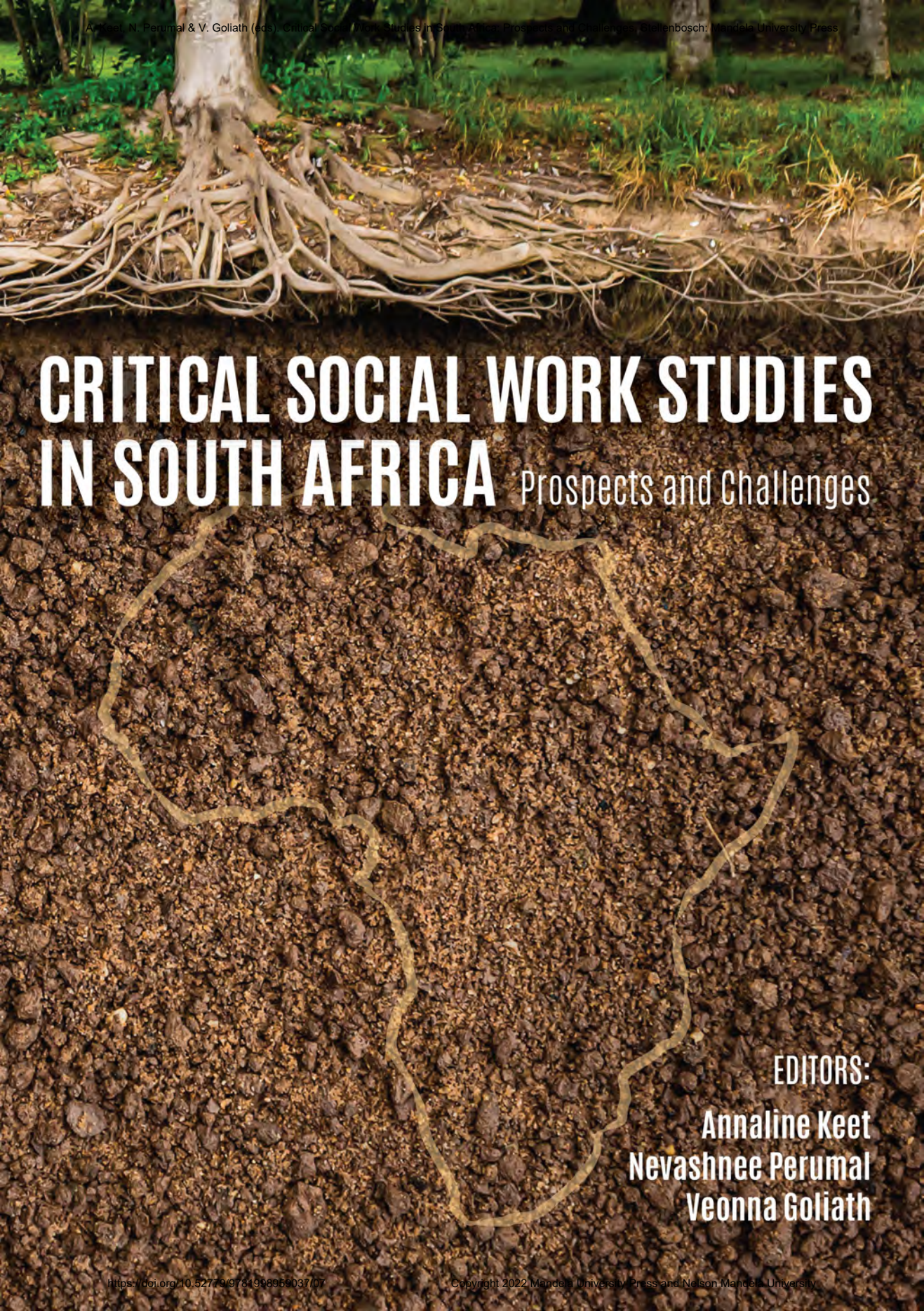


The background of the cover is a photograph of a forest floor. In the upper half, the thick, gnarled roots of a large tree spread out across the ground. Below the roots, the soil is dark and textured, with a yellowish-brown outline of the map of South Africa superimposed on it. The title text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

CRITICAL SOCIAL WORK STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prospects and Challenges

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CENTRING AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPING SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES

