

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Wrestling with the Present to Re-Imagine the Future of Social Entrepreneurship in Social Work: A South African Context

Goitseone Leburu¹ and Rebecca Skhosana²

Received: 31 July 2023 | Revised: 12 June 2024 | Published: 11 July 2024

Reviewing Editor: Dr. Olajumoke Ogunsanya, Durban University of Technology

Abstract

South Africa faces many problems that require the attention of social workers. It wrestles with youth unemployment, and social work graduates are not immune to this plight. Despite the profession's mandate of promoting social change, empowerment and liberation, the social work curriculum fails to prepare graduates for entrepreneurial opportunities. Moreover, there is a dearth of research on how the current curriculum transforms and empowers graduates to explore the untapped space of social entrepreneurship in curbing unemployment. This article utilises the Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis method to explore how unemployed social work graduates can re-imagine the future through social entrepreneurship. The review confirms that little is known on how social work graduates could apply entrepreneurship to reduce unemployment. The authors argue that the current social work curriculum must incorporate social entrepreneurship as a model for graduates to respond to the country's unemployment crisis. This is significant since institutions of higher learning strive for transformation in developing innovative, long-term solutions to persistent social problems.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; social work; social work graduates; unemployment; youth

Introduction

South Africa is confronted by many problems that require the attention of social workers. Youth unemployment is one of many critical issues that the country is wrestling with, and it remains the biggest impediment to the hopes of many young people. Cloete (2015) describes youth unemployment as an economic hurdle. Despite the country's transition into democracy which produced a boom in the South African economy, unemployment remains high (Triegaardt, 2008; Rodrick, 2008). The global financial crisis dented the South African economy and exacerbated unemployment (Bilgili *et al.*, 2017; Nazarova *et al.*, 2017). In South Africa, the causes of graduate unemployment can be attributed to the country's inability to generate growth momentum since the onset of democracy (Rodrick, 2008). Some authors attribute it to a lack of employability, the type of qualification received, the field of study, quality of secondary school education, quality of university education, incessant job searches, and lack of work experience (Oluwajodu *et al.*, 2015). Another factor contributing to increased graduate unemployment is technological advancement, which results in the substitution of workers by machines (Rathbone, 2017). Despite the causal factor, unemployment remains a key determinant of poverty in South Africa and labour market inequalities reflect deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities (Zizzamia, 2020). The ability of South African companies to hire graduates is undermined by an education system that does not provide adequate skills and strict labour laws that make hiring and firing of workers an onerous task. Moreover, the apartheid-era strategy of creating townships where many Black citizens are compelled to live on the periphery of cities complicates residents' access to the formal job market (Naidoo, 2021).

To ensure a dignified existence for all South Africans, achieving full employment and sustainable livelihoods is crucial. This can be done by increasing employment, productivity, and income. South Africa aims to reduce the unemployment rate to 6% by 2030 and create 11 million jobs by then (National Planning Commission, 2011). In stark contrast to this commitment and the growth in the graduate labour force in the country, graduate

¹University of South Africa, leburge@unisa.ac.za | <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7487-200X>

²University of South Africa, skhosrm@unisa.ac.za | <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0441-3369>

unemployment continues to increase, complicating an already chronic overall unemployment rate. This phenomenon is problematic because it scuppers scarce human capita which is detrimental to the economy (Oluwajodu *et al.*, 2015). The social issues of unemployed young people have drawn attention, and policy solutions are in place to help. However, social work graduates also face unemployment. In the first quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate for young graduates aged 15-24 decreased from 40.3% to 32.6% and increased to 22.4% for those aged 25-34. Some social work graduates remain unemployed despite their qualifications (Kosie, 2022). As a result, learning economics and enterprise skills in pursuit of social entrepreneurship is important in the trajectory of learning. This could be used as one of the creative approaches that develop interventions to improve the entrepreneurial opportunities and employability of social work graduates.

Social entrepreneurship is focused on the fact that most young graduates are the biggest cohort of new job seekers and are a vulnerable group regarding unemployment since they do not have enterprise skills (Cloete, 2015; Levinsohn *et al.*, 2014). The dearth of research on whether the current social work curriculum transforms and empowers graduates also justifies this article. Moreover, within the social work profession, there is limited research on the utilisation of enterprise skills that seek to promote social entrepreneurship. This is despite the professional's mandate to respond to social problems, empowerment, and liberation of people. For instance, students in other professions, including business and medicine, are taught to pursue economic objectives and form their own companies. In contrast, students in the social work field are frequently discouraged from adopting an entrepreneurial mindset (Bent-Goodley, 2002). Social workers possess valuable skills that could support those who find themselves unemployed (Carey, 2017). They have a long history of assisting economically marginalised groups and communities. However, research demonstrates that in South Africa, social welfare organisations, specifically Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are closing due to a lack of funding and others face a drastic shortage of social workers (Skhosana, 2020; Velaphi, 2012; Skhosana *et al.*, 2014; Budlender and Proudlock, 2011; Lombard, 2008; Loffel, 2008). This situation exposes South Africa's most vulnerable groups to risks of unemployment (Skhosana, 2020). Social workers need to take a stand and embrace economics and enterprise skills in social entrepreneurship as an essential hybrid combining macro practice principles of social work and corporate innovation activities. "Innovative solutions are urgently required to address today's complex socioeconomic issues, including youth unemployment" (Germak and Singh, 2009: 80). Due to the immense budget shortfalls and cost cutting strategies in both the public and private sectors, social workers must embrace the straightforward business sense found in social entrepreneurship and business innovation activities (Nandan and Scott, 2013; Germak and Singh, 2009).

