SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Africa had an organized informal social work education and practice system that evolved around indigenous knowledge that kept their communities functional. However, European and American perspectives influenced African social work education, "with little attention paid to how social supports evolved in Africa" (Krietzer, 2012, p. 2) extensively. Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Africa, was opened as a liberal arts college (Koso-Thomas, 2019), and it took the University of Sierra Leone (USL) an exceptionally long time before it developed a social work program. The main document analyzed for this study is the Standardized Curriculum developed by consultants hired by UNICEF Sierra Leone in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Children's Affairs at the time. Morgan (2021) states that "document analysis has been an underused approach to qualitative research" (p. 64). The standardized curriculum has more details from the Global North, specifically from the United States of America, than the Global South, even

though the social work personnel may lack the requisite knowledge and expertise to provide instruction.

Keywords: social work education, social work practice, standardized curriculum, document analysis

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone is in West Africa and shares borders with Guinea, Liberia, and the Atlantic Ocean (Foray, 1977; Lamin, 2007; Sawyerr, 1979). Sierra Leone is the roundest country in the world (Ciruelos, 2019). The distance from the "North to the South is just over 200 miles and from East to West of 180 miles; with an approximate area of 30,000 square miles" (Sawyer, 1969, p. 5). Sierra Leone had exceedingly early contact with Europeans because of its natural attractions. Hair (1997) posits that "the Sierra Leone peninsula was first encountered by Europeans in 1460 or 1461, and thereafter, for some two centuries" (p. 4). The country has a dry season, usually from November to April, and a rainy season from May until October. However, there is sporadic rainfall in November and December due to the vast deforestation, especially in Freetown and the peninsula. Thus, the capital city, Freetown, became a municipal city by local ordinance in 1799, and a mayor headed the City Council. Sierra Leone is an independent member of the Commonwealth (Sawyerr, 1969). The 2021 Mid-Term Population and Housing Census by Statistics Sierra Leone states that the population of Sierra Leone is 7,548,702.

1.1 Social Work Education and Practice in Africa

According to Krietzer (2012), many "historical influences have affected the introduction and evolution of social work in Africa" (p. 1). European and American perspectives influenced African social work education, "with little attention paid to how social supports evolved in Africa" (p. 2). Fourah Bay College was as a liberal arts college for a (Koso-Thomas, 2019), and it took the University of Sierra Leone an exceptionally long time before it developed a social work programme. South Africa was the first country in Africa to start social work education in 1924, followed by Egypt (1936) and Ghana (1945) (Healy, 2008). However, "research on social work institutes specifically within the West African region is still vastly underrepresented in scholarship and policy" (Canavera et al., 2019, p. 1). During the colonial period in Africa, much emphasis on social work education was on "corrections and juvenile institutions (probation homes and industrial schools), general and mental hospitals, work with the disabled, work in children's homes, and (much later) in the school systems" (Asamoah, 1994, p. 16). Later, the colonial governments became incredibly involved and imported social workers from their home countries (Asamoah, 1994; Midgley, 1995) to work in Africa.

In many African countries, "the curative or remedial approach" to social work (Chitereka, 2009) is widely used in addressing social problems like poverty, HIV/AIDS, food scarcity, children's issues, outbreaks of diseases, mental health, and teenage pregnancy. During the African colonial era, "missionaries provided social services, or charities created by settlers or educated local people" (Midgley, 1995, p. 53).

After many countries gained independence, their governments and missionary organizations provided social services and other social welfare assistance to ameliorate the prevalent social

problems (Asamoah, 1994; Midgley, 1997). Postcolonial countries "pursued social development alongside infrastructural development" (Holland & Scourfield, 2016, p. 5). However, countries experienced problems beyond their capabilities and abilities to solve. They lacked policies and formal structures for intervention, as many people assisted others on a personal level. Many international nongovernmental and local non-governmental organizations provide social services in many African countries.

1.2 Social work in Africa involves community practice and community advocacy.

(Hugman, 2010, 2016). Moreover, the governments play pivotal roles in providing social services. Indeed, the colonization of African countries by the developed world has considerably impacted social work practice, and they continue to struggle to develop indigenous methods (Razack, 2009). There have been serious criticisms that social work education and practice in Sierra Leone are heavily impacted by Western American or European education and practice. Therefore, many people call for the indigenization of the curriculum (Asamoah, 1994; Fredua-Kwarteng, 2020; Krietzer, 2012). Some writers, for example, have postulated the importance of indigenizing social work education in Ghana to improve local social work education and practice (Krietzer, 2012). Some authors have stated that teaching Western social work theories and methods may connote professional imperialism (Kreitzer, 2012), especially as "social work reflects the society in which it is operating" (p. x).

