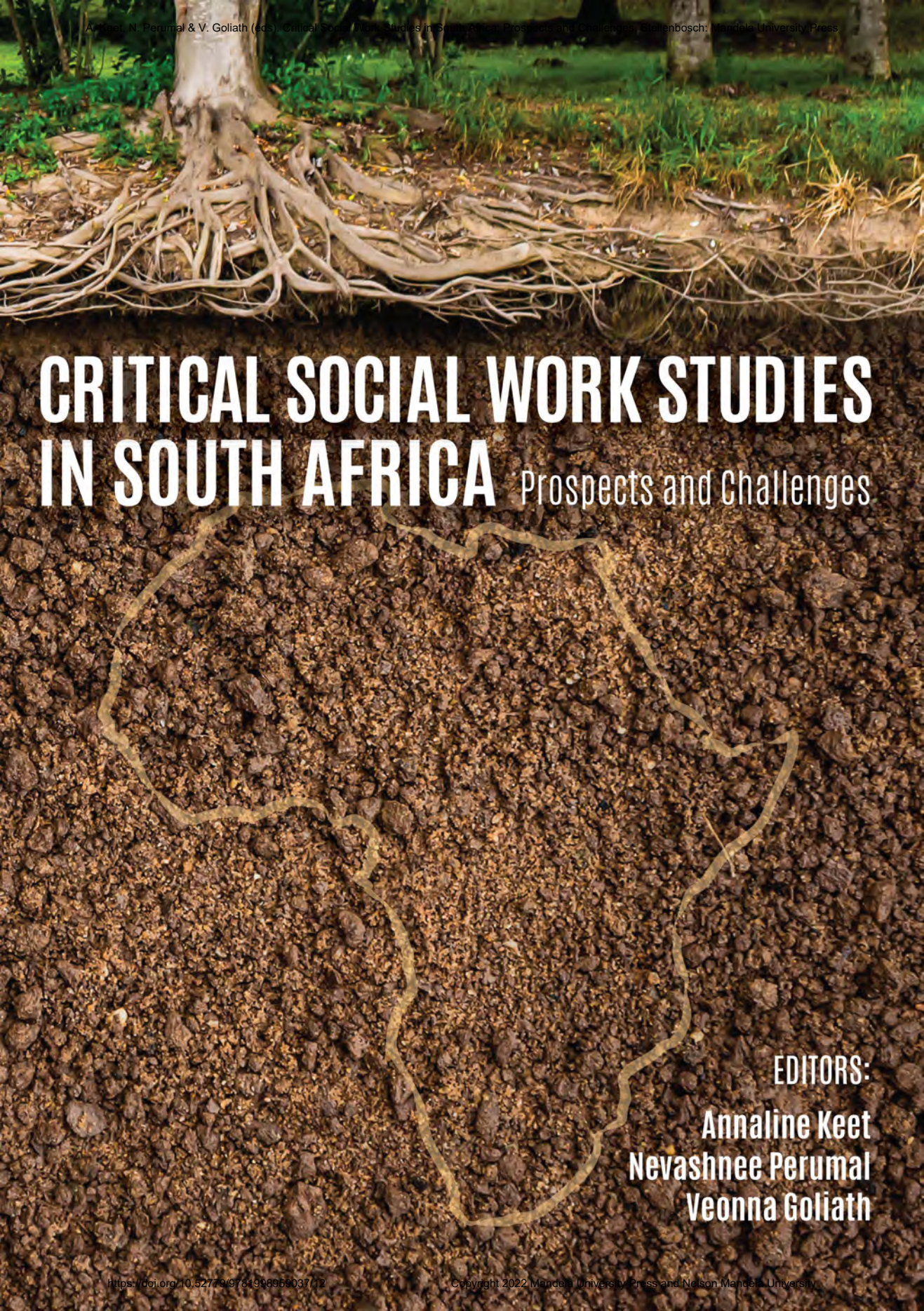


The background of the cover is a photograph of a forest floor. In the upper half, the thick, gnarled roots of a large tree spread out across the ground. Below the roots, the soil is dark and textured, with a yellowish-brown outline of the map of South Africa superimposed on it. The title text is overlaid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

CRITICAL SOCIAL WORK STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prospects and Challenges

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INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND INTERVENTIONS

A viable path to a culturally friendly
social work service delivery in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The African continent, with specific reference to South Africa, is debating on a critical education paradigm, which is decolonising the curriculum and some professional practices. This chapter aligns its arguments with such debate. This is because social work interventions, methods, skills, values and principles in numerous African settings continue to yield meagre results because they are not indigenously grounded. Over the centuries, Western-based social work education has been implemented in institutions of higher learning, but it appears to be socially, culturally and developmentally unfriendly among African communities. Therefore, this chapter delves into discussing how social work education and practices should be indigenised to befit the socio-cultural, economic and environmental circumstances of the clients. The chapter contributes to the debate on decolonising and indigenisation of social work through a conceptual framework with four key principles, which are economic, political, socio-cultural and education and practice, with possible blended outcomes to lead a friendly social service provision environment in South Africa.

