

REIMAGINING THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM: ALIGNING AFRICAN AND WESTERN COSMOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

Widespread student uprisings associated with the Fees-Must-Fall movement have starkly focused universities on the need to revisit the impact of colonialism, and the need to decolonise curricula and adapt them to the South African context. While acknowledging the oppressive effects of colonisation and the homogenising and universalising effects of globalisation, the main thrust of this paper is that we need to recognise that social work as a worldwide profession is part of the global village and that we need to keep current with international developments, while remembering our history, celebrating our unique multicultural context, beliefs and practices, and remaining anchored in Africa. This article discusses examples of indigenous world views that could infuse and inform the Western-based knowledge, skills and values components of the curriculum, and which are needed for effective provision of social work services.

Keywords: social work; curriculum; South Africa; decolonisation; indigenisation

INTRODUCTION

While the Fees-Must-Fall movement of 2015 focused predominantly on the exorbitant tuition fees charged by universities, it was also accompanied by pleas for the decolonisation of South African education and had the effect of starkly focusing universities on the need to revisit the impact of colonialism, and the concomitant need to indigenise curricula. By way of understanding the far-reaching effects of colonialism, we need to consider the views of some of the key post-colonial writers. For example, Edward Said (1993, 8) a Palestinian activist, described colonialism or imperialism as



“the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distinct territory”. European conquerors appropriated land and resources from colonised people, imposed their hegemonic world views, othered indigenous people, created economic dependence in the colonies, and decimated indigenous ways of living (Tamburro 2013).

In addition to these negative effects on economic well-being and family life, Frantz Fanon (1965) drew on his experience of French colonialism in North-Africa and his psychiatric studies to highlight the profound ramifications of colonialism on the psyche of the colonised who were imbued with a deep sense of inferiority. In a similar vein, Chinua Achebe (2000) referred to the “inferiorisation” of African world views. Moreover, Tamburro (2013) emphasised the multi-generational effects of colonisation. While this phenomenon has been studied mainly in relation to the Holocaust, it would appear to be particularly relevant to South Africa where the loss of family and community structures and cultures as well as the dehumanisation, oppression and exploitation experienced by Black persons during Apartheid, has left a legacy of pain and trauma that still affects their Black descendants today in the form of historical, multi-generational or ancestral trauma (Masson 2016). In response to the oppression of colonisation, Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) advocated for the celebration of African languages as an aid in decolonising and liberating the mind of the colonised.

Against this backdrop, it needs to be acknowledged that as a profession, social work has its roots in Europe, England and America, and has also been affected by colonisation as much of the African social work curricula were for a long period based on Western paradigms, theories and methodologies. This over-reliance on Western texts has long been recognised by social work luminaries such as Zimbabwean academic Mupedziswa (1992), Botswana scholar Osei-Hwedie (2007), South African writers such as Triegaardt (1997) and Bar-On (2003), and international scholars such as Midgley (2008), Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird (2008) and Razack (2009). Tamburro (2013) contends that post-colonial theory can provide an alternative to Western Eurocentric perspectives and guide the decolonisation of social work education and practice by enhancing awareness of the effects of colonisation and enable us to develop less oppressive ways of providing social services. Mupedziswa (2001, 285) points out that since the 1970s, various pleas have been made for social work on the continent of Africa to move away from the “foreign” remedial approach and towards a “more dynamic and more widespread preventative and rehabilitative action.” This shift would be in line with African culture, in particular, and with socio-economic policies of Africa, in general. Mwansa (2010, 135), sharing similar sentiments, states that Africa must move away from models that rely on Western frameworks and philosophies and towards Afrocentric models based more on indigenous (ethnic) knowledge systems, community-based interventions and local values and practices.

Gray et al. (2013) elaborate on the decolonisation of social work by stating that the process entails several dimensions, including reclaiming indigenous beliefs and practices,

identifying harmful beliefs and practices and learning from successful decolonisation to improve social work practice with both indigenous and non-indigenous populations. As South African social work students are predominantly drawn from the Black African population and the vast majority of individuals, groups and clients that we serve are also Black African, it stands to reason that the curriculum should be based on African world views. While individual lecturers have adopted such world views, they need to be strengthened across universities.