People live in communities, and their behaviors may lead to community problems; hence, studying micro social work becomes paramount. Many youths in Sierra Leone abuse substances. Alcohol dependence and abuse, cocaine dependence and abuse, and marijuana dependence and abuse are common, and many suffer from mental illnesses (Bintu, 2023). However, since society still considers such problems as character deficits, governmental programs hardly help these categories of people. According to Sheafor and Horejsi (2015), "social workers strive to view each individual as a whole person, having many dimensions: biological, intellectual, emotional, social, familial, spiritual, economic, communal and so on" (p. 7).

According to Holland and Scourfield (2016), most countries where social work has a recognizable identity have gradually moved over time toward professionalization. This has "involved increasing expectations and educational achievement and regulation of boundaries of social work (p. 9). Thus, the "exportation of Western social work theories and knowledge has helped introduce social work to many parts of the world, assuming that its core theory and practice is universal and transferable" (Krietzer, 2012, p. xvi).

1.3 Social Work Practice During Colonial Rule

Social work practice or welfare assistance to poor people has been in existence even before Sierra Leone became a Crown Colony in 1808, when the British Government assumed direct responsibility from the Philanthropic Sierra Leone Company that had directed the affairs since the colony's foundation (Foray, 1977; Sawyerr, 1967). The "British colonial rule of Sierra Leone in 1787" (Harris, 2014, p. 7) was a significant turning point, enhancing social service provision in the following decades. The British declared the Protectorate in 1896 (Foray, 1977; Lamin, 2005; Sawyerr, 1967). In 1820, the British Colonial government opened the Kissy

Mental Home, the first of its kind in Africa, to provide asylum to the mentally ill in the colony (Bell, 1991). With the opening of the Kissy Mental Home, mental health hygiene law was enforced, and vagrants and wanderers were arrested. The Tribal Authorities Ordinance 1938 gave powers to tribal authorities and established native courts under the provisions of the Native Courts Ordinance. The Colonial Government passed the Protectorate Vagrancy Act in 1938 to control and provide for the repatriation of vagrants to their chiefdoms of natives. The British Government established the Department of Labour in 1941 and took over some missionaries' responsibilities dealing with families.

During the colonial period in Sierra Leone, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) provided social services to those in need. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Rural Development later adopted DSW 1944 during the Second World War, owing to the high incidence of juvenile delinquency (Jarrett, 1984). In 1946, a community center opened in

Freetown, as the new ministry, sponsored women's institutes and other groups interested in child welfare and domestic affairs. District councils and the Protectorate Assembly were set up as well. Thus, until 1951, the Welfare Department was a sub-department of the

Education Department. According to Alie (2015), "Native Administrations (NAs) had undertaken institutionalized community development programmes in the Protectorate since the late 1930s. They built intra-chiefdom roads, elementary schools, clinics, and supervised sanitation" (p. 14).

One of the legacies of British Colonial rule in Sierra Leone is a social welfare system that did not impact the provision of services very much. Jarrett (1991) asserts that Sierra Leone inherited an outdated social welfare system. In Sierra Leone, social welfare is "an institution that addresses housing, education, health, welfare, labour and employment, prison, youth, and sports" (Jarrett, 1991, p. 143). The Social Development office, later the Ministry of Rural Development, Social Services and Youth, collaborated with Fourah Bay College and other non-governmental organizations to conduct mass literacy programs (Beckley, 1993). Many communities benefited from the literacy skills that they acquired. There was improved sanitation in the colony, and major hospitals like the Princess Christian Maternity Hospital (PCMH) (Cottage) opened in 1892, and Connaught (1922) provided quality services (Lamin, 2007). However, social services were highly concentrated in the colony, leaving the majority of people in the protectorate underserved.