KEYWORDS

culturally-friendly services, indigenisation, indigenous social work, interventions

INTRODUCTION

Pockets of evidence presented in the discussion of this chapter attest that social work interventions, methods, skills, values and principles in numerous African settings continue to yield meagre results because they are not indigenously grounded (Amukowa & Ayuya, 2013) and Western-based social work education appears to

be socially, culturally and developmentally unfriendly among African communities (Kalinganire, Gilkey & Haas, 2017; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008). This prompts the need to work towards strengthening indigenous social work education and its knowledge base and values because indigenisation introduces rich local knowledge, experiences and ideas to all spheres of life (Ogungbure, 2013), is people-centric and adds significant social value (Kajiita & Kang'ethe, 2020).

The concepts 'indigenous' and 'indigenisation' are contested, because they attract multiple meaning and perception in different contexts. However, the universal meaning of 'indigenous' pertains to originating or occurring naturally in a particular native area. Hence, 'indigenisation' is the process or action of bringing something under the control, dominance or influence of the people in their native areas (Kang'ethe & Nomngcoyiya, 2014). By this definition, every human being has an indigenous aspect. Therefore, all the races in the world, whether White, Black, Coloured, or of Indian descent, for example, have particular originality and way of life. In the context of this chapter, indigenous as a concept applies to all native people, cultures, values and belief systems in Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and elsewhere. However, to achieve the objective of a paradigm shift in social work education in Africa, the arguments and meaning of indigenous and indigenisation points to the Afri-centric way of life (Kang'ethe, 2014). This is deliberate in sparking an emancipatory thinking and approach in training social workers to deliver social services to African-informed needs, values and resources. We conceptualise 'indigenous' to embrace individuals' cultural and social origin, clannism, family tree and personal attributes that define who they are. It also speaks to services and approaches that have true meaning to their local contexts and needs. Indigenisation of social work education would therefore factor in all these aspects to generate context-bound knowledge and skills for effective service delivery.

Optimistically, indigenisation can develop social work interventions that are proactive rather than the reactive interventions currently employed in social work practice (Kang'ethe, 2014). The aforementioned author contends that the adept application of indigenously grounded interventions, theories and practices is likely to address and mitigate several social ills in Africa that the current Euro-American grounded curriculum is unable to address effectively (Makhubela, 2018). The need for indigenous social work education and interventions and a people-centric curriculum in institutions of learning is vital to inform a paradigm shift in restructuring the current social work curriculum to lean towards Afrocentric values and ethos.

The indigenisation of social work education in Africa is an emerging debate with the movement advocating for decolonised curricula in South Africa. The authors of this chapter feel justified in appealing to scholars to leave no stone unturned in

advocating for indigenised social work education and practice in Africa. They have largely been encouraged by scholars who have explored conceptualising indigenous social work education, for example, Anderson, Wilson, Mwansa and Osei-Hwede's (1994) work titled, *Empowerment and Social Work Education and Practice in Africa*. The authors regret that the development of social service policies and programmes have thus far been inclined towards traditional approaches to social work (casework, socialisation, custodial care and therapeutic models). Although these have contributed meaningfully to the evolution and dynamism of social work, social phenomena and issues faced by the African continent require different approaches that speak to the needs and preferences of their peoples (Anderson, Wilson, Mwansa & Osei-Hwede, 1994; Mawere, 2015).

This chapter focuses on the need to strengthen indigenous social work education, presupposed to be a path for meeting the socio-economic needs of African communities. The main themes that are discussed are the implications of employing indigenised social work education, the prospects and challenges of indigenisation, the inherent paradoxes in indigenisation, cultural and context-based social work and indigenisation, technology and the Fourth Industrial Revolution and a proposed conceptual framework for strengthening indigenous social work education.

EMPLOYING INDIGENISED SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The authors refer to indigenisation as social work education and theory that is deeply entrenched in the repertoire of social work interventions informed by an African social and cultural milieu (Kang'ethe, 2014). This resonates with the thinking of Ugiagbe (2014), who contends that the indigenisation of social work education and practice means to infuse all invaluable, local, socio-cultural practices and traditions that are rich in local knowledge, dogma, experiences, ideas and tenets with a proven record of accomplishment in maintaining the livelihoods of local communities. The indigenisation of social work education and practice implies employing a proactive approach that offers an alternative to traditional and reactive social work in Africa. This also means that social work education and institutions of higher learning in the Global South, particularly in South Africa, must cease paying 'lip service' while they continue implementing predominantly Western approaches bereft of locally-informed social work education. Indigenised social work is inspired by the ethics and values enshrined in the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics that embraces cultural competence, self-awareness, humility and commitment to understanding and embracing culture as a fundamental aspect of effective practice (NASW, 2008). This embraces and promotes social work education and practice that explore societal challenges through an indigenous lens. Debatably, interventions

that employ the Western-centric approaches that have dominated social work interventions have not significantly benefited Africa because these approaches fail to take into consideration that the various geographical locales present different cultures, behaviours, belief systems and thinking. This compels the need for different regions to adopt regional-specific training and interventions, which makes the indigenisation of social work in African countries topical.

