Company welfare and social work ethics: a space for social work?

A discussion based on cases from Norway and Tanzania.

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Abstract

This article deals with company welfare and social work ethics. If social work is concerned with welfare and distributional issues, we would assume company welfare to be an issue of great relevance to social workers, so why do we not come across any social workers in our fieldwork? This calls for the simple question "where do social workers work?" or rather "how come social workers do not work in private companies?" We explore into the combination of social work and private companies with special reference to social work ethics to discuss private companies as a job arena for social workers. We argue that in a sector aiming at profit, social workers may trigger employees enthusiasm, but employer scepticism. However, by avoiding a less stereotyped notion of private companies, company welfare and social work we claim that certain social work ethical principles would be of joint interest to the involved, but more so in certain contexts than in others.

The article consists of six sections. After the introduction, we take a closer look at company welfare followed by a section on social work where we focus on ethical principles and work arenas for social workers. In section four we present our data from some private companies in Norway and Tanzania as a point of departure to our discussion in section five on private companies as a potential job arena for social workers. The complexity of company welfare does not call for simple answers. In the conclusions, section six, we therefore argue that the ethical principles of social work make it an interesting and relevant competence in managing company welfare, though not unproblematic in the homeland of profit. However, contextual complexity invites contextual responses.

Introduction

Welfare capitalism shows that welfare benefits and services such as medical insurance, pensions, food or transport beyond cash wages have a long history as part of the pay packet (Brandes 1976). This makes private companies into one of several major welfare providers along with the classics family, public sector and voluntary work. However, the benefits and services offered by employers reflect the wider contextual settings of the companies resulting in fairly systematic variations across branches, regions and countries (Ryen 1984, Ryen and Habi 1993). To illustrate, for park rangers in Tanzania a risk allowance refers to lions and other wild animals, for health workers to HIV infected blood whereas in Norway to working with chemicals, special technical equipments etc. In the rather extensive Norwegian welfare state access to health services is based on citizenship rather than the work contract. This makes most health services less attractive as remuneration from the company compared to in Tanzania where health services are scarce, of various qualities and expensive compared to average income. Also, in some Tanzanian companies employers and employees struggle to manage HIV and AIDs related health problems, rather unfamiliar to Norwegian companies.

This introduces a range of questions like how to compose the pay packet? What benefits to include or not? How should the benefits and services be distributed among employees, and what about limits to how much or how often? Do employees know their rights? Even if they do, is the doctor or medication available? How to avoid that delicate challenges like HIV testing or counselling offered by the company do stigmatise or harm employees? Is mismanagement of household finances a private issue or of concern to the company? Is funeral related costs a matter for the employer? If problems keep employees away from work or lower their performance their problems eventually do become the employer`s problem, too, as in cases of alcoholism, drugs, divorce or other family problems just as harsh work environments do. It is this complex wage packet that makes companies into more than pure production sites.

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Social work is a profession associated with their loyalty towards service users, and social workers are involved in practical as well as policy work and well trained in managing complex issues at individual and organisational level (e.g. supply-demand mismatches and policy work with politicians), and in being solution-oriented. These are all competences highly appreciated by private companies characterised by a complex mix of instrumentalism and personnel considerations though they primarily aim at other goals than care and redistribution. To nurture employee interests in private companies is embedded in a wider policy, rather than being an end product as illustrated above. Employers expect loyalty towards the company, an obvious contested field for social workers. On the other hand social workers are familiar with the squeeze between ideals and practice, or operating in complex and contested fields not unfamiliar to companies and their personnel managers.

We will explore into the relationship between company welfare and social work by giving a brief presentation of company welfare followed by a section on ethical guidelines in social work and social work arenas in Norway and Tanzania respectively. We then present our data from company cases in Norway and Tanzania. Comparisons work well to illustrate contextual issues calling for more nuanced responses.

Company Welfare: Between care and control

Before we proceed, let us look closer into the definition and use of company welfare.

What is company welfare?
The most frequent terms for welfare offered by the employer to his or her employees is fringe benefits or company welfare, but also perks and others. Fringe benefits, in particular, refer to the non-cash part of the wage packet and the supplementary status of such remuneration. It is extra to the basic remuneration (Ryen 1984). The welfare benefits and services are portrayed as in the outskirts constituting the fringes of the wage packet with the cash part as the major element. Wages are associated with cash as opposed to deferred cash such as pensions not paid until reaching the age of retirement.