This article explores the unemployment of social work graduates and re-imagines the future of social entrepreneurial social work in South Africa. It examines the current state of social work unemployment, identifies the challenges faced by graduates, and offers a vision for the future of social entrepreneurship in South Africa. The research objectives are designed to explore the plight of social work graduates in South Africa, who face considerable challenges in securing employment after graduation. The article further describes the root causes of the problem and proffers recommendations for a new approach to social work that embraces social entrepreneurship as a means of creating employment opportunities for graduates in their quest to re-imagine the future. Social issues keep evolving, thus requiring relevant and contextual interventions that are informed by practice and education. This is crucial for mapping the future where social workers can adopt proactive and innovative roles in their practices to address complex challenges such as unemployment. Furthermore, re-imagining the future is essential for acknowledging how social workers can integrate entrepreneurial strategies into their work, potentially resulting in more efficient and influential practices. This not only benefits clients and communities they serve, but rather contributes to their own development (Pereira *et al.*, 2024). Looking at the current socio-economic and political situation of South Africa, there are high possibilities that the unemployment crisis could worsen. Therefore, it is important to attend to unemployment among social work graduates now to preserve the future and integrity of the profession. The article is organised as follows: the next section justifies the research methodology adopted, followed by a literature review on graduate unemployment in South Africa with specific reference to social work and the role of social work in addressing unemployment. Subsequently, a discussion of the social entrepreneurship perspective is provided, and the article terminates by proffering pragmatic suggestions on how the social work curriculum could prepare social work graduates for social entrepreneurship.

Methodology

This article utilized the Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis (FRMS) method to answer the research question: “How can social work graduates utilize the enterprise skills and knowledge they acquired to venture into social entrepreneurship?” FRMS comprises a literature review which offers an overview of the state of science concerning a certain topic and identifies gaps in existing knowledge (Fawcett, 2013). The FMRS's goal is to address epistemological gaps related to a specific study field. “Unlike some other forms of review such as systematic reviews that strive towards breadth and exhaustive searches, the focused mapping review searches within specific, pre-determined journals” (Irvine *et al.*, 2019; Bradbury-Jones *et al.*, 2017). FMRS focuses on specific, recent, and relevant journals within a set timeframe. The information obtained is then mapped to synthesize knowledge within that field (Bradbury-Jones *et al.*, 2019). It further provides an overview of what is available on a specific topic (Perryman, 2016). To answer the research question, the authors followed the three-stage FMRS approach, namely, focus, mapping, and synthesis (Bradbury-Jones *et al.*, 2019). This article utilized a literature review sourced from academic literature, grey literature, organizational reports, and policy briefs (Leburu *et al.*, 2022). The authors searched for journals in databases such as SocINDEX, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, Academic Search Premier, Academic OneFile, Google Scholar, Sabinet, Scopus, and news documents to conduct this review. Because the authors were interested in a critical review of social entrepreneurship in social work, they had a clear disciplinary focus. Thus, they restricted their search to the specificity of the title.

In addition, the search was based on the following themes: social work education in South Africa, social work graduates' unemployment in South Africa and social entrepreneurship in social work. Firstly, the authors searched for articles on Google Scholar with 5 years' publication using “social entrepreneurship in social work in South Africa.” The authors could not retrieve any information that is social work specific. From this phase, the search was opened to 10 years (2013-2023) and open beyond the South African context. A dire scarcity of literature on entrepreneurial social work compelled the authors to extend the time frame to 2002 and even then, the search was done per sub-heading of the themes. The extension of the publication years was also done so that the authors could capture the history of social work in South Africa and observe, in tandem, the implementation of social entrepreneurship in the profession over the years. As Bradbury-Jones *et al.* (2019) affirm, FMR incorporates the calibration process to add rigour to the process. To ensure this, the authors had frequent contacts to first map the search parameters and then review these when the need arose. Mapping review was also conducted to characterize studies in ways other than eliciting their findings (Irvine *et al.*, 2019). In this regard, only articles that met the inclusion criteria of the mentioned themes were read in full and interrogated. Only documents written in English were read in full. The flowchart below from Strydom *et al.* (2020) demonstrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the ultimate articles.



Figure 1: Flowchart demonstrating inclusion process

To reflect the diverse terms for describing unemployment of social work graduates, any paper that contained such key works in the title was included in the review. This was done by each author individually, but to enhance rigour, the two authors worked together to check each other's retrieval processes and thereby confirm inter-rater consistency. This process eliminated uncertainty and the authors found this form of calibration to be crucial to the process. The two authors took responsibility for journals from which articles were retrieved. The contents page of each issue of each journal was reviewed. Data extraction was done independently but the authors discussed a selection of papers to enhance rigour. No computer software was used in the analysis of the data. Authors did not

critically appraise the included studies for quality because the purpose was to profile what was happening in the field rather than to draw conclusions from the included studies. Once the details from all the papers had been extracted onto the tables, the authors identified common themes in the included articles (Aveyard and Bradbury-Jones, 2021). Consequently, the authors ensured rigour in the preparation, organizing and reporting phases (Elo *et al.*, 2014). The focus during the preparation phase was on data collection, sampling strategy and analysis. This was followed by a clear description of the unit of analysis and categories adopted to address the research question (Strydom *et al.*, 2020). The organization phase involved categorizing the data that was retrieved from articles. The last phase involved reporting the findings systematically in an article format (Elo *et al.*, 2014).