The case for decoloniality and Afrocentricity

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ABSTRACT

The marginalisation of spirituality, African spirituality in particular, is found to manifest itself in how the holistic intervention is practised by the helping professions. This chapter explores the central role spirituality plays in human existence and outlines the quest for integration of the spiritual side of humans and African spirituality in social work education and practice, particularly in South African context. Sufficient literature depicts African spirituality, with its notion of existentialist existence, as having a space in South Africa's social work education and practice. One cannot overemphasise the numerous trauma that South Africans, Africans in particular, have and still face. This chapter starts by pointing to the historical connection between spirituality and social work and further highlights how the pre-occupation with the evidence-based approach and the related decisions around professionalisation influenced the centrifugality of spirituality. This chapter further draws from Afrocentricity as alternative thinking in validating the integration of spirituality in social work education and practice. This pursuit serves as the basis for challenging the imperial epistemologies propelled by Western perspectives on the epistemic parameters of what comprises African spirituality. This chapter concludes with the notion that a spiritually-sensitive approach to social work education and practice serves as the basis for spiritually-based intervention. As the helping profession, social work practice has the ethical responsibility to provide effective service to all clients. This chapter offers a recommendation that students and practitioners need to be trained in a deeper understanding of African spirituality and that the guidelines for spiritually-based intervention need to be developed in the process.

KEYWORDS

African spirituality; Afrocentricity; decolonisation; social work education; spiritual intelligence; spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the centring of spirituality in human existence. It also outlines the centrifugality of spirituality in social work education and practice and describes how the lack of African spirituality integration in social work affects deeper understanding of the approaches and practices that support therapeutic goals in practice. The connection between social work and spirituality and the rising quest for incorporation of spirituality in social work education and practice is well-documented (Mabvurira & Nyanguru, 2013). Evident in both international and local literature, several scholars have made a commendable contribution in the area of social work and spirituality (Bullis, 1996; Canda, 1998; Canda & Furman, 2010; Hodge, 2007), without much reference to the need for the decoloniality of social work education and practice. In the global context, McNabb (2019) describes the social work education sector in New Zealand as having played a vital role in advancing the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. South Africa could be viewed as sharing more or less similar circumstances as McNabb (2019) depicts the pursuit of decolonisation and the development of decolonising practices in New Zealand, the phenomena that characterises the South African education and practice landscape. Simultaneously, it suffices to acknowledge the notion that the inclusion of spirituality in social work education and practice is not without its implications, with students and practitioners sharing the limitations of incompetence in dealing with spiritual issues (Bhagwan, 2010, 2013).

In order to realise decolonisation of the social work profession, students and practitioners must embrace, respect and develop insight into African belief systems and practices as applicable in the African context. Mbiti (1991) describes African spirituality as shaped by Africans' cultural, social and political lives, as well as economic activities. Marumo and Chakale (2018) concur by stating that African spirituality involves deep human values, attitudes, beliefs and practices, based on various African world views. In African world views, spiritual involvement remains an essential element, with most behavioural patterns, thoughts and emotions described as related by a particular spirit. The imparting of this Afrocentric knowledge to students as early as the educational context may contribute to decolonisation and decoloniality of practice.

In relation to social work, Bhagwan (2013) asserts that the developments in spirituality experienced in social work could be attributed to the rebirth of traditional, indigenous and spiritual forms of knowledge. There is ongoing literature that depicts African spirituality, with its notion of existentialist existence, as having a space in South Africa's social work education and practice (Bhagwan, 2002, 2010; Shokane, Nemutandani & Budeli, 2016; Thabede, 2008). The late South African scholar,

Thabede (2008), goes as far as rejecting the use of Eurocentric theories of human behaviour to explain the behaviour of Africans. The quest to integrate spirituality in social work is a focal point of this chapter and is based on the notion that the shift of the spiritual domain from the centre to the margins poses a limitation on the holistic understanding of human nature in social work practice (Singh & Bhagwan, 2020; Steenkamp-Nel, 2018). Hodge (2018) describes the social work profession as ethically committed to providing effective services to all clients. In this regard, failure to assess and address the client's holistic functioning could be viewed as posing limitations on ethical conduct.

RATIONALE FOR THE CHAPTER

This section focuses on the reasons informing this contribution. Firstly, the standards of practice require that the helping professions, including social work, conduct their interventions competently. Chan, Chan, Tsui and Kwok (2014:515) describe competence as “the ability to perform to expected standards, and performance is a valid form of evidence as it can be used to infer competence”, an indication that a practitioner's competence is demonstrable through performance. Hodge (2018) describes competence in a spiritual context as a form of cultural competence that deals with spirituality and religion, specifically clients' individually-constructed spiritual world views. In this regard, it is not unusual to find studies where social workers report having received limited training in spirituality during their educational training (Canda & Furman, 2010; Oxhandler, Parrish, Torres & Achenbaum, 2015; Sheridan, 2009).