Remuneration is a wide category, and not all remuneration is included in the definition of company welfare such as pleasant work environment, good colleagues or a nice boss who compliments your good work. Also, to receive one's wage regularly when your company operates in a region or a sector where wage payments are irregular does not make it part of the company welfare category, rather it reflects tidy work relations. More precisely we can delimit fringe benefits to include payments in kind (such as a mobile phone, company car or free medication), services (such as health services) and deferred cash (such as pensions). However, due to the extensive use of allowances in Tanzania we also include this in our definition of company welfare. An allowance is a cash supplement defined as compensation for disadvantages or special needs such as sitting allowance as a compensation for spending time sitting in meetings or transport allowance as a compensation for transport to/from your job. To differentiate such benefits from other attractive remunerations emerging from job relations, we also introduce another criterion. It is a prerequisite that the employer must pay all or parts of the costs associated with providing these benefits or services in order to be included in the definition. This means that to receive an item or a service at reduced price or any other advantages from a third part like a business partner or any other intermediary is excluded from the category fringe benefits or company welfare though still beneficiary to the recipient (Ryen 1998). This also excludes bribes or corruption from our category though undisputedly adding to the recipient's welfare whether organised at individual or group basis at organisational top or bottom level.

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Fringe benefits or company welfare is frequent in most work relations. Collective benefits are offered all employees whereas individual benefits are reserved the few holding special positions like a car for the driver or a car and driver for the general manager. Provided tax regulations are kept, such benefits are fully legal. However, whether legitimate or not is quite another question (Ryen 1984, Knudsen and Ryen 2005).

Welfare or management strategy?
Motivations to introduce company welfare are multiple (Ryen 1984:18 and 1998) ranging from merely practical arguments such as to attract and retain managers and employees till tax issues. From a theoretical perspective the phenomenon has been approached by a number of disciplines like economy, sociology and psychology (Knudsen and Ryen 2005:17), and from different perspectives within each separate discipline like the sociological control oriented perspective. This makes company welfare into more than a question solely of welfare.

Apart from causing enthusiasm, fringe benefits have been used as means in diverse strategies to control employees as companies grew in size. In small companies with close relations personal management tend to rely on an informal and unstructured control system (Edwards 1979:29pp). The owner has access to all stages of the production process and relations become personal and tend to foster employee identification and loyalty.

However, when company size increases such simple control (Edwards 1979:22) becomes more complicated. By delegating his (owners tend to be men) power to the GM or the CEO via a hierarchical structure, the assumption is that each manager's relationship with his (or her) staff would resemble the close personal power and authority associated with the owner's. Historically, management eventually faced two problems, growing resistance from the workers and a growing white collar group. This was the cradle of welfare capitalism, a management strategy to meet the conflict between work and capital, though based on harmony as in many US corporations last half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century (Brandes 1976:30). The aim was to modify workers` resistance caused by harsh working conditions. In this harmony model employers introduced welfare benefits and services, but without altering power-relations in the company. Illustrations would be housing, education, leisure activities, health services and pensions, all scarce and attractive benefits in kind or cash. However, this does not necessarily mean that the major motivation was with humanitarian concern and altruism. Rather, the main goal was increased management control by use of positive incentives to foster loyalty towards the company. The benefits thus worked as elements of a larger strategy. To illustrate, access to pensions could be restricted to non-unionised workers, you could get insurances against accidents given you would refrain from blaming the company, and the joy of leisure activities would improve identification and loyalty with the "company family" (Ryen 1984). To tailor the total wage packet thus becomes crucial though firmly positioned between welfare and productivity.

We do not claim that contemporary company welfare fits into this perspective, but we do need to reflect on if or to what extent traces of such strategies live on. Our focus here is not with the effects as such, but with the dilemmas or potential paradoxes such welfare may induce to social workers that are obliged to a set of ethical standards for their social work profession. At least, this sociological perspective so far invites two conclusions. First, company welfare is closely integrated into business strategies. Second, company welfare is embedded into the contextual of any company (traditions, tax regulations, unions etc.)(Ryen 1984). If so, the discussion calls for a high level of awareness.

Before we present our data, let us look into where social workers tend to work in our respective regions.

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Social work in Norway and Tanzania

We will here try to locate the major job arenas for social workers in our regions, and review some social work ethical principles particularly relevant to our topic.

Where do social workers work?
Internationally welfare is organised differently, and we may assume this influences where social workers tend to work.

In Norway social workers are foremost associated with the public sector. A brief look at statistics for Norway tells us that for 2001 close to half of the man-labour years in the public social sector, was performed by trained social workers (2195, 8 of the total 5537,7)*(http://www.ssb.no/emner/03/04/soshjelpp/tab-2002-12-19-01.html).* However, based on 1999 outlooks the assumed demand for the future shows a supply side of social workers that by far extends the demand (worst scenario shows close to a 100% discrepancy) *(http://www.ssb.no/magasinet/analyse/tab-2002-08-26-02.html).* Despite an increase in number of social workers from 2000 to 2001, there was a small decline from 42% till 40% mainly due to an increase in other social sector related professional positions as well as in unskilled labour combined with a small decline in employees with a mercantile education. Important, we cannot uncritically deduce from this statistics neither to the need for social work positions despite an increase in social problems last decades[4] nor to the number of social work positions ahead. In the Scandinavian welfare regime the size of the public sector is to a large extent a question of political priorities[5]. However, if the quest for market mechanisms continues, social workers may expand their work arenas to include (though not necessarily embrace) private companies just as we last years have observed a less stringent link between education and classic work arena (teachers become cultural administrators, priests become personnel managers, social workers start working in private child care institutions etc).

