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**Does Educating the Nation on Professional Identity Matter: the Case of Counseling,
Psychology and Social Work in Botswana?**

Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling EFH 645

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“Does educating the nation on professional identity matter; the case of counseling, psychology
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Does Educating the Nation on Professional Identity Matter: the Case of Counseling, Psychology and Social Work in Botswana?

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Abstract

The issue of professional identity in Botswana is not clear among some helping professionals offering psychological assistance. It is even more unclear among the public within Botswana making it moot issue. For the issue to be addressed this study investigated if it is important to educate the nation of Botswana on professional identity. The study used conceptual route to amplify the issue in order to make a verdict on the matter.

Key words: identity, professional, helper, skills, Botswana

Introduction

As part of establishing enlightenment, Maddocks (2018) listed social work, counseling and psychology as part of a group of 7 helping professionals that exist globally. One word brings the professions together which is “help”. Whatever the diversity or resemblance may be among the professions it is eminent that they all entail helping people. It is in that instance that knowledge of professional identity is imperative in understanding dynamics of the professions. Undertaking that, Peer (2016) explains identity as a negotiated experience that is defined not only by how students define themselves, but also by how others see them and Zydziunaite (2005) defines professional identity as the professional’s conception of what it means to be and act as concrete professional. Professional identity is not static but fluid; it is strongly influenced by how we see

ourselves, how we perceive others perceive us and how we are viewed by society at large, (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2004).

There is a contention on how professional identity develops with Ibara (1999) suggesting that it evolves through work, socialization and observation while Larson (1977) argues that it is based on shared expertise. With all that in plate this journal paper is a systematic review of some literature. The paper therefore at the end gives verdict on whether educating the nation on professional identity matter in Botswana within the circle of counseling, psychology and social work.

Contrary to Cardoso, Batista and Graça (2014) who stated that the research around the professional identity is wide, and runs through multiple areas of intervention, such as philosophy and psychology , social psychology and sociology the case is not so in Botswana. Research around professional identity in the case of social work, counseling and psychology is very partial. That acts as part of limitations to this paper however conceptualization of validated and reliable literature is used in this paper to produce contextualized information in relation to what is happening in Botswana.

Theoretical framework

In the quest for establishing whether it matters to educate the nation on professional identity, the paradigmical and theoretical underpinnings should importantly come to the fore. Professional identity has individual and collective strands. The former entails personal practical values, skills, knowledge, individual development, success at work, thoughts and inventions (Gazzola & Smith, 2007). On the other hand, joint professional identity connotes the status of a profession, a collective identity amongst its members, and indebtedness of the antiquity of a profession (Gale & Austin, 2003). By syllogism, a study of this nature would fittingly adopt Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theoretical perspective which the general populace consider principally

influential in investigations of identities in social milieu (Alves & Gazzola (2011). The theory owes its roots from Erik Erikson who is considered a pioneer in developing the concept of identity (Verling, 2014). Social identity is about someone's awareness of their belonging to certain social groups together with some emotive and value significance to the group membership (Tajfel, 1974).

In the steps of professional identity, a counsellor, a psychologist or a social worker, despite the overlaps, would be distinctive from either of the professions. If any dissimilarity is of necessity that a line is drawn, the public would, without doubt, easily understand the differences. This is so because, in the theory of social identity, the social class in the same social group is perceived to be alike with a shared frame of reference and norms, and become part of the 'in-group'.

Consequently, differences between others are amplified and thus categorized as the 'out-group' thereby making the in-group membership more distinctive and attractive (Pratt, 1998). With this understanding, the theory of professional identity would fittingly be appropriate in determining whether educating the nation on professional identity matter in the case of counselling, psychology and social work in Botswana.

The research questions

1. What is the significance of educating the nation about professional identity?
2. How does the society perceive a social worker, psychologist and a counsellor looking at their duties?
3. What are correspondences that match opportunities for counsellors, psychologists and social workers?
4. What are legal and ethical issues that relates with professional identities of psychologists, social workers and counsellors?

Purpose

1. To parade the importance of educating the nation about professional identity.
2. To display the roles played by social workers, counselors and psychologists in Botswana;
3. To show relationship between offered opportunities for counselors, social workers and psychologist with their professional identities.
4. The legal and ethical issues that arise in Botswana while practicing as a social worker, counselor and psychologist.