Secondly, the literature regards social work as the comprehensive profession, where attention is centred on helping people improve and realise their holistic social functioning and human well-being (Mishra & Bandela, 2015). This bio-psycho-social model is often regarded as incomplete without the spiritual domain and there are calls from different researchers for this model to “be expanded to include the spiritual dimension as well” (Saad, De Medeiros & Mosini, 2017:2). The authors like Buzan (2012) go as far as calling for the recognition of multiple intelligences and assert that a truly intelligent person is not one who can simply spout words and numbers, but someone who can react ‘intelligently’ to all the opportunities, simulations and problems provided by the environment, with spiritual intelligence included. Buzan (2012:xx) further regards the development of the power of spiritual intelligence to have “come at just the right time for a world that is often described as spiritually sick”.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF SPIRITUALITY

Religion and spirituality are two constructs that are related but different. Before discussing spirituality, it is essential to look at the relationship between the two constructs. Despite the distinct nature of spirituality and religion, it is still not uncommon to find literature that does not comprehend each of the two constructs as distinct in its own right.

Religion and spirituality

A debate about the religion-spirituality discourse, particularly the confusion between the two constructs, is still an ongoing discussion. Despite the close relationship between the two constructs, there is sufficient literature showing a clear difference in their etymology and in the contemporary meaning of the two constructs (Eliason, Samide, Williams & Lepore, 2010). On the one hand, religion is conceptualised as focusing on a set of organised, institutionalised beliefs and organised practice of worship, ritual and social functions, which may become a means through which spirituality is expressed and experienced (Carroll, 1998; Eliason et al., 2010). In their study on religions in contemporary Africa, Grillo, Van Klinken and Ndzovu (2019) acknowledge that the African religious climate is crucial in expanding understanding of the plurality of religions in our globalising world. Based on its being a highly diverse continent, “Africa does not present itself as one united front of ideas and religion” (Beyers, 2010:2). Despite this, it is worth noting that common to most African religions is the notion of their preoccupation with the orthopraxis, focusing on the practice of rituals, as opposed to the orthodoxy, focusing on the doctrine (Grillo et al., 2019; Ngolande, 1990). This phenomenon is regarded as foreign to the Western conception of religion. Despite being considered as an inferior, ‘primitive’ or even ‘superstitious’ form of religiosity, African understanding of religion does not purport to replace existing understandings of religion (Beyers, 2010; Grillo et al., 2019).

Although not stated in explicit terms, spirituality in this chapter is presented as a broader concept than religion. It is a concept with no universal definition or meaning. Its complexity may be why Principe (2000, cited in Magesa, 2013) defined a three-tiered conception of spirituality, namely the basic fundamental or existential level, the teaching about lived experiences and the study of scholars of the existential level. Canda and Furman (2010:59) define spirituality as “a universal and fundamental human quality involving the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, well-being, and profundity in relationships with ourselves, others and ultimate reality, however, understood”. Sheridan, Wilmer and Atcheson (1994:40) argue that spirituality is more about the “human search for purpose and meaning of life experiences, which may or may not involve expressions within a formal religious institution”. Hodge

(2003) defines it as a self-defined phenomenon specific to the person and addresses how the individual interacts with and experiences ultimate reality. Crisp (2010) describes spirituality as a universal characteristic of all humans, the expression of which may be understood as being socially and culturally constructed. Magesa (2013) acknowledges differing spiritualities within the same larger whole. For example, African spirituality comprises subgroups, e.g. Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, and so forth, characterised by unique traditions and customs as defined within their immediate environments (Magesa, 2013).

Lastly, it is worth noting that Farias and Hense (2008) remark that spirituality has a universal significance in the sense that it applies to almost all humans and that it can be reflected in a religious or non-religious manner. Spirituality is described as the human quest for personal meaning and mutually fulfilling relationships with living and non-living beings and the supernatural power (Bhagwan, 2013; Canda, 1998). In summary, the above discussion reflects that spirituality is perceived as separate from religion in that it includes experiences beyond socially- or culturally-defined systems.

The critical factors in the conception of spirituality are the universal nature of the spiritual realm and the notion that spirituality transcends and connects people beyond the physical and psychological levels. Canda and Furman (2010) emphasise that embracing spirituality in social work is not new since the two disciplines have had a historic connection since the inception of social work practice. Seinfeld (2013) asserts that social work originated and developed from philanthropic origins but separated itself from that as professionalism developed. Based on this historic relationship, it could be viewed as much easier to incorporate spirituality into social work education and practice. In Bhagwan's view, "secularization, scientism, and the rise of modernity have contributed to the antipathy between spirituality and social work" (2012:188). In embracing evidence-based practices, the issues relating to spirituality were viewed as not befitting the scientific nature of the profession (Zapf, 2005).

The lack of a framework for the integration of spirituality into social work practice may result in social workers having to rely on their discretion to tackle this topic with clients (Carrington, 2013). Also significant is the lack of educational preparation on the universal use of spirituality across different societies. This also includes spirituality as practised in Africa and South Africa, hence including the African paradigm. The significance of spirituality in African knowledge cannot be overemphasised, considering that spirituality is regarded as "the bedrock of this knowledge system that makes it remarkably different from other knowledge/sciences" (Millar & Havertkort, 2006:8). African spirituality is even more relevant, considering that it involves the kind of related knowledge base that has sustained Africans under diverse, complex and risk-prone environments (Millar & Havertkort, 2006). In addition, an estimated 80% of South Africa's people reportedly rely on traditional healing as their first contact for the treatment of health concerns (Felhaber, 1997 in Berg, 2003).

