

Inhalt

Forewords	8
Acknowledgement	12
Introduction	13

Tshering Dorji

Spiritual Social Work: Reflections from a Buddhist Perspective	19
1. Introduction	19
2. Defining Social Work from a Bhutanese Perspective	19
3. Social Work Education in Bhutan	20
4. The role of the Buddhist approach and spirituality in Social Work Education and Practice	22
5. Helping students to learn and practise spiritual values: Our experience	23
6. Conclusion	25

Ursula Fasselt

International Human Rights and social development: The importance of International Human Rights Law for Social Work Practise	28
1. Introduction – Social Work a Human Rights Profession?	28
2. What are the characteristics of Human Rights?	30
2.1 Philosophical content	30
2.2 Juridical aspect of Human Rights: international, regional and national guaranties	32
2.3 UN monitoring system	33
2.4 National monitoring institutions	34
2.5 The importance of civil society in the monitoring process	35
3. The impact of human Rights on social work practise	35
3.1 Social work and human rights	35
3.2 Human Rights approach for social policy and social services	36
4. Conclusion	40

Shanthalembi Lisham

Historicizing Feminism in India: Locating Feminism in India's Northeast	43
1. Introduction	43
2. History of Women's Movement and Feminism in India	44
3. Doing Feminisms in India	46
4. Northeast Women and Women's Question	47

Prateeti Barman	
Reproductive Rights of Women: Issues and Concerns	57
1. Introduction	57
2. Reproductive Rights: Issues and Concerns	57
3. Conclusion	61
Nandita Bezbaruah	
Telehealth and Social Work Practice	63
1. Definition of Telehealth	63
2. Historical Perspective of Telehealth	63
3. Telepractice and Social Work	64
4. Modes of Delivery	64
5. Online Therapy	65
6. Self-Guided Treatment Interventions	65
7. Opportunities and Challenges of Telepractice	65
8. Rules for Engagement with Clients	66
9. Ethical and Legal Considerations	67
10. Preparing the Environment for Telepractice	67
11. Things to Consider for Telepractice	68
12. Cost of Telepractice	68
13. Discussion	69
Carola Berneiser	
Child rights and protection in Germany: the so-called “Frankfurter Modell Kinderschutz“	71
1. Introduction	71
2. Historical context of children’s rights and child protection	71
3. The child protection system in Germany	72
3.1 Youth agency	74
3.2 Family court	76
3.3 Police and Criminal Court	76
4. Current problems in the “child protection“ system	77
5. The “Frankfurter Modell zum Kinderschutz“	77
6. Summary	78

Timo Tohidipur	
European Migration Law and Social Work Practice	81
1. About Global Migration and Borders	81
2. Relevance of Migration for the EU and the crisis of solidarity	82
3. European Migration Law: Competencies and Content	82
3.1 EU Policy on Immigration	83
3.2 EU Policy on Asylum	83
3.3 EU Policy on Border Management	85
4. European Migration Law and Human Rights	85
4.1 On Basic legal foundations	85
4.2 Challenges for Human Rights and law in general in context of EU Migration Law	86
5. Social Work Practice as Human Rights Practice in context of Migration	87
Andrew Carlson	
Harnessing the potential of SBCC Post-COVID-19 Pandemic	89
1. Background	89
2. Social and Behaviour Change and Communication	89
3. Challenges for SBCC During the COVID-19 Pandemic	90
4. Social and Behaviour Change Communication post-COVID	91
5. Conclusion	92
Chaitali Das	
International Social Work: Problems and Possibilities	94
1. Introduction	94
2. Social work as an international profession	94
3. Colonialism, neo-colonialism, and international social work	95
4. The significance of international social work in a globalized world	97
5. Conclusion	99
About the Authors	103

Foreword by Ute Straub

Our world is facing enormous challenges: climate crisis, pandemics, new and ongoing threats from war. We are all feeling the effects, but especially those who find themselves in a vulnerable, underprivileged, marginalized position. This particularly affects the population in the Global South. Economic hegemony and land grabbing as well as the externalization of the consequences of western life have split the world into center and periphery, “the West and the rest”. But massive threats are emerging from the periphery, from waves of migration to fundamentalism and terrorism. Things that are taken for granted, an open society and other values of the Global North are being questioned. New geopolitical developments, the economic strengthening of former “developing countries” and the Russian attack on Ukraine are currently forcing European states to turn to countries of the Global South “for help” in search of resources for the energy transition or skilled workers. A new way of exploitation or the “provincialization of Europe”? It remains to be seen whether the hegemonic model that has so far determined the world order and has ensured growing inequality between the societies of the North and the South will be overcome.

