the world, especially developing countries like ours, country's like Zimbabwe and South Africa and what they are doing. And this has really gingered in me how to do developmental social work.

When we started the project, like others have said, this is a unique way of data collection, which is not the same as what we are used to. One interesting thing about it to me is the way we dialogue in the group ... we always discuss things in some detail and sometimes very hot and by the end of it we have a consensus ... when we are sitting as individuals in our homes or villages, either as former students or current students, we wouldn't have had the opportunity to do that. But the research project has given us the opportunity to contribute our ideas as to what should be done to the curriculum to make it suitable to changing needs.

When I came into the group, naturally I am a little bit loud and sometimes I forget that this is a participatory group that everybody's thoughts and views are to be expressed ... but with time I have learned to control myself and then allow anything to go and then after that I will make my comments ... It is a sort of a revolutionized type of research and I am looking forward to using it ... another benefit that I have gained from this research is the friends I have made.

I have been proud to be part of this participatory action research. And what fascinates me is this aspect of, the positive aspect of democracy, the democratic way in which we conducted this research ... I was faced with the challenge of personal biases. I felt that if western influence was not also proper then it was equally right for me to say that some of our cultural aspects were not also proper ... I saw that a big challenge for us Africans to start thinking about is that we need to give women and children their rightful positions so far as human rights is concerned.

The group has enabled me to critically exam some of the things that we have been thinking through as social workers ... this research has been a process where we all dialogue together, agree on and we have to reach a consensus in making decisions and for me it has been very interesting to know the other side of research where you have to involve people in dialogue ... What role are we going to play after this group work has gingered us more or less to re-examine the role social workers can play or should play in our society? What is the way forward? What are the next steps as group members?

This research has caused me to think, it is a very positive aspect that it has had on me. Before we started the whole research program, we were taken through some exercises (map exercise) to think outside box. And that has stayed with me ever since. I mean for the first time I have seen that it is very necessary to sometimes not only respect the common, what people are used to, but to also consider other methods of knowledge which are equally important ... It is a vision of the research to establish a professional association. I know it is not going to come very easily because we have been doing some running around and it appears that people are not too enthusiastic about it so that is a big challenge.

This research will benefit me in my Master's preparation because most of the articles given to us contained information about things that I have been looking for for quite a long time which I had not been able to find ... I hate to say that when I was in my final year or so well as for social work, I only did it as a discipline and I will move to MB to finance or law. But I think through this particular research method I have learned to love social work. The discussion with Dr. Blavo was actually asking me to stick to social work in the future.

This research is an open-ended project. The learning experiences and knowledge produced by the group are already affecting the lives of people in Ghana, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. As Fals Borda (1988) aptly states: "We know that PAR commitments have no deadlines, and they will not cease until justice and communal progress have been achieved in every place and region where research and action are undertaken. This is PAR's true and final evaluation" (p. 43).

Implications for social work

This research project has highlighted many issues surrounding the development of social work in Africa and in particular Ghana. Clearly, in most African countries, it has

been a struggle to obtain societal acceptance for the profession of social work. There are many social, political, economic and historical factors that have affected social work and these have been outlined in the above chapters. At a local, regional and international context social work is still on the periphery in many African countries and is struggling to find its place in society. Perhaps this coincides with the attempt of the continent to come together and find its identity in the 21st century. There are implications at the local, regional and international level concerning the issues surrounding social work practice in Ghana.

Local. Social work in Ghana has a rich history of good social work education and practice. Although influenced by western social work practice, indigenous mechanisms have guided its development. Several reasons occurred as to why it lost momentum after the 1970s. Political, economic and social realities of the country affected the profession and it has never fully recovered. This links the direct relationship between the stability of a society and social work practice, which is not often seen in western countries. It is, therefore, important for social workers to advocate for stability and good governance in Ghana. During this time of societal openness and country stability, work needs to continue to promote the social work profession and its influence on government social policy. Social workers need to take an active role in advocating for the profession and take responsibility and pride in creating a profession that moves from the periphery of society into the center of society. Professional social workers need to urgently address the problems of the Association and decisions need to be made as to how to move forward in order to establish an effective Association. The Association should offer seminars, conferences and opportunities for social workers to come together and unite in

strengthening the profession of social work in Ghana. Plagued by corruption and financial difficulties that are not always the fault of the Association, effort needs to be made to alleviate these issues and develop an Association that is vibrant and active. Practical ways of helping this along is to establish a new Association with a different eligibility criteria, establish membership fees and create a registry of all practicing social workers along with a disciplinary system for situations arising concerning practice issues.

The development of the Masters program will help alleviate the lack of indigenous writing available to students training to be social workers. Efforts should be made to encourage students and practitioners to write about their social work practice and experience. These articles need to be published and available for use by teachers at the university and at the School of Social Work, Osu. The Masters program will incorporate social workers in the community as speakers and sessional instructors in order that practical experience can be a major part of social work education and this should also be encouraged at the Bachelors level. Effort should be made to collect practical case studies from all over Ghana for use in the classroom. Individual social workers can play a part in promoting the values and skills of a social worker by involving themselves in social and political discussions via the radio, newspaper and media to bring the voice of social work into the everyday lives of Ghanaian people. The Code of Ethics should be revised in order to reflect the language and culture of Ghana. Finally, work needs to be developed concerning the positive links between social work and traditional authority and ways that the two institutions can promote development within the communities that they serve.

Throughout this research project, the use of PAR sustained me when I had doubts about why I was in Ghana facilitating a research project. This group research process

provides the opportunity for wonderful creativity and learning. I drew strength from PAR and as part of our recommendations to the Department of Social Work, we felt more qualitative research methods should be taught in social work. PAR should be used more often in research at the University and I hope that the group members will actively use this method in their work, studies and research.

Regional. There was clearly an important movement in West Africa supporting social work development in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only was GASOW active in offering seminars for social work practitioners and educators in West Africa, but also ASWEA offered conferences, collected indigenous writing for the classroom and was a voice for social work in West Africa. On the minds of members then and social workers now are issues concerning the acceptance of social work as a profession in Africa. Back in 1973 an ASWEA participant wrote this concerning social work education.

Social work education in Africa, in spite of the various efforts made by social work educators, has not yet reached the level where it can produce social work practitioners who could meet the needs of the masses of people in terms of improving the general standard of living. Social work practice because of the lack of adequately developed and clearly established social welfare policy has not yet moved beyond the level of a token service. It has not yet identified itself with the overall national development programmes (Tesfaye, 1973, p. 21).