If we go to East-Africa we find that Tanzania is among the African 15 full IFSW members, - International Federation of Social Workers *(http://www.ifsw.org/p38000152.html).* Interesting, in the *Regional Cooperation Newsletter for East and Southern Africa* (No.1, 2009), the Regional Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) refers to a collaboration between IFSW and IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work) for the 2009 pan-African regional conference in Libya. Their topic "Promoting Social Work Education, Practice and Social Development in Africa" with social work education and social work practice as central sub-themes as well as human rights and environment, shows the international relevance of our topic *(http://www.icsw.org/doc/ESA_Newsletter_2009_January_Eng.doc).* Also references to topics such as environment show the potential of social work to focus on new, contemporary topics as contexts change. This invites to look at new job arenas.

Social work statistics for Tanzania is difficult to obtain which leaves us with indirect indicators of major arenas for social workers in East-Africa. As referred, how to organise welfare is firmly embedded into politics. So first, if we look at public sector in East-Africa, the Civil Service Reform had as one of its goals to reduce this sector. In his report (2001) on the Civil Service Reform Process in Kenya Manda rightly warns us against assuming a necessary link between size of public sector and social services in post-colonial East-Africa. It is far more complex. Also, Alex George Massawe (2008) claims that social work is a rather new profession in Tanzania and claims that only 50 districts out of 119 have social welfare officers. Second, we also need to direct our gaze across sectors. With a growth in the interest in civil society[6] or Civil Society Organizations (CSO) as referred to by UN (2009)[7], there has been a parallel focus on non-governmental organisations` (NGO) activities as part of SCO activities (hence the job-ads online). This then is likely to be another major arena for social workers in Tanzania.

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As to social work education in Tanzania, the private Institute of Social Work (ISW) in Dar es Salaam reported in 2007 to have more than 1900 students pursuing different courses, ranging from certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, postgraduate diplomas and degrees . Tanzanians are reported to study social work also at the private Kenya Institute of Social Work and Community Development (KISWCD 2005), who refers to themselves as a Community focused development and training Institution "without any governmental, religious or political affiliation". According to the web they train Community Development Workers "to assist the community in project planning and management. This is done to ensure that Communities are self-reliant in small-scale business entrepreneurship, income generating activities, food security, public health care, water and sanitation, improved shelter, and environment" *http://www.kiswcd.co.ke/About%20us.html.* Again, this reflects the contextual of social work education to match local contextual needs, a matter most relevant to our discussion.

Some ethical principles in social work
We will now present a selection of social work ethical issues of particularly relevance to the meeting between social work and goals and practices of private companies.

The document *Ethics in Social Work, Statements of Principless* is a combined IFSW/IASSW document *(www.ifsw.org/en/p38000324.html)* approved at their joint General Meetings in Adelaide, Australia in 2004 and replaced the old Ethical Document. As members, both Norway and Tanzania are obliged to go with these principles. The document states that "ethical awareness is a fundamental part of professional practice of social work" which makes this a most important document when doing social work globally. The principles are at a general level and will not guide social workers in specific cases. This recognizes the variety, diversity and cultural specific of the field and makes more specific guidelines for specific professional activities and cases unrealistic. Rather, that could violate the very same ethical principles especially in cross-cultural or inter-ethnic settings (just as with the research ethical guidelines, Ryen 2004 and 2007).

Our focus will be on some major sections in the ethical document, and the purpose is to prepare the ground for the discussion on how these ideals relate to managing welfare in companies.

The document consists of five sections, and our focus is with three of the principles. The first is headed under section "4.1 Human Rights and Human Dignity" stating that "Social work is based on the respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this…" Of the four sub-principles, we focus on principle 2:

2. *Promoting the right to participation* – Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.

Further, according to section "4.2 Social Justice", "Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and to the people with whom they work". This section comprises two principles of particular interest here:

3. *Distributing resources equitably* – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.

4. *Challenging unjust policies and practices* – Social workers have a duty to bring to the

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attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.

Despite their general level, these principles are of particular interest for two reasons. First, they address the micro (4.1.2 and 4.2.3) and macro (4.2.4) levels of social work, or everyday practice as well as an obligation towards active policy work addressing politicians and the general public. Second, these principles commit social workers not only to be concerned with the resources at hand, but also with more general distributional policy issues including the problem of lack of resources.

We will now proceed to our data.

Company welfare: Norway and Tanzania

To better get at our data, we will first comment on the context in which they are situated.

The contextual of welfare

Western researchers have for decades claimed welfare provision can be mapped into models or clusters despite conflicting arguments (among others Esping-Andersen`s well-known 1990 book, Friedman, Gilbert and Sherer 1987, Abrahamson 1991). They have equally argued that welfare is a field of constant transformation (as in Esping-Andersen et al. 2002, Hvinden and Johansson 2007, Kangas and Palme 2005). A closer look has shown, as referred, an array of welfare providers though the space for single actors or institutions are rather closely entangled with the state-market relationship in line with the dominating political ideology as argued by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990).