The need for indigenisation and embracing its ethos is also inspired by the concern raised by Weaver (2006:41) when he conceded that:

When we reflect on the work that social workers have actually done with indigenous people, we find that as a profession we have not lived up to our professional value system. In spite of the significant discussions about the need for cultural competence or cultural safety throughout the social work literature in the last two decades, social workers, by and large, have failed miserably in their work with indigenous people.

This poignantly ridicules the current social work practices and calls for self-awareness with regard to the services social work practitioners provide in their locale. Weaver (2006) calls for the support of indigenisation as the alternative approach to the failed social work interventions. In the South African context, societies should take advantage of the constitutionalised 11 official local languages as a platform for training social workers. This is anticipated to bring social workers closer to their clients and motivate them to enhance their service delivery. The use of vernacular languages in service delivery encapsulates the essence of indigenisation. This is synonymous with Moreton-Robinson's (2004:75) view that "indigenous peoples were traditionally relegated to the category of objects that were known, and seldom if ever appeared in academic discourses as subjects who were knowers or producers of knowledge". Unfortunately, social work in Africa remains significantly influenced by colonialism that affects all aspects of the curriculum, from cultural appropriateness and humility, sensitivity and relevance to teaching and learning, the research agenda and community engagement (Makhubele, Mabvurira & Matlakala, 2018).

Social work education needs to be indigenised to become culturally relevant and create an environment in which cultural integrity, cultural humility and cultural sensitivity exhibited by service providers and clients can be preserved (Habashi, 2005; Zvomuya, 2020). This could reinforce the role of local languages as the cornerstones of cultures and the epicentres of indigenisation. Languages will then become the foundation for indigenising the education curricula and social work service delivery will more aptly respond to the needs of local communities (Gray, Kreitzer & Mupedziswa, 2014; Zavala, 2013). The authors of this chapter consider this to be progressive and promote social work's ethos to develop and teach social work students to adopt socio-cultural interventions. For example, when a social worker in a South African context

introduces himself/herself using the clan's name; *Molo mama/tata, mna ndingu Madiba, uDlomo, umfo waseBathenjini kwaNomngcoyiya eBhofolo - ndizalwa yintombi yoKрила oTangana kwaTafeni eQongce* (Good day dad/mam. I am a young man of abaThembu clan from the Nomngcoyiya family in Fort Beaufort; my mother is of the Thangana clan from the Tafeni family in King Williams Town). Such an introduction facilitates the establishment of a strong rapport that is likely to lead to the client accepting and welcoming the social worker (Marais & Van der Merwe, 2015). This kind of introduction falls within the professional dictates of mainstream social work but is undertaken within the ambit of an indigenised approach.

In adopting an indigenised approach to social work, a practitioner is required to allow clients to express their feelings before any professional undertaking begins. One could, for example, allow the client to begin the initial engagement by asking, *uzalwa kwabani mfana wam/ntombi yam* (which clan or family are you from young man/young lady), or *uyinto kabani mfana wam/ntombi yam* (who is your father or mother, young man/lady)? This kind of engagement creates an environment that can facilitate an open discussion between the social worker and the client and enables social workers to step beyond the prescripts imposed by the assumptions of the mainstream or traditional models of social work (Pray, 1991; Sewpaul, 2016).

For effective and indigenised social work service delivery, practitioners are required to fully understand the facets of culture and their significance in the assisting and healing processes in social work practice (Mbazima, 2017). Biko (1978:26) posits that “a country in Africa, in which the majority of the people are African, must inevitably exhibit African values and be truly African in style” (Ross, 2010). Indigenised social work education is therefore required to portray and instil the unique fundamental values and qualities of the African people and particularly, it has to embrace all the tenets and underpinnings of Afrocentrism (Mabvurira, 2018; Ross, 2018). Van der Westhuizen, Greuel and Beukes (2017) posit that within the education and training system, the caring professions should firstly assist students to engage in and facilitate processes in which local indigenous praxis and knowledge interlink with existing academic knowledge. In a multicultural South African context, the links between various indigenous praxes and knowledge should be explored for effective integration. To achieve this, social work students must comprehend the underpinnings of culture that individuals, families, groups and communities bring with them into the social work setting; the culture that social work clients create for themselves; the culture of the social workers; the culture of the social work agency setting and the culture of the profession (Mabvurira, 2018; Yan, 2008). From this perspective, indigenisation is inclusive and comprehensive.

