

Project Planning and Management (PPM) Approaches application and Zimbabwean social development social work achievement - An analysis of the contestations of PPM approaches

Tatenda Goodman Nhapi

ABSTRACT

The paper examines Zimbabwean theoretical and empirical Social work literature focusing on the trajectory of Social work transformation from being remedial to be developmental aided by Project Planning and Management (PPM) Approaches. The paper problematizes PPM approaches when harnessed in social work interventions reduce social work to be more obsessed with quantifiably objective indicators than the focus on social work's subject matter, human dignity and enhanced social functioning. The paper contends that although evidence based practice has become prominent in current social work thinking which is also dovetailed by PPM approaches, the lifeworlds and interventions of service users benefitting from social work and PPM approaches need comprehensive explanation beyond Log Frame and other PPM toolkits.

The paper illustrates its arguments by examining Social Work oriented projects rolled out in Zimbabwe like the National Action Plan for OVCs, studies on Volunteering and Social work. The examined projects and studies projects are grounded in participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and rights based approaches which are critical ingredients for projects achieving desired outcomes of social developmental than remedial social work interventions. The paper concludes by offering concrete recommendations which can aid the blending of PPM and Social work in Zimbabwean developmental social work endeavours to guarantee that social work interventions stays true to its calling of facilitating enhanced social functioning of Zimbabwean service users, unique as in their thumbprints.

Key words: lifeworlds, service users, social development, PPM

Background and Introduction

This paper examines the Zimbabwean social work landscape using the lens of PPM in endeavours for broad based social developmental approaches usage. Its analysis is embedded in examining selected Zimbabwean state and non-state actors child welfare, social development and youth projects and empirical studies by social work practitioners and scholars. Firstly, in conception of Social Work, the International Federation of Social Workers, (IFSW, 2015) notes global definition constructing it as practice-based profession and an academic discipline promoting social change and development, social cohesion, and peoples' empowerment and liberation. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are embedded in social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing". Social work's most important contribution perhaps is the consideration it gives to the human and social sides of development, essential in

order to avoid high material and economic standards without consequent matches in human and social standards (Rwomire, 2011).

Within the Zimbabwean context social work is argued as having imported from the global North through her coloniser, Britain where the first social worker came through to the then Rhodesia in 1936. Since then Zimbabwe has been eventually trying to shed off the remedial social work nature of its British inspired social work which emphasises case work and individualised social work approaches targeting to address malfunctioning behaviour and social pathological challenges. Casework is done on a person-by-person basis, in situations where privacy is necessary in attending to individual problems, for example, in a hospice, a women's shelter, or a drug rehabilitation centre (Rwomire, 2011).

However, scholars as Midgley and Osei Hwedie Kwaku have been prominent in advocating for a more social developmental social work approach embracing in African social work like in Zimbabwe. This emphasises communities led social development interventions which are bottom up and guarantee community ownership. Community development, it is carried out by groups of people who agree to undertake projects and programmes, largely voluntarily, for the benefit of their communities. The basic aim is to enhance the self-reliance of the community and its ability to maintain its growth (Rwomire, 2011). This thrust thus insists on accountability and participation and relies on a toolkit of different PPM approaches. PPM is one of the core courses for fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Social Work Honours offered at different institutions in Zimbabwe.

The articles objectives are three fold:

- i. To analyse selected Zimbabwean empirical social work studies and harnessing of PPM for social development outcomes
- ii. To explore potential social workers' roles in balancing PPM demands and consideration of beneficiaries lifeworlds towards communities well-being outcomes
- iii. To recommend potential strategies for social workers for enhanced PPM approaches harnessing for greater improvements of beneficiaries dignity and enhanced social functioning

Conceptual framework

Global South social work has in the past as Rwomire (2011) contends, treated only the most overt problems of urban destitution and maladjustment and that the profession has done little to promote the welfare of the majority population, especially where the vulnerable and rural people are concerned. Consequently, many social workers have come to realize that their conventional approaches have had rather limited impact on social needs and problems in Global South (Rwomire, 2011). As a result, social workers have begun to seek new ways of expanding social work's professional roles in order to deal more effectively with the problems of mass deprivation in these countries. Additionally, Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) (n.d), notes social development should be seen not as a mechanistic operation but as a process which involves people and their modes of life.

