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Human, social & economic capital development in Africa

Professor Shahana RASOOL

ABSTRACT

Basically, we're trying to promote the interest of social work education in the African region. And really, this should be a decolonized African-centred education, as well as to provide, of course, opportunities for consultation, exchange of ideas, resources, and faculty and student exchanges. But we often don't have the funding for this because we also don't have enough membership. We'd also like to be a body for channelling resources to social work education institutions in the region. And a lot of this gets done through our alliance with IASSW, which I'll talk to about just now, because we're also concerned not just with inter-regional and regional, but also international cooperation in social work education. ASSWA is linked to the International Association of Schools of Social Work. And I'm talking about IASSW because our role as Africans in IASSW becomes very important. If we don't have membership and we don't have enough representation and action from African educators, our role gets minimised in IASSW. But IASSW offers a lot of opportunities and resources for Africa to do more inter-regional cooperation and work. So, just quickly, the vision of IA is to promote excellence in social work education, research and scholarship across the globe in pursuit of a more just and equitable world. Now, I sit on this board and my question is often, justice for who? An equitable world for who? Human rights for who? Because they were very quick to act on the Ukrainian situation, but maybe not as quick to react to other issues in the world, for example, Palestine and other issues in Africa. I'm not going to go through their mission. You can find this on their website. And so, you know, I guess what I'm trying to talk about is why do we need to be active in these organisations? You know, both ASWNET, ASSWA, IFSW, why is it important for us? And as I said earlier, since the time of ASWEA in the 1960s and even the conference held by the esteemed Nkrumah, scholars have been talking about decolonisation and Africanisation.

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PRESENTER DETAILS

- Prof Shahana Rasool, Head of Department of Department of social work at university of Johannesburg SA, Email: shahanar@uj.ac.za

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HOW TO REFERENCE USING ASWDNET STYLE

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Oluwagbemiga Oyinlola: On this note, I would like to introduce our next speaker, that is Professor Shahana Rasool. I feel so much glad to talk about Professor Shahana Rasool because Professor Shahana Rasool is a Rhodes Scholar who obtained a Masters and Doctorate from the University of Oxford, United Kingdom, and also at the Department of Social Policy. She is a full professor at the University of Johannesburg, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Social Work, and Community Development. Professor Shahana Rasool has been an activist, researcher, trainer, and academic in the field of gender for many years, with a particular focus on gender-based violence. Shahana is active in various organisations and partnerships, both regionally and internationally. She is vice president of the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa and the African representative on the International Association of Schools of Social Work. Shahana is Chair of the International Conference on Gender and Sexuality and recently edited a special issue in the Journal of Gender Issues. She is also Vice President of the Asian African Association of Women, Gender and Sexuality. On this note, I feel so delighted to welcome you, Professor Shahana Rasool, for your presentation. A round of applause for her.

Shahana Rasool: Thank you so much, Olu. Good day, everybody, and thank you to the organisers for inviting me today. Let me just try and share my presentation quickly. So, yeah, Sawubona, Kunjani, Habari, and happy Africa Day to everyone. And I'd like to start off by remembering one of our late ancestors, Nkrumah, our late president, Nkrumah, and he says, "I am not African because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me." And, you know, when I teach on decoloniality, I always share this picture of the true size of Africa. And this is really the force that we should become. The global map doesn't really adequately represent the true size of Africa, both our hearts and our capabilities and abilities. And so today I'm mostly going to talk a little bit about social work, history and organising in Africa, or more social work educators, history, organising and a bit about ASSWA, because this is who we've been asked to represent. And just in terms of how these bodies are really important for us to actually start addressing important issues in Africa from an African perspective, from a decolonial perspective, which was really what our colleague, Jacob, also mentioned in the beginning of our discussions. So, just to say that actually the first conference to discuss social issues in Africa was held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in 1954, many moons ago. And between 1965 and 1971, various meetings were held to establish the Association for Social Work Education in Africa, and this was formally launched in 1971. So, organisation by educators in Africa has a long history. In 1965, in Egypt, 16 African schools of social work were represented, and the purpose was to examine the content of training programs and syllabuses and to make a critical survey of existing trends in training and social work. And this was already in 1965, right? And then in 1969, the Expert Working Group of Social Work Educators met to further discuss issues in West Africa. And in that same year, they met to formally establish ASWEA, which was the Association for Social Work Educators in Africa. And, at that time already, educators were talking about social development, coloniality, decolonisation of education, and developing appropriate curriculum for the African context.