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF INDIGENISATION

In recent years, the African continent has made significant contributions towards realising social work education that embraces the ethos and values of indigenisation, is African orientated and exhibits Afrocentric thinking. In South Africa, the tenets of *ubuntu* and communal value systems, among other social work principles, have been evident (Mogorosi & Thabede, 2018). However, the concept of indigenisation has a different meaning for different people as noted earlier. In his work, *The Quest for Relevance Towards a Conceptual Model of Developmental Social Work Education and Training in Africa*, Mupedziswa (2001) postulates that to realise its relevance, social work education and training in Africa has to redefine its curative character and assume a developmental outlook. By this, he meant that social work education and training in Africa has to move away from its reactionary model and rather assume a proactive human-oriented approach to social work.

Other contributions pertaining to indigenisation have been made by scholars such as Thabede (2008), *The African World View as the Basis of Practice in the Helping Professions*; Ross (2010), *Inaugural Lecture: African Spirituality, Ethics and Traditional Healing – Implications for Indigenous South African Social Work Education and Practice*; Mbazima, Mathebane and Sekudu (2018), *Decolonising the Curriculum that Underpins Social Work Education in South Africa* and Mogorosi and Thabede (2018), *Social Work and Indigenisation: A South African Perspective*. These scholarly works by our own South African and African scholars indicate that the debates and goodwill towards indigenisation are taking shape but additional work is required.

Unfortunately, Africa's developmental landscape, challenges and opportunities are still viewed from Euro-American social work education perspectives (Asante, 2014; Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2008). Arguably, years of domination and colonisation by the Global North and decades of apartheid in South Africa in particular have largely influenced this situation (Kang'ethe & Nomngcoyiya, 2014). However, as the Global North and Global South constitute diametrically opposed geographical and cultural settings, realistically, the Global North's approaches have never adequately addressed the challenges encountered in the Global South. For instance, while ideally the African indigenous value systems and cultures embrace the communal ethos of respect for family and kinship that is strongly influenced by *ubuntu*, the Global North's cultures and practices appear to exemplify individualism (Arowolo, 2010; Kang'ethe, 2014; Mupedziswa, 2005). This phenomenon has presented a difficult misfit that needs to be rectified and has also adversely affected the application of indigenisation ideals and values in contemporary social work education.

It is thus imperative that social work development practitioners and policymakers realign and restructure most of the current social work values to adequately serve Africans (Osei-Hwedie, 1996). This is particularly important as it has been many decades since the call for social work to be indigenised with limited transformation as yet (Osei-Hwedie, 1996; Mupedziswa, 2005). Perhaps this is because the efforts to overhaul the social work curriculum have remained a theoretical proposition in Africa and this could largely explain the glaring gaps in social work service delivery (Kang'ethe, 2014).

The challenges envisioned in the indigenous social work education in Africa include that the institutions of higher learning inadvertently serve as 'conveyor belts' to perpetuate Western-based social work education and curricula (Abdi, 2006; Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018). There is a misconception that institutions assume that learning materials and methods that are not European or American are inferior and governments from the Western world appears to stigmatise anything Afrocentric (Kang'ethe, 2014). This does not mean abandoning or overly supplanting the Western-based curriculum that has provided a developmental benchmark but cautiously trimming and restructuring values, tools and approaches that are aligned with African thinking and belief systems and that respect and embrace African cultures (Kang'ethe & Nomngcoyiya, 2014). The curriculum and social work practice should be viable social enterprises that promise the generation of higher social value dividends (Kajiita & Kang'ethe, 2020).

The foregoing discussion resonates with the catchall phrase "*African solutions for African problems*" that was coined by the eminent political economist George Ayittey in response to the behaviour of the international community with regard to the crisis in Somalia (Battle & Cousin, 2011). This call is by no means an endeavour to discard or undermine the mainstream interventions by replacing them with indigenous approaches but rather a call to the international community to recognise African indigenous systems, interventions and approaches as appropriate interventions in the fight against the various social ills that affect the local people. The contention is that social work education should be driven by an Afrocentric ethos and ideals such as *ubuntu* (commonly associated with South Africa), *Utu* (Swahili word for humanity, Kenya), *Botho* (Botswana) and *Unhu* (Zimbabwe) (Zvomuya, 2020). This resonates with Biko's (1978:26) assertion that "a country in Africa, in which the majority of the people are African, must inevitably exhibit African values and be truly African in style".