Unlike the Kuhnian revolution, which completely rejects the old paradigm in support of the new, Himmelstrand, Kinyanjui and Mburugu (1994) advocate a search for the possible synthesis of the already existing perspectives, where old ideas can be combined in a new manner. Santos (2016) concurs by stating that challenging the canonical and Eurocentric epistemological traditions as the ultimate standard does not always involve coming up with the new but also involves applying relevant and existing perspectives. In the South African context, Mkhwanazi and Ramose (2002:164) underline the need to recognise “the plurality of knowledges and, on the other, a deep philosophical reflection that serve as the basis to support social and political changes free from the de-humanising forces of colonial-capitalist relations”. In relation to this view, it needs to be acknowledged that there is not just one single African spirituality, although many of the characteristics of the African spiritualities are alike (Knoetze, 2019).

SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

This section is mainly aimed at supporting the idea that since the inception of social work education and practice, spirituality has been centre stage. Africans acknowledge the idea that spirituality remains at the centre of Africa’s knowledges and human nature that both human beings and non-human beings in the universe originate from a supernatural being and that science and art are not regarded as separate entities. This section focuses on South Africa’s educational context as the background within which social work education is entrenched.

South Africa’s educational context

Allais (2007:523) defines the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) “as a key mechanism for overhauling the racially divided and unequal apartheid education system”. The NQF is among the government bodies established and introduced with the first educational legislation in the democratic era (Allais, 2007; SAQA, 2001). The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (2001) describes the national standards as specific descriptions of learning achievements agreed on by all major stakeholders in a particular area of learning. Shokane, Nemutandani and Budeli (2016) argue that despite changes taking place in Africa, the legacy of apartheid in South Africa still manifests itself in many ways, including in the educational landscape, specifically in the social work programme.

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to establish whether the NQF has managed to achieve its transformation objective, two decades after its inception the national student protests in South Africa called for a no-fee decolonised education system (Le Grange, 2016; Mutekwe, 2017), including the #RhodesMustFall action (Pillay, 2016). The protesters not only reminded the government about the inequality

in the educational landscape but also showed unequivocally that students were no longer prepared to subject to colonial education. Langa (2017) asserts that, for some students, the protests represented their quest to restore their dignity through free, decolonised education.

Some scholars have also called for decolonised education including the African philosophical scholar Ramose (2005), who called for recognition that there is neither a moral basis nor pedagogical justification for the Western epistemological paradigm to retain primacy and dominance in decolonised Africa. As a result, he called for a “radical overhaul of the whole epistemological paradigm underlying the current educational system” (Ramose, 2005:4). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) has also been vocal on these issues, particularly acknowledging the intertwined nature of the various aspects of decolonisation. He observed that the main struggles of the 21st century in the educational landscape were not so much about academic freedom as about broader and deeper epistemic freedom. Epistemic freedom is described here as the right to think, theorise, interpret the world, develop one’s own methodologies and write from where one is located, unencumbered by Eurocentrism. The process of integrating theory and practice remains essential in social work education and practice.

Social work education in South Africa

Bytell (2014) describes knowledge development as organised in different university courses, while professional practice refers to knowledge acquired through practice and in a more integrated manner. Reporting on social work training in South Africa, Earle (2008) describes the post-1994 period as having been characterised by three distinct but related factors: changes in socio-economic legislation; changes in the responses to the population’s welfare needs; and challenges in professional governance and leadership. These factors contributed to fundamental changes in social work practice in South Africa. From 1996 to 2000, there was an increase in the number of social work graduates at the undergraduate level, with a sharp rise in numbers in the 2006 to 2010 period, possibly attributable to former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki having declared social work as a scarce skill (Earle, 2008). The increased number of social work graduates can be seen as a direct response to the previous social exclusion of the majority. May (2000) describes social exclusion in the South African context as previously marginalised groups, particularly Africans, having been denied all the social and economic rights to which they were entitled. Moreover, the appointment of more social workers had to correlate with the rapid elevation of other practitioners to the supervisory role.

Before the national alignment and standardisation of the social work curriculum in 2007, each institution used different descriptive names for their respective undergraduate social work programmes. In 2007, a decision was made to phase out

7 Critical Social Work Studies in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges

other programmes and that all schools of social work had to name their social work programmes Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). According to Earle (2008), becoming a social worker in South Africa now involved the successful completion of four years of study, comprising theory, practice and research. As for spirituality, the structure of the BSW is explained below. These changes in the educational system had a major impact on social work practice, with 2008 characterisable as the year of standardisation of social work practice. “Students at the 17 universities which offered a social work qualification were now required to register directly for a closed four-year professional qualification, namely the BSW” (De Jager, 2013:469).

