

“Shalom Educational Model and the Paradigm Shift in the Social Work Training in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)”.

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Abstract

Social work is a discipline that was introduced into an academic curriculum in the DRC not long ago. It is with the repetition of the phenomena of urban banditry and that of street children that the various stakeholders have thought of training professionals in this field. But is said training effective and appropriate? In this article, I examine through a sample the academic curriculum in the DRC and propose avenues' starting from the biblical model of shalom, which is a four-dimensional model, responding to contextual and spiritual needs. The article contains seven parts: the first point will be the introduction, in the second point there will be a brief contextual presentation of DR Congo, the third point is about the method used in this article, the fourth point will be the sample of social work curricula, the fifth point will be analysis and assessment of this curricula, in the sixth point I will show the implications of shalom model in the social work training and the last point will be the conclusion.

Keywords: Shalom, education model, social work, faith, spirituality, decolonization, Democratic Republic of Congo

1. Introduction

In this part, I give light to the concepts of shalom and social work. What is shalom? The great theologian Walter Brueggemann, the philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff and other thinkers have argued for many years that shalom is the vision toward which all Christians are called to live. Brueggemann and Wolterstorff both defined shalom as flourishing in the enjoyment of relationships of four kinds: with God, with other people, with the physical creation (ecosystem), and with self. The notion of shalom is more meaningful than the concept of the common good elaborated by Aristotle and is about a four-dimensional relationship (Guirguis, 2019). Wolterstorff has advanced shalom as the goal not only of life in general but of education in particular (Wolterstorff, 2004; Shortt, 2017). For Lundberg and Smith (2021), Shalom combines questions of justice, fulfillment, and joy. It is a state of well-being that takes into account all of creation and all of society: businesses, institutions such as marriage, public power ... The beauty of God is at the center, and humans are called to act as his agents, it is more than peace in the sense of calm or the absence of conflict called “pax Romana”.

Concerning social work, even if it can be considered a fully-developed profession or remains a semi-profession has been debated throughout the last century. The first group considers it as a group of professions but another group sees it as a unitary entity including all social professions such as social workers, social pedagogues, cultural and social animators (Hare, 2016). Hare (2016) gives a background of its different definitions because social workers are in the context of a globalized world. Interconnection is required between different social workers of this global village. For the International Federation of Social Workers, gathered in General Meeting in Montreal (2000), social work promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments (Hare, 2016). In 2014, Social work is understood as a profession based on academic practice and discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for

diversity are at the heart of social work. Supported by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities, and endogenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to meet life's challenges and improve well-being (IFSW, 2021). These essential mandates are the promotion of social change, social development, social cohesion, as well as the empowerment and liberation of people. This profession recognizes the place of interconnected historical, socio-economic, cultural, spatial, political, and personal factors that can be opportunities and/or obstacles to human well-being and development. Structural barriers contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, and oppression. For this, it is necessary to develop critical thought and awareness on the structural causes of oppression and/or privilege, taking into account race, social class, language, religion, gender ... and so develop action strategies to address these structural and personal problems. By being in solidarity with the underprivileged, this profession strives to reduce poverty, liberate the vulnerable and oppressed, and promote social inclusion and social cohesion. Social development is conceptualized to mean intervention strategies, desired end states, and a policy framework, the latter in addition to the more popular residual and institutional frameworks. It is based on holistic biopsychosocial and spiritual assessments and interventions that transcend the micro-macro divide, incorporating multiple system levels and intersectoral and interprofessional collaboration, aimed at sustainable development. It gives priority to socio-structural and economic development and does not subscribe to the received idea that economic growth is a prerequisite for social development. The fundamental principles of social work are respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, respect for diversity, and the defense of human rights as well as social justice (IFSW, 2021). This proposed definition recognizes the place of indigenous knowledge in the development of theories as well as the importance of different environments in their praxis and not only the monopoly of Western concepts and theories. It helps to develop new approaches.

2. Social context of the DRC

This country has 5.2 million internally displaced people, and currently hosts the second-highest number of internally displaced people in the world. There are also 527,000 refugees from neighboring countries. Food insecurity has reached the highest level on record.

According to the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, 19.6 million people face severe and acute food insecurity in 2021. More than 3.4 million children under five suffer from acute malnutrition (UN Info, 2021).