2.0 EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE

Significant educational developments occurred during the British colonial period. Fourah Bay College was opened in 1827; the "first institution of higher or collegiate education in British West Africa" (Bangura, 2009, p. 583). The Church Missionary Society (CMS) founded the Grammar School in 1845. Later, in 1849, a female institution, Annie Walsh Memorial School, was opened (Alie, 1990, 2015; Foray, 1997; Fyle, 2006; Kilson, 1966). The British Colonial administration founded the Education Department in 1909, and in 1911, the Education Ordinance was passed, legalizing formal education. Thus, from 1845 to 1956, there were twenty-eight secondary schools in Sierra Leone. The Western Area had 18 schools, the Southern Province had six schools, the Eastern Province had two schools, and the Northern

Province had two schools. Thus, when Sierra Leone gained independence, there were 35 Government and assisted secondary schools, 600 primary schools, six teacher training colleges, two technical institutes, and Fourah Bay College (Sawyer, 1969). According to Kilson (1966), "the educational basis for social change in Sierra Leone was laid at an early date as compared to other West African colonies" (p. 39); therefore, Sierra Leone was known as the Athens of West Africa.

2.1 Social Work Education

Although Fourah Bay College (FBC) was founded in 1827 and Njala University College (NUC) in 1964, the two institutions only recently provided social work education in their curricula. President Stevens (1984) noted in his autobiography that Fourah Bay College was so preoccupied with training law students that he concluded that many lawyers would find it difficult to get meaningful careers upon graduation.

2.2 Post-Independence

In 1969, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) published that the Government of Sierra Leone was concerned about social work education and sought ways to implement changes. CSWE also noted the "lack of curriculum, adequate training materials, and skilled writers to rewrite and adopt materials for all levels of personnel" (Jarrett, 1984, p. 25).

According to Jarrett (1984), a National Training Center (NTC) in Bo was opened in 1978 to train social development workers. The curriculum emphasized areas in social welfare services and "rural development, such as childcare, nutrition, literacy, and village structural development, gerontology, and juvenile delinquency" (Jarrett, 1991, p. 148). However, the institution trained students for only 18 months with basic social work skills, most of whom worked at the community and chiefdom levels. According to Canavera et al. (2014), "the training program was in two parts: theoretical classroom studies of 12 months, and practical fieldwork of 6 months" (p. 41). Participants were awarded certificates at the end of the 18-month training. The Ministry of Social Welfare then promoted workers and transformed their positions into the permanent and pensionable grades of the civil service. Unfortunately, the National Training Center was closed during the civil war in the country from 1991 to -2001 and only reopened in 2014 with support from UNWOMEN.

The National Training Center now trains students at both the certificate and diploma levels. When NTC closed, officials in the Ministry of Social Welfare and other social work practitioners from the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and Red Cross designed a new curriculum. The curriculum focused on "direct services, crisis management, and social and community development" (p. 148). In addition, the Ministry of Social Welfare regularly held workshops and worked with non-governmental organizations to train individuals with specific skills.

Before 2003, Sierra Leone lacked comprehensive social work training programs at the college or university levels. The Institution of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) had social work training modules to train people during the civil war so that they could provide services to people. There was a desperate need to provide psychosocial services during and after the civil war, as many people witnessed the killings of their loved ones and other gory

and horrific scenes (G. Mansaray, Personal Communication, August 5, 2020). IPAM in partnership the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) and Boys Society Sierra Leone in 1998 introduced a course titled Social Development, also referred to as Social Work. At IPAM, paraprofessionals were trained to intervene in the looming crises that was prevalent. Handicap International, an International Non-Governmental Organization introduced a psychological care and social work training course.

In Sierra Leone, social work education was reintroduced when Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (now Milton Margai Technical University) offered social work courses in 1998 at the diploma level. In 2007, Njala University started offering a bachelor's degree in social work. In 2011, Fourah Bay College introduced a Bachelor of Social Work degree program with Dr. Alusine Jalloh at the University of Texas, Arlington, Texas, USA. Dr. Jalloh worked with Professor Osman Gbla at the administrative level to get Fourah Bay College and the University of Sierra Leone to approve the new social work course. Dr. Jalloh convinced Dr. Alfred Jarrett to head the new social work program at Fourah Bay College. Dr. Jarrett received his doctorate from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, USA. Jarret eventually hired Mr. David Smart, Mr. Abdul Kamara, Mr. Patrick Walker, and Mrs. Mariatu Cyllah. At Fourah Bay College, the social work program sits within the Department of Sociology and Social Work. Many non-governmental organizations also offer targeted training and sporadic workshops at various locations, including the head office of Social Work Sierra Leone (SWSL) along Sanders Street in Freetown. Many volunteers and employees work in "difficult circumstances without appropriate supervision, or awareness of key guiding documents" (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2019, p. 3), pertinent to social work practice skills. Another key institution established by the government of Sierra Leone to train social workers, which is attached to various social welfare agencies, is the Civil Service Training College. Its primary aim is to empower social workers and other social welfare personnel employed by the government who lack formal social work qualifications. Since 2012, the college has been awarded numerous certificates and diplomas, equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge to enhance their effectiveness in social work (Fullah, 2024).