Literature review

Concept of Professional identity

Literature show professional identity as utilized in the dimension of believes, motives, values and experiences. In a study by Weiner and Torres (2016) their finding displayed school teachers' professional identity as "highly skilled, dedicated, and deserving of stature". In that aspect identity is demarcated by the people believes. From other researchers perspective professional identity means practices for instance Wenger (1998) contended that there is a profound connection between identity and practice. In support to that Widdicombe (1998) stated that identity is something we do, rather than something we have as such, it can be seen in terms of being expressed in practices.

Some scholars view professional identity as a part of a very wide socio-cultural setting of societal discourses (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) To clarify that contention Zimmerman (1998) proposed that professional identities can be multiple proposing three aspects of identity being course identity, which comes from the moment by moment organization of the interaction, e.g. being a speaker, listener, presenter, etc, second aspect being situated identity referring to the identities gained in a particular situation, e.g. being a service worker or customer in a service

setting; and a third aspect transportable identity which refers to applying or relating other identities, e.g. referring to one's gender, family role, along with the professional service identity. It would therefore be a precise to argue that professional identity is not at all a fixed phenomenon. It is an ongoing and performative process in which individuals draw on diverse resources to construct selves (Watson, 2006).

There are distinctions on the roles of a social worker, a counselor and a psychologist

Social work is a professional and creative enterprise in the service of humanity, and it strives to improve the wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities by mediating between them and their environment (Ambrosino, Heffernan, and Shuttlesworth, 2005). In a study by Jacques (1993) it is contended that since community development program involved the poor and the disadvantaged segments of the population then it provides an effective method of service delivery by social workers. That contention raises eyebrows that social workers specialize on helping marginalized groups in Botswana context.

A study by Lucas and Jongman (2017) stipulates the roles of social workers as enunciated in the new children's act of Botswana. The exhibited roles includes educating communities about children issues, reporting cases involving children to the police, facilitating foster care. In deduction social workers are the children's advocates in Botswana. They safeguard the right of the children and protect them from harm.

Botswana Labour Market Observatory (2016) presented that psychologists study mental processes and human behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how people and other animals relate to one another and the environment. Their line of duty and identify therefore is displayed by ability to appraise, diagnose and treat clients in the dimension of mental health.

On a different study to inspect on the roles of a counselor Navin (1989) revealed a suggestion of counselors being Information Service, Consulting Service, Counseling Service, Referral Service,

Placement and Follow-up Service as well as Evaluation and Research Service providers.

Although there are some correlations on the roles of counselors with those of social workers as stipulated by cited authors, there is a line that is visible between the two professions.

Professional identity: legal and ethical implications

Ethical dilemmas can arise when mental health professionals accept referrals that are not within their scope of practice (Rogers, 1987). According to Shuman and Greenberg (2003) the case is the same when mental health professionals engage in multiple roles. It attests the need for knowledge on professional identity so help evade overlapping practices between psychologists, counselors and psychologists. In order to avoid role conflict, mental health professionals should be cognizant of the roles that they can play in legal proceedings and clearly define their roles when working in the legal arena (Woody, 2009). Professional identity therefore is a necessity in the law environments and populations. Knapp, Gottlieb, Berman & Handelsman (2007) note that laws that govern mental health practice and the teaching of psychology come from a variety of sources and the uniformity between ethical and legal requirements make it possible for psychologists to execute their function with much ease.

As revealed by participants in a study by Selemogwe (2013), psychologists with a master's degree in clinical psychology are lacking some of the skills required of forensic mental health practitioners. The same has however revealed that the same psychologists are the ones used as witness experts in the courts of law. That indicates a query of knowledge of professional identity by the jurists.

Bernard and Goodyear (2004) expound that the concern for ethical, legal and effective professional practice of counselling and other human related services requires that professionals participate in supervision of their work. It would be through supervision that professional

identity will be constructed. The supervisors will help instill the right beliefs, values and perception of the profession.

There is misperception on vacancies/posts advertised for counselors, social workers and psychologist.

Jobs Botswana (2018) which is an online advertiser for existing vacancies displayed demand for counselors from various organization with a demand of a puzzling qualification. In one instance the website advertised on behalf of Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention and Support Center for a post of Project Counselors. The only mentioned requirement was Degree in Social Work. In another subsequent incident the website advertised on behalf of Daisy R Solutions for a post of a Locum Counselor. The duty as of the locum counselor as advertised was to conduct counseling for the company employee and their families. Astonishingly on the advert the requirement displayed was at least a Degree in Social Work. For both posts identities described on the posts were mostly suiting professional identities of counselors and psychologist than that of social worker. That omission rationalizes the question of educating the nation on professional identity.