The same thoughts could be related to social work in Ghana today.

In order for Ghanaians to develop their own social work profession and Association, the support of an organization like ASWEA should be encouraged so that each country can experience institutional support and financial support from a larger African body. In this way, intercontinental networking can be established and could benefit social work activities around the continent. This development has begun through the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). Through this organization, the

Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) has been established and there is an effort to host a conference for Schools of Social Work in Africa in the next few years. The purpose of the ASSWA is to,

- a) promote the interests of social work education in the region, b) provide opportunities for consultation and exchange of ideas, educational resources, faculty and students, c) serve as a body for channeling resources to social work educational institutions in the region and d) promote inter-regional, regional and international co-operation in social work education (IASSW, 2004).

I have been communicating with one of the interim executive committee members and plans are underway to organize a meeting next year to plan the future of this organization, curriculum review, establish a data base, networking system and forum for members. Again, funding is a big issue concerning organizing a meeting like this. Due to the political and economic factors that have plagued Africa, now is the time to strengthen and develop the social work profession through regional bodies, complimenting other continental efforts.

International. Colonialism, modernization and globalization have affected the development of social work in Africa. As stated in an ASWEA (1973) document, there are many attitudes, beliefs and thinking that need to be changed due to these influences. This takes time, energy, critical thinking and innovative ideas from social workers working in the field and educators teaching these students.

Political, social and economic conditions have also had an impact on social work education in the continent. Probably the most important is the static role of the social work method being adopted by many African social workers. The influence Europeans had (from UK and France, in particular) on the whole field, during the colonial period and later through training the leadership in the field – is to some extent responsible for this situation. Social welfare programmes designed to solve urban problems of highly industrialized countries were transplanted into African societies without serious examination of local priority needs and local approaches to problems and with little attempt towards their adaptation. As a result, the dynamic role of the social work method was overlooked. African social workers were led to

believe that there is a certain set of legitimate and unchangeable fields where the social work method can be utilized. This orthodox attitude towards social work, and social welfare in turn, reflected on social work education. Trained social workers in Africa keep on using the term social welfare referring to individualized attention to persons under strain in stress or in need for special care (ASWEA. 1973, p. 53).

The research group came to the conclusion that it is time to set aside the old influences of colonialism and westernization and take the positives of these influences and go forward into the future. It is time that Africans grow in their identity as a unique people who have much to offer the world. Social work practitioners and educators have unique opportunities to establish and create new social work theories and practice that are relevant to the African situation in the urban or the rural setting. The close link between social work and political, social and economic situations and how these influence each other can be important lessons for western social workers. Western social work practitioners and educators can influence African social work by encouraging and funding better technology for students to have access to journals written by Africans about Africa that are only accessed through western libraries and the Internet. More importantly, the wider international institutions can influence social work development through debt relief programs and supporting the development of social welfare and education in African countries. Organizations like The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the IASSW can help promote exchange of information through conferences and publications. What hinders most social workers in Africa is the fact that they cannot afford to attend these conferences. Work needs to be completed on how scholarships and funding can be provided to encourage better attendance of social workers from these countries.

Western hegemony continues to dictate knowledge distribution and determines whose voices are being heard worldwide. African social work practice and thinking can benefit the social work profession everywhere and it is up to each of us to encourage their voices to be heard. In this way we are slowly making a difference in rectifying the imbalance of western hegemony of knowledge, particularly in the profession of social work.

Historical, social, political and economic processes have influenced changes in social welfare and social work curriculum in non-western countries. Many of the issues highlighted in the United Nations, ASWEA and GASOW reports concerning social work are similar issues brought up by this research group in 2004. Through this research a new critical understanding of the effects of colonialism and modernization has empowered social workers to think critically about social work knowledge and the curriculum being taught in Ghana. This group has emerged with a new appreciation for the important contribution indigenous ways of knowing can make in social work curriculum. The challenge is to use the interdependency and opportunities of a more global world to address the imbalance of the flow of social work knowledge so that all social workers can benefit from each other's experiences. Through collaboration with each other, a new, creative and equitable balance can be achieved in social work education worldwide.

Future Research

Knowledge production from this project has raised issues that need further research. First, there is a need for ongoing evaluation of the social work curriculum at the Diploma, Bachelors and Masters levels at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana. Recommendations for new courses should be part of the

the Diploma, Bachelors and Masters levels at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana. Recommendations for new courses should be part of the evaluation in order to keep students informed of current social issues in Ghanaian society and to educate them as to how to deal with these issues. Second, research concerning the present and future relationship between social workers and traditional authority, in particular Queen Mothers, would contribute to the literature and would highlight their overlapping roles in the community as well as how they could work together to foster positive community development. Third, an historical analysis of the work of ASWEA and GASOW during the 1960s and 1970s would document this important knowledge concerning social work in Ghana and West Africa. This analysis could be used in teaching and research as well as educating the international social work community. Fourth, research concerning the effects of globalization, particularly in health and social programs, would add to important documentation relating to poverty issues that affect Ghanaian society. Included in this study could be the social workers role in supporting the empowerment of people to change their situations and take control of their own economic, health and social issues affecting them. Finally, research linking indigenous social mechanisms in Ghanaian society to social work education and practice would be invaluable to the profession. An example given during this research project is the exploration of a potential working relationship between indigenous medical practice and social work practice.

It is hoped that this research project will motivate and inspire others to facilitate a PAR project in their own communities as well as to challenge researchers to think

through their own understanding of knowledge production and how research can, in fact, transform lives and communities.

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Appendix A

Recommendations to the
Department of Social Work

University of Ghana

October 2003

Social work in Ghana:
Education and Practice

By

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Group
February – October, 2003

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Introduction

In November 2002, Linda Kreitzer came to Ghana to facilitate a research project concerning social work curriculum at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana. The research project, part of her PhD studies, was affiliated with and supported by the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana and the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, Canada. The purpose of the research was to explore the exportation of western social work knowledge through the various historical factors as they affect African social work education in the context of Ghana. Also, to what extent has western social work knowledge been replaced by indigenous approaches and knowledge in social work to meet the needs of modern Ghana?

The research methodology was that of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR encompasses adult education techniques, scientific research and political action in order to critically look at a topic of concern to the group. It involves a group of interested local people who are committed to a group research process in which a topic of concern is identified, knowledge is gathered to critically look at the topic and several actions are implemented that reflect the group research process. PAR is an evolutionary process and reflects the concerns of the group itself with the group deciding where the research process should go.