So, the things we're talking about now is really not new. By the 5th ASWEA conference in Ethiopia in 1985, they had a membership of 55 social development training institutions and 150 social work educators from 33 African countries. But we are struggling to get this right now in ASSWA, despite us having better technology and means of communication, which they clearly didn't have at that time. They didn't have the Internet, they didn't have Zoom and WhatsApp and all of these kinds of technologies we currently have, as well as kind of websites. So, I'm not sure what happened in the years between 1985 and 2005. It was almost 20 years. In fact, some of this research is being done currently by Linda Kreitzer and a few others. So, I'm really looking forward to their research. I just kind of picked up some of this from some of my reading. But the Association of Schools of Social Work, which is the organization myself and Charlotte and others are representing, was only established in 2005. At the IFSW, the International Federation of Social Works, Africa's Pan-African Congress in Nairobi in Kenya. So, we are very kind of recent organisation considering the history of organising among social work education over the years. So, what is the purpose and objectives of ASSWA?

Basically, we're trying to promote the interest of social work education in the African region. And really, this should be a decolonized African-centred education, as well as to provide, of course, opportunities for consultation, exchange of ideas, resources, and faculty and student exchanges. But we often don't have the funding for this because we also don't have enough membership. We'd also like to be a body for channelling resources to social work education institutions in the region. And a lot of this gets done through our alliance with IASSW, which I'll talk to about just now, because we're also concerned not just with inter-regional and regional, but also international cooperation in social work education. ASSWA is linked to the International Association of Schools of Social Work. And I'm talking about IASSW because our role as Africans in IASSW becomes very important. If we don't have membership and we don't have enough representation and action from African educators, our role gets

minimised in IASSW. But IASSW offers a lot of opportunities and resources for Africa to do more inter-regional cooperation and work. So, just quickly, the vision of IA is to promote excellence in social work education, research and scholarship across the globe in pursuit of a more just and equitable world. Now, I sit on this board and my question is often, justice for who? An equitable world for who? Human rights for who? Because they were very quick to act on the Ukrainian situation, but maybe not as quick to react to other issues in the world, for example, Palestine and other issues in Africa. I'm not going to go through their mission. You can find this on their website. And so, you know, I guess what I'm trying to talk about is why do we need to be active in these organisations? You know, both [ASWANET], ASSWA, IFSW, why is it important for us? And as I said earlier, since the time of ASWEA in the 1960s and even the conference held by the esteemed Nkrumah, scholars have been talking about decolonisation and Africanisation.

The issue of whether we are just universities based in Africa or African universities is not a new discussion. Why are we still having these same discussions? Why is it that our universities are not able to move from the colonised spaces that they are? Why are we failing to organise ourselves now when we have technology available to us? And these are questions we need to ask ourselves in terms of how do we become much more active to be able to represent Africa on the world stage? And the impact of us not being as active as we should be, is that the European issues still dominate. And as I said earlier, IASSW was willing easily to do a statement on Ukraine. But when we wanted to do a statement on Black Lives Matter or the Palestinian issues or other African issues, we are told that we have a generic statement that covers all of these, or we can do one statement to lump all of these other issues together. So, European issues can be dealt with as critically important, but all others must be lumped into one. And so, the question remains, whose lives matter? So, if we don't, as Africans and Black people and people of the global south, start asserting ourselves and taking a stand on our own issues, and if we don't organise ourselves and ensure representation, we will continue to be excluded, silenced and marginalised, even in a profession that claims an interest in social justice and human rights. And so, I guess, this depends on who do we consider more human? Whose human rights matter?

And how are we going to engage further to change this? And, of course, those of us in leadership and those who are in those positions trying to represent these issues need a strong force behind us. We need all the schools of education in Africa behind us so we can organise ourselves and activate for change. So, it's really time for Africa to lead and we need to be involved in our own social development and take the lead on developing theories and curriculum that is Afrocentric and decolonial. And to do this, we need a strong base. We need to unify plus Africa and create a strong ASSWA, IFSW Africa, SWan Africa, you know, this organisation that we represent today. And we need to be active in asserting our interests on international bodies to ensure Africa has a strong voice. And we need to build solidarity across the global south as well, so with Latin America and Asia, so that we can challenge this Western centrism. But we need to lead on this engagement and not follow. I'm very proud of Joachim Mumba, who is now the IFSW president. And we wish him well and stand behind him as he leads, because he has risen to this position. But he won't be able to represent African interests if he doesn't have a strong body of social workers and social work educators behind him, supporting him, motivating for certain issues to be raised. So let us ensure that we're strongly represented on IASSW, IFS Global, so that our needs and interests of Africa are heard. Asante Sana. Kea leboha. Thank you. Ngiyabonga.

Oluwagbemiga Oyinlola: Thank you, my Professor Rasool. I feel so delighted with those – it sounds to me like a TED Talk. That was really lovely.