

## Title

# The origins of social and economic development in Zimbabwe — Lessons for social work education and training

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## Abstract

The article examines social and economic development in pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe. Before present day Zimbabwe, the economic development of the Mutapa, Torwa, Rozvi and Ndebele States was based on cattle wealth and farming with significant gold mining as methods of fostering social economic development. They traded internally and externally. They exported gold, ivory, and copper for luxury goods and war goods. These precolonial states had their social structures bound by Ubuntu philosophy. The paper argues that social workers should be given the opportunity to appreciate the genesis of socio-economic development within social, economic and political structures. The article uses literature review methodology to explore and analyse origins of socio-economic development in pre and post-colonial Zimbabwe. The literature includes peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters. The study recommends integration of more economic development in social work curricula and that policy makers should have an understanding of social work roles in socio-economic development.

## Key words

development, social development, economic development, postcolonial, social work, Zimbabwe

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## Introduction

To appreciate the case for a social economic (also presented in this paper as socio-economic or social and economic) development in Zimbabwe, it is necessary to understand this within the context of the country's pre- and post-colonial history. Soon after independence from colonisation in 1980, Zimbabwe achieved impressive results in social, economic and sustainable development. These positive trends in food security, health and education delivery were soon to disappear in the 90s. Zimbabwe faced a significant crisis of social development whose roots is multifaceted but can be traced to pre-colonial times, the process of decolonisation, the economic liberalisation program and economic mismanagement on the part of government. Beginning in the late 1990s the country experienced an economic decline that has eroded livelihood capacities of both the urban and the rural population, the worsening conditions of poverty, a land return and reform program and the general decline in the economy. This trend led to the need to study and understand the concept of social economic development in Zimbabwe. The article will focus on examining the origin of social economic development in pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe and show how it was integrated in social work education.

## Background

Moyo (2007) avers that in pre-independence Zimbabwe, indigenous populations were relying on kinship ties for support since state welfare provisions were discriminatory in nature. The first move to provide state social welfare services in Zimbabwe, then Southern Rhodesia, was in 1936 when the Probation and School Attendance officer position was introduced. The first probation officer was recruited from Britain due to lack of trained personnel in Zimbabwe. This was followed by the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare in 1948. The education of social work is considered in Zimbabwe as heavily influenced by colonialism in its formation. This was targeted at addressing the problems within the white community and to deal with social ills such as unemployment, overcrowding, destitution, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, social disintegration and family breakdown among black community members. According to Kaseke (2001) the term social development emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with a 'modernist' developmental model that puts undue emphasis on economic growth at the neglect of social factors.

Kanyenze et al (2011) noted that, at independence in 1980, the new nationalist government, intent on establishing an egalitarian society, embarked on a largely interventionist development strategy, which led to increased expenditure on health, education and other social welfare programs. The economic policy framework was shaped by the need to achieve both economic growth and equity. Two years after independence witnessed an economic boom, data from the Central Statistics Office (1983) suggested that Gross Domestic product (GDP) grew at phenomenal rate of 11% in 1980 and 1981 respectively, gross investment in capital stock

as a percentage of GDP grew from 13, 7% in 1979 to 14,8 percent in 1980 and 15,5 per in 1981 capacities utilization following the trend rising for 76% in 1979 to 83 percent in 1980 and 95% in 1981.

Mupedziswa and Ushumba (2006) articulates that social work was introduced initially for the benefit of the white settler community therefore the advent of independence in Zimbabwe brought in a new era resulting in the re-examining of the social work education curriculum and training to make it responsive to needs of majority. Therefore, at this juncture it is important to note that re-examining of social work education and training was targeted at addressing the problems within the white community and to deal with social ills such as unemployment, overcrowding, destitution, juvenile delinquency and prostitution. Mupedziswa and Ushumba (2006) noted that the profession of social work became more organised after independence, with the coming in of the new government, it was committed to redressing imbalances of the past and social services were viewed as an effective instrument to redistribute wealth (Kaseke, 1991).

Considerable investment was made in the social work profession. The Zimbabwean government embarked on economic recovery programmes resulting in investing sectors like health, education and social services with little help from donors (Sichone, 2003). Social workers had support staff including social welfare assistants, clerks and office orderly and could afford to make several home visits to clients (Mupedziswa and Ushumba, 2006). During this period, social work education was developed modules like casework, group work, community work, social administration, socio-economic development and public health, sociology, psychology as well as further courses in health and ethics taught at the school of social work to reach everyone problems to the most vulnerable groups in rural areas.