However, the main thrust of this paper is that while recognising the oppressive impact of colonialism, in a post-colonial context we should not completely abandon colonial theories or delink world knowledge and educational systems from each other (Abdi 2012); instead, we need to interrogate what aspects are still useful, appropriate and relevant at this juncture in our history and what aspects need to be replaced or supplemented with indigenous approaches from the African continent. This viewpoint is encapsulated in the writings of Ebijuwa (2007, 46) who challenges the notion that Africans should only adopt their own traditional cultural practices which he feels would be self-limiting, particularly in a world that is “connected to a network of interlocking relationships”. The aim of this article is to argue for an alignment of African and Western cosmologies in social work curricula by focusing on selected examples of indigenous world views that could inform the Western-based knowledge, skills and values components of the curriculum, and that are needed for effective provision of social work services.

CULTURAL AND/OR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Constraints imposed upon the length of this paper preclude discussion of all knowledge areas within the social work curriculum, hence specific knowledge areas which lend themselves to decolonisation are selected for discussion and include among others, the history of social work, paradigms of health and health-seeking behaviour, human growth and development across the life-cycle, and writers who could inform our students’ understanding and appreciation of indigenous knowledge.

History of Social Work

While acknowledging the role of international organisations such as the Charity Organisation of America and the London Missionary Society as well as international luminaries such as Elizabeth Fry, Jane Adams and Mary Richmond in the development of social work as a profession, we also need to consider local historical developments and give credence to local social workers who helped to craft the history of social work in South Africa.

For example, Patel (2011, 71) shows “how the colonial and imperial experience from the early twentieth century and later apartheid period (1948–94), shaped the

evolution of the nature, form and the content of social welfare policy in South Africa”. Hence, in teaching the history of social work in this country, we need to include key social, economic and political events and factors. The summary below represents the broad brushstrokes of what could be included in a course on the history of social work in this country.

We need to include descriptions of the early African efforts at social welfare during pre-colonial times whereby African people assisted one another, combined their resources and through a collaborative African spirit (Poovan, Du Toit, and Engelbrecht 2006) were able to survive extreme hardship. In Africa, prior to most countries gaining independence, Shawky (1972, 4) makes reference to two noticeable social welfare trends, namely, “traditional” social welfare and a “Western-type” welfare. The traditional social welfare system was mostly confined to the rural areas, where families and clans or tribes accepted responsibility for the social and economic needs of their members. By implication, every individual’s needs were met, simply by being a member of the “group”. Poverty was not felt, since everything was shared; there was no financial insecurity due to unemployment; there was no competition between members, because no one had major personal ambitions. One’s status was determined by one’s family position in the tribe; it was not earned. The extended family took care of the children, the elderly and the sick.

This communal system was displaced when South Africa became a Dutch colony in 1652 and a British colony in 1795. The “Western-type” welfare originated with colonisation, since it was part of the norms and values of Western society that were introduced and enforced during that period. The resulting concepts of welfare were found mainly in the cities, with the British welfare programmes focusing on juvenile delinquency and correction, while the French programmes emphasised medico-social programmes (Shawky 1972).

These colonisers emphasised their racial superiority over the indigenous people which provided justification for their exploitation and exclusion of the Khoisan and Africans. The discovery of gold and diamonds in the mid-nineteenth century heralded the process of industrialisation, which in turn gave rise to the migrant labour system and undermined traditional African family structures. Although the process of industrialisation and urbanisation led to large-scale poverty of all racial groups, it resulted in the 1929 Carnegie Commission of Enquiry to investigate the “poor white problem” only. Recommendations of the Commission resulted in the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare and training and professionalisation of social work based almost entirely on European and North American models (McKendrick 1987; Patel 2011).

Under the National Party which had come to power in 1948, both society in general and the welfare system in particular were ideologically committed to racial segregation. Public welfare policies for whites expanded and were redistributive while policies for Black Africans, Coloured and Indian persons were either residual or non-existent.

In response to the neglect of basic services for the Black population, and as part of the political opposition movement during the late 1980s, alternative social development initiatives emerged and welfare activists started popularising the concepts of social justice, social rights and the idea of “People’s Welfare” or a welfare state (Patel 2011). Among the key social work activists during this period was Ellen Kuzwayo who studied with Winnie Mandela at the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work, and was detained at the age of 63 under the so-called Terrorism Act for an offence that was never specified. She was also the first black writer to be awarded the CNA literary prize for her book *Call me woman* (1985). Other social work stalwarts who resisted apartheid policies were Greta Apelgren and Shirley Gunn. Then there was academic and activist Anne Letsebe who was elected as President of the South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA) and who subsequently became one of the first social workers to be appointed to the policy unit of Nelson Mandela’s government where she served as Chief Director for the Social Sector.