However, John Baldock (1993: 34) nuanced Esping-Andersen's assumption in his argument about the 1990 reforms of the social services where he claimed they moved in the direction towards competitive pluralism as associated with the then British Thatcherism's preference for the market mechanisms. Important, Baldock noticed these took place across Europe in welfare systems driven by different ideologies and claims this paradox relates to two issues. First, these states have all faced similar combinations of budget constraint and demand growth also called "demographic and moral panic" (1993: 35). Second, "the ideological arguments used to support market-like innovations can cut across established divisions between the political left and right and between those who support state welfare and those who tend to oppose it" (1993:35).

Self (2000 in Lyngstad 2005:66-67) argues along the same lines and sees the neo-liberal economic paradigm as an ideological hegemony across the political ideologies of the ruling. After the turn of the century this materialised as New Public Management (NPM) introduced into the Norwegian public sector based on principles from the market including outsourcing services and the use of tenders that also invite private actors inside (for a critical discussion of vital actors in transforming the Norwegian public sector more in line with NPM and business principles, see Klassekampen 2009: 14-17[9]).

For Tanzania the situation is even more complex as a result of the crises in the 1970s combined with the Structural Adaptation Programme (SAP) imposed by The World Bank that demanded a considerable diet to slim down public (or statal) and semi-public (or para-statal) sector see (Mahigi et al. 2000 for a study of effects on retrenched female workers after their workplaces were privatised in line with SAP). As a result of the new-liberal policy welfare introduced after the liberation like free education and health services (Tanzania and Malawi) now were reversed. In a country characterised as poor[10], with major parts of the population

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living in fairly remote rural areas, laid-off workers were now left to their main welfare providers which are the family and local community for support, combined with their own initiatives to start-up informal businesses at times facilitated by means from NGOs or other sources.

The Tanzanian state does offer welfare as evidenced by the law. However, access to health-, social - or other services varies as does money to pay for the services. Also, it is frequently reported that mandated welfare services especially in informal sector are not provided, or that even regular pay is delayed or simply absent. From a Tanzanian perspective, the remnants from Julius Nyerere`s politics referred to as Ujamaa associated with a socialist ideology (Hyden 1980) is minimised to a state that struggles to provide its citizens with even the most basic public welfare like education and health services (for new, good illustrations, see TSPA 2007). Interestingly, since the liberal policy in this region has failed, some African politicians have last years showed an increasing interest in the Nordic welfare states well aware of the fact that copying will not work. In addition, the Millennium Goals (see the UN 2008 report) also have introduced a closer interest with social policy as one way to combat poverty and inequality (Bistandsaktuelt 2007:19).

This makes company welfare in Tanzania emerge as an extra welfare source in a region where such resources are scarce whereas in Norway it means moving away from the egalitarian principle so crucial to the social democratic welfare regime as described by Esping-Andersen (1990). This reflects how our perception of company welfare is ideologically and contextually informed.

The North and the South:
the welfare mix
In his criticism of Esping-Andersen`s 1990 book, Ram A. Cnaan, School of Social Work at University of Pennsylvania (1992), in particular points to Esping-Andersen's neglect of the private involvement through charitable donations, volunteering and voluntary organisations as an essential factor of Anglo-Saxon welfare. He argues this is an effect of defining welfare states to what the government provides to its citizens (1992:70). This macro-perspective argument relates to Baldock`s comments to Abrahamson's "welfare triangle" (1991, see figure 2.1 in Baldock 1993:30l) emphasising the interaction between the market (west), the state (east) and Civil Society (south). For the latter Abrahamson refers to the Mediterranean region in Europe with the family, household and community assistance as major welfare solutions over both market and state programmes. Despite disagreeing with Abrahamson on his claims on the European tendency in this triangle, Baldock points to the usefulness of this diagram "as a useful summary of the potential variety of welfare-mix arrangements and a framework for describing and explaining the direction of change" (1993: 30-31).

We can draw on this usefulness also for our purpose. Whereas Norway falls into the Northern region generally characterised by a welfare mix with a strong state involvement as in Esping-Andersen's analyses, Tanzania in the South is better characterised by civil society dominating welfare as in Southern Europe in Abrahamson's welfare triangle. This does not rule out companies or workplaces as vital providers of welfare for targeted groups just as we know it from historical contexts in Europe as well as in USA (Ryen 1984 and 1998b, Knudsen and Ryen 2005 and 2006).

In the history of company welfare these organisations are complex arenas of conflict and control, care and welfare, - often directly or indirectly entangled. This introduces a more dynamic and global perspective to identify challenges across such contexts as the Norwegian and Tanzanian and most relevant to social work.
Data.