All these developments and turbulences challenge social work as a profession and discipline. On the one hand, there are new fields of practice and research, e.g. in refugee aid, development cooperation, peacebuilding and disaster management. On the other hand, local and indigenous approaches are gaining in importance, which is reflected in a reconceptualization and indigenization of social work methods. The focus of the established (Northern) individualizing casework and clinical social work is substituted by educational and community work and organization which builds awareness, strengthens the community and opposes repression. These approaches are often clearly politically oriented and, in contrast to the neoliberal tendencies of the North, they call for an active role in bringing about socio-political changes, above all in the fight against poverty, landlessness and lack of education. With these premises, with a pronounced community orientation and with the claim to political interference, social work in the Global South is ahead of us. It should set an example for ourselves in many ways.

However, the debates are still taking place too much in the national context, and different discourses appear side by side without being intertwined. In order to avoid stagnation in social work (especially in the rather complacent Global North), exchange on an international level is essential. A cooperation is needed that makes it possible to link the different approaches at eye level, to compare them systematically and to develop them further together in order to exploit all potential. But not only professional knowledge is required. Especially in the increasingly important cooperation with social movements and NGOs, “silent” knowledge is also of great relevance. It is important to develop this implicit collective knowledge about support strategies to a common canon of knowledge

by incorporating scientific findings and local and indigenous traditions. A new understanding of global lifeworld orientation (Lebensweltorientierung)?

The contributions from the International online lecture series on “Emerging trends and perspectives in Social Work Practice” can be classified precisely in this strategy, because they are part of a collaborative project between Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and Assam Don Bosco University. Secondly many topics are addressed that require further processing. They deal with fundamental questions such as the role of human rights in social work and the future of international social work. It’s about de-construction and re-construction, e.g. the bringing together of ethnicity and feminism: Meitei women in North-East India not only have to distance themselves from white feminism, but also from the limitation of understanding gender system from the mainland Indian perspective. Furthermore, it is made clear how the intersectionality of gender, caste, class and structural inequality leads to a complex perspective on reproductive rights. Child protection’s current challenges are highlighted in the frame of a globalized and multicultural society – not only relevant for Germany. The role of spirituality is an upcoming topic. How to interconnect it with a politically understood practice? New methods are described: opportunities and challenges of Telehealth and Telepractice as a support especially for clients located in remote and underserved regions as well as – in the context of Covid – the opportunities for digital engagement to strengthen the rights of people and communities.

Even if the topics are still side by side and an explicit linking in the sense described above, this processing of different perspectives is a piece of the puzzle of social work, which increasingly sees itself as social development, which ascribes responsibility to the community as a whole and includes everyone in the change processes. My own international involvement in social work for 25 years, from being the responsible person for internationalisation in the Department of Social Work and Health at Frankfurt University of Applied Science, to initiating a Section for International Social Work within the DGSA (German Association of Social Work) and a Special Interest Group for eco-social work in the EASSW (European Association of Social Work) to being a member of the board of IASSW (International Association of Social Work) taught me how much patience it takes to build binding and long-term international cooperation.

It is my pleasure, I am happy to see that the Department of Social Work at Frankfurt UAS, the dedicated colleagues at Assam Don Bosco University and the DAAD have all pulled together to support this project.

Every step that leads further in the sense of the above-mentioned strategy of exploiting the full (change) potentialities of social work and social development on the basis of concrete, practical international cooperation must be celebrated – including this publication!

Prof. Dr. Ute Straub

Frankfurt, Germany 12th of June 2023

Foreword by Mary Rauktis

I am honored and delighted to have been asked to provide the foreword to “Social Work in a globalized world”. During the COVID-19 period when I was alternately worrying about teaching on-line, and binge-watching shows on Netflix, my amazing colleagues in India, Bhutan, Germany, the United States, and Israel used their “COVID-Time” to respond to important questions such as: “How can we engage with the international community on topics relevant to social work? “In what ways do other disciplines such as communication, spirituality/religion and feminism intersect with social work? “How can we best use new technologies emerging from this period to help others” and most importantly “What can we learn from each other.” While many of us retreated and our nations shut down borders, they reached out and social work is all the better for cooperating in virtual spaces. What you will read in this book is grounded in the spirit of true partnership and discovery by people on multiple continents, all looking within and outside their borders.

