Collaborative group of North West University and UNISA: Addressing Homelessness

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A RAPID CRITICAL APPRAISAL ON THE CONCEPTUALISATION AND DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA
The collaborating team

• Members from North West University (NWU) and Unisa are involved since 2009 in a collaborative effort with two (now more) Canadian Universities and a German University.

• The preparation for this work started when a presentation had to be delivered at a workshop in 2011 (6 Canadian members and 8 South African members).

• Work continued and was finalised towards the end of 2012.
The purpose of the study was to conduct a desk review to conceptualise and define homelessness in South Africa using the critical appraisal methodology in order to come to an understanding of homelessness in South Africa.
Methodology

1. Identify Central Problem
   *Homelessness in South Africa*

2. Consensus on Main Research Question – *what are the concepts and definitions of homelessness in South African and globally?*

3. Search for literature – *Published and unpublished*

4. Develop criteria for appraisal – *Critical Appraisal Tool*

5. Appraise Pieces of Evidence – *Key word searches*

6. Evaluate on appropriateness and applicability

7. Develop mini-appraisal tool on common research themes for synthesis

8. Draw upon lessons learned and provide recommendations
Tool development

• Was done at two separate settings (UNISA and NWU) – enhanced objectivity
• Trial run with draft tool and cross review
• Reliability ensured by following critical appraisal methodology (CPM)
• Finally 30 pieces selected to appraise (published in accredited journals [nationally/internationally] 2000-2011)
## Key results: Main foci identified from CPM

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Other elements noted from CPM

• Format of pieces
• Main settings (places where sleeping/contexts)
• People (who) (Key role players)
• Activities and reasons for homelessness
• Support
• Needs (economic, psychosocial, personal socio-political)
Overall rating of evidence pieces

• Scale of 1-5
• Applicability
• Capacity building and training
• Benefits of interventions and programmes
• Duplication / replication of interventions or research
• Overall impression score of evidence pieces
Synthesis from 10 articles

• Based on the overall rating of the pieces of evidence 10 pieces which were identified as the most applicable and appropriate to the purpose of the study were used to summarize the key results into four themes to fit the objectives of the study.

• Identified articles were:


DU TOIT, J.L. 2010. Local metropolitan government responses to homelessness in South Africa.


Conceptualisation of homelessness in South Africa

No single definition of homelessness: a variety of purposes, values, political views and more would have an influence on such a definition; confirmed by Makiwane et al (2010:40).

“...the physical condition of being homeless is driven or influenced by a variety of dynamic latent social and economic factors” Naidoo’s (2010:132)

To see homelessness as not only one reality, but part of a continuum as reflected by Du Toit (2010:113). He outlines the situation as including “detached homeless people” to “temporary overnight sleepers” and finally “informal settlement dwellers”.
Demography of homelessness

• Demographic characteristics of homeless population in South Africa: usually a contextualized snapshot of a specific group of homeless people at a specific point in time

• Estimation of number of homeless people is almost impossible and unreliable (example – mobile homeless population; impact of political factors [refugees, asylum seekers])
Key stakeholders involved in homelessness

• The homeless population: rural and urban South Africa

• “Although it is central government that sets social policy, much of the action taken to deal with homelessness is driven by empowered actors in local society – and driven by the fears of businesses and local administrators ... urging municipalities to act” (Cross et al, 2010:8)

• FBO’s
Policy and research issues related to homelessness

- Complexity of formulating national and global policies around homelessness
- Lack of clear policy consensus
- Difficult to put policies into action (Du Toit, 2010:121)
- Research: comprehensive review; job creation; socio-economic and socio-political factors leading to homelessness; sub-populations within homeless communities; affordable housing
Since 2011 – new publications

Conceptualisation of homelessness:

- Marginalisation (Mangai, 2014; De Beer, 2014)
- Displaced (Idemudia, 2014)
- Land ownership (dispossession) (Mashau, 2014)
- Frailty (De Beer, 2013)
Demography of homelessness

• Health seeking behaviours of the homeless (Wentzel & Voce, 2012)
• Extent of difference of South African context as compared with Europe and US (Phiri & Perron, 2012)
• HIV in urban homeless (Lohrmann, Botha, Violari & Gray, 2012)
• Physical and sexual abuse (Idemudia, 2014)
Key stakeholders involved in homelessness

• The importance of including those on the margins: homeless in Tshwane to be included when solutions are planned (Mashau, 2014)
• Contact between provinces important (Phiri & Perron, 2012)
• Practical Theology and the idea of radical hospitality (De Beer, 2013)
Policy and research issues

• Land ownership (De Beer, 2013; Mashau, 2014)
• Poverty (Mangayi, 2014)
• Unemployment (Phiri & Perron, 2012; Lohrmann et al, 2012)
• Refugees and asylum seekers as homeless population (Idemudia, 2014)
• Formation of good habits (Baron, 2014)
• The homeless and health (Wentzel & Voce, 2012; Phiri & Perron, 2012; Lohrman et al, 2012)

• Prevention of homelessness (Phiri & Perron, 2012)

• Housing of the urban poor (Steyn, 2012)

• The assistance of Ms Germari Kruger is acknowledged in the search for articles 2012 and beyond