According to Collins (2015), social work students were ideally expected to be compliant with both the performance of outcomes-based education and the indicators of deep learning. These significant changes to the training and practice of social work in the country included the new curricula that had to comply with SAQA’s requirements for outcomes-based education and had to meet the 27 exit-level outcomes of the BSW as identified by the Standard Generating Bodies (SGB) (De Jager, 2013). Lombard, Grobbelaar and Puijs (2003) identify the SGB for social work as comprised of interest groups including educators and trainers, practitioners, NGOs, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), labour and other groups such as professional associations.

Looking at all the 27 exit-level outcomes, none were related to spirituality, despite the discipline’s frequent consideration of the spiritual element in its practice. For instance, the development on the bio-psycho-social perspective was viewed as incomplete without the spiritual element. Beerbower, Winters and Kondrat (2018) assert that the failure to consider the spiritual dimension could be attributed to the notion that the issues of spirituality tend to be addressed in life-threatening situations. More recently, the significant development in social work education and practice has been the introduction of standards, which have replaced the outcomes-based system involving the 27 exit-level outcomes. A core knowledge is as follows:

... human behaviour and the social environment, with particular emphasis on the person-in-environment transaction, life-span development and the interaction among biological, psychological, socio-structural, economic, political, cultural and spiritual factors in shaping human development and behaviour. (CHE, 2015)

One of the fundamental changes in the standards from the BSW programme’s exit-level outcomes relates to the acknowledgement of the spiritual element. The above core knowledge explicitly identifies spirituality as one of the factors shaping human development and behaviour. This could be interpreted as setting the base for reintegrating the spiritual realm at the centre of education and practice.

Person-in-environment

The person-in-environment configuration involves a dual focus on individuals and the environments in which they live. Coady and Lehmann (2016) describe the person-in-environment perspective as emphasising the interdependence and mutual influence of people and their social and physical environments. This remains a core concept of social work practice and it distinguishes social work from the other helping professions.

Zapf (2005) asserts that despite this focus on person-in-environment, the person appears to be commanding all the attention and not the environment, with the two viewed as separate entities. To explain the person-in-environment perspective in relation to spirituality, one must look at both the self and the environment. The idea of spirituality as individually experienced and expressed (Lepherd, 2015) is associated with the Western mindset, which differs from the interconnectedness applicable in the African context. Nel (2007) reports that in theology lectures he became aware of the difficulties that the African students were having in applying the traditional Western individualistic social science theories to their experience in the family. The Western concept of self is viewed as existing independently from the collective while the African conception of self is embedded in the collective experience of the community. Ramose (2005:6) shares the view that “the self-knowledge can never be complete without reference to one’s roots, to the past, which is one’s history”.

Bio-psycho-social and spiritual model in social work education

Santos (2016) makes a strong call for incorporating spirituality into social work education and practice with the observation that human beings are natural believers. The call is also for spiritually sensitive intervention approaches, considering that social work educators and practitioners are “finding it challenging to integrate the concept of spirituality into a consistent bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework for both assessing and intervening with all clients” (Senreich, 2013:548). However, spirituality is critical in helping people make sense of life issues and complements social work’s holistic biopsychosocial model (Belcher & Mellinger, 2016). Hodge (2018:124) defines spiritual competence “as a form of cultural competence that deals with spirituality and religion, specifically clients’ individually constructed spiritual world views”. Hodge (2004) identified three interrelated dimensions of the spiritual competence process. Firstly, it is an awareness of one’s value-informed world view along with its associated assumptions, limitations and biases. Secondly, it involves an empathic, strengths-based understanding of the client’s spiritual world view. Lastly, is the ability to design and implement intervention strategies that are appropriate, relevant and sensitive to the client’s spiritual world view.

Integration of spirituality in social work practice

Hughes (2010) says that social workers need to be able to critically analyse their knowledge, values and skills, which fosters their understanding of their work. Marc, Makai-Dimeny and Osvat (2014) assert that competencies develop from the relevant knowledge, skills and value orientation required to do the job. While knowledge and skills are explained differently below, Thabede's view (2008) is that, in the African context, affective, intuitive, rational and scientific knowledge are all equally valid. Equipping social workers with a wide range of knowledge is essential in their role to effectively respond to clients' needs and demands (Gentle-Genitty, Chen, Karikari & Barnett, 2014). Thabede (2008) further remarks that a critical proponent of Afrocentric social work requires that social workers practising in Africa understand concepts like traditional healing, ancestral worship and other rituals that are key to traditional African life.