Still, one can describe social work education in Sierra Leone as haphazard, especially before the design of the standardized curriculum. Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (now Milton Margai Technical University), Njala University, Fourah Bay College, the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology (EBKUST), and Eastern Technical University all had different generalist courses that instructed students about the profession. The courses had more sociology content than social work theories, perspectives, paradigms, frameworks, and models. The institutions did not provide structured practicum education for the students. For some years, international aid agencies (specifically UNICEF) attempted to create a standardized curriculum in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Remarkably, on May 23rd, 2022, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education (MHTE), and UNICEF officially launched the harmonized social work curriculum at Bintumani Hotel in Aberdeen, Freetown. However, the design of social work curricula is an enormous challenge in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone Association of Social Workers seeks to represent and accredit social work education. Implementing the standardized curriculum in Sierra Leone faces significant obstacles, such as limited funding to support

program expansion and provide adequate teaching materials. The shortage of qualified educators further complicates efforts to deliver high-quality instruction. Many institutions lack infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries with updated social work textbooks, and Internet accessibility, making it challenging to ensure consistency in curriculum delivery. For instance, the absence of locally produced teaching materials relevant to Sierra Leone's context highlights the need for targeted investments to address these gaps (Fullah, 2024).

Before the different institutions introduced social work courses, many civil servants in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, professional heads, and non-governmental organizations approached social work through on-the-job experience. Many workers whom people consider or refer to as social workers lack the requisite educational training, theoretical knowledge, and methods. Many continue to rely on their practical experiences, conference attendance, and workshops to do their jobs. The number of trained lecturers and professors with social work degrees is explicitly limited, too, as is the quality of education (Fang, 2013, p. 31). There is a wide use of dated textbooks and no social work textbooks focusing on Sierra Leone (I. Koroma, Personal Communication, June 2023). Ancillary and teaching materials are also lacking. Much needs to be done, either by training some students at the graduate level to teach courses at the bachelor's level or by encouraging the few Sierras Leoneans overseas with graduate degrees in social work to return to help.

3.0 HIGHER EDUCATION

Several acts regulate higher education in Sierra Leone, including the Tertiary Education. Commission (TEC) Act of 2001, The National Council for Technical, Vocational, and Other Awards (NCTVA) Act of 2001, The Universities Act of 2005, The Polytechnics Act of 2014, and The Universities Act of 2021. Sierra Leone has an exceptionally long history of providing higher education, with the founding of Fourah Bay College in 1827. The Njala University College Act of 1964 led to the founding of the University College in Mokonde,

Njala. Fourah Bay College is part of the University of Sierra Leone. Fourah Bay College and Milton Margai Technical University are in the western area. Njala University is a public university in the south. Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology is also a public university in the north. Eastern Technical University in the east also offers social work courses. Four private universities are registered by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and two of them, the University of Makeni (UNIMAK) and Central University in Mile 91, offer social work courses at different levels. Social work education has different levels, with educational outcomes and scope of practice (Larkin, 2013, p. 1).

3.1 Master of Social Work

The Master of Social Work (MSW) is a terminal degree in social work, especially for social work practice. The MSW prepares students for advanced and specialized professional practice. Students gain the knowledge and skills to apply social work principles, ethics, and values. The master's degree programs integrate the social knowledge building and theoretical underpinnings acquired in undergraduate studies. Thus, "the first year of study in most MSW (graduate) programs emphasizes generalist social work. Fourah Bay College, University of

Sierra Leone, secured approval from the Technical Education Commission (TEC) to offer graduate-level social work programs.

3.2 Professional Social Work Organization

The country now has the Sierra Leone Association of Social Workers (SLASW), a professional social work education and practice organization that focuses on "coordinating, organizing, and promoting the development of an indigenized social work education suited to the country's realities" (Fang, 2013, p. 32) and social problems. The country needs professionally trained social workers to deal with the many social problems like juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, addiction, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, truancy, unemployment, extreme poverty, housing needs, homelessness, petty crimes, and prostitution. There is no doubt that the origins of social work education in Western countries like Germany, the U.S.A., and the United Kingdom have influenced and will continue to influence the knowledge base and practice of social work in Sierra Leone. Usually, students spend four years completing a bachelor's degree in social work for a 120-credit program. Many social work programs are generalists covering topics or courses such as child protection, human behavior, social environment, crisis intervention, and social and economic justice. Students must complete 400 hours of supervised fieldwork and 120 semester hours.