## Theoretical framework

### Ubuntu philosophy

Ubuntu philosophy encourages justice, communityness, integrity and equity. This philosophy shaped the policy of community participation, equity and land justice in post-independence Zimbabwe. The origins of social economic development in pre-colonial Zimbabwe were backed by *Zunde raMambo* term, according to Mararike (1999), implies a large gathering of people taking part in a common activity. Members of the community would take turns to participate in the farming process, for example, preparing the land, sowing, weeding and harvesting. Harvesting was done by both men and women. The activities done at the *Zunde raMambo* were the same as *nhimbe* or traditional weeding field ceremonies. Mararike (1999) states that the *Zunde raMambo* also played important religious, economic, and social functions. Members of the society would take turns to participate in planting and harvesting of crops. Harvesting was normally done by both men and women. *Zunde raMambo* was an expression of oneness, belonging, reinforced collaboration,

solidarity, relationships and loyalty to the king (Mararike, 1999).

The idea of *Zunde raMambo* resonates well with the Ubuntu philosophy which emphasizes humanness, respect, solidarity and hospitable spirits within the African communities (Mbigi, 2000). When undertaking the *Zunde raMambo* activities, it was also regarded as a training opportunity for the young boys and girls to work for themselves. It was development, educative and empowerment model. During the time of plenty, the grain would be used to take care of the disadvantages and when it is low the poor will benefit as well. It was a traditional practice associated with the feeding capacity of the Shona kings/chiefs *Zunde raMambo* as a traditional coping strategy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Mararike, 1999). Therefore it is important to note that social work education and training has adopted the developmental approach entailed social workers education and training to fight dependency social injustice protecting the less privileged and disadvantaged as the deal with problems of unemployment, mass poverty, poor housing, high population growth and malnutrition on their own a sign of being proactive and geared. The education and training of social work in Zimbabwe has since been geared towards the developmental approach in trying to meet the needs of locals. This was meant to facilitate the requirements of the developmental approach which discourages dependency and promotes active and productive involvement of clients in their own development (Mhiribidi 2010) therefore at this juncture it is important to note that this shows the integration of social work education and training.

Kanyenze et al (2011) avers that to the period, 1991–1996 when it became clear that the economy was not generating sufficient jobs, especially in the context of depressed investment, government adopted a market led reform programme, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), in 1991 on the recommendation of the World Bank and the IMF. ESAP marked a paradigm shift from the state-led economic development of the 1980s to a more market-driven development strategy. Dominelli (1997:35) postulates that social workers education and training reinterpreted their professionalism - away from the detached bureaucrat or technician into the well-informed activist who cares about and for others, the poor and marginalised groups have been specifically targeted with a view to enhancing their productive capacity. According to Mupedziswa, (1998) avers that due to effects of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme noticed here has been a shift in social work training in Zimbabwe trying to place more emphasis on social development approaches which also place greater significance on macro intervention to reach the individual or group (Kaseke, 2001). In Zimbabwe changes have been noticed in curriculums which tend to focus on land reform and rural development focusing on developmental theories.

A number of reasons have been put forward in support of the developmental approach to the social work profession as opposed to the remedial approach. The most compelling one was the general lack of resources. The developmental

approach has proved to be suited to social work education and training in Zimbabwe.

According to Kanyenze et al (2011), the economy began to show symptoms of over-heating in 1997, with the rate of inflation rising. Kaseke (1991) avers that they were problems such as unemployment, overcrowding, destitution, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, social disintegration and family breakdown among community. According to Mupedziswa (1998), the advent of Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome pandemic was another scourge that perpetuated the trampling of Zimbabwe as many children were left orphans and in the care of not their biological family, child labour and child abuse was rampant during this colonial period in Zimbabwe children were employed in factories where they were treated with viciousness and extreme brutality.

According to Kaseke (2014), the economic challenges which were encountered in the country from 2000-2008 most social problems like crime and prostitution rose as a result of stress due to the economic situation in the country. Inflation took its toll, and the Zimbabwean Dollar became utterly useless. This led to massive brain drain and a lot of skilled Zimbabweans left the country for South Africa, Australia, Zambia, United States of America, the United Kingdom and several European countries. Mhiribidi (2010) found out that the Zimbabwean economy shriveled by over 40% between 2000 and 2008, inflation speeding 2009, soon after the formation of the inclusive government, Zimbabwe's economy was dollarized, and inflation reduced to minimum levels.