This has several implications in terms of the overall approach to social development programmes and projects - and, since social and economic development are interrelated, to other types of development activity too. According to FAO, programmes and projects cannot be planned in a rigid 'blueprint' manner, since it is impossible to predict exactly what will happen once they get underway. There is therefore a need for a flexible approach to planning, in which progress is closely monitored and the original project design modified, extended or (if necessary) abandoned in the light of the experience gained. Finally, Lifeworld concept is rooted in theories of social pedagogy emphasising everyday experience and suggests that understanding requires deep insights into a person's subjective interpretation of the world which cannot be achieved through a detached approach (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009).

State and dynamics of social work in Zimbabwe

The employment catchment for Zimbabwean social workers is dominated by a flair of working for the state or being non state sector employed. A regulatory body, Council of Social Workers registers social workers. This is whilst National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe is the advocacy arm representing social workers interests and a platform for the social workers knowledge management and reflection of experiences. Its membership is a mix of non-state actors involved in food security, Rural Development (RD), Child Welfare development projects. This is alongside Government of Zimbabwe's Department of Social Services(DSS) employed social workers who are frontline professionals who are custodians responsible for administering the predominantly means tested state social policy.

In their role as administrators, social workers oversee national programs and systems that provide social, health and public welfare services, which are intended to enhance the people's quality of life and to help them achieve the desired standard of living. Based on their understanding of the mission of organizations for which they work, social workers administer the material and financial resources necessary to ensure that social programmes operate as effectively and efficiently as possible(Rwomire 2011).Also, Chitereka (2009) notes, poverty manifestation in form of majority spending less than a dollar a day on their livelihood, degraded environment, and homelessness, is increasing alarmingly in Africa mainly caused by regimes which do not care for the welfare of their citizens.

The DSS has a broad spectrum of statutory responsibilities for the protection and care of children under the Children's Act and other enactments, and responsibility for the administration of a variety of public assistance programmes (Wyatt, et al., 2010).Notably, social workers demand in Zimbabwe arose especially the late 90s when economic meltdown, HIV and AIDS rose, recurrent droughts, impacted on livelihood security and saw arise in democracy and human rights, food relief and livelihoods NGOs and INGOs. These were and are regulated under the Zimbabwe's Private and Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Act. These dynamics witnessed a rise in demand for Social Work graduates who could be frontline personnel implementing the various programmes for these NGOs. For instance, although it is reported that in Zimbabwe, there is one social worker for every 14000 children, (Mbanje, 2015), most social work graduates end up following the proverbial greener pastures especially within Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional countries of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, if not going to UK. Both countries in which study is grounded have experienced government freezes on recruitment in the public sector and yet the Ministry of Social Development (Lesotho) and DSS, are the major social workers employers.

The paper explores pathways for Project Planning and Management (PPM) Approaches application and Zimbabwean social development social work achievement. This is within in the broader global South context for outcomes of contributing to social development, outcomes requiring social workers employment of holistic methods of interventions to intermediate on dignity of communities and individuals.

Additionally, The Social Work role in RD and the climate change mitigation agenda is critical. African Social work embraced the curative or remedial approach to solving social problems during its inception (Chitereka, 2009). Notably majority of NGOs employed social workers are involved in developmental social work, with a specific bias to rural areas and poverty having the responsibility to mobilise communities to take an active interest in the problems affecting them (Chitereka, 2009). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)'s Global Social Work Agenda 2012-2016, notes people's health and wellbeing suffer as a result of inequalities and unsustainable environments related to climate change, pollutants, war, natural disasters and violence to which there are inadequate international responses. Additionally, one major challenge of social services provided through NGOs and other non-state actors has been apparent fragmentation service provision. Provision of social services tended to follow individual projects resulting in the fragmentation of social service provision (Banda & Ngwerume, 2014).