South Africa became a constitutional democracy in 1994 and in 1996 the Constitution guaranteed civil, political and social rights to all citizens. The post-apartheid social policy was encapsulated in the White Paper for Social Welfare (South Africa 1997), conceptualised by Leila Patel stemming from her PhD thesis. This policy document was based on developmental thinking characterised by the link between economic and social development, active citizenship, pro-poor policies, partnership between state and voluntary initiatives, and transformation. Leila Patel, Jean Triegaardt and Vivienne Taylor were among the social workers who were part of the process whereby the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare was reviewed in 2015.

Jean Triegaardt and Leila Patel also helped to shape the history of social work by serving on the committee chaired by Francie Lund that was responsible for the Report of the Lund Committee on Child and Family Support (1995), which recommended the introduction of the Child Support Grant which has become a major poverty alleviation mechanism.

In terms of academic training, Black and White students were registered at different universities during the apartheid era. However, the curricula provided by the different universities were similar, although they emphasised different methods. For example, the University of the Western Cape tended to emphasise community development while Wits was initially more clinically oriented. However, in recent decades the emphasis at all South African universities has been on the social development approach. Efforts by academics such as Vishantie Sewpaul, Antoinette Lombard, Vivienne Bozalek and others to formulate the Exit Level Outcomes to ensure compliance with global requirements for the profession, have helped to enhance consistency across curricula (Sewpaul and Lombard 2004).

The aforementioned historical milestones need to be incorporated within teaching courses on the history of social work, so that students may be aware of the impact of

colonisation and apartheid on the indigenous peoples of this country and the responses of social work activists to these events.

Paradigms of Health and Health-Seeking Behaviour Embedded in Indigenous Knowledge/World Views

In terms of world views and epistemologies, there are two main types of health conventions or social constructions of health, illness and healing, namely the traditional approach which is based on indigenous beliefs and practices, and the modern or Western paradigm, often referred to as the biomedical approach (Ross and Deverell 2010). From the perspective of traditional medicine, diseases and disorders are perceived to arise from natural, social or emotional disturbances that create disharmony, which is expressed through physical or mental problems (Truter 2007). The aim of traditional healing is to restore equilibrium through alleviating physical symptoms as well as reintegrating people with their communities, the earth and the spiritual world (Truter 2007). In contrast, Western or allopathic medicine initially viewed disease as a form of biological malfunctioning while healing was seen as a scientific process of correcting disorders through medical, surgical and chemical interventions (Chalmers 1996). Subsequently, efforts were made by the World Health Organization (WHO) to integrate the biomedical model with a social model to form a bio-psychosocial model (WHO 2002).

The WHO classifies the traditional healer as “someone who is recognized by the community in which he lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetable, animal, and mineral substances and certain other methods based on the social, cultural, and religious background as well as the prevailing knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding physical, mental, and social well-being and the causation of disease and disability in the community” (Pretorius, De Klerk, and Van Rensburg 1993, 5). Traditional healers play a critical role in South Africa, where one Western-trained doctor may be responsible for approximately 7 000 patients. Moreover, it is estimated that there are between 250 000 and 400 000 traditional healers in this country in comparison with 23 000 medical practitioners. Because traditional healers are often more geographically accessible than Western hospitals, and they understand the social, cultural, economic and political context of their patients, it is believed that approximately 80 per cent of Black South Africans rely on traditional healers alone, or in combination with Western healthcare professionals (Keeton 2004) – although this figure is a guesstimate and not based on empirical data. Despite the passage of Traditional Health Practitioners Act (South Africa 2007), and possibly due to the hegemony of Western medicine and negative attitudes to traditional healers, traditional healing seldom features within the social work curriculum.