After arriving in Ghana, letters were sent to staff at the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Community Development and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) inviting anyone interested in this research to contact Ms. Kreitzer. The criteria for this project was that each person had to have completed either the diploma or bachelor's degree program at the Department of Social Work, was interested in the topic and open to other ways of thinking and could commit themselves to a nine month process, from February 2003 – October 2003. On January 25, 2003 a presentation was given at the Department of Social Work concerning the research process and eight people attended. By the middle of February a group of 12 interested people had been identified for the project. Three of those people subsequently withdrew which left nine people plus the facilitator, all who participated in the project from the beginning to its conclusion. These nine people represented different areas of social work practice, ethnic groups, religious groups and age groups. They included one faculty member, two current

students in the Bachelor's program, and six former students of the social work program who have graduated in different years in the past nine years. Finally one Queen Mother representing culture and traditional authority was part of our group.

Five types of knowledge gathering techniques were used: 1) oral knowledge including personal experiences, storytelling and proverbs, 2) reflections including journal writings, 3) academic articles mainly from African and Ghanaian writers concerning African issues, 4) knowledge from experienced people and 5) document analysis. Analysing the information occurred continuously throughout the research process through group dialogue.

Two questions arose from the group that influenced the evolution of the project. 1) Why did Linda have to come and facilitate this project when it could have been created from within Ghana? 2) Was there a systematic body of knowledge that could have been used from pre-colonial Ghana that would have formed the basis to develop a social welfare system in Ghana? In order to answer these questions above it was important for the group to understand what is African/Ghanaian culture and what was the evolutionary process of social work education and training in Ghana? The following sessions were planned with appropriate resource people in the community, alternating cultural issues with curriculum information.

Feb. 21-22, 2003 – Introductory residential workshop at Aburi Botanical Gardens.

March 8, 2003 – Group sketch dramatizing pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial through the eyes of a Ghanaian family.

March 29, 2003 – Group member's experiences of social work curriculum.

April 12, 2003 – Identifying social issues in Ghana and the role of social workers in Ghana.

May 3, 2003 – Guest speaker, Prof. Awedoba, Institute of African Studies – Definition of culture, differences between western and African culture and Ghanaian specific cultural aspects.

May 23, 2003 – Guest speaker, Dr. Blavo - The evolution of the social work profession and training in Ghana.

June 14, 2003 – Guest speaker, Mrs. Esie Sutherland-Addy, Institute of African Studies - Language and culture, indigenous mechanisms in Ghanaian culture that help solve social

issues, principles and ideals of Ghanaian society and examples of ceremonies around these ideals.

June 27, 2003 – Guest speaker, Mrs. Cynthia Sottie, tutor in social work - Revised Bachelor's curriculum and the lecturer's position at the university.

July 12, 2003 – Guest speaker, Prof. Glover, Artist's Alliance - Importance of art, the education and empowerment of people to think creatively, and using art in our social work practice.

July 18, 2003 – A critical look at the course outlines from the present Diploma and Bachelor's courses and offering recommendations for changes to these courses.

July 25, 2003 – Guest speaker, Mr. Abrefa – Administrator and lecturer in social work - New Master's program.

August 9, 2003 – A critical look at the revised Bachelor and New Master's programs and identifying recommendations for changes to these programs.

August 16, 2003 – Guest speaker, Prof. Nana Apt, Head of Department of Social Work – The background to revised Bachelor's curriculum and the new Master's program and the future of social work in Ghana.

August - October 2003 – Recommendations to the department concerning the social work curriculum and preparation of action plans emerging from the research.

A very important part of the PAR process is an action plan that reflects the research process. It is to be practical and of value to the culture in which the research was facilitated. One of the action plans was to make recommendations to the Department of Social Work concerning the curriculum. The recommendations are divided into six sections: 1) Group Reflections, 2) Diploma program, 3) Bachelor's program, 4) Revised Bachelor's program, 5) New Master's program and 6) General recommendations for social work training and curriculum. It is hoped these recommendations will be of use to the Department in the task of revising the social work training to meet the needs of modern Ghanaian society.

1. Group Reflections

Throughout this research process, the group has learned a great deal about African and Ghanaian culture and the evolution of the social work profession and training in Ghana. This section reflects the important thoughts and feelings of the group concerning

factors influencing the evolution of social work in Ghana and the learning processes and the conscientization of the group through the research process.

- We acknowledge the negative and positive influences of colonialism and its effect on the Ghanaian society. On the negative side loss of identity, labelling everything of African origin as primitive and fetish, abuse of non-human and human resources and creating dependency has affected African development and creativity. On the positive side colonialism brought formal education and a new understanding of the rights of individuals including the handicapped in this society.
- We acknowledge the continual influence of western society on Ghanaian culture and practice. As a nation we live in many different worlds at the same time. As a group we feel that both the western and traditional approaches to solving social issues have been embraced by the country and this should be reflected in social work training.
- We acknowledge that culture is dynamic, constantly changing and sometimes intangible. It encompasses the past, present and future. This is reflected in continual changes in social issues and these changes need to be addressed in social work training. Regular evaluations of the courses should be part of the Department of Social Work's continuing assessment of its program.
- We acknowledge that Ghanaian culture has its differences and similarities from other cultures. The importance of consensus in decision-making, expressing emotions externally, importance of community, saving face and hospitality are principles identified as important in Ghanaian culture.
- We acknowledge the importance of understanding traditions in society, how they evolved and an understanding of cultural practices in light of social issues.
- We acknowledge the work of the social work pioneers in Ghana in introducing and strengthening the profession of social work and its training.
- We acknowledge that the introduction of social work in Ghana was developmental in nature but over the years has become more remedial with the individualization of services. The dwindling political interest and funding in social welfare services has been a factor in the decrease of service delivery.