Examination of PPM and Social Work harnessing in Zimbabwe-some selected case studies

The following section of the paper is an analysis of two social work oriented programmes initiated in Zimbabwe. Firstly, paper interrogates a volunteering and civic participation study findings with regards to project planning and management. Additionally, the other interrogation is of a National Child welfare programme implementation, the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

a) Five-country study on service and volunteering in Southern Africa -Zimbabwe country report

Firstly, a study by Kaseke and Dhemba (2007) in a Zimbabwean study of volunteerism has demonstrated that civic service and volunteering in particular is emerging as a viable social development intervention. Kaseke and Dhemba (2007) note harnessing of PPM approaches in volunteerism projects administration have been critical in desired outcomes achievement because NGOs and CBOs were the lead agencies involved in programme administration. The participating organisations, namely AIDS Counselling Trust, Child Protection Society, Diocese of Mutare Child Care Programme, Family AIDS Counselling trust, Southern Africa Human Rights Trust and the Young Women's Christian Association. The study was a qualitative descriptive research design using a purposive sampling method involving interviews with key informants and focus group discussions with service providers. Thus service providers in structured civic service programmes and informal community-based civic programmes and key informants from government and non-governmental organisations constituted the study population.

The structure of the programmes included formal and informally organised programmes with a hybrid of the two types of programmes. Informal community-based programmes were prevalent

and these were in some instances associated with district level/national programmes. Organisations are required to register in terms of the Private Voluntary Organisations Act of 1996. Participatory management practice seems to inform the administration of the local community programmes. Factors promoting success included having structured local level programmes, volunteer training, ongoing supervision, good communication between all the parties and direct involvement of community participants and volunteers in decision-making.

The decentralisation of programme administration to local community level was found to be important, as day to- day decisions were taken at a local level, which resulted in greater responsiveness to local concerns. In some instances, the volunteers also reported directly to a community-based committee made up of local representatives. This form of local accountability was good, although it could be abused as some community representatives tended to focus on their own needs at the expense of the common good (Kaseke & Dhemba, 2007). Volunteers stoppage of allowances was due to resource constraints and the realistically, incentives issues are very sensitive. They observe allowances non availability affects the quality of work, hunger on the part of the volunteers can hinder the amount of time that they can dedicate to the programme. Also, it is being women dominated, incentivised and, religious faith oriented without proper application of PPM approaches, as Kaseke and Dhemba (2007)'s study of Zimbabwe's volunteering observed. The study in identifying volunteering as an innovation for community development approaches notes gaps. The lack of management and administrative capacity and inadequate monitoring of programmes and supervision are further challenges. The design of service programmes needs to grapple with other issues such as the high turnover of servers; negative perceptions of volunteering; high expectations of beneficiaries; the poverty of volunteers; the lack of funding and sustainability of service programmes; and a lack of infrastructure.

b) Programming dynamics of National Action Plan (NAP) for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Zimbabwe (2003-2015)

Since 2006 UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (MoLSS) supported a large scale, multi-sector Programme of Support for OVC in partnership with 32 NGOs and 150 sub-grantees in implementation of National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVCs) phase 1 and 2. The NGOs technical support coupled with its right based approaches flair saw the Plan being administered with emphasis on social services officers producing measurable outputs and outcomes. This is usually far from their Public Assistance dispensing and probationary roles which has no log frames and detailed outcomes report.

Resources for NAP 1 were mobilised under the Programme of Support (PoS 1), which was a predictable funding mechanism through which interested donors could pool their resources (Ministry of Labour and Social Services, undated). Under a multi-donor fund called Programme of Support (PoS) to the NAP for OVC, over 30 NGOs and 150 CBOs are providing a wide range of services including school-related support, birth registration, psycho-social support, food and nutrition, health care, water and sanitation, child participation, child protection, education on nutrition, health and hygiene, economic strengthening, life-skills and vocational training, cash transfers and shelter (Banda & Ngwerume, 2014). An approach for monitoring the NAP for OVC that is harmonized within the National M&E system was to reach a better understanding of:

- What works and does not work
- Which implementation activities make a difference
- Who is most vulnerable and where
- How lessons learned can be applied to manage programs for OVC more effectively