Regarding armed conflicts, it should be noted that following the 1994 genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda, where 800,000 Tutsis were killed, more than 2 million Rwandan Hutus fled the Tutsi rebellion to the DRC, seeking refuge in camps in eastern Congo. In November 1996, Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congolese rebels led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila brutally dismantled the refugee camps to officially drive out the last officials suspected of having been involved in the genocide, hidden in these camps. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 7 percent of these refugees were involved in the genocide. These elements subsequently contributed to the creation of the armed group of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), whose actions were limited to Congolese territory. It was in May 1997 that Kabila, alongside the coalition between the Ugandan and Rwandan armies, advanced towards Kinshasa and defeated Mobutu, thus Laurent-Désiré Kabila became President. In 1998, Kabila ordered the Rwandan and Ugandan armies to leave Congolese territory. It receives military support from neighboring countries, such as Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. The ensuing conflict caused the death of an estimated 5 million people between 1998 and 2003, mainly from disease and other health problems. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and Joseph Kabila replaced him as president. The National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), a

Tutsi militia, led by Laurent Nkunda, which claimed to defend the interests of Tutsi in the DRC, is becoming more active by pursuing the FDLR to the east. Despite the signing of a peace treaty in January 2008 between the Congolese government and the 22 armed groups, fighting between the DRC Armed Forces (FARDC), FDLR, CNDP, and other armed militias continues. However, from 2009, the Rwandan and Congolese governments began to cooperate to fight the FDLR, still present in eastern Congo. The peace treaty signed between the DRC authorities and the CNDP in March 2009 results in the integration of this armed group into the FARDC, but its main leaders, including Bosco Ntaganda, maintain a parallel chain of command within the Congolese armed forces. Although the new partnership between the DRC and Rwanda has weakened the FDLR, they continue to operate in eastern Congo and are still active there to this day. In the northeast, another foreign armed group, the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), has been active for many years and continues to cause terror and unrest, killing hundreds and bringing in thousands. Villagers from the DRC and other African countries (mainly Sudan and the Central African Republic) to be displaced. 1,400 civilians were killed between January and September 2009, 7,500 others were raped, and 900,000 people were displaced within the country itself, in North Kivu and South Kivu, following military attacks by the FARDC and the FDLR. In October 2012, the DRC government and the United Nations signed an action plan comprising a series of commitments from both parties, aimed at putting an end to the recruitment and use of children by the Congolese armed forces and services. Security forces, as well as to end sexual violence against children by members of these armed forces. There are many cases of child murder and mutilation; 108 cases of rape and other cases of sexual violence against children; child trafficking; summary and arbitrary executions (CRIN, nd). According to recent demographic surveys, the mortality rate for children under 5 in the DRC for the 5 years before the survey is 70 per 1000. In other words, 7 out of 100 children die before reaching their 5th year of life (INS, 2018).

3. Method

I use the documentary method which refers to the interpretation and analysis of documents such as books, websites that contain information about our study (Monageng, 2006).

4. Sample

The sample is constituted one-two higher school's curriculum about the social work training. One works in partnership with the Roman Catholic Church named "Institut Supérieur de Travail Social (ISTS). This school was created in 1996 by the National Association of Social Educators (ANES-Congo) and approved by the Ministry of Higher and University Education of the Congolese government since January 1999. The training of social workers is programmed in the form of teaching modules, a large part of which is intended for the general culture of the social sector and another part devoted to the specifics of social worker training. The course program is subdivided into three parts:

- Theoretical training relating to the profession: philosophy, logic, law, economics, history of social work, ethics and deontology, sociology, psychology, medico-social sciences, anatomy and physiology, demography, statistics, management.

- Training on social intervention methodology: observation, listening, communication techniques, systemic approaches, facilitation and data collection techniques, scientific research, social work methodology, participatory action research.

- Training on professional practices: internships, educational supervision, practical work, end-of-cycle work, presentations, and seminars on specific themes. It trains in a bachelor's degree. Another is a Protestant Church university named "Université Protestante au Congo" (UPC) in its department of social transformation which trains in a professional master level since 2014.

The courses in Master 1 are Introduction to the Old Testament, Introduction to the New Testament, Introduction to the study of Law, Ethics and Social law, Public health, Leadership, Sociology and disability Culture, Method of Social Sciences, History of Christian thought, Disability, Bible and Theology, Human Rights, Management and Development, Psycho-Social barriers.

The Master 2 program has these courses: Theology and Ministry, Holistic mission, Disability Policy, Development project, Disability and Social Transformation, Publishing theory and Technique, English, Leadership, Computer science, internship period, and the writing of a dissertation.

5. Analysis and assessment

The training model of the social work bachelor is based essentially on social sciences and founded in the philosophy of rationality created by the French philosopher Rene Descartes, inherited from the Belgian colonization. They train also for social intervention and there is no place for spirituality. So the first courses are philosophy and logic.