- We acknowledge that the past 20 years in Ghana has been difficult economically, socially and politically due to changes in governments and debts incurred through structural adjustment programs and this has affected the public perception of social work generally. Social Work as a profession has not been accepted in Africa up to now. It has been on the periphery of Ghanaian society and this has affected the progress of social work training and job placement. There needs to be a concerted effort to change people's perceptions of social work in Ghana.
- We acknowledge the continual lack of resources that have plagued the department since the 1980's and appreciate what has been accomplished with minimal finances and minimal staffing, which often affects ones motivation to work creatively.
- We acknowledge that there was a strong traditional society in which to develop a social welfare system indigenous to Ghanaian culture before colonialism and the positive aspects of this tradition should be taught in all courses in social work.
- We acknowledge an imbalance of western social work knowledge and practice in social work training in Ghana and encourage training to be more indigenous to Ghanaian society. We acknowledge that African knowledge is not primitive and uncivilized and is just as important as western knowledge.
- We acknowledge the difficulties within the University of Ghana with regards to salaries and conditions of lecturers. Specifically the very poor pay and conditions of lecturers and the strict requirements for being employed as a lecturer. The profession of social work is a very practical profession and years of practice need to be acknowledged and rewarded by the University when hiring lecturers..
- We acknowledge that for a society to develop there must be dreamers. We acknowledge that social workers are like artists in that they create ways for positive change to occur in society. Therefore the importance of creating a class environment through participatory teaching methods that encourage dreamers and visionaries within the profession is necessary.
- We acknowledge the appropriateness of Participatory Action Research as a research methodology in Ghana. We all come from different backgrounds and

experiences and the group process is an effective way to bring these differences together for creating change. It promotes a democratic and creative way to facilitate research that allows people to be involved thus counterbalancing the research fatigue syndrome found in many communities today.

- We acknowledge the importance of the revised Bachelor's curriculum and the new Master's program and the significant impact these will have on the future of social work training and practice in Ghana.

The following are recommendations for curriculum change in the Department of Social Work covering both the old, revised and new curriculum.

3. Recommendations to specific curriculum issues

A. Diploma course – We were only able to find half of the course outlines for the diploma courses and all effort should be made to have all course outlines available to anyone wishing to see them. Therefore our recommendations are for part of the diploma program only:

001 - Theoretical framework for Social Work Methodology

- The title needs to be changed to be less technically understandable.
- The course has too much material to cover and should have a separate class for the History of Social Work.

002 - Methods of social work

- It was felt that traditional practices were incorporated into the teaching material. In regards to social work values, many are embedded in our traditional thinking. However this area of values could be expanded to be more Ghanaian specific.
- Some of the western theories could be adapted to the Ghanaian setting through using local Ghanaian examples.
- Due to the volume of material needed to teach this course, it is recommended that the course be extended to one academic year or that the course be re-titled: "Introduction to Social Work Methods" if this extension is not possible.

003 - Introduction to Social Policy

- Lecturers need to be more practical, using Ghanaian examples with their teaching material.
- The references in the reading list are very old and not up-to-date. No Ghanaian writer was listed in the reference list. We have many Ghanaian writers who have written about social policy in different fields of study including social work and sociology. Both government and non-government organizations (NGO) have social policy statements that could be used. We therefore recommend that, as much as possible, Ghanaian writings and local social policy examples should be used and referred to for the course. Also, other African countries have social policies that could be examined as well. In our group, one of the members looked extensively at the 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare in South Africa and found this useful (A copy is available on reserve in the social work library).

B. Bachelor's Course

201 - History of Social work

- A common concern among the group was the inadequate information regarding Ghanaian and African social work history in this course. The objectives are good but we recommend that the course centre less on the American and British social work and more on the African/ Ghanaian history of social work.
- No Ghanaian references were included in the reading list, especially the article written by Dr. Apt and Dr. Blavo concerning social work in Ghana. We would recommend their article on the History of Social Work in Ghana be included in the reading list as well as other local writings from the 1960's and 1970's. We are aware that some lecturers may not know of the existence of these writing or that these writings are hard to find at times but with persistence they can be found and used appropriately. Examples of relevant writings are the early conferences in West Africa concerning social work and the Ghana Association of Social Workers articles from conferences held in the 1960's and 1970's. Articles and materials from the Association of

Social Work Educators in Africa were used as teaching materials in Ghana during the 1960's and 1970's and should be included in this course. The United Nations was involved in 6-7 international surveys in the 1960's and 1970's concerning the social work profession in non-western countries and is important to the history of social work in Ghana. Documentation in regards to activities in and history of correctional institutions in Ghana and other welfare institutions should be covered. We recommend that a reader (articles collated into a binder form) be produced with all of these important documents for this course as we are in danger of losing sight of the past and present important events concerning social work in Ghana.

202 - Philosophy of social work

- This course is very inconsistent as it is taught by different visiting lecturers, with different issues emphasized. We recommend that a comprehensive course outline be given to any visiting lecturer with some flexibility so that students will have a more consistent learning experience from year to year.
- There is some duplication between this course and the Nature of Social Work and we suggest that duplications be addressed by making sure that certain issues are dealt with in one place or the other.
- This course lacks a healthy dose of non-western philosophy, particularly African philosophy and should be incorporated into the course as a means by which social work training can become more African. This course leaves the task of studying non-western philosophy to the students themselves. The group felt this is difficult at Level 200 and at present it places African philosophy in a less important learning experience than western philosophy.

203 - Nature of Social Work

- Most of the topics in this course are important to social work training. However, most of the reference books are only one and this one copy has to provide reading material for the student's and lecturer. This highlights a real need for the availability of indigenous writing and a Ghanaian social work textbook.

204 - Approaches to Meeting Human Need

- It is felt that more current social problems need to be addressed. Topics tend to centre on theories concerning these social issues and not pragmatic solutions and intervention strategies. We recommend that this course be of a more pragmatic nature and current to the social issues of today.

301 - Theoretical Framework for Social Work Methodology

- The title needs to be revised, as it appears ambiguous and vague in its description.
- The topics in Level 300 seem to duplicate and overlap with the courses in Level 200 and topics had been borrowed or expanded upon from Level 200.

Soc. 305 – 306 - Research Methods

- It was felt that research methods should be taught in the Department of Social Work instead of Sociology.
- We also felt that too much emphasis is placed on quantitative research and not enough emphasis on qualitative research including Participatory Action Research, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participatory Learning, Grounded theory and Phenomenology. At the present time research classes are far too big, too technical and there is a high failure rate.

401 – 402 - Framework for Social Diagnosis and Framework for Planned change

- The titles need to be changed to a more modern Ghanaian title.
- There is a lot of repetition between these two courses and with other courses.
- Reading lists should be properly referenced with dates, titles and publishing companies, etc.
- Language in the course outline needs to be more specific and not so ambiguous.

405 – 406 – Organization, theory and planning and Administration, management and evaluation

- The group recognizes the importance of training in organization, administration, planning and management and recommend a course in the Department of Social Work specifically looking at social welfare administration.

412 - Family welfare

- This course is very Ghanaian in context. Issues that were considered private at one time and are now public issues should be explored in this course. Examples include domestic violence, rape, female genital mutilation, etc.

