

BRIEF COMMUNICATION

**BRIEF LIFE HISTORY AND VIEWS OF TED
ROGERS, FOUNDER OF SOCIAL WORK
EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE**

Chogugudza, Chris.

ABSTRACT

This brief communication shares notes from a 2012 meeting of Zimbabwean social workers in the United Kingdom with Ted Rogers, founder of social work education in Zimbabwe. It gives a brief of his work whilst he was still in Zimbabwe and shares his thinking about the current state of affairs in social work education in Zimbabwe.

KEY TERMS: Father Ted Rogers, social work education, Zimbabwe.

Contacts: crisford02@yahoo.co.uk

INTRODUCTION AND EARLY WORK IN ZIMBABWE

Father Rogers now (87) is recovering from lung and heart problems at the Corpus Christi Jesuit Community in Bournemouth, Dorset, UK where he is currently based.

For the benefit of those who do not know Father Rogers, he was the founder of social work education in Zimbabwe. Father Rogers started the School of Social Work in 1964 and became its first principal from 1964 up to 1985. Father Rogers' first assignment in Zimbabwe was in 1960, when upon arrival from the UK he took up post as a teacher at Musami Mission, Mashonaland East where he stayed for 2 years. He left Musami Mission to start the St Peter's Community Secondary School in 1963 in Harare township, now Mbare (Harare was then called Salisbury). Fr Rogers had been commissioned to look into ways of tackling social problems which were building up in the high density suburbs of the capital city. He soon identified a major problem in that many youngsters had nothing else to do but cause trouble.

SETTING UP ST PETERS SCHOOL IN MBARE

There were town kids who had finished their primary education, but had no jobs. There was only one government secondary school for blacks in Salisbury but 14 for whites. He was able to secure the voluntary services of 20 local teachers from mainly white schools and St Peter's Community School was born, taking 80 students from

out of 250 applicants for a two year course leading to the External Junior Certificate. Former Education Minister Fay Chung was one of the voluntary teachers at St Peter's Community School in Mbare.

SETTING UP THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Having successfully set up St Peter's Community, Father Rogers then embarked on setting up the School of Social Service, now called School of Social Work, a fully-fledged degree awarding department of the University of Zimbabwe. The School of Social Services was set up in the old Morgan High School in 1964. The School was open to students of all races and its population had grown and the earlier volunteers had been replaced by local teachers.

Father Rogers stated that the need to train higher level manpower became apparent, and culminated in the introduction of a Bachelor of Social Work degree offered jointly by the School of Social Work and the then University of Rhodesia in 1975. The full range of programmes offered included the Certificate in Social Work, the Diploma in Social Work, the Bachelor of Social Work (General), the Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) and the Master of Social Work.

TRIBUTE TO SOME PEOPLE HE WORKED WITH

Father Rogers paid tribute to the following who contributed significantly towards the establishment of the development of social work education in Zimbabwe in their different ways: Dr Hugh Ashton then Bulawayo City Council Director of Housing, Dr Eric

Gargett, the Head of Social Services at Bulawayo City Council, Don Passmore, Des Roberts, Avis Clifford from Salisbury Municipality and officials from the Rhodesia Railways and Eileen Thomson from the Council of Social Service. Professor J Clyde Mitchell from the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (UCRN) helped considerably and later, on the academic side there was assistance from university lecturers, especially Professor Desmond Reader, and former and present staff of the Oppenheimer School in Zambia such as Bill Clifford, Mike Hough, and Fr. Stan Quinn, SJ. Father Rogers was conferred with an honorary Doctorate from the University of Zimbabwe for services to the University and the local community in 2002 but rarely uses the revered title.

COMMENTS ON CURRENT SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE

Questioned on the current situation concerning social work training in Zimbabwe, Father Rogers said he was saddened to learn about the huge numbers of students being admitted into the School these days, and to the two new universities starting social work courses. He said the numbers are just too many and this will inevitably affect quality. He thinks there are not enough resources to allow for good quality fieldwork supervision of students. He argued that we need to have supervisors and the necessary type of agencies which are able to offer excellent supervision of students on field work. There should also be about a third of students' time spent on field work and managing this number from the huge intakes you say of 60 to 70 students per class is difficult.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN ZIMBABWE

On his greatest achievements in Zimbabwe, he indicated that these include the setting up of setting up of St Peter's Community School in Mbare (now St. Peter's Kubatana in Highfield), and the School of Social Work in Harare and contributing to the inception and continuation of social work education and training in Zimbabwe. He is also happy to have helped set up a number of voluntary organisations in Zimbabwe such as Shelter Trust, SASCAM, CCJP, CSSD, Help the Aged, and Aids Counselling Trust among others. He derives some comfort from the fact that the organisations he helped to set up including the School of Social Work are still operating and benefiting lots of people in Zimbabwe in different ways. At the people's request, he is now publishing his memoirs and he hopes to make the book available to those who would like to read it.

ADVICE TO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS

Asked to give advice to social work educators and other stakeholders in Zimbabwe, he said that providers of social work education and training should be people with the relevant social work education and experience in social work. He said,

“My experience is that having people with relevant qualifications steering social work has no suitable substitute. I had a London certificate in education, degrees in Philosophy and Theology when I became involved in setting up social work in Zimbabwe. However,

having realised my short comings I decided to go back to school where I earned an MSc in Social Administration at Cardiff University in 1970/71 and returned back to my social work project with relevant education which helped me understand the field of social work better.”

PARTING NOTE

Father Rogers said that there should be a 50 year Jubilee celebration of the foundation of St. Peter’s Kubatana next year (2013) and of the School of Social Work in 2014. God willing, he would like to attend these activities and he hopes his doctors will allow him to fly to Zimbabwe to witness these joyous and auspicious occasions.

REFERENCES

Chogugudza, C.; 2012. UK based Social Workers pay tribute to the Founder of Social Work Education in Zimbabwe. Unpublished document.

Rodgers, T.; 2012. Interview with Chris Chogugudza.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer acknowledges the effort by Jacob Mugumbate in soliciting and preparing this journal communication from the original report.