Brief Overview of Social Work Education in South Africa

Social work has been formally practised in South Africa since the 1930s, when the first social work college was founded at the Jan H. Hofmeyr School of Social Work as the first institution to train black social workers in South Africa (Gray and Mazibuko, 2002). However, for decades social work promoted Western assumptions about practice and education. Currently in South Africa, professional social work education and training is offered through a four-year generic degree curriculum. A curriculum is defined as planned learning and it is guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually inside or outside the school (Kerr, 1968). The curriculum exists at three levels namely, what is planned for the students, what is delivered to the students, and what the students experience (Prideaux, 2003). The exit level of the social work qualification in South Africa is NQF level 8, with a minimum of 480 credits. The consequent certification is categorised as a bachelor's degree with a professional focus. Professional bachelor's degree students are prepared for professional training, postgraduate courses, or professional practice in a variety of fields. The certification is recognised by the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training. The programme's goal is to provide a well-rounded professional education that equips reflexive graduates to connect with people at the micro- to macro-levels of social work in a dynamic socio-political and economic setting. It consists of sets of values, skills, knowledge, and applied competencies at the core of the social work discipline, which account for at least 50% of the curriculum proportional to the total credit weighting. The remaining courses are made up of fundamentals like communication studies, computer literacy, and academic literacy. Additionally, the qualification consists of courses from ancillary but related fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, criminology, and economics (Council for Higher Education, 2016).

The purpose statement of the qualification states that it seeks to prepare graduates to engage people in problem-solving activities, promote social transformation and development, social harmony, and people's empowerment and liberation in the form of macro practice (Council of Higher Education, 2016). Despite this purpose statement, the enterprise knowledge and skills are not at the core of this curriculum. Additionally, the nine competencies and skills required are mute on preparing students in the enterprise world as social entrepreneurs. In their study on transforming social work, Turton and Schmid (2020) emphasise the need to interrogate social work education. The authors suggest that the dominant social work curriculum is ineffective because it is culturally unsuitable, ignores alternative information, marginalises structural problems, is costly, and unmatched to local South African needs. The curriculum must be responsive to changing values and expectations in education if it is to remain useful in that the range of enterprise knowledge and skills selected for the curriculum must be adapted according to the needs of society. When developing national standards for social work education, consideration must be given to structural and economic factors that contribute to poverty, unemployment, and inequality in South Africa (Council for Higher Education, 2016). Moreover, the debate over the role of social work in economic development is critical for contextualising social entrepreneurship as a community development strategy (Lombard and Strydom, 2011). To give students a solid foundation in the knowledge, theory, principles, and skills of the profession and the ability to apply these to professional contexts, the qualification emphasizes general principles and theory along with procedural knowledge. Preparing a workforce that is ready to use a generalist approach in micro, mezzo, and macro practice has been at the core of the undergraduate and graduate social work curriculum. It is widely acknowledged by social science scholars in contemporary South Africa that engaging in partnerships and implementing macro intervention projects in communities is central to the training of social work students (Raniga and Seepamore, 2017).

Social Work Graduates' Unemployment in South Africa

South Africa has been wrestling with high unemployment rates, particularly among the youth. Despite the recent efforts made to address this crisis, it remains a significant social problem in the country calling for immediate

attention (Odunlami and Akanle, 2021; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2017; Nandan and Scott, 2013). The gravity of the situation calls for a comprehensive approach that involves the government, private sector, and civil society (Odunlami and Akanle, 2021; Bhorat *et al.*, 2017; Graham and Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodu *et al.*, 2014; Altman, 2022; Baldry, 2016). Research demonstrates that unemployment is a social welfare problem that is inseparable from social work (Zastrow and Hessenauer, 2022; Chandra and Shang, 2021; Strømhaug, and Halvorsen, 2023; Lodemel, *et al.*, 2014). Although social workers are key role players in service delivery to individuals, families and groups affected by unemployment, there is a dearth of literature on how social workers could assist unemployed youth (Liang *et al.*, 2017; Roets *et al.*, 2012). In this article, youth unemployment is defined as young people who are social work graduates specifically unemployed but with the capacity, skills, and eligibility to work.

Students who enter the social work profession have graduate attributes evident in the degrees and licensure examinations. However, they can only access demanding work; currently, they experience unemployment and low compensation due to the profession's historic emphasis on service rather than entrepreneurship (Godwin *et al.*, 2022). In South Africa, over 9 000 professionally trained social workers are unemployed. The Department of Social Development (DSD) hired only 3 465 social work graduates between the 2014/15 financial year and March 2020. This emerged when the Department briefed the social development portfolio on the employment status of social work graduates (Mqhina, 2020). In August 2022, unemployed social workers marched to express their discontent and outrage at the remarks made by Social Development Minister, Lindiwe Zulu, that social workers who were funded by the DSD would be prioritised for employment (Visagie, 2022). In South Africa, the DSD is the key conduit for the delivery of social welfare services, and it employs majority of social workers. Moreover, the DSD introduced a scholarship to help fund students which could increase the number of social workers. This was after the profession was declared a scarce skill. The National Development Plan proposes that the sector should employ 55 000 social service professionals by 2030. These sentiments are shared by the Deputy Director-General of the DSD, Khumbula Ndaba (Mqhina, 2020).

Ndaba reported that DSD absorbed 3 719 state-sponsored social worker bursary holder graduates out of 9 000 graduates. The employment period dates back from the 2014/15 financial year to 2019/2020. The number of unemployed scholarship graduates stood at 5 142 with the highest in the Eastern Cape at 1 164, followed by Limpopo with 1 159, KwaZulu-Natal, 1 133, Western Cape, 404, Mpumalanga, 353, Free State with 265, North West, 243, Northern Cape, 50 and Gauteng, none. KwaZulu-Natal led the pack with 1 382, followed by Limpopo, 530, Eastern Cape, 284, Mpumalanga, 90, Gauteng, 30, North West, 18, Free State, 11, Northern Cape, 6, and Western Cape, none. There were 488 students on government scholarship programmes at different years of completion of studies while a total of 4 024 students graduated without any government assistance (Mqhina, 2020). Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds and need extra support and guidance to complete their education, gain skills, or find work (Eyester *et al.*, 2016). This calls for social workers to advocate for and work towards the gainful employment of youths and entrepreneurship. This is supported by Germak and Singh (2009: 91) who emphasise that to address the changing environment, schools of social work should become beacons in educating social work students regarding the practice of advanced management techniques.