409-416 - Rehabilitation

- We recommend that international policies concerning the disabled, the teaching of developmental approaches to rehabilitation and inclusion of examples from other parts of Africa be included in this course.

Practicum

- It was very apparent that all members of the group felt this was the most important part of their training and much discussion centred on making the fieldwork more workable.
- The group recommends that the 8-week block practicum be extended.
- The fieldwork practicum needs to be revised with a gradual shift from organizational fieldwork to community fieldwork. We acknowledge that this developmental approach to fieldwork has been tried in the past in Ghana and we encourage the department to continue its efforts to organize communities whereby social work students can practice holistically in the community. One example the group read about was from South Africa and is called the community-based student's unit where a group of 4 students go into a community and work along side the community in identifying developmental needs, prioritize those needs and identify local resources in order to find solutions with the full community participation. (See attached article to recommendations)

C. **Revised Bachelors courses** – The group was encouraged by these revisions but were concerned as to when they would be implemented. We hope that these revisions will be implemented as soon as possible:

305 - Human Development

- It was felt by the group that although western theories should be taught, we would encourage lecturers to site African examples of these theories in light of traditional African thinking.

307 - Work with Older people

- Two classes on the elderly are offered, one at level 300 and one at level 400 and the group felt that one course at the bachelor's level was adequate.

308 - Working with HIV/AIDS

- This is a very important course and the group felt a global picture of HIV/AIDS in Africa and around the world was important. It needs to be global and yet specific to the Ghanaian situation.

401 - Working with groups

- This course should include use of drama, plays, art, pictures, storytelling etc. and use resource people in the community to come and show students how to do this effectively.

402 - Working with individuals

- Using a video camera to record interviewing skills would be useful for this class and as many practical exercises should be incorporated as possible.

405 - Social work and the law

- This course seems a little bit imbalanced concerning general laws and emphasising more about criminal law. Adoption laws as well as other social issue laws should be discussed. The traditional legal system should also be included as well as the alternative dispute resolution concept.

409 - Health, Illness and disability

- This course should have a strong developmental approach. It should include international examples and draw from other African countries concerning theory and practice. It should include the role of the social worker in

modern and traditional health services. The group felt it is a very broad topic and needs to be more specific.

413 - School social work

- The course should look specifically at the role of social work in the schools and not so much on education itself. This includes practical intervention strategies for the social worker in the school.

418 - Working with people in need of protection

- The topic is too broad. The group suggests that it be split into two: 1) refugee issues and 2) persons in need of protection. (See under new courses)

New courses to be offered – The following courses should be considered for future courses in social work.

- **IT and social work** – The objective of this course is to introduce students to computer use in research and in social work. Students are taught to search for articles on the Internet for their long essays, taught how to present at conferences using PowerPoint, overheads, etc., setting up websites and using the computer in the workplace.
- **Indigenous mechanisms for social change** – This course could be taught with the help of the Institute of African Studies looking at indigenous mechanisms in solving social issues including oral tradition, belief systems, drama, songs, “nhoboa” (group labour in rotation among members) system and language, etc. Ways in which social workers could work within indigenous systems including traditional health clinics, churches, witch villages, etc. should be discussed. Conflicts between traditional and modern mechanisms should be discussed using practical examples. Appropriate interventions, including adult educational techniques and examples helpful in changing negative practices should be explored. Working effectively within the traditional authority systems should be included in this course.
- **Social work and power issues in Ghana** – The objective is to look in-depth at the different ethnic groups in Ghana with outside resource people

coming to speak about their particular ethnic group. Issues of power, authority, class, ethnicity and oppression should be discussed as a major part of this class as well as indigenous approaches to empowerment and positive changes in society. Rural and urban issues should be explored in light of power issues as well as tensions between religious and cultural systems. The importance of language in culture should be explored in the light of power issues.

- **Social work and social action** – Realizing that individuals, groups and communities can change behaviour in society, this course teaches successful techniques for social action at a local, regional, national and international level. Lobbying parliament, writing letters and organizing demonstrations will be covered. How to promote the profession of social work publicly should be explored. A practical project concerning social action should be part of this course.
- **Social work values and Ghanaian society** – This course explores social work values and their relation to Ghanaian society. The universality of social work values will be explored and the course will identify social work values with particular reference to Ghana.
- **Social work and refugee issues** – This course explores the issue of refugees, externally and internally displaced, refugee policy, role of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, child soldiers, post-traumatic stress disorder, integration versus camps, etc. and could include a visit to a number of camps in Ghana.
- **Persons in need of protection in institutions** – The course should explore the major issues surrounding institutional care of persons and developmental approaches to resettlement back into the family and community.
- Many of the courses offered at the new Master's level should be offered at the Bachelor's level as well. The group felt that Work with Children and Youth, Aging and Life Cycle and Project Development and Management should be offered at a Bachelor's level.

D. Master's program - We are pleased that the Master's program has commenced and academic work has begun in September of 2003. We are also pleased that one of the group members has been accepted into the Master's program. The following are recommendations concerning the Master's program in the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana:

601 - History of Social work and NGO development

- The group was pleased that NGO development is included. However, there is no article concerning the history of social work in Ghana and it does not cover social work activities in Ghana.

602 - Human Resource development

- The general theories and principles on human resources are not covered.

603 - Strategic planning for social welfare

- The objective of the course makes no mention of social policy. The group felt the course should contain evaluations of existing social welfare programs. Example: Free medical care for the aged and children under five.

604 - Strategic planning for community development

- There is repetition between 602 and 604 in regards to strategies for empowerment at the grassroots level. The purpose of the course is to consider development in the context of Ghana Vision 20/20 document. There is no reference for the Ghana Vision 20/20 in the reading list.
- There needs to be a critical look at whom NGO's serve.

605 - Social issues in contemporary Ghana

- The group recommends that references should include many more Ghanaian authors and include concerns around Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP's) and it's effect on Ghana as a country. Also, a critique of the NEPAD document would be useful in relation to African social issues.

606 - Methods in qualitative research and evaluation

- This research course should have more of an emphasis on qualitative teaching: i.e. PAR, PRA, grounded theory, phenomenology and less quantitative methods.

607 - The African family and social transformation

- The group felt that due to the nature of the course, the lecturer should be a social worker by profession with good experience in the field. Included in this course should be the issue surrounding traditional beliefs about seeking social work professional services.

609 - Work with children and youth

- Counselling and career guidance must be included in the course objectives.

610 - Aging and life cycle

- This course should include examining the pension scheme policy and the National Health Insurance Scheme as it affects the aged in Ghana.