The social situation in the country began to change and poverty was reduced. This continued up until 2013 when the inclusive government was dissolved. Unemployment remained high but various socio-economic problems were degenerating. With the adoption of the multi-currency system in the country, things changed significantly. However, there remain budgetary constraints, and a large part of the population is living in poverty with the majority of graduates resorting to vending or hawking. With the existence of all the various social problems in the country, there is need for social workers to address social decadence and dissonance and bring about social functioning and social order and stability as this will continually make Zimbabwe underdeveloped thus affecting the livelihoods of ordinary Zimbabweans. Social workers education and training geared on developmental approach rather than remedial approach discover social workers have been dealing with symptoms rather than the root causes of the problems.

This realisation has made Mhiribidi (2010) to conclude that the residual model of social work is a 'deficient vehicle, not only to change the material welfare of people, but to address the larger issues of social development this led to the shift of social work education and training to developmental approach recognise that the construction of dams for irrigation purposes is a long-term goal and those employed by non-governmental organisations are mobilising rural communities to set up income-generating projects in order to

supplement incomes derived from agriculture. This makes an important contribution in reducing the problems of unemployment and under employment in rural areas. An important activity undertaken by community workers is that of assisting individuals, groups or communities to prepare project proposals and undertake feasibility studies for their intended projects.

## Methodology

The article used literature review methodology to explore and analyse origins of socio-economic development in pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe. The table below shows names of authors, source and conclusions derived from the literature reviewed.

**Table 1: Literature reviewed**

Title and Author	Source (Data Base, Journal article library or internet website)	Conclusions
Social work practice in Zimbabwe. Kaseke, E., (1991).	<i>Journal of Social Development in Africa.</i>	During the pre- and post-colonial era in Zimbabwe there has been a shift towards developmental social work mainly aimed at promoting human and social development. The post-colonial era in Zimbabwe was marked by the genesis of non-governmental organisations mainly aimed at mainstreaming grassroot communities in socio-economic development.
Murisa, T., (2010). Social development in Zimbabwe.	<i>Development Foundation of Zimbabwe</i>	Zimbabwe had by 1990 achieved impressive results in the area of primary health and education for all and had become the envy of many other post-colonial states, in the area of food security, the country had been assigned the responsibility of ensuring that there are enough food stocks within the sub-region by the SADC hence the term the 'breadbasket' of the region.
Tramped no more: <i>Voices from Bulawayo's Townships about Families, Life, Survival and Social Change in Zimbabwe.</i> Moyo (2007)	University Press of America	The emergence of social development during pre- and post-colonial era led to the reconceptualization of social work education and training.
" <i>Social Work Education, Training in Africa: The case of Zimbabwe</i> ",	<i>A Journal of African Studies</i>	The major strength of colonial social work education was that it enhanced social work

Chogugudza, C. (2009),		students with knowledge on social and economic development.
<i>The Social Work profession in Zimbabwe: a critical approach on the position of social work in Zimbabwe's Development.</i> Kurevakwesu W. (2017)	<i>Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences</i>	The form of social work being used in Zimbabwe was adopted from the West in the 1960's and it has a remedial stance. This makes it irrelevant and in the political, economic and social environment in the country.
Making sense of African thought in social work practice in Zimbabwe Towards professional decolonization Mabvurira V. 2018	<i>International Social Work</i>	Despite the political independence of most African countries, the profession has remained stuck in Western methods, values, principles and standards.
<i>The quest for relevance: towards a conceptual model of developmental social work education and training in Africa.</i> Mupedziswa 2001	International Social Work	The vision of an emerging developmental orientation across the theory and practice curriculum appears to be coming to fruition despite numerous challenges.
Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa: Turning over a New Leaf Ndlovu-Gatsheni S.J (2020)	Routledge	African scholarship is deliberately marginalized in the so-called global economy of knowledge and African scholars are reduced to hunter-gatherers and native informants for theorists in the global north.

## Findings

### The concept of social and economic development in social work education

Findings from the study show that, the social work curriculum provides an opportunity for students to understand the concept of social and economic development. Data collected shows that there is an interlink between welfare and economic development which are major indicators for the developmental approach in social work education. Some of the activities that were the backbone of the economy in the pre-colonial times still hold the livelihood of Zimbabweans to this day. Taking for instance, agriculture, mining, and trade. These activities transcend to this day even now they are being done in a much-developed way. One can strongly find some remarkable benchmarks of social economic development from these pre-colonial times. However, the precolonial states were less civilized as compared to western states and that lead the colonial leaders to take advantage of Zimbabwean states. The colonial governments brought modernization and civilization to Zimbabwe, but this disturbed the African way of social development. The colonial era created human problems that



needed social work intervention. In the post-colonial era, social work had to adopt the developmental model so as to suit the situation of the developmental needs in the post-colonial period to the present day.