The rate of unemployment amongst social workers is depressing because social workers are key in the delivery of mandatory social welfare services. An article by BusinessTech (2022), reported that the Department of Social Development claims that South Africa has a critical shortage of social service professionals, but government departments have effectively reached their limit in the number of workers they can absorb. The irony is that government has tried to address the shortage of social service workers by creating the social work scholarship programme but once the graduates have completed their studies, they are not absorbed into meaningful employment. Admittedly, the DSD absorbs some of the professionals funded by this department, but the majority are taken as mere volunteers. The department admits that this is not enough since they have budget constraints (BusinessTech, 2022). This is an unacceptable compromise and often generates resentment amongst those in the social work profession. This situation has thrust many graduates into panic mode, frustrated and demotivated. Most of them, as depicted by the above statistics, remain at home with their qualifications with utterly no prospect of employment (BusinessTech, 2022).

To answer the call for the employment of social work graduates, the Professional Board for Social Work and Health and Welfare Sector, Education and Training Authority engaged different stakeholders, universities, experienced veteran social workers, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations to develop a Social Work Readiness Programme (SWRP). The purpose of this programme is to empower newly qualified and

unemployed social workers. Secondly, the programme aims to enhance and facilitate the employability of unemployed social workers and newly qualified social workers through a custom-designed capacity development programme that focuses on knowledge, skills and experience to support their readiness and transition to employment (South African Council for Social Service Professionals [SACSSP], 2021). The programme also aims to promote an understanding of organisational structure and culture, clarify roles and responsibilities. Additionally, the programme seeks to promote interdependent collaboration in line with the mandate and strategic objectives of the employers. The programme is still being rolled out and its effectiveness has yet to be evaluated.

Social Entrepreneurship in Social Work

In the social work profession's historical context, emerging social workers are educated to work for others, and they seldom discuss social entrepreneurship beyond macro-level private practice (Godwin *et al.*, 2022: 475) and even less on social entrepreneurship. Across social work fields globally, social entrepreneurship is rooted in professional codes of ethics (British Association of Social Workers [BASW], 2021; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017; SACSSP, 2020), curriculum policy statements and broader disciplinary values of service, social justice, and competence. It is essential at this point to elucidate the meaning of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship varies in conceptualisation as compared to traditional entrepreneurship. The primary focus of social entrepreneurship is generating social values rather than generating economic benefits (Husain-Talero and Cortés, 2021). This phenomenon is an extension of entrepreneurship into the non-profit sector and this extension is deeply embedded in actual practices (Dahles *et al.*, 2010). Godwin *et al.* (2022: 475) extend the aforesaid definition by describing social entrepreneurship as a "community-based, for-profit business aimed at building a sustainable, fair, and socially just future by providing services which facilitate a social need within a specific population centred on connectedness, equality, and solidarity." As a result, "social entrepreneurship is perceived as a vital practice in social work that delivers pioneering, unique, and prolonged solutions to difficult and pervasive societal issues" (Nouman and Cnaan, 2021: 475). From these definitions, there is no consensus on the specific nuances within social entrepreneurship. In crystallising this definition, Nouman and Cnaan (2023: 2) refer to social entrepreneurship as a "practice among social workers that is carried out as an integral part of their professional activity, in all areas of practice, to address social issues through innovative solutions and transformative interventions toward social change."

Social work remains conspicuously absent from discussions regarding social entrepreneurship though its values and practices are closely aligned with social work (Berzin, 2012). For instance, Light (2009) restates the mission and motivation of the social entrepreneur as being socially driven, persistent, and optimistic. Arguably, these same characteristics are acquired by many social workers in that social work aims to improve the well-being of individuals and society. These descriptions imply potential connections in the mission and value between social work and social entrepreneurship (Berzin, 2012). Since the social work curriculum does not include economics and enterprise skills and knowledge related to social entrepreneurship competencies, there is an evident gap between education and execution in providing various social work entrepreneurship services outside of companies (Briar-Lawson *et al.*, 2020; Nandan *et al.*, 2015). To mitigate the disparities, social entrepreneurship-linked enterprise management skills must be introduced in the social work curriculum to ameliorate the position of unemployed youth in the community. In support, (Cai, 2013: 466) argues that "universities should provide support for their students' preparation for the workforce, with special attention to the relevance of their education programmes to the labour market's need and the quality of their graduates." Invariably, social workers witness the effects of political decisions and policies on the lives of the people they serve. Currently, social workers are exposed to social entrepreneurship that is reshaping the field by their working in NPOs, hence the need to augment their enterprise management skills and knowledge in social entrepreneurship training, leadership and management.

"Being business-like-minded should no longer connote a negative attribute of a social worker or a social service organisation as cautioned" (Germark and Singh, 2009: 92). It is noted with concern that as the non-profit sector continues to grow, the administrators of social service organisations are not social workers, but public affairs and business professionals. One of the most constructive ways of helping social workers become viable and sustainable is to foster social entrepreneurs' business management skills and expertise. Support structures and networks rely on professionals who understand both traditional businesses and social enterprises to build social entrepreneurs' capacity to become sustainable without diluting their social service mission (European Union, 2017) and again this is a serious concern. Social workers must be acutely aware of the managerial discourses that are reshaping their discipline and now incorporate applications of enterprise sector methods such as strategic planning,