3.3 Name Protection

In many countries, social services workers call themselves social workers, whether case managers, counselors, service coordinators, or relief workers. In Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Social Welfare got Parliament to sign the Professional Social Work Regulatory Bill 2025 and is waiting for Presidential Assent. The law will protect the name/title protection of the social work profession and regulate social work practice and facilities that provide services to clients. In the standardized curriculum prepared by Atieno Odenyo, Senior Associate of Maestral International, it was observed that "many well-being people call themselves social workers, drivers to volunteers with no professional training" (2019, p. 5). Thus, professional identity needs protection; for instance, you cannot call yourself a lawyer because you work at a law court, and your credentials must support your title. According to Colby and Dziegielewski (2016),

A degree in sociology, psychology, anthropology, or any other ology does not make a person a social worker. The major difference between a degree in social work and these other degrees in sociology, psychology, and anthropology are science-based. People who major in these fields may specialize in practice or complete practice-based courses, but they are not based in practice as social work graduates are. (p. 84)

3.4 Practicum Education in Social Work

Many professions require internships. During the practicum experience, students can integrate their "course content and experiences and apply their understanding to social work practices" (Poulin et al. 2019, 2023). Exposure to field practicum is significant to social work professional preparation as students can apply theoretical knowledge with practical skills (Colby & Dziegielewski, 2016; Lamin, 2012; Larkin, 2013). According to Bogo and

Vayda (1987) states, "field instruction is a unique area of social work practice and is applied through an interactive process" (p. 1). Field instruction can be juxtaposed with apprenticeship, pupillage, housemanship, or internship in other professions, and it gives students firsthand training in what they have learned. It is complementary to coursework.

Bogo and Vayda (1987) assert, "Academic courses alone are not enough nor is an apprenticeship requirement per se sufficient to qualify for a social work degree" (p. 1). Traditional track MSW students complete two field placements/internships: Generalist year (400 hours) and specialization year (500 hours) for a total of 900 hours. Students admitted as advanced standing will complete just one field placement (500 hours). Thus, field education is a critical component of social work education and is considered the signature pedagogy of the profession.

Field practicum is significant as students can enter an organization or agency and work directly with clients' systems under the supervision of a social worker, performing the roles of a social worker. The bachelor's degree program in Social Work utilizes the generalist field education approach defined by Larkin (2013), as a field experience that integrates and impacts the curriculum.

Takes place in organizations under the supervision of a field instructor and requires students to engage in multilevel field tasks and the foundational roles of social work; and emphasizes ethical practice, diversity, and social justice, critical thinking, and the application of the planned change process with specific emphasis on multilevel assessment, planning, and implementation. (p. 3)

Field education in social work is very new in Sierra Leone. There is a lack of a comprehensive structure among the eight leading institutions (F.B.C., Njala University, Milton Margai Technical University, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, Central University, Eastern Technical University, and the University of Makeni) that offer social work courses. Thus, institutions must identify agencies, organizations, and ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) where students can effectively complete field practicum hours under a supervisor with a social work degree.

3.5 Social Work Practice

Regarding social work practice, it will be essential to note that communities in Sierra Leone before the British colonial period and even during the colonial period had structures to maintain social cohesion and social control of people. Children were socialized in ways that allowed them to pass on cultural practices (Lamin, 2005; Mansaray et al., 2020). According to Sawyerr (1967), children received vocational and traditional education. Secret societies like Poro for boys and Bondo for girls were prevalent and offered valuable traditional roles to their initiates. Thus, "Sierra Leone is somewhat typical of post-colonial African states in its multi-ethnic and multi-religious configuration and its faltering efforts to build a cohesive nation and a functioning state from a pre-colonial and colonial legacy" (Harris, 2014, p. 2).