In my role at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, I teach “Global Perspectives of Social Work” to graduate students as well as undergraduate students majoring and minoring in social work. Too often, our students hear the term “global social work”, and they think “international social work” which they believe is working in social development in another country or working in the Peace Corp or at the United Nations. They do not plan on leaving so why study global social work? My job is to show them, as Global Social Work Scholar Susan Mapp writes in her call to action (Mapp, 2021) that:

The importance of understanding social work issues from a global context is important even for those who will never leave their hometown. The international has now come to us, whether we are prepared or not. To practice ethical social work, therefore, we must be prepared to help effect change. (p. 390)¹

Helping to reduce the negative impacts due to globalization and neoliberalism at micro, mezzo and macro levels is what social workers do to effect change. This may look like helping the fifty-five-year-old US steel mill worker laid off due to job-outsourcing to find a retraining program or assisting the climate refugee from Somalia entering the Federal Republic of Germany to find housing. When we support communities, who have experienced collective trauma to repair the social fabric of their community by supporting spiritual practices, or we advocate for global human rights for marginalized groups such as the disabled or the LGBTQ+ persons who are criminalized for their existence, we are practicing globally. This

¹ Mapp, S. C. (2021). *Human Rights and Social Justice in a Global Perspective: An introduction to international social work* (3rd ed.). Oxford Press.

is because local and individual problems have a global foundation. Often it is the long arm of colonization and forced assimilation, as seen in the challenges facing Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, India and East Asia, or the West's entrenched belief in the global free market's capacity to move the deepest poor out of poverty. The structural reasons for social conditions that social workers strive to ameliorate have global roots and global implications.

However, helping students to "connect the dots" globally requires readings that engage their minds and hearts. Frankly speaking, some of the international social work reading is a little uninspired. It is an important contextual reading, but it does not easily come alive to my students. When I recently asked my class of master's students in global perspectives what indigenous practices in social work could look like, they were puzzled. Our westernized approach to educating social workers does not always broaden their perspectives. That is why this book is so important to social work educators. Although the lectures and discussions were undoubtedly a bright spot in a locked-down world, the documents that resulted will educate and inspire other social workers, such as my students. For example, reading about the role of Buddhism in working with clients in Bhutan can help them to reflect on their own comfort or discomfort in addressing the spiritual needs of the people they work with. Our western view of feminism – how does it apply or not to India? These readings also serve to push students out of the "West is Best" thinking that we all fall prey to. India is one of the most progressive nations in terms of women's contraceptive care, not Europe or the United States. There is a very comprehensive section on human rights that brings together all the laws and conventions into one chapter with examples of rights-based practice tool kits and application. This takes what feels like an amorphous concept for students and puts it into policy and practice language for social work students and practitioners.

During my brief time at Assam Don Bosco, I was not fortunate enough to see the elephants who sometimes walk through the hills on their way to finding food. However, I was told that during the campus shut down when the students and faculty were gone, the elephants began coming back to the campus, following old paths to find water and food. Social work, like the elephants, has historically had paths of engagement in global efforts, when our skills at collaboration, finding resources, motivating groups and advocacy were needed and welcomed. Now, more than ever it is important to share the knowledge of the ways and the paths, and we are fortunate that our colleagues were prescient in thinking that the rest of us could benefit from the fruits of their collaborative work. I'm grateful to the individuals who put this book so that those of us who were not part of their conversations and online discussions can benefit and learn from their efforts of creating social and intellectual connections when we were socially distant, "six feet apart".

Prof. Mary Rauktis

University of Pittsburgh, United States 10th of June 2023

Acknowledgement

Conceptualizing this book from an online lecture series of an international collaboration to the editing of this book has been a very enriching experience for us. Contributions from across the globe have offered new perspectives and insights to this publication and we would like to take this opportunity to express our deep sense of gratitude to the contributors, without whom this would not have been possible. Their expertise, knowledge and involvement is highly commendable.

We are grateful to our institutions for providing the necessary space and resources in giving shape to this project and bringing this book to fruition. We also extend our gratitude to DAAD for their generous support which has been instrumental in bringing the project to conclusion with this publication.

We feel honoured that the Fachhochschulverlag – based in Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences – accepts us in its program. This helps bring international perspectives to social work education.

Lastly, we would like to thank our family and friends for their support, wishes and encouragement through the journey which has finally resulted in this publication. We are indebted to everyone who in one way or the other has contributed to this book and we feel inspired to have more publications that will allow reflections and perspectives in the field of social work to reach a global readership.