Discussions

Sources have drawn a picture about professional identity education importance for the vital helping professionals being the counselors, psychologists and social workers. The sources have further given a distinct between the vital helping professionals. Counselors have been painted to be helping professional who work to provide a variety of counseling, rehabilitation, as well as support services. The duties of counselors in Botswana however vary greatly, contingent on their area of specialty, which is mostly determined by the location at which they work and the people they are to serve. Counselors may work with children, youths, adults, or families with diverse issues which include mental disorders, addictions, school problems and life crisis. It has stood

out in the literature reviewed that governing role of counselors is providing counseling service to people.

Professional identity seems to be utilized in the dimension of believes, motives, values and experiences. The people in Botswana identify psychologists, counselors and social workers mostly by perceptions and believes. Believes are however misconceptions in some instances the nation is consequently clearly in blank status of social workers counselors and psychologists.

That indicates lack of knowledge about professional identity on the trio of helping professions.

Researches have shown that organizations in Botswana have employed social workers as directors, managers, counselors, program officers, administrators, lecturers and researchers who teach and conduct research on child welfare issues (Maundeni, 2009). Social workers have played multiple roles within the Botswana sectors of practice. In the presence of the counselors with the major role of counseling the social workers are identified as the counselors. It is flawless that employers have seen and perceived the social workers more the most capable than the counselors and psychologists in helping professional basket.

Jurists expect psychologists to express their opinion on the ultimate issue in criminal responsibility and child custody evaluations opinion on the ultimate issue in criminal responsibility and child custody evaluations (Allan & Louw, 1997). Since the law of Botswana (children's acts) places the care of children upon social workers there is still some priority given to psychologist on issues pertaining to children responsibilities.

Literature has revealed that social work is a profession displayed by strong desire to help improve the lives of people. Most social workers specialize in serving a particular population especially the most vulnerable in the society. The major role that abridges the duty of a social worker is delivering services that meet the welfare needs of people. That entails the social workers helping clients who are physically disabled, sick, having substance problems and

poverty. Social workers are also competent on issues that affect families such as abuse and negligence of children. With such experience in that area social workers rightfully advocate for existence of improved services and policies in the community.

Verdicts are that psychologists concentrate regularly on patterns that will help them to understand and predict behaviors by means of scientific procedures, methods, principles, or to test their ideas. Because of that psychologist ought to be identified by the ability to help increase understanding behaviors and mental processes among individuals, groups, institutions, organizations, nations, and cultures.

Discovery is that the talk of the town professions is causing an ambiguity in the nation of Botswana. Issues of competence question the practice of the professionals. That even implicates the legal and ethical issues while practicing as either a counselor, a social worker or a counselor.

Position and conclusion

There is an element of ambiguity in Botswana to distinguish differences between a psychologist, a counselor and a social worker. The ambiguity is not limited to the people in Botswana but goes beyond the nation to the trio professionals as well. They are now practicing beyond their line of practice. That is influenced by the nation's perceptions about them with some vacancies in organizations describing duties to be performed by a social worker describing duties of a counselor and vice versa. The social workers even practice and play multiple role within the spectrum of helping professions. More consultation and collaborations between psychologists, social workers and counselors would help eliminate the ambiguity among the trio professions.

Educating the nation about professional identity will help eliminate malpractice. That is because if the people had knowledge about professional identify they would have a sense of autonomy to choose their helpers. Currently people go to the helper with an assumption about their helpers

and some with misleading information about them. It would even give the helping professionals being the counselors, the social workers and the psychologist liberty to refer their clients at ease.

Hughes (2013) presented counselling as an example of a profession that has a clear identity because it is underpinned by a professional association which is a body of knowledge nationally recognized qualifications. With Botswana having an existence of Botswana Counseling association a prediction is that there is a potential for educating the nation on professional identity of counselors

If the government officials and stake holders had decent knowledge about professional identity then some ethical and legal complications would be eliminated. They could make a sound judgement on making referral, consultations and collaborations. At the court of law all the trio of helping professionals offering psychological assistance would complicate each other towards a good subpoena.

In conclusion, knowledge about professional identity is very important. Among counselors, psychologists and social workers there are some shared roles that make the professions parallel. Despite the resemblance there are lines of disparity that make the professions unique separately. The knowledge of disparity would be clear to those possessing education on professional identity of the professions. Exclusively people who would want to pursue a career in one of the 3 helping professions offering psychological assistance. They would identify the specific line (of professional belonging) without having had a wrong assumption about the profession while the reality manifests a diverse monster.

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