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Cases from Norway and Tanzania.
We draw on four datasets from company cases in which the authors in different ways have been involved. Datasets A, B and C are secondary data (see publications in table 1, column 5), and dataset D consists of primary data collected in Dar es Salaam by the authors. All data are collected by interviews (A: structured, postal, B, C and D: semi-structured, face to face).

Table 1. Data sets used.

Country	No.	Companies	Size/ no. of employees	Publication
Norway	A	Private, ICT	Small	Ryen 1998a
Norway	B	Private, shipyard	Medium	Haugland 1998 (Ryen as supervisor)
Tanzania	C	Private, textile	Large	Ryen and Habi 1993
Tanzania	D	Private, banking	Large	Ryen, Temba and Matotay 2009 (in work)

Small: less than 99
Medium: 100-999
Large: 1000+

In table 2 collective benefits have been marked "X", and individual "x". To help the reader we organised data in wider categories (first column) however, not pretending to be analytic.

Table 2. Welfare benefits in company Norway (A and B) and Tanzania (C and D)

Category	No	Benefits	Norway A	Norway B	Tanzania C	Tanzania D
Benefits "at work"	1	Free tea/coffee/water	X			X
	2	Newspapers	X	X		x
	3	Lunch	X			
	4	Social arrangements for staff	X	X		
	5	A family day (spouse only)				X
	6	Free parking	X			x
	7	Using job telephone for private calls	X	X	x	
	8	Visit doctor/dentist during work time	X			
	9	Other welfare leaves		X		
	10	Company clothes		X	X	
	11	Gifts			x	
	12	Company vehicle				x
	13	Utility allowance				x
Benefits "at home"	14	Computer	X			
	15	Newspapers and journals	x			x
	16	Telephone			x	
	17	Airtime				
	18	Loan for a house/apartment	X	X		
	19	Loan, general	X		X	
	20	Borrowing company car or truck		X		
	21	Borrowing company tools		X		
	22	Repairing your car in the company workshop		X		
	23	Buying company product at discount		X	x	
	24	House			x	x
	25	Furniture			x	
	26	Housing allowance			X	X

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	27	Transport of late person to home village			X	
	28	Coffin, clothes, condolences			X	X
	29	Monthly supply of maize, beans, rice			X	
	30	Milk weekly			x	
	31	Milk daily at municipal milk centres for employee's and other children below 7			X	
	32	Club membership				x
	33	A security company				
Health/leaves	34	Prolonged father's leave[1]	X			
	35	Prolonged mother's leave				
	36	Sick leave, extra				
	37	Sports activities	X	X	x	
	38	Free health checks	X	X	X	X
	39	Dental checks		X		
	40	Compassionate leave (for funeral)			X	X
	41	Leave for delivery			X	
	44	Leave if sick			X	X
	45	Leave if sick child			X	
	46	Medicine			X	
	47	Check-ups (pregnancy) and delivery				X
	48	Experts` evacuation cover			x	x
Insurances	49	Pensions/gratuity	X	X	X	X
	50	Insurances	X	X		
	51	Full medical cover			X	X
Transport	52	Car, subsidised	x	x		
	53	Baggage allowance			x	
	54	Mileage allowance			x	
	55	Transport allowance			X	
	56	Transport to/from job			X	
	57	Driver's allowance			x	
	58	Car allowance			x	
	59	Fuel allowance			X	x
	60	Travel leave assistance			X	
Other cash benefits	61	Bonus	X	X	x	
	62	Shares at reduced price	x			
	63	Wages during (mil.) refresher course	X	X		
	64	13th check (=one extra month salary)				X
Career benefits	65	Free courses	X	X		
	66	Study leave			X	X
	67	Training			x	
	68	An Honour Award				X
	69	Other Awards				X
	70	Exam leave				X
	71	Others				X x

The list contains of 71 different welfare benefits both in kind, as services or in cash, present or delayed, and many offered both in Norway and Tanzania.

They are all partly supplementing already existing state welfare benefits like paternal leave

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(34 A), sick leave (44 C and D), leave when having a sick child (45 C) and leave to attend a funeral (40 C and D) (Ryen and Habi 1993:64).

Benefits also reflect the cultural/economic context. Good illustrations for Tanzania are the variety in transport allowances (52-60 in C), the collective funeral benefits (28 coffin/clothes/condolences in C and D), food maize, beans, rice in kind (29 C). Other parts of a company`s welfare can be rather unique such as running community milk centres (30 and 31 in C) and in line with their obligations towards the (children in the) local community.

At least, five immediate observations can be revealed from the data in table 2. First, we notice the general range or extent of welfare benefits which in column 2 amounts to 71. Second, the table also reflects great nuances within categories such as with leaves and transport (column 1 and 3). Third, the distributional variations across and within countries are shown in columns 4-7. The Tanzanian companies offer housing (24 C and D) or housing allowances (26 C and D). In company C "House" means subsidised company houses (24) for the senior officers, and housing allowance (26) for other staff, and using the job telephone for private calls (7 C) is an individual benefit reserved for certain positions only. In Norwegian company A only top executives get shares at reduced price (62 though less specified in the table) plus newspapers and journals (15) home as opposed to the rest (2). Fourth, benefits also reflect the branch in which the company operates such as getting a free bank account with no fees on opening or transfers in Tanzania, and subsidized loans (71 X D), all collective. Company D also provides a security company looking after your house, but for heads only (71 x D). Fifth, we also observe certain similarities across countries such as the focus on basic welfare benefits like free health checks (38, in Norway you then avoid the fee) and pensions (49, supplementary in both countries, but Tanzanian pensions are relatively much lower), both collective benefits in all companies independent of country.