market research, and consumer demand as part of the social entrepreneurship curriculum. “Social entrepreneurship is predicated to address the trending youth unemployment concerns due to the unhappiness and relative insufficiency of the governmental and private sectors to address social challenges” (Stanlie *et al.*, 2023: 470). “In social entrepreneurship, a social goal and an enterprise strategy are combined, and the latter is missing in some social work curricula. To accomplish the purpose of resolving societal challenges, the entrepreneur gathers resources and earns money from these endeavours” (Shahverdi *et al.*, 2018: 342). Therefore, social entrepreneurship is considered an alternative method of solving unemployment among social work graduates. Social entrepreneurship has two key characteristics: engaging in business commercialisation activities to make money while also pursuing social welfarist objectives (Dees, 2001). A study conducted by Malgas (2022) on social entrepreneurship found that in the setting of formal employment shortages, social entrepreneurship provides a feasible avenue for revenue generation. The study further confirmed that every employment generated by social entrepreneurship benefits people on several levels, including individuals, households, and the local economy. In terms of social capital formation, the advantages outweigh the financial contribution of income since more jobs mean better prospects for education, stable communities, and improvement in people's quality of life, in addition to boosting self-worth, dignity, confidence, and self-sufficiency.

The problem of unemployment among social work graduates could be attributed to their failure to identify and pursue possibilities (Agbenyegah, 2022). Moreover, higher education institutions provide career guidance on the assumption that all graduates have control over their career paths and equal access to the labour market, yet this is not the reality on the ground (Baldry, 2016). Therefore, the introduction of social entrepreneurship with specific focus on enhancing enterprise skills and knowledge could culminate in a tailored and community-driven response, build community capabilities, and generate social capital among the youth. The introduction of social entrepreneurship linked enterprise management into the field of social work could further promote social justice and advocacy, identify and challenge systemic barriers. In addition, it will endorse equitable access to resources, opportunities, and social rights. It will further advocate for policy reforms to address social injustices within the communities. Moreover, engaging in social entrepreneurship entails exposing social work graduates to innovative and creative concepts that serve as significant stimulants to the entrepreneurial attitude of the youth (Agbenyegah, 2022). “Graduate employability has become a highly topical and contested theme as employers think that graduates are not suitably prepared for the labour market” (Tran, 2015: 6). Therefore, social entrepreneurship in South Africa as a developing country is ideal for the younger generation (Urban, 2008). Unemployed social work graduates need to be exposed to the enterprise sector during their fieldwork practice to acquire relevant economics, enterprise skills and knowledge. In this case, a variety of work-integrated learning, short courses and workshops must be offered to instil the knowledge, talents, and skills necessary to launch and successfully operate a social enterprise.

Both societal issues and the field of social work are changing. Therefore, the researchers call for lifelong learning as well as the acquisition of new values and competencies to keep abreast with changes in the sector. An important aspect required for the future of the profession is rebranding. This can be done by altering how services are rendered to generate professional and monetary growth. However, this alteration must take place without sacrificing the profession's ultimate goals of serving and empowering vulnerable populations (Godwin *et al.*, 2022). To immerse in this process, Boles (2021) asserts that social work should be defined in ways that make sense to the business community so that it is inclusive of social entrepreneurship principles. Considering the future of social work, this rebranding can occur at education and practice levels. In terms of education, institutions of higher learning, specifically schools of social work, must incorporate social entrepreneurship into the curriculum (Germak and Singh, 2009). In this recalibrated curriculum, social work educators should engage in curriculum design and development of modules that include business management, economics and accounting as components of the new qualification. The aim is to have graduates who are capacitated with business management skills, financial education and labour market opportunities. The researchers also advocate for re-evaluation of the matric requirements for prospective social work students. In this context, one of the business subjects should be added as a prerequisite for enrolment in the programme.

European Union (2017) reported on the need for capacitating social work students with business enterprise skills. As the “how part” can be discussed through various platforms such as symposia, conferences and different platforms where professional bodies such as the SACSSP, Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions [ASASWEI] and International Federation of Social Work [IFSW] meet. The different government sectors and NGOs should also be engaged in this process. This collaboration would ensure that the institutions of higher

learning offer relevant, contextual and responsive content to the needs identified in practice. Godwin *et al.* (2022) support that to reimagine the future of social work with social entrepreneurship, there is a need for social work educators to reshape the curriculum that capacitates students with the professional values and commercial acumen necessary to maintain these social entrepreneurs. To social workers in the field, the authors advocate for short courses or post-graduate certificates that focus specifically on enhancing social work skills in managing welfare organisations. In practice, Godwil *et al.* (2022) support that social workers should reclaim a discourse of embracing entrepreneurial endeavours into their service delivery. This process should consider the three levels of analysis pertinent to social entrepreneurship, namely, the micro, mezzo, and macro. The individual's characteristics and leadership are the focus of the micro level. The macro level is concerned with social and economic growth, whereas the mezzo level is concerned with fostering creativity (Cukier *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, ongoing research on social entrepreneurship should be prioritised.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article explored the unemployment of social work graduates and re-imagined the future of social entrepreneurial social work in South Africa. It emerged that social entrepreneurship is practised at the macro level, yet there is a lack of economics, enterprise skills and knowledge incorporated into curriculum and practice. This gap in the integration of these crucial aspects not only inhibits the potential for growth and sustainability but also curtails the achievement of desired outcomes, especially in the employment of social work graduates. Such strategies would not only improve the impact and effectiveness of social entrepreneurship but also foster innovation and the development of sustainable solutions to societal challenges in the future. Social work education and training cannot remain static; it must be responsive to the influence of history on contemporary life; address current life issues as social workers engage people in problem-solving and societal change initiatives; and work towards greater socio-economic equality. Therefore, the inclusion of enterprise skills, economics and business management in the curriculum (theory and work-integrated learning) could tailor graduates' efforts or expertise according to different communities and markets. Together with the SACSSP and ASASWEI should include business management, economics or entrepreneurship modules as co-requisites in the social work curriculum.