Ursula Fasselt	Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
Verena Ruhsert	Project Coordinator of the academic cooperation
Riju Sharma	Assam Don Bosco University

Introduction

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people (IFSW, 2014).

Globally, social work grew up within a social service infrastructure (Gray, 2002). Over the past decades, rich and varied literature in social work education has developed, opening the space for new and emerging discourses, prospects and research across the globe. The landscape of social work education has transitioned from the dominant worldview to an alternative discourse of social work education and perspectives. Internationally, the social work profession faces complex forces of globalisation and liberalisation leading to critical evaluation and revisit of the relevance of existing approaches in social work fields of practice and developing models of intervention applicable to a specific context.

It is in this state of transition and fluidity of the social work profession and discipline that Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany and Assam Don Bosco University, India collaborated for an online lecture series to create a space for the social work academia and practitioners to share, interact, exchange, appreciate and acknowledge the different dimensions, facets and perspectives of social work education and practice.

To begin with, in India the modern concept of social work can be traced to its colonial legacy in the pre-independence period primarily through social, cultural, and religious institutions. In the post-independence period, it progressed from the charity and welfare approach to the development and rights-based approach that ensures the dignity and worth of all.

The social work curriculum in India was introduced in 1936. Dr. Clifford Manshardt through the efforts of the American Marathi Mission and the Nagpada Neighbourhood House blended the methods of professional social work to suit the locality in the way a 'professional has to marry with the indigenous' (Desai, 1985; Kulkarni, 1993).

Though there has been much discussion for creating an indigenous model of social work education that incorporates context specific and culturally relevant and competent practices, yet majority schools of social work in India continue to rely heavily on the western curricula. Jones (1978, p. 32) said that Asian social work has been hindered due to its reliance on European and American models of social work for which its progress towards indigenisation is unstable. Decolonising social work requires return to one's cultural roots for direction and it entails resistance to social work's 'West to the Rest' movement, which seeks to 'internationalise' and 'standardise' the profession (Ibrahima & Mattaini, 2018).

In mediaeval Germany, before the profession of social work was established, charity for the deserving poor was mainly undertaken by Christian institutions

and municipalities (Hammerschmidt et al., 2017, p. 8 f). In the 19th century social work was part of the answer to social problems that arise in an industrial capitalist market society and connected help with a form of control and discipline (ibid. p. 9; Wendt 2020, p. 11 ff).

Social work as a profession took shape in the 1920s fuelled by the new social legislation and welfare laws, social reform- and women's movements, and the First World War that left large parts of society in need of support. Noteworthy are the efforts of Alice Salomon, who worked towards standardisation of the profession and state recognition (Reinicke 2012, pp. 140 ff; Hering & Münchmeier 2000, pp. 91ff, 102 f).

A dark period for the development of social work was the time of National Socialism during which welfare work only benefited those who were worthy of it according to the Nazi ideology (Wendt 2020, p. 39 f). After World War II, in the frame of re-education, new approaches – mainly from the US – were introduced that entailed the notion of client's participation and ownership (Kuhlmann 2014, pp. 110 ff). The new Constitution with its guarantee of the Welfare State and the rule of law, strengthened the social position of the clients of social work, turning them into rights-holders.

Later, in the 60s and 70s social work began to adopt more critical perspectives, focusing on issues such as human rights and empowerment, while emphasising a holistic approach that takes into account the community context. Professionalisation and specialisation were further advanced in the coming years and work settings diversified. Since the 90s social work increasingly demands client's participation (Wendt 2020, pp. 43-53; Hering & Münchmeier 2000, pp. 235-241). Currently social workers are confronted with a dichotomy between clients who can be empowered and those who are left behind, here social work becomes the administrator of need (Lutz 2008). In the 21st century social work in Germany is deeply affected by migration and transnational mobility and gets increasingly intertwined with international social movements (Lohrenscheidt et al. 2023).

The partner universities bilateral exchange taking place in the context of these two introduced countries has been broadened through an international lecture series on "Emerging trends and perspectives in Social Work Practice". Within their cooperation, the partner universities have organised this event involving scholars of Universities of Bhutan, Finland, Germany, India, Israel, the Netherlands, Taiwan and the USA. This format has been made possible through the DAAD funded program IVAC – International Virtual Academic Collaboration, which during the Covid pandemic provided means for developing new formats of collaborative teaching and learning. The main objective of the lecture series was to provide graduate students of social work an exposure to the perspectives that prominently inform social work practice in different parts of the world. The lecture series would help them reflect if social work is entirely defined by the local context or if there is any universal and common thread that cuts across this domain of practice.