According to Gutsa (2012), National Association of NGOs (NANGO), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) from the University of Zimbabwe and Progressio-Zimbabwe with the financial support from the European Union commissioned a research. The research aimed at examining the role of local government in improving access to education for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) under the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe. In the study findings, evaluation of NAP 1 activities showed that it achieved well on relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. It exceeded its target of reaching at least 25 % of most vulnerable children by reaching 410 000 OVC with services, at a time when the capacity for service delivery was declining in government and outside (Ministry of Labour and Social Services, 2011). NAP does not seek to measure quality and consistency of attendance of OVCs at school as it is mainly focusing on enrolment rates. Also, major challenges of focusing on enrolment rates are that children may be enrolled at school but not learning because they are hungry.

According to Laver et.al (no date) the NAP for OVC Monitoring and Evaluation operational challenges were Indicators needing to cover all levels in the results pyramid (input process, output, outcome and impact) adhering to national & international reporting standards. Secondly meet program reporting needs without burdening the system - weighing up “Nice to know versus Need to Know”, Meet need for “beneficiary” versus ‘Activity’ data. They further note need of PPM approaches confronting problems of double counting, quality coupled with need for inclusion of routine, non-routine and informal data sources. This was as well as development of an operational research agenda adhering to one data flow system while understanding multiple user needs. Limitations of National system Issues around data “ownership”.

Secondly, Laver et al note the NAP for OVCs Monitoring and Evaluation operational challenges as having been Different funding cycles; negative perceptions of M&E, need to strike balance between program needs and national needs. Capacity building needs– needed to specifically develop OVC program capacity – but within national capacity building model .Operational Research Agenda - need for operational research agenda on basis of challenges identified through routine monitoring process. Pilot phase – needed to factor in time and resources for this critical step; mentorship essential (Laver, et al., no date).

Pathways for enhanced Social Work and PPM harnessing for service users enhanced functioning

As FAO emphasises, people who are affected by a project or programme must be involved in all stages of it, including the planning, implementation and monitoring. This is the only way that the essential 'human element' of the project or programme can be incorporated in it. It is also important that in such cases, as FAO further observes, the planners and extension workers regard the people as active and equal participants in the development process, not as passive 'objects' of development. The aim should be a team approach, in which both professionals and people learn from each other (Food and Agricultural Organisation Documents Rpository, n.d).

Proactiveness in evidence based approaches knowledge management

According to Mbigi (2014), questionnaires, case studies, empiricism, philosophy and interviews are now redundant research techniques not relevant for social workers usage. Currently, participation action research discourse analysis, phenomenology, critical theory, cooperative enquiry, grounded theory, appreciative inquiry and critical rationalism are alternative viable research approaches (Mbigi, 2014, p. 24). Social workers facilitated participatory research particularly youth and women organizations in cooperation with Rural District Councils and resource persons to develop and adapt climate change adaptation.

Zimbabwean Knowledge Management platforms participation by social workers

Social workers visibility should be increased at occasional knowledge management platforms convened across the country on a regular basis. These platforms include UNICEF Zimbabwe Country office hosted Centre for Collaborative Research and Evaluation hosted Research in Progress Brown bag seminars, The UN Women Zimbabwe country office also convenes the Gender forum, a critical platform for dissemination of Gender programming and advocacy oriented programming.

Social work curriculum alignments for greater PPM elements inclusion

Schools of social work's curriculum inclusion of Social Ecology and Environmental Justice elements. This ideally can be in the form of Post Graduate applied courses in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Social Impact Assessment (SIA), Public Participation (PP). Incorporation of such components galvanizes the Social Work's profession visibility as a champion of sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

Development of Social Work centric PPM fieldwork manuals

It is imperative that schools of social work develop their own PPM fieldwork manuals, covering the teaching and learning content of unique social work PPM methods for fieldwork. This is particularly important considering that each institution is unique in terms of the prevailing socio-economic conditions, challenges and experiences, the social work education curriculum in a given country. Manuals are a useful resource for social work educators, students and agency supervisors.