In re-imagining the future, fostering social entrepreneurship education, universities have the potential to serve as catalysts for change and develop a talent pool that can be leveraged to solve social problems. By offering courses in social innovation, design thinking, and sustainable business practices, universities can create a generation of graduates equipped to tackle complex social issues and create positive change in their communities. By doing so, they can play a significant role in addressing social problems and contributing to the development of a more sustainable and equitable society in the future. The literature review established that most graduates are not aware of social entrepreneurship and how it could benefit them, thus there is a need to understand the enterprise skills and knowledge and integrate these within the social work practice. Politicians, social workers and policy advocates can help social enterprises get the financing, benefits, and privileges they require to survive, thus promoting advocacy and social justice. The authors emphasise the need for more chances for social workers to interact with unemployed social work graduates on how social entrepreneurship could be marshalled as an opportunity for employment. The establishment of favourable regulations is also necessary to improve students' employability, particularly in social entrepreneurship.

Although the concept of social entrepreneurship has not gained much traction in the field of social work, it is mushrooming in NPOs and private practice. Some social workers already incorporate entrepreneurial and social entrepreneurship activities into their community work, despite receiving little formal training. The majority take advantage of self-motivated learning opportunities related to their entrepreneurial characteristics, thus highlighting the importance of including enterprise skills and knowledge in the curriculum. Strong business management skills are vital for leading non-profit organizations to ensure social programs are not at risk due to revenue shortages. To sum up, social work is at a critical period of development and must adapt to the needs of individuals it serves as social and economic conditions change. The current socio-economic status in South Africa demands that social workers should have knowledge of social enterprises to produce novel, original, and sustainable solutions to the problem of youth unemployment. In re-imagining the future of social work, this article argues that social entrepreneurship is a viable and sustainable solution to the social work graduates' unemployment crisis in South Africa. In conclusion, a compelling case for the adoption of a social entrepreneurship model for social work in South Africa has been presented. In re-imagining the future of social work, the proposed approach not only addresses unemployment but also promotes social innovation, economic growth, and sustainable development. Furthermore,

it offers a blueprint for the future of social work in South Africa and beyond, lending credence to the notion that social entrepreneurship is crucial in the modern technology-savvy world.

References

- Agbenyegah, A. T. 2022. Linkages between Social Entrepreneurship and Youth Unemployment: The Search for Socio-Economic Opportunities in a Developing Country. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 16(2): 533-557.
- Altman, M. 2022. Trajectories for South African Employment after COVID-19. *South African Journal of Science*, 118(5-6): 1-9.
- Aveyard, H. and Bradbury-Jones, C. 2021. Writing for Publication: Reporting your Literature Review. In: Holland, K. and Watson, R. eds. *Writing for Publication in Nursing and Healthcare: Getting It Right*. Oxford: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 111-121.
- Baldry, K. 2016. Graduate Unemployment in South Africa: Social Inequality Reproduced. *Journal of Education and Work*, 29(7): 788-812.
- Berzin, S. C. 2012. Where is Social Work in the Social Entrepreneurship Movement? *Social Work*, 57(2): 185-188.
- Bhorat, H., Thornton, A. and Van der Zee, K. 2017. *Socio-economic Determinants of Crime in South Africa: An Empirical Assessment*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Bilgili, F., Ozturk, I., Kocak, E. and Bulut, U. 2017. Energy Consumption Youth Unemployment Nexus in Europe: Evidence from Panel Cointegration and Panel Causality Analyses. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 7(2): 193-201.
- Boles, B. 2016. Social Work Needs a Rebrand. Available: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/social-work-needs-rebrand-brianna-boles> (Accessed 11 March 2024).
- Bradbury-Jones, C., Breckenridge, J. P., Clark, M. T., Herber, O. R., Jones, C. and Taylor, J. 2019. Advancing the Science of Literature Reviewing in Social Research: The Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22(5): 451-462.
- Bradbury-Jones, C., Breckenridge, J., Clark, M. T., Herber, O. R., Wagstaff, C. and Taylor, T. 2017. The State of Qualitative Research in Health and Social Science Literature: A Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20(6): 627-645.
- Briar-Lawson, K., Miesing, P. and Ramos, B. M. 2020. *Social Entrepreneurship and Enterprises in Economic and Social Development*. New York: Oxford Academic.
- British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). 2020. Digital Capabilities Statement for Social Workers. Available: <https://www.basw.co.uk/digital-capabilities-statement-social-workers> (Accessed 03 July 2023).
- Budlender, D. and Proudlock, P. 2011. Funding the Children's Act: Assessing the Adequacy of the 2011/12 Budgets of the Provincial Departments of Social Development. Available: <https://open.uct.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/1b0a1e96-3623-4513-acd3-1a7a45c5a093/content> (Accessed 08 July 2023).
- BusinessTech. 2022. Critical Shortage of Social Workers in South Africa – Here's How Much they Get Paid. Available: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/617521/critical-shortage-of-social-workers-in-south-africa-heres-how-much-they-get-paid/> (Accessed 03 July 2023).
- Cai, Y. 2013. Graduate Employability: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Employers' Perceptions. *Higher Education*, 65: 457-469.
- Carey, M. 2017. *Qualitative Research Skills for Social Work: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.

Chandra, Y. and Shang, L. 2021. Social Entrepreneurship Interventions in the HIV/AIDS Sector: A Social Entrepreneurship–Social Work Perspective. *International Social Work*, 64(1): 5-23.

Council on Higher Education. 2016. South African Higher Education Reviewed. Two Decades of Democracy. Available:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312889357_South_African_Higher_Education_Reviewed_Two_decades_of_Democracy_including_chapter_on_Governance (Accessed 27 May 2023).

