

## **Final Report for IASSW International Projects**

### **Project name: ASWEA document analysis project**

Please accept this final report for the above project which began in June 2020 and ending March 1, 2023. From August 2020 to December 2022 the team has met monthly with each meeting being recorded and transcribed. The following is an account of what has been accomplished between June 2020 to January 2023, the finishing of this project.

#### **Executive summary**

The profession of social work was first introduced to Africa through colonial systems. The United Nations encouraged the importation of western social work programmes to colonial countries to address social issues due to issues related to independence. It was assumed that western social work education was transferable, and that the curriculum did not need to be changed or adapted to the African context. Western social work educational institutions, during the 1960's onwards, transported their own curriculum to African social work programs, and African educational institutions accepted these programs as appropriate for their training. However, over time African social work scholars realized that this western curriculum was ineffective in training social workers to work in the African context. The Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA) was formed in 1973 with the purpose of coordinating social work education and to address issues surrounding social work education in Africa. From 1973 – 1989 proceedings from conferences and workshops were written down and eventually printed and distributed through the work of Dr. Kreitzer. Realizing the importance of these documents for the present decolonization process, prominent African social work scholars agreed to analyze these documents. The IASSW project grant allowed for this project to begin this analysis over the past two years.

## **Rationale of the study**

Historically, social work education in African universities was heavily influenced by a European worldview.<sup>1</sup> This focus on European values and perspectives served to maintain European interest and domination at the expense of African knowledge. By creating and implementing Euro-centric curriculum, the important role of African values, social systems, and ways of knowing, developed thousands of years before the colonial period, were dismissed and replaced by western theories and practices.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup> The profession of social work was first introduced to Africa through colonial systems. The United Nations, in supporting colonial countries to become independent, encouraged the exportation of western social work education to African countries to address social issues due to issues surrounding independence.<sup>6,7</sup> It was assumed that western social work education (theory and practice) was transferable and that the curriculum, for the most part, did not need to be changed or adapted to the African context.<sup>8,9,10,11</sup> Western social work educational institutions, during the 1960's onwards, transported their own curriculum to African social work programs, and African educational institutions accepted these as appropriate for their training.<sup>12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19</sup> Western experts set up new social work programs in non-western countries and promoted western social work theories and methodologies.<sup>20</sup> Factors influencing this importation were the urgent need to have social work training after independence and the African desire to have western social work knowledge that was deemed superior to African social systems and to maintain European interest and domination.

While independence was being played out on the African continent, social work conferences emerged in the 1950's and 1960's throughout Africa, culminating in a social work conference in Accra, Ghana in 1962, followed by conferences in Zambia (1963) and Egypt (1965). However, over time African social work scholars realized that this western curriculum was ineffective in training social workers to work in the African context.<sup>21,22</sup> As a result of these conferences, it was agreed to establish the Association of Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA) to bring social work education and practice together to act as a forum where social work educators will discuss and resolve common problems that face Schools of Social Work in Africa.<sup>23</sup> From 1973 – 1989 the association held conferences, workshops and forums to discuss issues concerning social work education in Africa, including how to make the curriculum more culturally relevant to Africa. Twenty-one documents were produced during that period that included conference and workshop proceedings, a directory of social work educational institutions in Africa and an African Social Welfare directory. Thirty-four countries were involved in the association, the largest of any social work association in Africa to this day. From 1989 onwards, the association was inactive and this led to the development of regional associations and ultimately to a new association called the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) in 2005.

## **Goal of the research**

The **goal** of this research was to engage African social work scholars in analyzing these documents (3,500 pages) to advance the decolonization of social work education through knowledge and insights gained through this project. The **key objectives were:**

- 1) to fill a gap in knowledge and inquiry of social work development in Africa that will support African educators, researchers, and practitioners in critically looking at their own social work curriculum and revising it according to the goal of decolonization.
- 2) to support the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) in their strategic planning through identifying and examining factors influencing African educators and

practitioners, from 1973-1989, in rethinking the relevance of western curriculum in the African setting;

- 3) By using western and Indigenous research methods, to understand further the 1973-1989 plans for curriculum change, the actions and outcomes produced, and the challenges faced by ASWEA members to re-vision and take action to change African social work education;
- 4) to understand better the link between colonization, westernization, and globalization in relation to the development of social work education and practice in Africa; and
- 5) through strategic knowledge mobilization (KMb), to contribute to the contemporary decolonial discourse of African social work education.

## **Description of the process of implementation**

**May/June 2020** – Team members were confirmed (seven team members (three from Canada representing Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Canada), one from Uganda, one from Germany (Moroccan), one from South Africa and one from the USA (Ghanaian). The ASWEA documents were printed and coiled into 6 volumes and sent to three members living outside Canada. All received their copies, but we had some issues with South Africa. Eventually the team member there received their copies. A schedule was completed for each team member showing which documents they would be analyzing over the next year. The plan was that each document be analyzed twice.

**August/December 2020** - Our first official meeting was in August 2020. We started out with general comments on what people's thoughts were about what they were reading and analyzing. The November meeting was helpful in that people wanted to present their analysis at the 2021 meetings with a discussion afterwards. A template was created for each team member to document their analysis and comments before presenting their work. Each of the meetings were recorded and transcribed as a further data collection process. Unfortunately, our team member from Germany attended a few meetings and by the end of December felt he needed to take the next three months to finish his PhD. We gave him that three months and hoped he could join us in the April/May time. He is important to the project because he speaks French, and we need two French speaking analyzers.

To complete the financial need that will allow us to implement our project, we applied for the Partnership Engage Grant (PEG) of a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), a Canadian Award and our proposal was awarded for \$25,000 CDN. As part of this grant, we are collaborating with the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA). The requirement is to have a community presentation of the work that we have completed. We agreed that Makerere University would be a good place to do this, and we hoped for May 2021. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was not to be for this year.