To sum up, in both countries we observe a wide range of company welfare, but also that access to such welfare is differentiated by rank. That a benefit like pension is collective does not mean that each employee will receive the same amount of money in local currency when retired. Any contribution to the pension scheme is by percentage of your own wage, so the relative wage differentials from work are transferred into retirement for both countries. This simply reflects the global market principles operating in insurance companies. We also notice benefits or services not offered like care-related welfare such as nurseries or kindergartens, or eldercare or home helpers all fields associated with women's responsibilities whether in Tanzania (rely on family members or house girls) or Norway (rely on public or private services).

However, let us use these brief comments to discuss if company welfare could be of relevance to social workers.

Ethics, social work and company welfare
Let us now return to the ethical principles highlighted above.

Distributing resources equitably
This principle states that all social workers are obliged "to ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need", and refers to how to distribute the welfare already at hand.

As we saw, company welfare is unevenly distributed at company level although the majority consists of collective benefits and services. The table does not fully reflect the variation. As mentioned, pensions and insurances offered all employees can still be unevenly

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distributed. In Norway insurance companies may tailor so-called insurance packages for specific groups of employees within a company. Technically speaking it may still de referred to as collective which is a requirement if you want to avoid taxation. In company D there is a total of 20% contribution to the pension scheme (15% employer and 5 % employee). Percentage can be seen as a flat contribution. However, pay capacity is systematically skewed across the company hierarchy. So when pension contributions are based on percentages (like 5%) the end result is systematic variation in pension received. This means that the relative discrepancy from work life is carried on to retirement. This shows the intricate of "equality" or even "fairness". These considerations are parallel to those we find when distributing many other public welfare benefits familiar to social work practice whether regulated by explicit criteria (as in 27 C Transport of late person to home village) or based on judgement (51 D Full medical cover where employees may apply for exceeding the out-patient - or the in-patient limit since there is no fixed limit).

However, other aspects are more delicate. In ethical principle 5.1 dealing with professional conduct, it states that "Social workers should maintain confidentiality regarding information about people who use their services (…)." Employers often demand full information. The knowledge acquired may be seen as important for issues such as recruitment to higher positions. An employee suffering from a long-time health problem may be seen as unfit for this challenge. Some companies in East-Africa have introduced a HIV/AIDS workplace policy to combine prevention, care and protection where employees are invited to come forward for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). However, the perceived risks involved tend to make staff refrain from participating. Both stigma, lack of both support and confidentiality leave the programmes with underutilisation of VCT services (Karyeija 2007: 40-41). This makes Karyeija in her study from Uganda conclude that "Therefore, both the social worker and the individual can decide how to discuss confidentiality with management hence the urgent need for these organisations to consider employing professional social workers either on a part-time or consultation basis and this will facilitate implementation further" (2007:51). Here we see that social workers are seen as particularly well suited to deal with such delicate issues with explicit reference to the tricky employer-employee relations. This takes us back to the control issues referred above. Company welfare thus represents a potential conflict zone that calls for combining micro perspectives (face-to-face-working) with understanding organisations (focus on management and surplus).

We also want to point to ethical principle 5.3 saying that "Social workers should act with integrity. This includes not abusing the relationship of trust with the people using their services, recognising the boundaries between the personal and professional life, and not abusing their position for personal benefit or gain". Assisting people may trigger social phenomena from daily life such as reciprocity as well as power. To control an attractive scarce resource such as welfare benefits may tempt people to get involved in illegitimate exchange processes such as accepting a gratitude in cash or in kind from the welfare recipient. In her study from Tanzania Narayan (1997) reports that of all service providers, traditional leaders was the least trusted (10%) along with District officials (12%) and other official representatives like cooperative officials (9%). To illustrate, the low score for central government officials (16%) was linked up with a tendency to privatise their services to people who could pay (cf. bribes). To increase trust, we refer to social work ethics that demand social workers to refrain from getting involved in dubious activities which also means strength to withstand pressures towards the "collective" or group-nature of some forms of corruption.

These are merely illustrations and do not pretend to be exhaustive. We will therefore proceed to our next point.

Promoting the right to participation

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This ethical principle accentuates the active involvement and empowerment. The social worker is obliged to assist the recipient towards "full involvement and participation" when "using their services".