According to Hassan Koroma, National Coordinator of Social Workers Sierra Leone (SWSL) (a local non-governmental organization he founded that feeds homeless people in the central business district of Freetown), the documentation of social work practice in Sierra Leone has

been poor. However, indigenous practices have held communities together even before colonization (Mansaray et al., 2020). Many local and international non-governmental organizations provide social services, especially as the government of Sierra Leone struggles to do so in many areas, such as child trafficking, supporting teenage mothers, or individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

According to Ary et al. (2019), "qualitative researchers may use written documents or other artifacts to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 436). Documents generally exist, and researchers use documents as they are "more cost-effective than social surveys, in-depth interviews, or participant observations" (Mogalakwe, 2006, p. 221). Some researchers have postulated that documents may not be objective. Some other researchers note that documents are authentic, credible, representative, and valuable to the phenomenon under study (Bowen, 2009; Mogalakwe, 2006; Morgan, 2021). The main document analyzed for this study is the Standardized Curriculum developed by consultants hired by UNICEF Sierra Leone in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Children's Affairs at the time. Morgan (2021) states that "document analysis has been an underused approach to qualitative research" (p. 64). The Standardized curriculum has three parts.

Part I: Introduction- Background,

> Human Resources for Social Services Social Work Education.

Part II: Framework for the Standardization of the Social Work Curriculum-

> Introduction to the Standardized Curriculum.
> Element of the Curriculum.
> Social Work Programs Content Areas

Part III: Standardized Social Work Curriculum for Sierra Leone-   Vision   and   Mission   of Bachelor of Social Work Programme
> Objectives of Standardized Curriculum
> Summary of the Bachelor of Social Work Competencies
> Admission Requirements
> Assessment and Evaluation of Students

Part III (b)-Bachelor of Social Work Course Description

> Programme Structure
> Summary of Course Structure
> Course Outline

In addition to reviewing the standardized curriculum, the researchers browsed the websites of the different institutions to analyze the qualifications of the social work faculty or lecturers with social work qualifications: Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work, or Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work. There are very few lecturers with graduate degrees in social work, as many have a Bachelor of Social Work and a graduate degree in related areas such as

sociology, theology, or development studies. The researchers also reviewed the course offerings by the different institutions.

5.0 FINDINGS

5.1 Sociological Perspective

Currently, the curricula at all the universities offering social work courses have more sociological perspectives and knowledge building than social work theories, models, perspectives, and knowledge base. Integrating social work theories, frameworks, models, perspectives, and paradigm shifts will ensure that social work students will be more competent in doing their jobs than is the situation at present.

5.2 Trained and Qualified Instructors

Although the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education approved the standardized curriculum, the universities have yet to implement it fully. There is a great need for trained and qualified social work educators to teach all the courses at the various universities, especially as the consultants adopted the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competency-based education and practice behaviors. Therefore, lecturers should have a Master of Social Work degree recognized within the social work field as the final professional degree.

5.3 Field Education

There is a lack of structure for field education. The universities have yet to devise ways to count field hours and have field liaisons and field supervisors to work with students. The founder and coordinator of Social Work Sierra Leone (SWSL) facilitate student internship opportunities; however, many students are crammed into his tiny office space for field education. Some nongovernmental organizations and government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) provide internships for students, but there are few supervisors with social work degrees to train and monitor social work interns.

5.4 More Local Content

The standardized curriculum is styled after the Council on Social Work Education. (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation, which has extensive content from the United States, and this will make it somehow difficult to implement. For instance, Chuku et al., (2023) posit that "social work education should be responsive to local practices" (p. 1181). Besides, it will be difficult for faculty and students to get newer editions of textbooks with the EPAS competencies and practice behaviors. Incorporating traditional African approaches such as community-based problem-solving, extended family systems, and indigenous methods of conflict resolution can make the curriculum more relevant. For example, integrating cultural practices like the role of elders in community decision-making or the use of storytelling to transmit values can enhance students' understanding of culturally appropriate interventions (Chuku et al., 2023). Additionally, local languages and traditional beliefs about welfare and health should be included to foster a deeper connection between social work practices and community needs.

6.0 LIMITATIONS

The primary document analyzed in this study was the Standardized Curriculum, which some consultants from the United States designed. The university website details are scant, and one cannot deduce much about the institution's courses. Thus, qualitative research, such as narrative research, could bring other significant findings to help train social work students effectively in the private and public sectors.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The study revealed that social work practice has been in Sierra Leone before colonial rule, as many missionaries helped locals, and indigenous practices like the initiations into secret societies effectively groomed young boys and girls for community roles and other forms of socialization. The British Colonial Administration, as indirect rule, ensured the participation of traditional rulers and maintained cultural hegemony.

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