Meanwhile, Boshoff (2014) identifies the typology of knowledge as ranging from factual to procedural knowledge, with factual knowledge being described as that which focuses on the 'know what', while procedural knowledge focuses on the 'know-how'. "Procedural knowledge refers to skills and abilities that are demonstrated in practice through the performance of procedures, without the performer necessarily being able to articulate what is being done" (Boshoff, 2014:5). Procedural knowledge is often acquired in day-to-day practice and is difficult to articulate. The African spiritual pre-occupation with the orthopraxis could be viewed in a similar manner. Grillo et al., (2019) assert that the use of rituals in the African context does not depict adherence to abstract belief, but the participation of adherents that is central to them. In this regard, the rituals are often viewed as actively serving to maintain harmony in the relationship with the sacred and divine realm, which is believed to be the source of the spiritual power that ensures the ongoing life of the community.

It is also worth noting that the Norms and Standards on Social Welfare acknowledge the need for coordination and development of programmes for meeting the social welfare needs of all beneficiaries (Department of Social Development, 2011). Even though there is no specific reference to spiritual needs, it is worth noting that the social welfare services is a value-laden institution. Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly and Konopaske (2012:33) define values as "the conscious, affective desires or wants of people that guide their behaviour". In simple terms, values are regarded as that which is worthwhile, desirable and unique to an individual. According to Tuulik, Ōunapuu, Kuimet, Titov (2016:154), Rokeach was instrumental in categorising the two sets of values, namely "the terminal values (referring to desirable and end-state existence; the goals that a person would like to achieve during their lifetime and may vary among different groups of people in different cultures) and instrumental values".

The relationship between the two values suggest that the instrumental values refer to preferable modes of behaviour; means of achieving the terminal values, whereas the terminal values focus on the end product and refer to beliefs about a desirable state of existence.

AFROCENTRICITY AND SPIRITUALITY

As highlighted in the introductory section and reiterated in further discussion, the proximity between religion and spirituality cannot be disputed. Cowley and Derezotes in Bhagwan (2002) perceive spirituality as not equivalent to religion, religiosity or theology, either conceptually or ideologically. Before alluding to Afrocentricity and spirituality, it is essential to briefly look at elements of individualism and collectivism as described in the African context.

The individual in the collective perspective

Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012) distinguish between individual and collective perspectives, focusing on how one perspective is separate and different from others but also explain how these perspectives are similar and connected. Whetten and Cameron (2011) describe knowledge of the self as being at the core of human behaviour and that self-reflection and self-disclosure are vital to develop an individual's awareness of the self. Harvey and Allard (2002:8) conceive self-awareness as the basis for developing awareness and understanding of others; as a result, they emphasise a self-explanatory premise that "to understand others, you must first understand yourself". Harre (1998), cited in Jarvis (2006), rejects the unilateral view of the 'self' and asserts that the 'self' comprises of three elements. The first relates to self-identity, which emphasises the view that one possesses a unique set of attributes; the second recognises the self as the part of the human being that changes over time; and the third is the social identity, which mainly involves impressions that individuals make on other people. Concerning the collectivistic perspective, Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012) describe the 'self' as a social product unfolding in three ways. Firstly, people are viewed as not creating themselves in a vacuum but in a social context – through interaction with others. Secondly, the 'self' requires others to endorse and reinforce selfhood. Thirdly, the 'self' is viewed as meaningful in terms of the here and now. Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012) seem to regard the sense of self as not only context-dependent but context-sensitive as well.

Afrocentricity

In the broad sense, Asante, regarded as the father of the Afrocentric paradigm, is known for advancing the centring of the Afrocentric discourse as a set of human relationships involving the supernatural (Asante, 2007). Afrocentricity is regarded as

not condoning the ethnocentric valorisation at the expense of degrading other groups' perspective (Asante, 2007). Africans need to derive actionable ways of addressing their plight and need the capacity to develop consciousness about their issues. In his book, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, Santos (2016) describes various ways of de-imperialising knowledge. Starting anew is described as a means of rendering creativity and interruption possible even under hostile conditions. In tandem with this, the emphasis is described as not so much about imagining new theories, new practices and new relations among them, but to imagine new ways of theorising and of generating transformative collective action (Santos, 2016).

Ngolade (1990) describes Africa as a blessed continent due to various indigenous spiritual and cultural treasures and wonders why foreign values should be viewed as better than indigenous values. Mazama (2002) describes Afrocentricity as a perspective on the African experience that posits Africans as subjects and agents and demands grounding in African cultures and the world views on which these rest. This is an emancipatory call and a noted feature of African resistance is its reliance on spirituality. Mazama (2002) argues that Afrocentricity cannot be minimised into an epistemological tool that one applies only as and when the situation demands. This is a key point that lands one in the debate around who is African and about those who use Afrocentric expressions on one side while practising something else on the other. Thabede (2008) asserted that social workers need to be sensitive to African views since these inform how Africans relate to phenomena when dealing with African clients. This discussion leads to the second element about Afrocentricity, which is African cosmology.