Cukier, W., Trenholm, S., Carl, D. and Gekas, G. 2011. Social Entrepreneurship: A Content Analysis. *Journal of Strategic Innovation and Sustainability*, 7(1): 99-119.

Dahles, H., Verduyn, J. K. and Wakkee, I. A. M. 2010. Introduction to a Special Issue on Societal Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 4(1): 5-12.

Dees, J. G. 2001. The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship. Available: https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/03/Article_Deess_MeaningofSocialEntrepreneurship_2001.pdf (Accessed 12 June 2023).

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K. and Kyngäs, H. 2014. Qualitative Content Analysis: A Focus on Trustworthiness. *Sage Open*, 4(1): 1-10.

European Union. 2017. Boosting Social Enterprise Development: Good Practice Compendium. Available: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/deliver/9789264268500-en.pdf?itemId=/content/publication/9789264268500-en&mimeType=pdf> (Accessed 15 June 2023).

Eyster, L., Durham, C., Van Noy, M. and Damron, N. 2016. Understanding Local Workforce Systems. Available: <https://scholarship.libraries.rutgers.edu/esploro/outputs/report/Understanding-local-workforce-systems/991031663084104646> (Accessed 29 March 2024).

Fawcett, J. 2013. Thoughts about Conceptual Models, Theories, and Literature Reviews. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 26(3): 285–288.

Germak, A. J. and Singh, K. K. 2009. Social Entrepreneurship: Changing the Way Social Workers Do Business. *Administration in Social Work*, 34(1): 79-95.

Godwin, C., Crocker-Billingsley, J., Allen-Milton, S. and Lassiter, C. D. 2022. Social Entrepreneurship and Social Work for Transformational Change: Re-Envisioning the Social Work Profession, Education, and Practice. *Advances in Social Work*, 22(2): 475-498.

Graham, L. and Mlatsheni, C. 2015. Youth Unemployment in South Africa: Understanding the Challenge and Working on Solutions. *South African Child Gauge*, 2: 51-59.

Gray, M. and Mazibuko, F. 2002. Social Work in South Africa at the Dawn of the New Millennium. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 11: 191-200.

Husain-Talero, S. and Cortés, L. D. G. 2021. Social Entrepreneurship. In: Khosrowpour, M. ed. *Encyclopaedia of Organizational Knowledge, Administration, and Technology*. IGI Global, 1413-1426.

Irvine, F. E., Clark, M. T., Efstathiou, N., Herber, O. R., Howroyd, F., Gratrix, L., Sammut, D., Trumm, A., Hanssen, T. A., Taylor, J. and Bradbury-Jones C. 2020. The State of Mixed Methods Research in Nursing: A Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 76(11): 2798-809.

Kerr, J. F. 1968. *Changing the Curriculum*. London: London University of London Press.

Kosie, H. 2022. Social Work Graduates Left without Employment. Available: www.careersportal.co.za/news/social-work-graduates-left-without-employment# (Accessed 14 June 2023).

Leburu, G. E., Kgadima, N. P. and Malesa, K. J. 2022. The Inherent Limitations of Gender-Based Violence to the Exclusion of LGBTIQ: A Guide for Social Workers. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 11: 37-47.

- Levinsohn, J., Rankin, J., Roberts, G. and Schöer, V. 2014. Wage Subsidies and Youth Employment in South Africa: Evidence from a Randomised Control Trial. Available: <https://resep.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/wp-02-2014.pdf> (Accessed 10 May 2023).
- Liang, J., N, G. T., Tsui, M. S., Yan, M. C. and Lam, C. M. 2017. Youth Unemployment: Implications for Social Work Practice. *Journal of Social Work*, 17(5): 560-578.
- Light, P. C. 2009. Social Entrepreneurship Revisited. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 7: 21-22.
- Lodemel, I., A. Moreira, I. L. and Moreira, A. 2014. *Activation or Workfare? Governance and the Neo-Liberal Convergence*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lombard, A. 2008. The Impact of Social Transformation on the Non-Government Sector and the Social Work Profession. *International Journal of Social Work*, 17(2):124-131.
- Lombard, A. and Strydom, R. 2011. Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 23(3): 327-342.
- Malgas, N. 2022. Examining Social Entrepreneurship as a Solution to Addressing and Reducing Youth Unemployment among Disadvantaged Youth in Cape Town. Master's Dissertation, University of Western Cape.
- Mqhina, M. 2020. Social Development Hired Only 3400 Social Workers out of 9000 Unemployed Graduates. Available: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/social-development-hired-only-3400-social-workers-out-of-9000-unemployed-graduates-881fc964-aca0-4158-b767-de7002b7ccfa> (Accessed 14 June 2023).
- Naidoo, P. 2021. South Africa's Unemployment Rate is Now Highest in the World. Available: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ced580bb0d82c00014e59b7/t/6139a64eb2b9065a0b239753/1631168079218/CapNews_Sept_2021_15.pdf (Accessed 15 March 2024).
- Nandan, M. and Scott, P. A. 2013. Social Entrepreneurship and Social Work: The Need for a Transdisciplinary Educational Model. *Administration in Social Work*, 37(3): 257-271.
- Nandan, M., London, M. and Bent-Goodle, T. 2015. Social Workers as Social Change Agents: Social Innovation, Social Intrapreneurship, and Social Entrepreneurship. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance*, 39(1): 38-56.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) 2017. Code of Ethics. Available: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English> (Accessed 12 April 2023).
- National Planning Commission. 2011. National Development Plan Vision 2030. Available: <http://policyresearch.limpopo.gov.za/> (Accessed 03 June 2023).
- Nazarova, Y. A., Sopilko, N. Y., Bolotova, R. S., Shcherbakova, N. S. and Alexeenko, V. B. 2017. Increase of Social Impact Due to the Development of the Renewable Energy Industry in Russia. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 7(5): 263-270.
- Nouman, H. and Cnaan, R. A. 2021. Toolbox Recommendations for Social Workers to Promote Successful Social Entrepreneurship. *Social Work*, 66(4): 317-328.
- Nouman, H. and Cnaan, R. A. 2023. Community Social Workers as Social Entrepreneurs: Lessons from Israel. *International Social Work*, 67(2): 1-14.
- Odunlami, P. and Akanle, O. 2021. The Youth Unemployment Quagmire of Africa: Graduates in Artisanal Sector of Southwestern Nigeria. Available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354126009_The_Youth_Unemployment_Quagmire_of_Africa_Graduates_in_Artisanal_Sector_of_Southwestern_Nigeria (Accessed 15 May 2023).
- Oluwajodu, F., Greyling, L., Blaauw, D. and Kleynhans, E. P. 2015. Graduate Unemployment in South Africa: Perspectives from the Banking Sector. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management*, 13(1): 1-9.