Information is problematic in most organisations and in no company did we find that all employees had full information about the benefits offered or with what benefits they could consume (A, B and C. Not yet explored for D). Social workers are well familiar with such problems as well as the consequences it may pose because variation in information tends to correlate with needs, - our worry is with the less well off who tend to be overrepresented in the group who do need, but do not demand welfare benefits or services they are entitled to get.

Housing (24) in company C works well to illustrate. Among the different housing benefits and allowances we were told that the company offers to build free housing to employees who have been employed for "21 years of clean service with the company". However, when asking about this welfare benefit, most of the top management reported this was the company policy whereas $2/3$ of the remaining employees said this is not the case (Habi and Ryen 1994:63) and pointed to lack of seniority or other reasons. From a company perspective, this benefit hardly worked to make employment stable because it was too hard to fulfil the criterion. On the other hand, if perceived as an available benefit it may still work to lower turnover and heighten loyalty, but to no costs. This way even information becomes firmly embedded in a wider company policy.

To promote the right to participate in decisions that affect one's own life as an employee, may therefore be a more complex and delicate issue in private companies, especially if no unions to negotiate for you. On the other hand, when companies offer welfare we should also anticipate a joint interest in getting information over to the staff whether unionised or not. If not, benefits can easily turn into costs to the employer with no return. A social worker should also be prepared to enter such complex arenas.

Let us now look into the last point that we referred.

Challenging unjust policies and practices
Interestingly, this ethical principle addresses more macro level issues. Apart from employers it also refers to external stakeholders by stating that "Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful."

If we find welfare benefits to be unjust or unfair, the social worker is urged to react. Important matters could be what kind of and range of benefits the employer should be motivated to include in the pay packet, distributional policy, and the contextual framework surrounding company welfare such as taxation of welfare recipients and – providers and the wider ideologies as reflected in the welfare triangle and -regimes. This is what makes company welfare a most complex field.

Our data show that company welfare is skewed just as in other projects, too (Ryen 1984, Knudsen and Ryen 2005) though depending on the categories or benefits compared. All employees have access to collective benefits whereas the individual ones are reserved for the top executives. Since they already top the salary scale, they double up by getting the highest score for both monetary wages and company welfare or benefits. However, uneven distribution is not specific for private business though usually more accentuated in private than public sector. There is also another layer, especially in Tanzania. The formal-informal sector divide introduces a further increase in distribution since payment in informal sector

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tends to be more problematic. If we also introduce the difference between those who do have paid work and those who do not, differences increase considerably and are well described by "the Matthew effect" (from the Bible) that in sociology has come to refer to the systematic uneven distribution of a good.

  Obviously, a major concern is how much variation (or regression) in access to company welfare is acceptable or not. Comparing welfare benefits internationally as in table 2 is informative, but also problematic because the benefits and services are separated from their wider context. If company pensions and insurances are supplementing public pensions and insurances as in Norway, the situation is quite opposite compared to in Tanzania. The possibility to borrow the company's tools (21) as in company B, is important for building up an identity with the company in a local community simply because the workshop becomes a meeting place for (male) staff in the evenings, but may be less important for the family's overall welfare. However, in a culture where repairing your bicycle (not to mention to buy one) is economically tough, the same benefit would fill another function as well, both social and economic.

To enter this debate calls for starting-up a dialogue with involved stakeholders like employer confederations and unions as well as local communities and political agents. According to the ethical principles this is a well integrated part of doing social work.

According to our discussion based on the ethical principles it is hard to exclude private or formal sector companies from the legitimate social work job arenas though we do not claim companies to be a major arena. The framework social workers are committed to follow seems to ethically prepare social workers for practicing across arenas as well as across levels from working with individual service users at micro level to community work and topics at societal level. Social change and problem solving are mentioned in the definition of social work and are cross-cutting concerns for more professions and disciplines. However, their concern for people who are less privileged may be reflected in their choice of job arena hence public sector in Norway. However, this does not make public sector in Tanzania an obvious choice. To handle the previous economic crises, the World Bank and IMF demanded also Tanzania to reduce their government expenditure which led to The Civil Service Reform parallel to that in Kenya (cf. Manda 2001 above). This reduced the number of positions in public sector. Second, in Tanzania the funds for redistributive welfare purposes are restricted, and third, trust in central and local governmental officials seems fragile.

A contextual perspective

The above points to job arenas as contextual and works well with the document Ethics in Social Work which clearly recognises the contextual when stating that social workers need to take the person's context into account by referring to family, community, societal and natural environments (point 4.1.3). The general of this principle makes it somewhat grand or voluminous, but the core of the principle is important: Context matters.

This is also reflected in the goals of The ISW Department of Social Work. They train social workers "who can work as frontline, direct or indirect generic practitioners in communities and in various social welfare agencies including the public, private, voluntary and non governmental organizations… Last but not least, the department expects through its various curricular to produce graduates that can create their own self employment that has capacity to respond to societal needs" *(http://iswoso.net/Files/Copy%20(2)%20of%20Prospectus_ ISW_ORG.pdf).* Also Burke and Ngonyani (2004) accentuate the *contextual* in a **s**ocial work vision for Tanzania with particular reference to the context of major political, economic and

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social change and widespread poverty. This is part of an increasing call for *local knowledge* as in Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999) who refer to social work practitioners in developing countries who have difficulties in comprehending Western knowledge in day-to-day practice.