615 - Conflict management and resolution

- The group felt that it was very necessary that a person practicing conflict resolution in the community should be part of this course and that it should be very practical in nature.

General Comments

- The group thought that as the Master's program progresses it should offer specializations.
- There should be a social work and law at this level looking at human rights and alternative dispute resolution.
- Concerning practicum, it should be extended.

E. General recommendations for social work training and curriculum

- One of the main concerns for most of the courses is the lack of African and more specifically Ghanaian examples to back up theories and principles. All effort should be made by lecturers to give Ghanaian examples when teaching. This is particularly true in general sociology and psychology courses which tend to be more abstract and less practical.
- Many reading lists need to be improved, up-dated and more African in content. There is a distinct lack of Ghanaian writers in many of the reference lists and all effort should be made to use Ghanaian literature and articles

when appropriate. This includes articles and writings from writers from other departments and in the community.

- Course outlines should be consistent from year to year and should be updated and more specific in nature. Some of the course outlines were from 1994-96 when VSO volunteers were teaching. We agreed it was fine to use these course outlines but the lecturer needs to adapt them to their present teaching situation. People who don't even teach here presently developed some of the course outlines.
- It was felt that generally the university does not encourage students to challenge the status quo. However, growth and development occur effectively out of an environment that encourages the questioning of present policies and practices. The group felt that the teaching methods needed to be more practical and not just a lecture style. A participatory approach to learning creates an environment for creative thinkers and visionaries. The use of drama, art, oral tradition, group projects, role-play, practical activities and resources persons from the community should be used regularly in Diploma, Bachelors and Masters courses. More contact with the community should be incorporated in the course objectives.
- Concerning the above, if lecturers are not familiar with these types of teaching methods, then a training course should be given to all lecturers, part-time and full-time, to teach them participatory ways of learning.
- Genders issues should be included and discussed in each course offered. This includes the effect of social issues on the lives of both men and women.
- The state of the library and appropriate books for learning is of concern to the group. Only 1% of the books, if that many, are indigenous to Africa, let alone Ghana. There needs to be an increase of indigenous books put in the library, including important books from other departments concerning social issues, traditional practices, education, etc. Long essays should be available to all students and all Master's students should be required to try and publish one article during the course of their study in a journal. These articles, plus

all other articles written by lecturers and people in the field should be collected by the department and stored in the library for student's use.

- We recommend that a Ghanaian social work textbook be written as soon as funds are available using Ghanaian writers experienced in social work practice.
- The department needs to back up the course outlines with appropriate equipment. Videos were to be shown in a number of courses but there is no T.V. or video player in the department. With the new technology, a laptop computer and projector should be available for PowerPoint presentations. A video camera would be an asset when teaching interviewing skills so that people can watch themselves interview and learn from their experience.
- All courses should have an international element to their content. Students should be encouraged to look at other African countries and non-western countries to see how they are dealing with social issues.
- Learning never ceases and the Department should provide, in cooperation with the Centre for Social Policy Studies, training sessions for former student's of the program.
- The indigenisation of lecturers should continue. The group suggests that when hiring lecturers, due consideration should be given to offering an orientation to social work in Ghana as part of the indigenisation process.
- There was a general agreement that many outside courses were too abstract and that the lecturers did not relate issues to social work issues. Practical examples were not given and lectures remained solely on a theoretical and abstract level. We recommend that either some of these courses eventually be offered in the Department of Social Work. If this is not possible then lecturers in other departments asked to teach social work students should be made aware of what social worker's do in Ghanaian society.
- There should be selection criteria for students going from Level 200-300 and this should be made public. Interviews should be completed so that a just and fair approach to selecting students is adhered to.

- The group found the supervision of both the 8-week fieldwork and the concurrent fieldwork inadequate and recommend one of the staff to be in charge of this area of training. This role includes organizing supervisor's training, continual expansion of fieldwork agencies and providing adequate supervision for students during their fieldwork.
- The group would like to recommend that the department continue the expansion of sponsorships for students who are interested in training for social work at the Bachelor's and Master's level. Concerning sponsorship for the Master's program, preference should be given to graduates of the social work program at Legon.
- There should be an opportunity for a combined degree and the group would recommend this as a positive development in social work training.
- The School of Social Work (formerly School of Social Welfare) had, since 1955, been linked/affiliated to the University of Ghana's Social Administration Unit, now the Department of Social Work. Indeed, the Social Administration programme was instituted by the then Director of Social Welfare for the graduates of the School of Social Work and later moved to the University of Ghana. The group would like to see this link strengthened and greater collaboration created between these two organizations.
- Exchange programs, including the exchange of writing materials and student fieldwork experience, should be encouraged with other Schools of Social Work in Africa. Although some lecturers and professors are in touch with other social work programs this should be made available and encouraged at the student level.
- The group recommends that a Ghana Professional Social Workers Association be formed through the Department of Social Work with an office on campus and whose membership are graduates from the department. This association would be an affiliate of the Ghana Association of Social Workers.

- The group recommends the continual evaluation of social work courses in order to keep training up-to-date and relevant to the changing society in Ghana.
- We recommend the introduction of a PhD program once the Master's program is up and running smoothly.

4. Conclusions

The above reflections and recommendations are offered to the Department of Social Work with the hope that they will be useful in the continuation of revising social work training. They are not meant to be critical of any particular lecturer or course but have been developed out of a variety of knowledge gathering techniques including the personal experiences of group members. The questions that need to be asked when evaluating any curriculum are the following: "Does the present social work curriculum include and fit into the psychological, spiritual, economic, social, political and environmental issues in Ghanaian society?" Is the curriculum holistic in nature? Does it emphasize African indigenous knowledge? Does it explore the continent's different social welfare experiences and international policies? Is it up-to-date with current African and Ghanaian issues? Are the courses local in context and examples?

The social work profession is and will increasingly become more important in Ghanaian society. One of our guest speakers challenged us to be pioneers of change. We need to continually provide and test out new models of intervention so that people are offered different alternatives for change. Their creative minds need to be developed in such a way that their horizons are expanded and they can hope for change in their lifestyle and economic situation. There is much to be done and the new revised curriculum offers a good chance to change the profession of social work from being on the periphery to being an important part of Ghanaian society.