INDIGENISATION PARADOXES

Regrettably, the use of Euro-American tools for service delivery have, and continue to be, adopted and advanced in African development programmes, including social work education and practice. In the midst of these developments, the desire for indigenisation is also growing on the African continent (Van Breda & Sekudu, 2019). These two facets present a paradox for both practice and the training of social workers in Africa. Perhaps the efforts to indigenise have been thwarted by African scholars and practitioners who have incrementally ‘worshipped’ the alien (not localised) methods of generating knowledge and seeking solutions to local problems (Ugiagbe, 2014). Essentially, if the local people’s epistemologies and ontological approaches to creating knowledge are not valued, then the efforts to indigenise the curriculum remain a pipe dream for African communities (Mbazima, Mathebane & Sekudu, 2018). Various approaches have prioritised logical reasoning rather than illogical reasoning (emotions, perceptions), which has arguably resulted in ‘cartelised knowledge systems’ dominating universities, schools and institutions of research. The controversies and politics involved with the creation and use of knowledge create a dilemma in selecting the best tools for global and local markets and the process of indigenisation suffers from low international demand for knowledge produced using native methods.

The authors of this chapter suggest that the road to indigenisation calls for reflection on self-identity, belonging, reputation and existence within certain frames. In 2019 at an open discussion session on indigenisation at a symposium held by the Department of Social Work, one of these authors posed a question to a score of male and female academics and postgraduate students, asking if they were ready to stop being influenced by artificial beauty such as body enhancement for men and hair weaves for women and maintain their natural African look as a way to embrace an indigenous lifestyle. This question generated an emotional debate, with those embracing Western-based hair and body enhancements becoming defensive that they were expressing their rights to attire and that the origin of the item one chose to consume was immaterial. Likewise, numerous scholars of African descent are not yet prepared for indigenised research, curricula and practices, especially in social work. Perhaps they feel that “we want to speak about it, it is good, but if we do it, we shall remain local”.

As a nod to strengthening indigenisation, the emerging research and debates about indigenisation and decolonisation in South Africa need to be appreciated (Harms Smith, 2008; Harms Smith & Nathane, 2018; Nathane & Harms Smith, 2017; Rapholo & Makhubele, 2018; Ross, 2018; Van Breda & Sekudu, 2019), with the majority of the scholars calling for changes to the education system and research practices (Muller & Trahar, 2016). The most significant questions worth asking are “who writes about *ubuntu* and for what reasons?” Who is leading the indigenous

research and teaching in the South African context? Although these scholars do not condescend to any race or undermine its contribution to the debate and research in indigenisation, it is clear that White academics have shown more interest in writing about *ubuntu* and indigeneity in South Africa (Muller & Trahar, 2016) than their Black counterparts who seemingly prefer to only talk about it. Another important question is “how is the local person in the deep rural village of Lusikisiki¹ in South Africa going to agree with the Euro-centric definition of a ‘bad person and a good person’ in the context of *ubuntu*?”

Ideologically, the process of indigenisation in Africa is at a crossroads because the epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies informing curricula and education are diametrically opposed to the local cultural contexts (Avendal, 2010). Numerous African scholars doubt their own cultures and have followed, orientated and socialised themselves to foreign philosophies that undermine the local knowledge systems and practices. Therefore, for indigenous scholarly work and practice to thrive in Africa, and South Africa in particular, decolonising the mind is essential (Kgatla, 2018; Shongwe, 2016; wa Thiong’o, 1986). Such steps will avoid what is referred to as ‘elite sell-out’ in achieving indigeneity in African scholarship (Kang’ethe & Nomngcoyiya, 2014). The utmost care should be taken when shifting between the two worlds, that is, the dominant academic culture and the indigenous culture to avoid an academic identity crisis for the scholars, educators and practitioners during the nascent stages. We can strike a balance in this regard by giving both worlds the respect they deserve instead of giving one more respect than the other, as that will contribute to the demise of one of them.

CULTURAL AND CONTEXT-BASED SOCIAL WORK

Issues surrounding culture have been emphasised in this work. According to McGinty (2012) and Ross (2018), indigenous knowledge and practices can be understood as the reality of nature for indigenous people (ontology), the ways in which indigenous people know and understand their realities (epistemologies) and the application of the two (methodology). Indigenous knowledge encompasses three main characteristics of the dominant academic nature of knowledge and to understand the concept ‘indigenous’, it is important to ask who is indigenous? How do we become indigenous? When do we indigenise? Why is it (indigenous knowledge and practices) necessary in the 21st century?

1 Lusikisiki is a rural area in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It is mentioned in this chapter because of its strong cultural values and practices such as traditional male circumcision; interacting with such a community would require an understanding of the cultural nuances.