Osei – Hwedie, professor of Social Work at University of Botswana, once asked the question "does social work in Africa need a definition different from what was bestowed upon it by its borrowed past?... social work must be redefined in the context of social development … Within the same context, social work training and related practice will be consistent with, and responsive to environmental, cultural and ideological variability of a people." (1993: 23). Consequently, Mafile'o (2004**)** argues that positive social change for indigenous and migrant groups in western countries requires the utilization of relevant cultural concepts as foundations for practice, and Nagpaul (1999) asks for indigenous material when teaching social work in India. These calls for *indigenization of practice knowledge* signal that we cannot uncritically import practices and assumptions across cultures. Consequently, we have to discuss cultural variation in social work practice and in job arenas. East-African social work education aims at producing social workers that are qualified to work as *change agents in a poverty context*. This calls for efforts across sectors and innovative thinking preferably based on valid data. Narajan`s (1997) study works as a good illustration. In the "Foreword" Ismail Serageldin states that the study "provides quantifiable evidence that village level social capital – membership in groups with particular characteristics – significantly effect household welfare", a conclusion that invites to a community rather than a pure individual focus.

Further, according to Narayan`s data on trust in strangers, this is rather rare in Tanzania. This is a strong argument for building up local capacity by national educations. Compared to the lack of trust with local service providers, an education that manages to socialise students to adopt social work ethics in practice, could hopefully modify this mistrust. Looking North-South, this calls for Western "migrant" social workers to acquire local African knowledge and knowledge based on empirical findings. One is obliged to distinguish between the universal and the contextual. That their old knowledge or practice may have worked in their own local contexts is no guarantee it can be exported to other contexts (hence neo-colonialism). Looking South-North, we should also look into African social work practice from across public and private sectors, formal and informal sectors, NGOs and community work as well as self-employment. The meetings across cultures often feed into awareness of one's own personal and cultural practices, ethics included. This process of critical assessment may also contribute to innovative perspectives and solutions hence the growing number of African immigrants in the western communities (cf. Mafile'o above)**.**

Conclusions

Our data show that companies are important welfare providers though more so in some regions than in others. This variation is important because it tells us that social work education and practice needs to work in close contact with the local and the contextual. We do not claim that the meeting between company welfare and social work ethics may be an easy one (conflicts are guaranteed), but rather that social work may offer competences that could work well in the delicate fields of power and control. This makes companies a viable work arena also for social work, but demands training tailored to handle unfamiliar challenges in new contexts. Reasonably a systematic variation in work arenas may foremost reflect the classic welfare regimes or "welfare triangles", but could it also mean being stuck in old frontiers?[11] What about an optimistic (local) "Social workers without frontiers" – what knowledge would that take?

To cite Osei – Hwedie:"The struggle to define social work and charter its course also involves

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the issue of control. It is a struggle about who controls and defines the profession and therefore assigns it socio-economic status. By necessity, whoever defines the field must also set the agenda" (1993:23). If social workers don't, others will do it for them.

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(Footnotes)

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1. when giving birth to a new baby

(Endnotes)

1. *Anne.Ryen@uia.no*, University of Agder, UiA, Norway Thanks to Nufu for funding our collaborating research programme UiA and MU.
2. *eulaliatemba@yahoo.com*, Mzumbe University, MU, Tanzania.
3. *edmund.matotay@gmail.com*, Mzumbe University, MU, Tanzania.
4. Throughout the 80s there was an increase in number of social care cases with a peak year for 1994 when the numbers went from 60 000 to 178 000cases and at present, 138 000 cases (128 000 persons or close to 3% of the population, especially young people who are single or single breadwinners) *(http://www.ssb.no/emner/00/norge/omsorg/)* .
5. We notice that per 2001 around 1/3 of all the employed worked in public sector (48 % of the women compared to 21 of the men)
   (http://www.ssb.no/vis/emner/00/norge/arbeid/main.html).
6. Centre for Civil Society, CCS, at London School of Economics (2004) argues that "the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated" and "Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group"
   (http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm).
7. More than 13,000 CSOs have established a relationship with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and the vast majority of these CSOs are NGOs (UN 2008 and 2009).
8. And collaborates with Bergen University College, Norway, on a bachelor study in Social Work with a focus on Handicapped and on Mental Retarded children.
9. The article draws closely on an interview with Noralv Veggeland, a professor of public politics and planning.
10. It has for the same reason been on Norway's priority list for foreign aid.
11. such as the frequent naïve categorisation and assumption in the North that "numbers" are for economists whereas social workers do "people". On the other hand, old Max Weber`s bureaucratic theory holds a strict differentiation between the professional and the private. Could this work to increase Tanzanian public trust in service providers (cf. Narayan`s study)?

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