### **Intervention strategies in social work curriculum**

The idea was to enable the white settler community to enjoy the same services enjoyed by their kith and kin in Britain. However, when social work services were introduced to the indigenous population, they were inferior and only served to perpetuate their marginalization. The intervention strategies were mainly directed at the urban population at the neglect of the rural population causing deliberate neglect of the rural population on the assumption that their needs were simple and easily satisfied within the traditional structures (Kaseke, 1991). The intervention strategies were remedial in orientation and only offered palliative measures. The intervention strategies assumed that social problems were caused by the failure of individuals to adjust to their environments, particularly within the context of rural-urban migration. It was believed that new migrants in the urban areas had problems of adjusting to their new environment.

### **Remedial social work vs developmental social work in education**

This drove to the realisation that social work education has also not sufficiently prepared social workers for social economic development roles. There has been too much emphasis in the past on preparing students for remedial social work (Kaseke, 1991). However, the curriculum at the School of Social Work in Harare was then informed by the social development model. The same was done to other institutions that followed to offer social work education to this day in Zimbabwe. The curriculum provides an opportunity for students to understand the concept of social economic development, its objectives and how these can be realised. It also enables students to make a critical analysis of traditional social work practice models. The curriculum now focuses on social economic development, rural development and project planning and management. With this, there is hope that social workers can bring social economic development to another levels in Zimbabwe at local and national levels.

Despite the efforts made to bring social economic development in Zimbabwe, the economic meltdown increased in intensity since 1990s, associated with the shrinking of industrial activity, through the closure of many manufacturing concerns and downsizing of some, and consequent high unemployment rates. The economic decline in turn affected the social reproduction capacities of both urban and rural households. Formal sector urban employment shrunk from 3.6 million in 2003 to 480 000 in 2008 and even those who managed to retain their jobs were in most cases receiving wages that are below the poverty datum line, mostly eroded by the hyperinflationary environment (Murisa, 2010).

## **Discussion**

Moyo (2007) avers that this led to the reconceptualization of social work education and training to have a strong influence of Paulo Freire and the radical political need which had arisen due to poverty, unemployment and exploitation.

According to Chogugudza (2009) most students' dissertations and fieldwork placements were encouraged to concentrate on work towards solving problems of the rural populations and this meant to facilitate the requirements of the developmental approach which discourages dependency and promotes active and productive involvement of clients in their own development and it also enables students to make a critical analysis and modernise social work profession and add indigenous knowledge system.

In colonial Zimbabwe, economic development was accompanied by social destruction. As the whites brought modernisation, industrial growth and new technologies, it was good for economic development at the cost of indigenous peoples' social freedom and rights. Zimbabwe became a British colony in 1890 and the colonial government immediately adopted a policy of racial segregation which promoted the supremacy of the white population whilst marginalising the African population. For instance, the 'white agriculture policy' designed to promote agricultural activities undertaken by the white settler community by providing them with extension services, land and credit facilities (Stoneman 1981). The same services and facilities were not made available to the African population. In pursuance of the white agricultural policy, the colonial government enacted the Maize Control Act of 1931 which stipulated that African farmers were not to receive the full market value of their crops (Stoneman 1981). Looking at these policies, one cannot deny that at some point, they led to the economic growth of the country since agricultural activities were now done by those with knowledge and resources in this case the whites but at the cost of indigenous people's social life. At independence the government inherited an economy that was not comparable to any other newly independent African country (Murisa 2010). In the years 1945 to 1975 it was one of the fastest growing economies in the world and the result of such sustained growth created an economic structure virtually unique in Africa except for South Africa (Gordon, 1984; Herbst, 1990). Therefore, economically, the colonial rule led to economic development in Zimbabwe while their policy where catastrophic to Zimbabweans.

When social work was introduced during the colonial period, it was just a borrowed profession aimed to fulfil the remedial duties mostly those of social control. Social work was introduced initially for the benefit of the white settler community (Kaseke, 1991).

## Recommendation

Social work in Zimbabwe needed to transform itself so that it could contribute to the material welfare of the poor. For instance, traditional practice of providing public assistance to destitute members of society has failed to make an impact on the amelioration of poverty. This is because social workers have tended to provide public assistance as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end.

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