In a symposium on social work indigeneity in 2019 at the University of Fort Hare organised by the Department of Social Work, the meaning of '*who is indigenous*' was conceptualised as the consumer of the knowledge, information and research findings that speak to his or her natural needs. Thus, the concept of indigenisation speaks to aspects of knowing oneself, being conscious of one's locale and being mindful of the language and the meaning thereof among the local people. To aptly wear the lenses of indigenisation, we need to understand and align interventions to a specific population rather than apply them generically. We also need to ask ourselves who owns the tools and benefits from such interventions. These are important concerns that social work trainees need to answer and address adequately in the current African education system.

In the aforementioned symposium, indigenous interventions and responses to social needs were conceptualised within the framework of a 'World Café' – where we prepare, sow, cultivate and harvest. This framework has the potential to guide indigenous engagements to generate and drive interventions that are based on culture and context. This gives licence and weight for social work practitioners and scholars to acknowledge the process of valuing indigenous principles and acts, as they do with the currently dominant 'mainstream systems' of knowledge creation. Indigenous knowledge and practices should be viewed as one's heritage, originality, nationality, 'pure socialisation', culture and history, knowledge learned and localised ways of doing things, among others. Therefore, to strengthen indigenous social work education, various levels of practitioners and scholars must concur about the true meaning of indigeneity but their perceptions may depend on their level of experience, for example, are they competent, proficient or expert.

The authors of this chapter posit that clients' cultural background is a central determinant of how they respond to social setbacks. Therefore, offering training that can identify and align interventions with such understanding could be beneficial to clients. Strengthening and transforming social work education in South Africa should begin with self-reflection. This calls for one to seek one's 'inner self', not in a compensatory manner but in a positive, holistic, transformative attitude to develop self-acceptance, which is tantamount to accepting others. African-based scholars, researchers and social work practitioners should explore the inappropriateness of employing foreign paradigms that are alien to the paradigmatic perspectives of the people that require the services and research (Muller & Trahar, 2016).

To illustrate the importance of context and culture-based knowledge, an excerpt from Muller and Trahar's (2016) story of Sheila's encounter with *ubuntu* is presented:

Encountering ubuntu was for me a completely different way of thinking about myself and the world, an important step on this doctoral journey. It was one of the many ideas or philosophies that challenged and enabled me to confront – or start to confront – my own identities as a white, British woman working in environments with people who were former colonies and, indeed, as a woman who was often working in former colonies. I encountered ideas and concepts that I had not encountered previously, in particular with regard to philosophies of learning and teaching. (Muller & Trahar, 2016)

The persona in the extract challenged her own beliefs and values to align with those of the client's context. This is important to ensure that the interactions and processes of building relationships become easier and impactful for the person, family and community receiving the services. Social work trainees and practitioners should endeavour to embrace ideologies that advocate principles such as 'working with people' as opposed to 'working for people' and 'researching with people' as opposed to 'researching people'. This is a sure way of strengthening the value, worth and dignity of social work clients in social work practice in Africa.

In Wilson's (2008) book *Research is Ceremony ...*, the balance between dominant-culture-thinking and the academic and indigenous people's voices was emphasised. This provides an important lesson for context-based methods and practices. By implication, social work students and educators can develop curricula that promote the indigenous ideologies applicable to culture-based settings. Social workers in the 21st century have to embrace multiple cultural and academic contexts to develop appropriate local and international solutions, which implies that social workers are becoming multiculturally competent and must facilitate diverse provisions of effective services to enhance human well-being in various geographical contexts (Nomngcoyiya, 2018; Nomngcoyiya & Kang'ethe, 2021).

INDIGENISATION, TECHNOLOGY AND THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The 21st century has been characterised by significant development and the advancement of technology in all spheres of life. For instance, technological advancements have influenced and will continue to influence how services are sought and delivered within the social work milieu (Goldingay & Boddy, 2017; Ko & Rossen, 2017; NASW, ASWB, CSWE & CSWA, 2017). Realistically, technology expedites the delivery of services, administration of programmes and eases communication with various stakeholders in the service delivery platforms. Effective technology expedites the gathering of information about clients, connection with colleagues in other parts of the world and the training of students and practitioners (Dowling & Rickwood, 2013; Reamer, 2018). For instance, clinical social workers provide counselling

services to clients they have not met in person and rely on video, email, text messages and online platforms (Dowling & Rickwood, 2013; Finn & Barak, 2010). This practice extends to supervision in social work and teaching (Fange, Mishna, Zhang, Van Wert & Bogo, 2014; Reamer, 2018). With all these advancements, where does indigenisation fit in?