For the professional master, there are 13 courses in Master 1 and 9 courses in Master 2, an internship period, and the writing of a dissertation. Both schools, like many others in DRC, are again in the old system and not in LMD called the Bologna Process. The first cycle has three or four semesters. The second cycle with 4 semesters in course of study to get the Master's degree, and the third cycle with three years in course of study to get the Doctorate, and the use of the credit system (Huisman, Adelman, Hsieh, Shams, and Wilkins, 2012). Regarding the LMD system and online studies, Fohle Lygunda of the North-West University in South Africa did a study in theological schools (2021) but the reality is the same for all other faculties in DR Congo. For him, there is a psychological problem linked to the habits acquired during the years of a teaching career and which must be jostled suddenly and even the students, which is difficult, for example no longer using syllabuses but electronic books, to do more and more personal research for the students when they are used to having everything from the professors. The system is student-centered, not the teacher as it was before. This system is not yet well understood and everyone interprets it in their way. Finally, problems related to logistics such as high-speed internet in a country where the internet connection is weak, lacking in speed and the electric current is cut off at all times. Teachers and students are also required to master ICT.

The Protestant university follows the model developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher or the vocational model. This model has its roots in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, sees theological education as preparation for a professional Christian vocation, and must therefore be situated in the context of a university as an academic discipline. Theology like any other science is considered "Wissenschaft", a science that requires systematic research (Rupen, 2015). Protestant and Catholic universities are under the influence of the theology of liberation developed in Latin America. In liberation theology, a revolutionary shift in hermeneutic based on the continued struggle for justice in response to the continued disparity between rich and poor nations in a geopolitical dimension with all structures of oppression and not only as an internal political problem using Marxist praxis, then struggle globally the problems of hunger, injustice or oppression. Gustavo Gutiérrez who is one of his supporters wrote: "Teología de la liberación" translated in English by theology of liberation. He includes Old Testament political interpretation of the Exodus of Hebrew people from the oppression of Pharaoh and New Testament political readings of Jesus. According to Gutiérrez, salvation cannot be seen in any kind of dualistic approach as distinguishable from liberation. Gutierrez believes that Marxist philosophy is not incompatible with Christian theology so he draws from its categories like alienation, social classes... For him, violence can be used if necessary to respond violence of dictatorship what was imperative and eradicating injustice through

direct action on behalf of the poor, the revolutionary actions. Evangelization brings total liberation, not only spiritual liberation. This liberation includes liberation from social and political structures of oppression, the non-persons, the marginalized, adopting a militant reading. This new hermeneutic is not the work of experts but of people for people, the "communades", the persecuted. In doing so, the church acts as God who acts to establish justice and right not only to demonstrate his power (2004). Liberation theologians argue that contemporary Christianity is challenged as it confronts Marxist interpretations of increasing poverty and inequality throughout the world challenge of transforming social structures and institutions that perpetuate poverty and oppression under the concept of globalization (Martin, 2003). I can formulate a critique in liberation theology about insisting on structures and systems of oppression but neglecting the responsibility of man and his transformation. Both pieces of training have imported models (social science imported model and theological model). The same structure introduced by the western or colonial administration is now seen to have been the imposition of a style of leadership (Ordinary professor, Full professor, Associate professor) and the superiority of knowledge upon the know-how (competency) and ethic. The great philosopher Platon in *République* (2008) shows the need for a society to have competent people, as well as the pilot to govern the ship, because he has the knowledge of the weather, the seasons, the sky, the stars, the winds, and all the elements that are relevant importance in the practice of his art. An opposite educational philosophy of competency-based training (CBT) and the pragmatism of John Dewey. The method used takes language seriously, where the teaching in the vernacular languages is neglected. French language is used as a medium of education. It makes indigenous foreigners in their local cultures (Newbegin, 1977). They need a paradigm shift and decolonization to be more effective so that they move "toward spiritual competency" (Hodge, Baughman, & Cummings, 2006).

6. Implications of shalom model in the social work training

-As an education model, the Shalom model addresses four essential questions in education (why teach, what to teach, how to teach, and who are teachers?). In its theoretical background, the Shalom model takes seriously educational issues such as gender identity, bullying, disability, linguistic and cultural diversity, and social justice. In this model, teaching is seen as "Beruf", a mission. When every work is done in integrity and gives thanks to God, it is a ministry, not only preaching. In this sense, to work or teach in higher school is seen as a calling with all its consequence like holiness, consecration...a mission, not only an ordinary job but "an ethical call" (Wolterstorff, 2004). For the same author, "it seems to come from a call by the suffering in the world, by those in pain and poverty, by the oppressed and silenced voices in society and around the world" (Wolterstorff, 2004), and the teacher is like a transformational leader who helps students unlock their full potential. The remarkable Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper "On Education" (2019) thinks that a school whose framework is centered in the Lordship of Jesus can transform our culture. Kaak proposes a curriculum that integrates subjects witch reconcile people to people (Shortt, 2017). Contrary to mindfulness training as a contemplative pedagogy in social work education used "to support student self-care, facilitate critical reflection and enhance dialogue around challenging topics, integrate spiritual and holistic perspectives, and to help students develop direct practice skills" (Gockel and Xiaolei, 2016), the shalom model purpose to be reconciled with the Creator and other sinful human beings. It is an epistemology that is rooted in a caring relationship with the creation (Shortt, 2017).