SPIRITUALITY AND AFRICAN COSMOLOGY

Before talking about the universe and African cosmology, one should firstly understand the person-in-environment configuration. This is the best possible way to understand cosmology: refer to the individual and the environment in his or her direct proximity. Drawing from Mbiti's thinking, the chapter argues that African philosophy and African spirituality are intertwined, and one cannot understand the one without the other (Marumo & Chakale, 2018). From the theology point of view, Nel (2007:25) describes the Africans' conception of self as "broad enough to address all relationships: with God, self, others and nature".

Secondly, it is vital to set the parameters about the nature of cosmology in the African context. In African world views, all things in creation have the Creator's quintessential essence (spirit) contained within it, whether animate or inanimate, an extension of the aforementioned notion of the 'interconnectedness of things' (Adofo, 2016). In tandem with this view, there is no confusion on the African view about the existence of the

Supernatural being, conceived as serving as a kind of cosmic architecture. Although the cosmos' interconnectedness is mostly associated with the African context, some international scholars share similar conceptions as applicable in their nations (Santos, 2016). Santos (2016) observes that never "was so much unjust suffering caused to human and non-human beings", then it has been the case in this century. Significant in this assertion is the acknowledgement that both human and non-human beings are susceptible to harm, hence experience suffering. Santos's conception of human and non-human tends to relate with the conception by Blacks, and African's in particular. This assertion brings us to the aspect of African cosmology.

Mazama (2002) concludes by highlighting that, in the African context, people do not conceive of themselves as separated from the cosmos but as being wholly integrated into a universe. Mazama (2002) further asserts that when we think of African sense of self, we cannot be satisfied with an individualistic approach but must understand that we are an organic part of a whole that includes diverse spiritual and physical entities. This conception concurs with Mbiti's explanation of the rites of passage, where he rejects the divisions between the human and non-human realm (Mbiti, 1990). Zapf (2005:634) also describes the "Western mindset of individualism and materialism as having ruined the environment and destroyed community". Gumo, Gisege, Raballah and Ouma (2012:524) describe environment as the "totality surrounding a substance or a person's existence and the way they relate to the world", which covers the social, political, economic, spiritual and natural environment which comprises living and non-living things.

Ancestry

Nel (2007) alludes that the African understanding of death is closely related to their knowledge of kinship, with death viewed as devoid of complete separation from the family. In tandem with this assertion, there are three significant aspects that make ancestors unique in the African context. Firstly, the kinship ties that existed before the departure of the family members is viewed as sustained and not extinguished. Unlike the Western view of death as an end, death in the African context involves a sense of continuity. It comes as no surprise that the scholars, Hill and Hageman (2016:3), define an ancestor as a "deceased forebear, a member of one's lineage, clan, or house which is no longer among the living". About ancestral practice in Cameroon, Lang (2018) relates to ancestors as a cult that is applicable within the traditional religion. These assertions could be viewed as a tip on a series of Western demonstrations that perpetually undermine the African practices.

In contrast and emphasising the continual existence and the role of the ancestors in the world of the living from the African context, Mbiti describes the departed as the "living dead" (Mbiti in Mazama, 2002). This conception sustains the view that the

departed remains part of the living. Olupona (2000:57) asserts that the ancestors function as “[...] regulators of human activities and conduct”.

“An important point to note is that these terms are all in plural forms and that it is seldom, if ever, that the singular form is used. This reflects the fact that the ancestors tend to be thought of as a collectivity” (Hammond-Tooke, 1981:24). This marks the second view characterising the uniqueness of African ancestry. Significant in the conception of ancestors from the African perspective is that the term is uttered in plural terms. The element of community rather than individualism remains. Another aspect of importance is the relationship and attachment that Africans have with the land. As Mazama (2002) asserts, this is the very reason why in many parts of the African world the departed or as Mbiti asserts “the living-dead” are buried within the homestead. These attachments go beyond the fact that the family homesteads serve as burial places for the ancestors. They also serve as the locality where family rites and rituals are held, with the ancestors often consulted as they are viewed as playing a role in the family situations.

SPIRITUALITY-BASED INTERVENTION

Blando (2006) asserts that addressing spirituality and religion in counselling has a therapeutic value in that integrating them helps counsellors to support clients to connect to others, moving outside of themselves and contributing to the common good. Eliason, Samide, Williams and Lepore (2010) concur with this assertion and identify spirituality as the vital component of counselling. Emphasising the spiritual theory-guided interventions, Walsh (2010) identifies three issues of importance in the client’s attention: constructive life activity, external view and stepping out of ‘self’.