The application of technology in social work practice presents a paradox because it facilitates the delivery of services and other pertinent interventions to communities but potentially also undermines the core values of those communities. This is because the reality of the online intervention is bereft of a human face and reality, which may lessen the effectiveness of the assistance provided (Duncan-Daston, Hunter-Sloan & Fullmer, 2013; Goldingay & Boddy, 2017; Reamer, 2012). The example of clinical social workers' extensive use of distance counselling options may dilute the meaning of the therapeutic relationship and alliance, which compromises social workers' ability to comply with the core ethical values and standards related to informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, professional boundaries, competent practice and termination of services (Duncan-Daston, Hunter-Sloan & Fullmer, 2013; Reamer, 2012, 2013, 2018). The implications of remote counselling and the delivery of other services are that they significantly increase the likelihood that social workers will miss important clinical cues such as clients' tears or physical discomfort in response to the social worker's probing questions or comments. The ability to maintain professional boundaries with clients is also likely to be compromised, as their interactions are no longer limited to office visits during normal working hours. This is an indication that advancement in technology, despite the social good it may bring in other facets of life, could threaten indigenous methods of social work practice.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution will have unprecedented consequences with regard to social challenges and the methods of intervention. Due to technological advances and innovations, social work as a practice and theory (teaching) is being reconfigured and transformed (Ko & Rossen, 2017), leading to complex concerns about what it means to be a social worker, what social work entails and what new ethical standards are required (Finn & Barak, 2010; Reamer, 2018).

Social work practice will continue to utilise computers and other electronic means to deliver services to clients, communicate with clients, manage confidential case records and access information about clients (Reamer, 2013). Amid these technological developments, it is vitally important to develop localised standards for social workers who employ digital and other electronic technology to provide information to the public and deliver services to clients (NASW, ASWB, CSWE & CSWA, 2017). Thus, social workers and social work educators should be vigilant in their efforts to monitor noteworthy adjustments in pertinent ethical standards to promote

indigenous practices. This is critical African social work service delivery terrain that is riddled with inefficiencies. The challenge remains for social work practitioners to decide how best to prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the utilisation of technology in indigenised social work practice in Africa.

Strengthening indigenous social work education for Afrocentric service delivery

The diversity of African communities is characterised by varying social, economic, political and environmental factors. In this chapter, the authors extrapolate four factors thought to be vitally important in strengthening the social work education and service delivery that is culturally competent in the African context. These factors have been identified as key pillars that include political, economic, socio-cultural and education and practice. These pillars encompass various attributes that support indigenous and culture-friendly social work service delivery. A brief discussion of these pillars is presented hereunder.

■ *Political pillar*

Social work services are established and guided by policies and regulations. In some contexts and aspects, these policies promote or limit the provision of indigenous-informed social work services. To have culture-friendly social work services in Africa, there is a need for policies that inform, support and guide the implementation of indigenised social work education and services, promote and protect cultural rights within the service delivery continuum and the political goodwill to continuously review the internationalisation process and social work practices to promote indigenisation. As social work services are provided by both state and private agencies, political governance that is cognisant of cultural rights and the value of indigeneity is vital for indigenous service delivery. The formulation of policies and acts that are local and culture-based serve as significant precedents for indigenised social work education and service delivery.

■ *Economic pillar*

The provision of high-quality social services requires adequate and sustainable resources, both human and financial. Although these resources have always been sought and provided for enhancing service delivery, cultural values and knowledge have not been fully utilised to derive economic value. Designing and marketing native programmes that generate knowledge that is cultural and context-based provides an alternative for funding indigenous social work services in Africa to counter this deficit. This could ensure the financial freedom to undertake unconventional approaches to meet people's needs without the government or international funding agencies imposing funding and operational limitations.

The political and economic pillars proposed in Figure 12.1 provide the conceptual framework for strengthening social work service delivery and can implement hybrid interventions, that is, indigenous and exotic interventions. With such interventions, resources are utilised efficiently, cultural rights are respected and local knowledge is integrated into the process of assisting people.

■ *Socio-cultural pillar*

Social work services are meant to restore the well-being of individuals, families and communities. In the African context, family and community are key components of an individual's development and well-being. The socio-cultural pillar proposed in this chapter entails aspects that promote one's self-acceptance, cultural competency, originality, identity and language. These aspects speak to and about the person in the context, whether receiving or providing social work services. Therefore, to promote indigenous social work education and practice, initiatives and programmes that focus on self-acceptance, originality, identity and language must be promoted.

■ *Education and Practice Pillar*

This is the backbone of the profession. Over the years, the education, training and practice approaches have been exotically orientated and the consequences of adopting imported training and practice approaches have resulted in deficits in providing culture-friendly services in the African context. This chapter proposes education and training approaches and methods that upskill social workers and research that employs local and indigenous knowledge to counter these deficits. When social work education and practice are approached in this manner, culture-sensitive practitioners are produced and knowledge inclusivity in delivering services is achieved. Redesigning the social work curriculum to be more Afrocentric is tantamount to recognising local knowledge internationally, thereby promoting the process and practice of indigeneity in African social work practice. The proposed framework to strengthen indigenous social work education provides insights and possible outcomes that are holistic and hybrid in design. However, this is not all-inclusive as the subject of indigeneity and social work is broad and requires continuous research to effectively address social issues.