**February/August 2021** – We started the analysis presentations in February 2021. Templates were presented with a lively discussion. From May to August, the principal investigator and a team member looked at each of the presentation templates and began a list of codes for the project. We have 154 codes presently and this may increase as more analysis is completed. In May our Moroccan team member had a family crisis which meant that he could not continue with the project. We debated as a team what to do because we needed a second French speaker. It was agreed to approach Dr. Abye Tassé to be part of the project.

**August/December 2021** – Dr. Tassé agreed to be part of the project and a set of documents was sent to him in December. We met in October, November, and December. These meetings were more about where we are at in this project and the next steps forward.

We looked at what documents still needed to be analyzed and a new schedule for 2022 was made with each person having a time to present their new document and template.

We decided on the last week of May to meet in Uganda for four days. Three of those days we met as a team to begin to bring our codes into categories and themes. The final day we planned a presentation to the social work community in Kampala. At this point, our team member from Uganda found three original members of ASWEA and planned to invite them to our meeting in May for discussion around the ASWEA organization.

**January/June 2022** – We met monthly until June 2022 presenting our analysis of documents followed by a discussion. We did an online presentation on April 1<sup>st</sup> for the Commonwealth Historical Project webinar, 2022. Our presentation is now online through the Bulletin of the Social Work Historical Network.

We also planned for our face-to-face meeting in Kampala, Uganda from June 13-16<sup>th</sup>. All but one co-researcher could attend due to contracting COVID at the last minute. It was good to meet face-to-face and we spent the time looking at the analysis so far and the codes that we created. Please see the attached photos of our coding and the group, and the presentation day. The surprise awaiting us was three original members of the Association for Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASWEA) who live in Kampala, and we invited them to join us for one of our sessions. We were able to ask them questions about the association, how it was started and why it ended abruptly. We received a better understanding of the goals of the association and some of the issues they addressed during the almost 17 years of its existence.

The finale of the week was a presentation of our work so far with students and faculty of Makerere University as well as over 100 colleagues joining us online. There were presentations, a world café activity, and a question-and-answer session (See photos attached). Lunch was served before we all made our way back to the hotel. We were also able to go to a cultural experience which was another highlight of our time in Kampala. Please see attached the weeks agenda and the presentation morning at Makerere University.

**July/December 2022** – We met twice during this period due to people's workload. In December we decided to take January and March of 2023 to reevaluate the project, what we have accomplished and what we still need to do.

## **Outcomes and feedback to the project**

The outcomes of this project are the following:

- 1) Seven sets of documents were given/sent to each co-researcher to begin this project. All required hard copies of the documents.
- 2) 23 two-hour zoom meetings from August 2020 – April 2023 in which a co-researcher would present their analysis of the document assigned to them. Other meetings were spent discussing what we have uncovered so far in relation to history, politics, and education in Africa.
- 3) A face-to-face meeting held in Kampala Uganda in June 2022 to code, categorize and themize the work so far.
- 4) At the end of our face-to-face meetings was a presentation day at Makerere University. We presented preliminary findings of the study with students and faculty face-to-face. It

was also online where over 100 African social work academics and students from all over Africa were able to join the presentation via zoom. We held a World Café with students after the presentation. This day enriched relationships and collaborations between researchers, students and faculty of Makerere and beyond and enabled us all to think critically about social work education in Africa.

- 5) Relationship and capacity building between co-researchers. We have grown to enjoy our meetings together to discuss important issues around African social work education.
- 6) A Ghanaian PhD social work student participating fully in the zoom meetings, presenting his analysis of his document, and facilitating a World Cafe. His relationship with other co-researchers will support their own African social work career in the future.
- 7) A Ugandan PhD social work student interviewed three original members of ASWEA and transcribed the interviews. Their knowledge of this history will be valuable to them in the future.
- 8) A presentation of the project on April 1, 2022, to an online conference hosted by the Commonwealth Historical Project.
- 9) A publication in the Bulletin of the Social Work History Network (2023).

The feedback from the online presentation was positive and as a result they wanted us to write about our project for the bulletin, which we did. The greatest feedback is from the researchers themselves and our discussions over the course of two years. Everyone states with awe ‘I didn’t know about this’ or ‘this is important to social work education’ and most importantly ‘we are still working on the same issues that this association addressed in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Why is this so’? Our knowledge and understanding of how social work evolved in Africa has exploded and we are excited about how this research will have an impact on Africa social work education in the future.

## **Conclusion**

This work is a labour of love by all researchers (volunteering their time) involved with this project. The project will continue, and we are planning to publish our work to enable African social work educators to teach the history of social work in Africa in their classrooms. A series of webinars will be planned for the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) members and other African colleagues over the few years sharing our findings and insights. One more face-to-face group meeting will occur when funding is available.

We are grateful for the money that IASSW provided for this project. It allowed us to cover necessary expenses for the project implementation and develop a proposal for the Canadian SSHRC partnership grant. This grant allowed us to share the firsthand results of the analysis with social work educators and practitioners in Uganda and the rest of Africa. The time and work that has gone into this project presently reinforces the necessity to enhance international collaboration in social work education, practice, and research. We can therefore say that we have fulfilled the requirements for this grant.

Thank you,  
Dr. Linda Kreitzer

Team members: Dr. Valerie Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso but teaching in Canada); Dr. Ziblim Abukari (Ghana but teaching in the USA); Dr. Antoinette Lombard (South Africa); Dr. Janestic Twikirize (Uganda); Dr. Abye Tasse (Congo, Mauritania, France); and Nurudeen Yassannah Musah (Ghana, PhD student in Canada), Youssef Abid (Morocco but living in German)

May 19, 2023

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