- Pereira, J., Rodrigues, R. G. and Veiga, P. M. 2024. Entrepreneurship among Social Workers: Implications for the Sustainable Development Goals. *Sustainability*, 16(996): 1-18.
- Perryman, C. L. 2016. Mapping Studies. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 104(1): 79–82.
- Prideaux, D. 2003. Curriculum Design. *BioMed Journal*, 326(7383): 268-270.
- Raniga, T. and Seepamore, B. 2017. Critical Reflexivity beyond the Classroom: Social Work Student Perspectives of Communities in KwaZulu-Natal. *Social Work Practitioner/Researcher*, 29(1): 34-48.
- Rathbone, M. 2017. Unemployment and the Gift in the South African Context: Towards an Economics of Recognition and Humility. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship Koers: Bulletin vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 82(1): 1-11.
- Roets, G., Roose, R., Claes, L., Vandekinderen, C., van Hove, G. and Vanderplasschen, W. 2012. Reinventing the Employable Citizen: A Perspective for Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 42(1): 94–110
- Shahverdi, M., Ismail, K. and Qureshi, M. I. 2018. The Effect of Perceived Barriers on Social Entrepreneurship Intention in Malaysian Universities: The Moderating Role of Education. *Management Science Letters*, 8(5): 341-352.
- Skhosana, R. M. 2020. The Dilemma Faced by NPOs in Retaining Social Workers: A Call to Revisit the Retention Strategy. *Social Work*, 56(2): 109-124.
- Skhosana, R., Schenck, R. and Botha, P. 2014. Factors Enabling and Hampering Social Welfare Services Rendered to Street Children in Pretoria: Perspectives of Service Providers. *Social Work*, 50(2): 213-236.
- South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSSP). 2020. Interim Ethical Guidelines for Social Workers in South Africa Regarding Technology-Supported Social Work Services. Available: <http://www.sacssp.co.za/2020/GENERAL%20NOTICE%20TECH%20SUPPORTED%20SOCIAL%20WORK.pdf> (Accessed 03 June 2023).
- South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). 2021. Social Work Readiness Programme. Available: <https://www.sacssp.co.za/2021/FLYER1%20SWRP%202021.pdf> (Accessed: 03 June 2023).
- Stanlie, R. A., Lestari, E. D. and Kurniasari, F. 2023. Making a Difference: The Relationship between Prosocial Motivation and Social Entrepreneurial Intention, with Creativity in Social Work as a Mediating Variable. *International Conference of Economics, Enterprise, and Entrepreneur*, 241: 470-483.
- Strømhaug, L. B. S. and Halvorsen, K. 2023. Ambivalence in Digital Social Work: Giving Advice about Welfare-to-Work Programmes to Unemployed Clients. Available: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/2156857X.2023.2218391?needAccess=true> (Accessed 14 March 2024).
- Strydom, M., Schiller, U. and Orme, J. 2020. The Current Landscape of Child Protection Services in South Africa: A Systematic Review. *Social Work*, 56(4): 383-402.
- Tran, T. T. 2015. *Graduate Employability in Vietnam: A Loose Relationship between Higher Education and Employment Market*. Germany: Anchor Academic Publishing.
- Triegaardt, J. D. 2008. Globalization: What Impact and Opportunities for the Poor and Unemployed in South Africa? *International Social Work*, 51(4): 480-492.
- Turton, Y. and Schmid, J. 2020. Transforming Social Work: Contextualised Social Work Education in South Africa. *Social Work*, 56(4): 367-382.
- Urban, B. 2008. Social Entrepreneurship in South Africa: Delineating the Construct with Associated Skills. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 14: 346- 364.

Velaphi, S. 2012. NGOs in Crisis Over Lack of Funding and Staff Losses. Available: <https://www.mm3admin.co.za/documents/docmanager/2D5ED792-878C-4371-9575-8281A96BBB26/00031524.pdf> (Accessed 20 June 2023).

Visagie, P. 2022. Unemployed Social Workers of SA Outraged by Remarks Made by Minister Zulu. Available: <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/unemployed-social-workers-of-sa-outraged-by-remarks-made-by-minister-zulu/> (Accessed 14 June 2023).

Wilkinson, A., Pettifor, A., Rosenberg, M., Halpern, C. T., Thirumurthy, H., Collinson, M. A. and Kahn, K. 2017. The Employment Environment for Youth in Rural South Africa: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Development Southern Africa*, 34(1): 17-32.

Zastrow, C. and Hessenauer, S. L. 2022. *Empowerment Series: Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare*. Boston: Cengage Learning.

Zizzamia, R. 2020. Is Employment a Panacea for Poverty? A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Employment Decisions in South Africa. *World Development*, 130: 1-15.