The conundrum is aptly illustrated with reference to HIV and AIDS. For example, some traditional healers advise people living with the disease to only take traditional herbs or to combine the use of purgatives with antiretrovirals (ARVs) which can have

the effect of flushing the ARVs from the system. However, those traditional healers who have worked closely with Western healthcare professionals understand that one can inhale some traditional medication through steam, rather than drinking it, so that it does not adversely affect the ARVs (Moagi 2009; Skosana 2016). Moreover, because purgatives tend to flush the ARVs from the body, they can be substituted with other forms of traditional medicine. Hence, when teaching courses on HIV and AIDS it is important to not only consider biomedical issues such as modes of transmission, CD4-counts and viral loads, but also the persons who are likely to be consulted such as traditional healers. These examples highlight the importance of social work lecturers mainstreaming both biomedical and African healthcare approaches within their lectures in a culturally sensitive manner (Lamorde et al. 2010; Lotika, Mabuza, and Okonta 2013) so as to acknowledge the existence of both approaches while not promoting one over the other.

Human Growth and Development Across the Lifecycle Seen from an Indigenous World View

Social work curricula have traditionally focused on Western theorists such as Freud, Erikson and Piaget. While their theories continue to be important, we need to include within the curriculum African developmental milestones such as birth, puberty and initiation into adulthood, marriage and death with their accompanying beliefs and rituals. For instance, in order to assist people to transition successfully through the various stages of life, life-affirming rites of passage are maintained when the ancestors are revered and their blessings and benevolence requested (Ramakgoba 2001). According to Froggatt (1997), these rituals evolve through socialisation within a particular culture and community and serve an important psychological, social and protective role.

Examples of common beliefs, ceremonies and rituals that social work lecturers need to highlight, include the following:

- When a baby is born, the ritual of *imbeleko* involves introducing the infant to the ancestors and slaughtering a goat whose skin is used to carry the child on the mother's back.
- When boys are initiated into manhood, they are circumcised and during this time they live in seclusion in the mountains or in specially prepared huts away from the villages. When girls start menstruating they go through the ritual of *intonyane* when they learn from their grandparents and elderly aunts what it means to be a woman.
- Marriage usually involves the payment of *ilobola* or bride price (gifts from the family of the groom to the family of the prospective bride) signifying the joining of two families or clans. Moreover, African perspectives of what constitutes a family are not based on the Western idea of the nuclear family but are far broader and include not only blood relatives.

- Death is not viewed as the end of life but instead as a way of moving on to join the departed in a state of collective immortality (Lubbe 2004), and also involves certain funeral rites (Murove 2009).

Traditionally, social work students have been taught about the typical emotional reactions to loss and bereavement, conceptualised by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) in her seminal text “On death and dying”, namely, shock, denial, bargaining, depression, anger, anxiety, acceptance and coping. However, culturally sensitive practitioners need to also be aware of the rituals involved in the care, preparation and disposal of corpses by different cultural groups. For example, among the Zulu the body is buried with the *amadlozi* (ancestral spirits) so that the soul of the departed may be at peace. When a person dies at a place that is not his/her place of origin and the body cannot be returned for burial, the family entrust someone to fetch the person’s soul, with a branch of the buffalo thorn tree which is believed to have the power to draw the spirit of the dead into it. There are also various culturally patterned ways of taking leave of the departed person. For instance, the Zulus hold an all-night vigil before the funeral and after the funeral the mourners engage in a cleansing ritual by washing their hands (Ross and Deverell 2010).

Teaching some of the aforementioned rituals and rites of passage would have the effect of revaluing and reclaiming indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and affirm African ways of living (Abdi 2012). It would also have the effect of “... reconstructing indigenous systems that affirm the identities as well as the existentialities of the populace ...” (Abdi 2012, 5). As students are drawn from different cultures, they could be encouraged to share with the class examples of beliefs and practices from their own cultures thereby enhancing cross-cultural knowledge and awareness.

In addition to incorporating cultural knowledge within the curriculum, and in order to challenge the dominant hegemony of colonial and Western traditions, and encourage identification with positive African role models, we need to urge students to read beyond social work texts and delve into the work of international scholars such as Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (1965), Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart* (1958), Wole Soyinka, *The lion and the jewel* (1963), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a yellow sun* (2006), and local writers such as A. C. Jordan, *The wrath of the ancestors* (2004), Don Matteredra, *Memory is the weapon* (1987), Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (1978), Sol Plaatje, *Mhudi* (1989), Zakes Mda, *The heart of redness* (2000), Es’kia Mphahlele, *Down second avenue* (1959), Nelson Mandela, *Long walk to freedom* (1994), and Njabulo Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the ordinary* (1991) – to name a few. The inclusion of such voices would help to transform Western social and educational systems and affirm the value of African literature.

