

## Reconsidering social work education in Namibia: past, present, and future

Nicole Bromfield, Janette Ananias, Ndumba Jonah Kamwanyah, and Emmerentia Leonard  
February 2023

### WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- Historical Western influences (colonization and Christian missionary work in particular) have reduced the impact of indigenous practices in higher education and professional settings and have structured national development agenda.
- Namibian post-independence struggles to coordinate robust social work education, as well as improve historical inequities, present an opportunity to indigenize and enrich curricula so that it may better address extant local issues.

### HOW WAS THIS RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- Researchers examined the intersection of Namibian colonization, Apartheid and independence, and professionalization of higher education through primary and secondary documents.
- Researchers considered the apparent limits in Namibia's attempts to address historical problems and the various factors that hinder the equitable provision of social welfare programming and social work activities, including scarcity in funding, racist effects of Apartheid, and urban vs. rural logistics.
- The researchers utilize a local lens for curriculum evaluation and improvement and survey existing community-based indigenous practices, including *okutekula*, *kuthaletha*, *ondjabi*, and *liyandja*, which have historically strengthened family and community ties.

### WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- The inclusion of indigenous content will better connect students to local needs and contexts for the varied indigenous groups in Namibia, ultimately enhancing state responses to social problems.
- Researchers provide nuance in the international vs. domestic conversation through their proposed conceptual framework that incorporates the 2020 Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development and Namibia's 2017 National Development Plan—the goals of which will enrich curriculum revision by focusing on:
  - national socioeconomic development and social change
  - client empowerment and self-help
  - community involvement in environmental development
  - greater professionalization of social work profession in Namibia

**"In keeping with the spirit of *Ubuntu*, welfare is everyone's responsibility. A revised social work curriculum would be more responsive to local needs and involve culturally relevant interventions."**

### ACTION STEPS

Stakeholders involved in Namibia's social work curriculum review must incorporate indigenous practices and perspectives in their commitment to righting historical wrongs.



### CONTINUE READING

#### Full Article

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02615479.2022.2161504>

#### About Dr. Nicole Bromfield

<https://www.uh.edu/socialwork/about/faculty-directory/n-bromfield/>