-Integrating Christian spirituality and faith in social work education.

For Cassidy Cousineau (2018), faith and spirituality are important for social workers. However, in many curricula of many social work schools, they are not well. Hodge (2002) notes that several studies have shown that social workers lack the necessary training to

address spiritual issues in a culturally competent manner. In the case of the United States, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics identifies that social workers are responsible for obtaining knowledge regarding cultural matters of the people they serve, and the Council on Social Work Education agrees, and the second competency in the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) addresses the expectations for cultural competence. Both NASW and CSWE identify spirituality and religion within the definition of culture and diversity (Cassidy Cousineau, 2018) and “a part of one’s ethical responsibility. Teaching students to complete a thorough bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment then becomes an integral component of the social work educational experience” (Darrell and Rich, 2017) so that they become more effective. It is reasonable then, to expect that schools of social work have included matters of faith and spirituality into their curriculum. Van Hook (2016) underlines the importance of spirituality in the healing process of trauma. Some rationales have been proposed for including content on spirituality within undergraduate and graduate studies, in particular the fact that religious beliefs and practices are an integral part of multicultural diversity. So social workers should have knowledge and skills in this area to work effectively with clients from many backgrounds (Darrell and Rich, 2017).

-The need for a pedagogical contextualization.

Jerome Bruner (1996) remarks that a choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates a conception of the learning process and the learner. Pedagogy is never innocent. Pedagogical contextualization shows that learning becomes effective when it is shaped by the context, culture, and tools of the learning environment (Tessmey and Richey, 1997). To this end, teachers are encouraged to respect each student's unique personality and at the same time developing the potential of each of them taking into account cultural ideas and contexts. Educational contextualization was a central factor in Jesus' teaching ministry. Hee Kap Lee and Ivy Yee-Sakamoto propose a contextualized pedagogy model comprising three phases: decontextualization, contextualization, and re-contextualization at the cognitive level (formal logic, ideas, concepts), metaphysics (cosmological structures and objects), and ethics or deontology (Guirguis, 2019).

-Decolonization of social work education. For Paulo Freire, education can be a tool of oppression; the pedagogy should be constructed and transformative. In “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970), Paulo Freire helps the oppressed recover their lost humanity and achieve full humanization. The process begins by their identification of the oppressors so that they become aware and seek liberation.

The question of decolonization reflects awareness of authoritarian knowledge discourses based on race, class, gender, and geography and the use of mono-cultural views of knowledge that have silenced other views and perceptions. But it is vital to engage in the debate to become more aware of the potential for the oppression that traditional educational avenues may replicate and perpetuate. Developing critical thinking and a critical consciousness must be at the heart of social work education, intertwined with a commitment to using this skill to scrutinize our beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and how to apply it to practice and guard against conformity and dogmatism. This then requires social work educators, both in academia and practice, to themselves develop and model critical thinking, to use it to explore, analyze and evaluate alongside the students (Sue, 2020). Shalom model concerns not only justice, but also restoration of human beings, and all the creation. No man, no race, no gender is superior or inferior (Lundberg and Smith, 2021). There is a place for indigenous knowledge in the social work curricula.

With the Shalom model, social work educators must consider seriously the ethic and not behave like a non-Christian. To bring quality to the higher school, work against the division of humanity, races, gender, and social classes. This model leads us to fight any form of

epistemic injustice which is part of the structural inequalities that students from marginalized or poor backgrounds and social classes face in order to access and succeed in higher education. This is in order to make universities ethical communities where all members have a full and secure place (Boni and Velasco, 2019; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

7. Conclusion

Shalom model fits the context of the DRC confronted in many crises but it requires a paradigm shift so that social work training becomes a tool of liberation and not of oppression, and the training in this perspective must include the spiritual dimension of the teacher, the learner, and the clients. Many empirical studies are needed to show the validity and effectiveness of this model and further the knowledge in the Congolese context.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks the Journal of Social Work & Christianity for this publishing opportunity.

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