CULTURAL AND/OR INDIGENOUS SKILLS AND PRACTICES

Trevelyan, as early as 1984, recognised that while many African clients seek concrete assistance from social workers for problems with documentation, housing, employment and material aid, they often prefer to approach traditional healers, spiritual leaders and family elders for difficulties pertaining to interpersonal conflict, emotional trauma and family disputes. In an effort to deal with these issues, Thabede (2005) developed an Afrocentric model of social casework. For example, as mentioned earlier in this paper, ancestors are generally believed to fulfil an important role in the lives of African people. Hence, in order to have a happy and successful marriage and family life, they need to be consulted regularly and be respected. He therefore advocates the incorporation of such approaches within African family, marital and relationship counselling. Also drawing on indigenous cultural practices, Murithi (2009) mentions that when there is conflict, the family and various community members, such as elders, need to gather together to discuss the issues until consensus is reached. After the experience of a highly traumatic event, a cleansing ceremony is held to enable the affected community to collectively acknowledge their pain and sorrow, provide mutual support and move forward.

Livers (2006) also advocates for collaboration with traditional healers and the incorporation of African traditional healing within an Afrocentric approach to counselling. For example, it may be beneficial to refer a woman who has been raped to a medical doctor for antiretroviral therapy while respecting her right to consult a traditional healer who is likely to engage in prayers and administer various herbs, thereby alleviating feelings of guilt and pollution.

In her travels through Africa, Livers (2006) noted many commonalities between the approaches of traditional healers and those of Western counsellors. For instance, they tended to value the importance of talking to their patients which is similar to the manner in which Western counsellors approach their clients. She also noted an overlap between the counselling style of healers and the tenets of existential and humanistic counselling practices. Livers (2006, 96) maintains that the pre-service training of African helping professionals “needs to include an emphasis on contemporary problems in Africa, and problem analysis needs to be linked to Afro-centric models of problem solving. Students need to understand the psychology of indigenous ways of knowing and be encouraged to construct intervention models that address the needs of most Africans in culturally meaningful ways”.

In a similar vein, Gray (2006, 175) makes a plea for an “eco-spiritual social work which would take social work away from individualism back to its communitarian roots”. Such an approach is in line with an ecological emphasis of the Green movement on people living in harmony with their social and natural environment and could be informed by issues such as poverty, gender-based violence, family breakdown, crime, migration, corruption, substance abuse, environmental pollution, and access to services.

More recently, Haselau, Kasiram and Simpson (2015) emphasised that while certain Western theories of marital counselling are too Eurocentric and individualised in nature and therefore not relevant to the African society, certain aspects of the person-centred approach, ecosystemic theory, community family therapy, narrative therapy and Imago Relationship Therapy include reciprocal, interpersonal elements and should therefore be retained.

In addition, as part of skills training and developing self-awareness, social work students can be encouraged to engage in the process of “remembering” their own unique histories and circumstances and thereby “heal from the oppression of colonisation” (Tamburro 2013, 8).

CULTURAL AND/OR INDIGENOUS VALUES AND ETHICS

According to Egan (2009), the best way to characterise the relationship social workers have with their clients – whether individuals, groups or communities – is through the attitudes, values and ethics that permeate and drive it. The main Western philosophical ethical frameworks include virtue ethics associated with Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics in the third century B.C., principle-based ethics commonly associated with Beauchamp and Childress (2013), deontological theories of Immanuel Kant, and teleological ethics or consequentialism developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Core values that have been traditionally taught within social work curricula include respect for human worth and dignity, commitment to service, confidentiality and privacy, acceptance and unconditional positive regard, the non-judgemental attitude, controlled emotional involvement, individualisation, culturally sensitive practice, the client’s right of self-determination, valuing the individual’s capacity for growth and change, responsibility for developing self-awareness and continuing professional development, accountability, and the emancipatory values of democracy, social justice and equity, citizenship, empowerment, and partnerships.