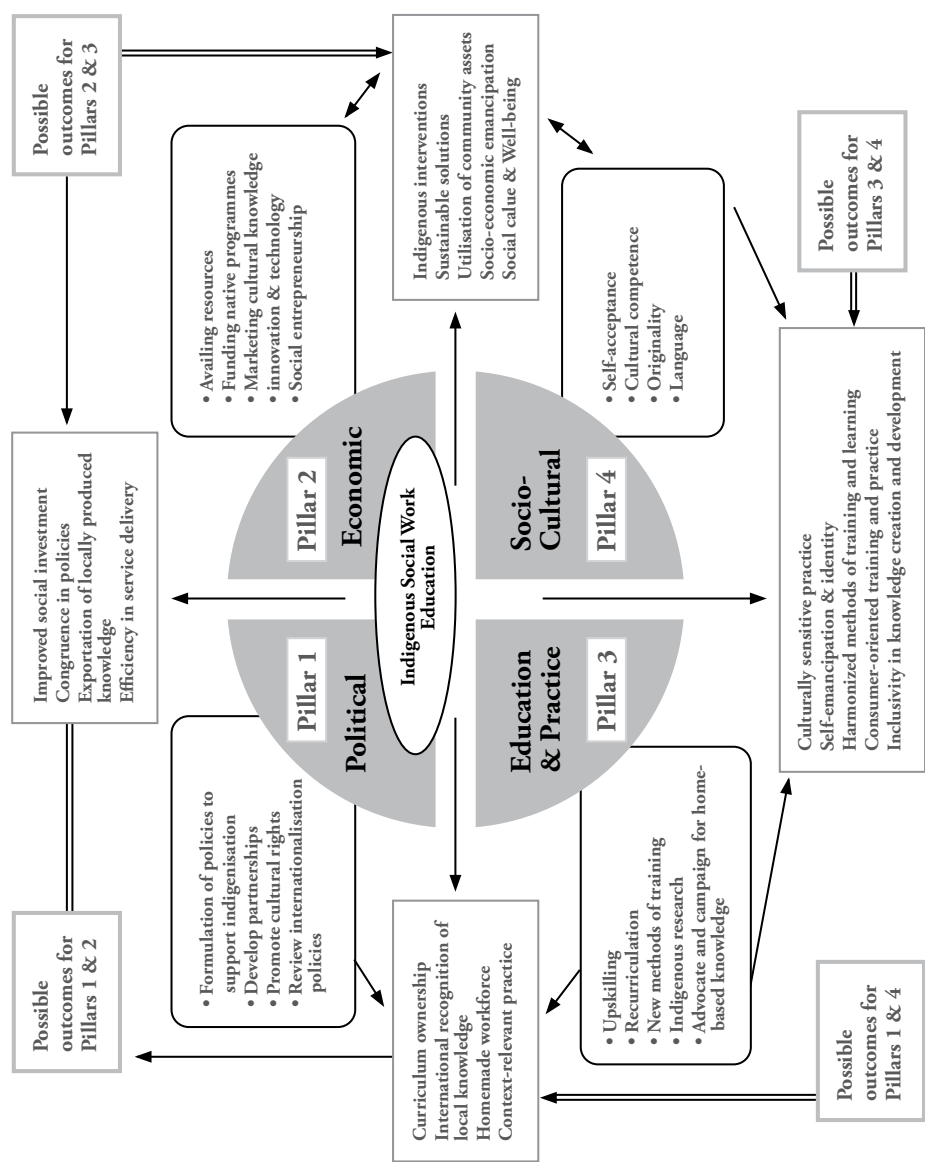


Figure 12.1 Conceptual framework for strengthening indigenous social work

CONCLUSION

An innovative strategy to achieve a paradigmatic shift towards ushering in and strengthening the current nascent indigenous social work education in Africa is desirable. The authors suggest adopting a conceptual framework containing four pillars, namely political, economic, socio-cultural and education and practice to strengthen indigenous social work education. Policy support and resource mobilisation should be provided by the government and significant stakeholders to design and implement the desired indigenously-grounded social work education curriculum, with the Ministry of Higher Education taking the lead. Social workers and other social service providers need to decolonise their thinking to strategically lean towards indigenised and Afrocentric ideologies and philosophies. As indicated in the proposed framework depicted in Figure 12.1, these steps and commitments can lead to the viable marketability of local knowledge, cultural competence, self-emancipation, indigenous interventions, human dignity and the preservation of self-identity for African academic institutions and social work practice.

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