5. Research Group Members

Nana Boatema Afrakoma II – Queen Mother of Juansa and Proprietress of Siriboe Memorial School

Dzabuni Dah George - Department of Social Welfare and current student at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana

Aburkari Ziblim – Opportunities Industrialization Centres, Tamale

Salima Iddrisu Imoro – Department of Community Development, Accra

Patience Antonio – Freedom from Hunger, Ghana, Dzorwulu, Accra

Kwaku Akuoko Afram – National service, Department of Social Work, University of Ghana

Jones Adu-Gyamfi – National service, Department of Social Work, University of Ghana

Joanna Mensah – Principal of the School of Social Work, Department of Social Welfare, Osu, Accra

Comfort Sackey – Department of Social Welfare and current student at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana

Linda Kreitzer – Facilitator of the group, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada

Appendix B

Maiden Meeting of Professional Social Workers

November 1, 2003

2-4:30 pm

Department of Social Work

University of Ghana

Legon

Attendance:

People acknowledged: Mr. John Amenlemah, Dr. Ayidiya, Madame Joanna Mensah, Daniel Asiedu, Mr. Joshua N. Arthur

Chairperson: Mr. P.K. Abrefa

Introduction to chairperson by George Dah Dzubuni

Purpose of Meeting:

To brainstorm about how social workers from all organizations feel about formulating a professional association of social workers.

Vision and objectives of a professional association by chairperson:

- There has been little change in the image of social work and the Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW) for many years.
- Social work in Ghana does not have a voice. It is not a forceful profession that is influencing social policy. In fact the term “social welfare” has been dropped from the Ministries. This has brought about the demise of the department.
- Pay and working conditions are not good and no one is advocating concerning these conditions.
- What is killing the GASOW is its association with the civil service. We need to have a neutral association that stands apart from the Department of Social Welfare.
- Three to four years ago Mr. Abrefa had a burden about an association that was a mouthpiece for social work issues in Ghana. In November 2002 a research group was formed to look at the social work curriculum at the Department of Social Work. In October 2003 their recommendations were distributed and one of the recommendations was the need to buttress a new association to champion social work practice in Ghana. Mr. Abrefa prompted a dialogue with this research group concerning the feasibility of establishing a new association. As a result, a maiden meeting was convened with the support of Mr. Abrefa and the research group.
- It was felt by Mr. Abrefa and the research group that a professional social work association could be established with different aims, objectives and vision than that of GASOW. The objective is not to demise GASOW but to work alongside GASOW in order to have an effective voice in Ghana concerning social work issues.

- The new professional association would have an academic slant with an emphasis on research, intellectual improvement, ongoing evaluation of social work curriculum and promote the well-being of its members.
- The new association would have the freedom to confront and talk about social issues in Ghana without fear of reprimand.
- It was proposed that a minimum qualification for membership would be a bachelor's degree in social work or a related field of study.

Contributions from the floor

- There was concern that people holding a diploma degree or are students cannot join the association. The response was that this minimum requirement would encourage people to gain a higher degree thus establishing themselves in the international community. However, it was also suggested that the diploma and students could be affiliates with the association until they gained the bachelor's degree. If this is to be the case, then the affiliates should have a say in how the association is run.
- There is a realization that there is an absence of a strong social work association. Therefore it was suggested that an additional side to the association be formed that emphasizes research and one that offers a voice to social issues in Ghana.
- The group instigating the meeting today has not come up with a constitution for the moment and it was suggested that a committee be formed that will produce a constitution so that everyone can review it.
- There needs to be a public agency group that is the mouthpiece for the profession and who speaks for the profession.
- You need both public and private agencies influencing government and the government needs to recognize this influence and this can only be done through a professional public agency.
- If a new association is formed it was suggested that the name be changed to something that reflects social welfare, community development and non-government organizations (NGO's). One suggestion was the term 'Social Development'.
- The professional association needs to be a neutral body that is not associated with the civil service.
- The general secretary of GASOW voiced his concern about the meeting and attempted to capture some of the misconceptions of GASOW that he heard in the meeting. He became emotionally involved by threatening the formation of the association. However, he did recognize that this is a democratic society and that people can have choices as to their professional affiliation. He was also concerned about how the meeting was set up and social welfare lists used to contact people about the meeting. He pointed out that GASOW executive was from different agencies and not just social welfare. GASOW has been registered since 1985 as a profession and it was acknowledged of the good work it has done in the past.
- The three main problems confronting GASOW at the moment are 1) lack of leadership, 2) apathy and 3) lack of money. If a new association were formed today they would have the same problems.

- This maiden meeting has not been a secret event. It has been open and transparent from the very beginning and that is the reason many social workers from all sectors of society were invited. In fact 250 letters were sent out and approximately one-third went to social welfare, one-third to community development and one-third to over 30 NGO's.
- It was suggested that the organizers of this meeting meet with GASOW and dialogue together about issues raised at this meeting.
- It was suggested that GASOW be strengthened and the new association be formed to support each other in their different association objectives.

Conclusion – After more voices were heard from the participants the following conclusions were suggested by the chairperson.

- There is a need for a strong association for social workers
- Concerning the new association, the issue of membership needs to be discussed further.
- A new name needs to be created that embraces everyone.
- Forming a new association is not an attempt to sabotage GASOW. GASOW has many problems and one of the issues is how to strengthen this association.
- Some of the problems of GASOW are lack of leadership, apathy and finances.

Three points to ponder

- Should GASOW be strengthened or revitalized taking into account some of the problems they face as an association? If so, how?
- Should a new association be formed and if so what should it be named?
- Should this new association be affiliated with GASOW or be independent from GASOW?

It was agreed that everyone would go away and think about the issues raised in today's meeting and another meeting will be organized in due course.

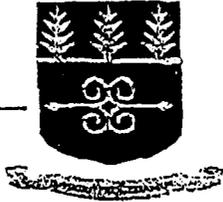
The chairperson closed the meeting at 4:30pm and he thanked everyone for coming and participating in this discussion.

Recorders

George Dah Duzbuni

Linda Kreitzer

Nov. 1, 2003



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

P. O. Box LG 65, LEGON-GHANA Tel:233-21-513051/500300 Ext: 3289
Fax: 233-21-513052 E-mail:socialw@ug.edu.gh

Our Ref No.....

Fax To: 001 403 282 7269
Attention: Linda Kreitzer

March 27/02

International Development Research Centre
P.O. Box 8500
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1G 3HP

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the Department of Social Work University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana, I write to confirm our support for and affiliation with Ms. Linda Kreitzer and her research project.

Ms. Kreitzer was with our Department from 1994-1996 as a teacher and knows the history and development of this Department. We welcome her coming back to Ghana and the University of Ghana as a researcher.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nana Apte'.