However, values such as individualism and the right to self-determination are not necessarily applicable to collective African, community-based societies. Instead, one needs to incorporate the African ethic of Ubuntu which is officially recognised in the White Paper for Social Welfare (South Africa 1997). Ubuntu is a contraction of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – a person is a person through other persons, and is predicated on the belief that all people are dependent on one another, and that relationships and interaction with other persons enable individuals to realise their humanity and potential (Nyaumwe and Mkabele 2007). African morals and ethics are inextricably linked with African spirituality and there is an animistic belief that the spirits of nature are found in certain hills, mountains, lakes, rivers, trees, plants, animals, birds and stones which are all part of the community of life (Kruger, Lifshitz, and Baloyi 2007, 333). Furthermore, according to Thabede (2005), while some Africans have adopted the Christian faith,

they have not necessarily forsaken their belief in a Supreme Being, ancestors and the power of witchcraft. The ancestors are believed to provide protection and prosperity, but can also mete out punishment if family rituals are not observed or taboos are violated.

In addition to incorporating concepts such as Ubuntu and African spirituality in teaching courses on values and ethics, students need to be encouraged to debate the ethical dilemmas arising from the intersection of cultural practices and ethics in a rights-based society such as South Africa. For example, they need to consider the ethical dilemmas inherent in the cultural practice of virginity testing versus the right to bodily privacy, the cultural injunction against organ transplants versus the right to life and health, and the cultural practice of *ukuthwasa* or abduction of a potential bride versus the right to freedom of choice (Ross 2008). At the same time, students need to debate whether they should respect cultural practices that violate the rights of others, or be advocates for change. As Maluleke (2012, 2) puts it, some cultural practices “are beneficial to all members, others have become harmful to a specific group”.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At this juncture, there is a clear need to decolonise social work and foreground the transformation of curricula within an indigenous, Afrocentric and culturally sensitive model of social work that is aligned with the South African Bill of Rights. In the words of Sikhakhane and Matshiqi (2015, 21),

We must understand the complexity of our society, the uniqueness of historical moments that require urgent attention and the danger of perpetuating the agony of the historically colonised, exploited, subjugated and dehumanised.

While acknowledging the oppressive effects of colonisation and the homogenising and universalising effects of globalisation, we need to recognise that social work as a worldwide profession is part of the global village and we need to keep current with international developments, while remembering our history, celebrating our unique multicultural context, beliefs and practices and remaining anchored in Africa. This perspective is encapsulated in the words of Steve Biko (1978, 26) who wrote: “... a country in Africa, in which the majority of the people are African, must inevitably exhibit African values and be truly African in style”.

Consequently, an Afrocentric social work educational curriculum needs to focus on the following issues:

- There is a need to acknowledge that African traditional healing and Western biomedicine do not necessarily represent irreconcilable paradigms. Moreover, there is a need to recognise beliefs in traditional healing, witchcraft, ancestors, a Supreme Being and cultural rituals linked to various rites of passage and other factors.

- We need to shift the focus of therapeutic interventions from individuals and couples based on the values of individualisation and self-determination to the family and the community.
- Social work curricula need to incorporate indigenous theories of help-seeking behaviours and include exposure of students to persons likely to be consulted about problems such as family members, traditional healers and leaders, pastors and Western-trained professionals.
- It is critical to acknowledge differences between African notions of person which emphasise the interconnectedness of things living and dead and the individual as part of a collective, and Western thought which focuses on individuality, rationality and physical reality.
- Courses on ethics and values need to include not only Western ethical frameworks, but also African ethics which emphasise the values of Ubuntu.
- There is a need to supplement individual theories of personality and psychosocial development with communal psychosocial models predicated on the African belief that the stages of development depend on the person's ability and readiness to perform societal tasks expected of them.
- Research agendas need to be informed by pressing African problems and challenges.
- There is also the imperative for social work students to understand the nuances and communication patterns of Africans, for example the use of proverbs, metaphors, idioms and circumlocutions (Murove 2009; Ramakgoba 2001; Ross 2010; Thabede 2005).

However, while acknowledging the importance of an Afrocentric approach to social work education, I concur with Nwoye's (2010, 39) emphasis on the principle of double socialisation, which includes a "training curriculum to incorporate not only the relevant knowledge and skills of our indigenous heritage, but also building on such a foundation the important concepts and skills in the Euro-American practice". Workshops and conferences can make a valuable contribution to professional debate and development of authentic, decolonised curricula. Furthermore, in order to develop indigenous theory, policy and practice, we need to conduct research with African individuals, groups and communities "about what Africans require and how they best can be served" (Bar-On 2003, 35 cited in Haselau, Kasiram, and Simpson 2015). In this way we can transform the social work profession by co-creating more effective services and culturally competent practitioners.

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