Constructive life activity

Walsh (2010) asserts that this process is paramount in encouraging the client to actively and constructively participate in issues concerning his or her life. Involvement of this nature is identified as a way of investment in the constructive nature of life. Often people overwhelmed by problem situations find themselves in the position of inactive. The critical role of spirituality in areas of death and dying is another aspect worth mentioning. Walsh (2010) further argues that spiritual concerns help people manage anxieties produced by death, isolation, freedom, as well as their place in the world. African spirituality could be viewed as even more relevant based on its notion of the continuity of life.

External view

Walsh (2010) acknowledges the notion that clients facing challenges are often preoccupied with inward-looking, with internal emotions being evoked as a result. The spiritual-guided intervention is viewed as emphasising the client's encouragement to look externally for solutions to problems. Considering that the human body is described as just a holding vessel for the spirit and consciousness of the Creator (Adofo, 2016), it is not uncommon for individuals to seek answers beyond their immediate being. As Mbiti (1990) asserts, African spirituality and philosophy are two related disciplines that are found to have shaped Africans' cultural, social and political lives, as well as economic activities. On this basis, client systems are known to tap on their spiritual dimension, particularly when experiencing challenges with various aspects of their lives.

Stepping out of 'self'

Walsh (2010) also argues that the spiritual theory-guided interventions encourage the client to care about something outside the 'self'. It is crucial to refer to the importance of person-in-environment in social work practice in relation to this view. The crucial nature of person-in-environment as the central focus of social work practice cannot be overestimated. The concept is reported to have stemmed from the beginning of social work, with its dual focus on both individuals and environment, rendering it unique from other professions (Cornell, 2006; Wiedmeyer, 2013). Hoffman (2010) identifies a few perspectives related to psychosocial relevance in helping professions (systems, existential, psychosocial theories). Despite the importance of the dual intervention focus, Zapf (2005) has argued that there is evidence suggesting that social work education has tended to focus more on the personal side, with the environmental dimension of the person-in-environment overlooked. Based on this shortcoming, the spiritual dimension may contribute to leveraging the situational focus in case of challenges. This could be found to be necessary considering that it is not all challenges that emanate from the 'self', and that could be addressed through inward focus.

CONCLUSION

The integration of spirituality in social work education and practice is viewed as an inevitable component considering the transformative landscape and the circumstances within which social work is undertaken. It has been acknowledged that spirituality has been the essential component of social work practice since its inception. The process of (re)integration of spirituality in social work education and practice, implies that, in addition to understanding the core elements of practice with its complexity, students and practitioners also have to develop appropriate ways of intervening with

the integrated spirituality. Hodge (2018:124) asserts that the social work profession is ethically committed to providing effective services to all clients. The shortcoming of this nature could be interpreted to have ethics and injustices implications. On the one hand, social workers are expected to develop spiritual competence and render their services following such competence. On the other hand, it may be an injustice for clients not to be offered the service they deserve.

This chapter provides sufficient basis to conclude that there is a need to focus on measures and practices regarding integrating spirituality into social work education and practice. The significance of spirituality in practice with diverse clients is that student social workers and practitioners have a responsibility to be conversant with effective ways of incorporating spirituality into social work practice, mainly African spirituality. The inconsistent historical recognition and embracing of the spiritual domain, in general, and African spirituality in the South African context, is an aspect that warranted consideration and which informed this chapter. In tandem with this view, is the notion that African spirituality has shaped most Africans' cultural, social and political lives, as well as economic circumstances. Despite this inconsistency, the profession remains resolute that conversance and understanding of broad knowledge, skills and values is an ineffective intervention in the diverse client system.

Any exclusion of the spiritual domain from the framework of social work education and practice could pose a limitation on the ability of students and practitioners to effectively respond to the holistic needs of the client system, in particular. As indicated in the introduction, there has been a phenomenal call to reintegrate spirituality into social work practice. That being said, it will be naïve to expect that the integration process will take place in a smooth manner, considering that the two phenomena do not sit comfortably in relation to each other, at least at a philosophical level. The practicality of this process is often related to the very uncertainty of social work practice and lack of training on the proper use of spiritual interventions and uncertainty for social workers, particularly in ethical conduct.

In the process of integrating spirituality, caution needs to be made not to associate spirituality with religion. It became apparent from the previous discussion that spirituality and religion are differently defined and have independent existence. It is also crucial to embrace the connection between the 'self' and the world around – both the physical and social environment. Further caution needs to be made about the sensitivity on addressing the ethical issues that may arise in relation to the use of spiritual interventions. Lastly, the lack of proper training on African spirituality and the use of the related interventions depicts the limitations of practice and the ethical and justice implications. This chapter recommends that students and practitioners are trained to have a deeper understanding of African spirituality and develop the guidelines for spiritually-based intervention.

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