Nana Apte, MSW, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology &
Head, Department of Social Work

Department of Social Work
Legon, Ghana

Appendix D

(Social Worker's name)
Department of Social Welfare
Accra,
Ghana

December 10, 2002

Dear

My name is Linda Kreitzer and I am a PhD student at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada. I taught social work classes at the Social Work Unit at the University of Ghana from 1994-1996. Through this experience I have returned to Ghana to examine the issues concerning social work curriculum in non-western countries.

In particular, I wish to look, with interested Ghanaians, at the exportation of western social work knowledge through the historical processes of colonialism, modernization and globalization, as they affect African social work education. This study will exam the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana and their social work curriculum and its westernization/indigenisation process over the years that a program has existed at the University of Ghana. It will also look at the relevance of the curriculum to the social needs of Ghana in this increasingly global world.

I am writing to ask if you would be interested in being involved in this research project. The expectations of each project member would be the following: You

1. Have been a student in the social work program at the University of Ghana;
2. Have an interest in social work curriculum at the University of Ghana;
3. Have a willingness to spend time reflecting on the development of social work curriculum and how it relates to the needs of Ghana including keeping a journal;
4. Have an openness to looking at all forms of knowledge including traditional Ghanaian knowledge, music, art, drama etc., and its relevance to social work curriculum;
5. Have a commitment over the next ten months (the days will be decided by the group) to meet as a group.

The research method is Participatory Action Research. It is based on dialogue and consensus with the understanding that each group member is regarded as equal during the group meetings. It is hoped that the members will represent a wide range of experience including practicing social workers, students, faculty members, a traditional leader and recipients of social welfare.

Once a group has been identified, a workshop explaining the project will be organized (by the end of January) and interested people can decide if they want to be involved in the project on an ongoing basis. Travel expenses will be reimbursed and a meal plus tea and coffee will be provided on the day of the group session. Any other expenses incurred for the research project will be reimbursed on production of a receipt.

If you are interested in this research project please contact me on my E-mail address at lmkreitz@ucalgary.ca or phone me on 024-763727. You can leave a message for me at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana, P.O. Box 65, Legon, Ghana. Please give a one-page summary of your background, educational experience and work experience. This can be E-mailed to me or taken to the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana. Please give it to Edith to keep for me.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Linda Kreitzer

This research project is supported by the following:
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
International Development Research Centre of Canada
University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work
University of Ghana, Department of Social Work

Appendix E

Oral Consent

Research Project Title: Globalization versus Indigenization: Power issues in social work knowledge

Outside researcher: Linda Kreitzer

Sponsor: University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada
 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
 International Development Research Council (IDRC)

The following information concerns the research project and issues concerning your participation in this project. It will give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. After reviewing the following issues each of you will be asked to give oral consent to this research project.

Introduction and purpose of research

My name is Linda Kreitzer and I am a PhD student at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada. I taught social work classes for two years in Ghana, from 1994-1996, at the Social Work Unit at the University of Ghana. It is through this experience that I am interested in looking at issues concerning social work curriculum in non-western countries.

The purpose of this study is to examine the exportation of western social work knowledge through colonialism, modernization and globalization as they affect African social work education. The study will look at the Department of Social Work's social work curriculum and its westernization/indigenization process over the years that a program has existed at the University of Ghana. It will look at the relevance of the curriculum to the social needs of Ghana. It is hoped that this type of study will be useful to the continual development of this social work program.

Research Project

The main expectation of the participants is an interest in social work curriculum at the University of Ghana and a willingness to spend time in reflecting on the development of social work curriculum and how it relates to the needs of Ghana.

The research methodology is Participatory Action Research. You will be part of a group involved in ongoing dialogue and knowledge generation concerning the above topic. I will facilitate the group, and each group member will be considered of equal importance within the research group. Dialogue between group members and consensus approach to problem solving will be the way in which the group operates.

The length of time for this research project is one year. It is acknowledged that family commitments, health issues, holidays and unforeseen circumstances may prevent attendance on some occasions. The group will decide the time it will meet but 1-2 times a month may be appropriate. Each group member is free to withdraw from the study at anytime.

The research participant is asked to engage in dialogue, on a regular basis, with other group members concerning the above topic, keep a personal journal of thoughts/reflections and gather certain types of information during this research project. Interviews and observation of classes may be part of knowledge generating techniques.

Tape recording and transcripts

All oral and written work during the group sessions will be recorded and transcribed on the facilitator's computer. Other forms of knowledge generation described above will also be transcribed and recorded and brought back to the group for reflection and further dialogue. No other persons will have access to this information during the research project. If at any time, you wish not to have your views recorded, then you may ask that the recorder be turned off while you speak.

Confidentiality

The group will decide on the degree of confidentiality that is appropriate to this type of research. Friends, colleagues and University staff will know your participation in the group due to the nature of the knowledge generation needed for this project. Dialogue and analysis during the group meeting will remain within the group meeting and not discussed outside the group. The tapes, all written work and disks will be kept in a locked room, either in the facilitator's room or in a room at the University of Ghana. All identifying information will remain with the facilitator. All transcripts, disks and written work will be destroyed within three years of the completion of this research project.

Risks and Benefits

This type of research does include a degree of self-analysis and may cause participants to challenge their own beliefs and assumptions. This may cause discomfort at times and team members are encouraged to discuss this discomfort in a way that they feel appropriate. The research group may be the appropriate place to discuss any discomfort and the facilitator is also trained in counselling people and will be available for counselling. All effort will be made to provide the best possible support if this is needed.

The benefits of this type of research is that local people will have a chance to examine the social work curriculum in relation to Ghana and be involved in a participatory research project in which their views and thoughts are validated and acknowledged.

Compensation

Funds will be available to cover costs of food and transportation with additional compensation during the research project.

Right to withdraw

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

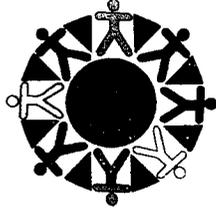
Linda Kreitzer lmkreitzer@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Maureen Wilson University of Calgary 403-220-7308
mwilson@ucalgary.ca

If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may also contact the Research Services Offices at 403-220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.

Linda Kreitzer
University of Calgary
University of Ghana

University Of Calgary
Faculty of Social Work



University Of Ghana
Department of Social Work



CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This is to Certify that

Linda Kreitzer

Has Fully Participated In Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Legon - Ghana

" Social Work in Ghana; Education And Practice"

Ms. Linda Kreitzer MSW
Group Facilitator

February - October , 2003