The above is buttressed by Rwomire (2011)'s assertions that

Rapid social change in LDCs is closely linked to the technological, economic and political changes occurring in these societies. Notwithstanding these phenomenal changes, not enough attention has been given to the human and social repercussions of these forces of modernization. Although we are witnessing relatively high levels of economic growth in some of these countries, the rise in material standards does not seem to be commensurate with improvement in human values and social standards.

Conclusion

Discussion and arguments in the paper have illustrated social workers' reliance on a toolkit of well laid out programming approaches encompassing monitoring and evaluation when engaged in social and community development projects. There is no developmental social work to talk about when PPM is not embedded in social and community development interventions. While it is evident from the study that even though PPM is emphasised gaps in holistic pro poor social work interventions still result when emphasis is applied more on the project cycle and its components whilst alienating beneficiaries and service users lived experience.. Of significance is that PPM may emphasise on indicators which may not also factor in service users lifeworlds like the NAP for OVCs emphasis on access and enrolment in education by children whilst they may come to school hungry.

Bibliography

Banda, r. & Ngwerume, C., 2014. A Generation in Transition: The Dynamics of Social Services Provision in Zimbabwe. In: *Promoting social work for Zimbabwe's Development*. Bindura: Bindura University of Science Education, pp. 175-203.

Chitereka, C., 2009. Social Work Practice in a Developing Continent: The case of Africa. *Advances in Social Work*, 10(2), pp. 144-156.

Dhemba, J., 2012. Fieldwork in Social Work Education and Training: Issues and Challenges in the Case of Eastern and Southern Africa. *Social Work and Society*, 10(1).

Food and Agricultural Organisation Documents Repository, n.d. *Guidelines on social analysis for rural area development planning*. [Online]
Available at: http://www.fao.org/docrep/T1660E/t1660e02.htm#P709_86169
[Accessed 20 June 2016].

Grunwald, K. & Thiersch, H., 2009. The concept of the lifeworld orientation for social work and social care. *Journal of Social work practice*, 23(2), pp. 131-146.

Gutsa, I., 2012. *The role of local government in improving access to education for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) under the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe (NAP for OVCs)*, Harare: National Association of Non Governmental Organisations.

International Federation of Social Workers, 2012. *The Global Agenda For Social Work and Social Development A call to action*. [Online]
Available at: <http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/globalagenda2012.pdf>
[Accessed 6 May 2016].

Kaseke, E. & Dhemba, J., 2007. *Five-country Study on Service and Volunteering in Southern Africa: Zimbabwe Country Report*. [Online]
Available at:
http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resource/five_country_study_on_service_and_volunteering_in_southern_africa_zimbabwe_country_report
[Accessed 12 April 2015].

Laver, S. et al., no date. *Building on the National M&E System to Monitor the National Action Plan (NAP) for*. s.l., s.n.

Mbanje, P., 2015. *You are here: Home › News › National › '1 social worker for 14 000 children in Zim'*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/07/03/1-social-worker-for-14-000-children-in-zim/>

Mbigi, L., 2014. Innovation, Culture and African Management. In: A. Nyanguru, ed. *Promoting Social Work for Zimbabwe's Development*. Bindura: Bindura University of Science Education, pp. 21-34.

Rwomire, A., 2011. The Role of Social Work in National Development. *Social work and society*.

Wyatt, A., Mupedziswa, R. & Rayment, C., 2010. *Institutional capacity assessment Department of Social Services*, Harare: Ministry of Labour and Social Services.

About the Author



Tatenda Goodman Nhapi

Harare, Zimbabwe



Mr. **Tatenda Goodman Nhapi** is a Zimbabwean possessing frontline social work experience. He has an interest and experience in social policy administration and social development having practised frontline Social Work both for state and non-state actors in the Zimbabwean context. His interests include applied social research, child welfare and social policy. At present, he is practising as a Social Worker for a UK Local authority. He holds a Bachelor of Science Honours Social Work University of Zimbabwe and in 2015 he graduated in the five European universities collaborative Masters programme, Erasmus Mundus Masters in Advanced Development Social Work. Email: nhapaz@yahoo.com