This online lecture series has also helped in understanding transnational and cross-cultural social work practice, the critical issues and directions in the conceptual and theoretical framework of social work education, decolonization of social work education and the emergence of indigenous social work practices in different parts of the globe with speakers included from India, Bhutan, Germany, Finland, Israel, Taiwan and the USA. It is critical for social workers to be open to diverse and emerging perspectives, approaches and forms of practice from across the globe to co-learn, appreciate, exchange and take best practices to be included in their teaching, learning and practice and prepare practitioners to be able to respond to the diverse social realities within their communities.

This publication presents the work of nine authors out of 20 on social work education and practice in their respective countries. The authors are highly experienced and practice oriented and their contributions range from clinical social work teaching and practice, indigenous knowledge systems, community-based social work practices, institutional models of community engagements and decolonized social work education and practices. Contemporary and emerging concepts, theories, pedagogies, opportunities, innovations and challenges have been presented, giving a comprehensive account of the trends and perspectives of social work education in their countries.

In the first chapter, *Tshering Dorji* shares the Buddhist perspective on spiritual social work. He explores the inclusion of spiritual values in social work practice, a topic that has so far received little attention in social work programs. He elaborates on the recent introduction of a social work degree in Bhutan. This education is grounded in Bhutanese societal values informed by profound Buddhist values while also offering courses on western social work theories, principles, and methods. Tshering further portrays the need and purpose of indigenizing social work theory and practice, like the ability to respond to service users' needs from different religious and spiritual beliefs. Such an alternative construction of social work professionalism through indigenous approaches ultimately also aligns with what global definitions of social work call for. The Bhutanese approach to social work exemplifies how indigenous and western approaches can substantiate each other with their strengths.

In the second chapter *Ursula Fassell's* article on international human rights and social development elaborates what is understood by a human rights-based approach and how it can be concretized and made fruitful for social work practice. The article is an attempt to reconcile the concept of universal human rights and dignity with the acknowledgment of cultural differences. The underlying idea is that social development and the protection of the dignity of every person need a multi perspective approach: international and national legal instruments for the enforcement of human rights, political fights to establish these rights and social and cultural transformation leading to behavioural change. Pilot projects show that a human rights-based approach might provide social organisations

and social work practitioners with fruitful strategies to empower people whose human rights are at stake.

In the third chapter *Shanthalembi Lisham* elaborates on feminism in India, emphasising on the understudied, ethnically diverse region of Northeast India. She depicts feminism as a western concept, which has been brought forward by Indian social movements including women's movements, political fights particularly against colonialism and constitutional guarantees and other legal rules. Feminism needs to recognize diverse historical and political contexts and connected challenges, as well as perspectives of Dalit and indigenous women. While recognizing that globally there are common struggles, her paper calls to see the heterogeneity of interests and identities within these struggles.

In the fourth chapter *Prateeti Barman* elaborates on reproductive rights for women in India. She carves out the contradiction of progressive laws in India on one side but high numbers of maternal mortality, child marriages, or infant mortality on the other side and illustrates how these realities are connected to structural problems of a patriarchal and case-based society. She therefore points out the importance of a human rights perspective on women's reproductive rights. The human rights conventions could serve as standards and legal guidelines, upon which the situation in India should be measured.

In the fifth chapter the article of *Nandita Bezbaruah* on Telehealth and Social Work Practice highlights the provisions and practice of delivering remote health care to the underserved and people living in isolated geographical areas by using technology for diagnosis, intervention and treatment. Mental health was the first domain in the application of social work in tele-practice. It has been an important mode of intervention, treatment and support and more so during the Covid 19 pandemic. Though online, it has clearly laid down guidelines, standards and code of ethics. The citations confirm that there is a high level of satisfaction in the delivery of tele-health among the clients, though it should not be a replacement for face-to-face intervention.

In the sixth chapter *Carola Berneiser's* article on child rights and protection in Germany illustrates the historical development of the implementation of human rights for children within the German context. She comprehensively describes Germany's youth welfare system and how parental rights are met while simultaneously guaranteeing the child's safety through the interaction of actors from various disciplines. After highlighting current challenges in a globalised and multicultural society, especially regarding adequate qualification, she showcases a possible solution, a 'child protection day' that has been implemented at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences.

In the seventh chapter *Timo Tohidipur* gives a very brief overview of some important legal foundations of EU Migration and Refugee law and underlines that the gap between binding law and (legal-political) reality is the main problem for the EU and even more for the people being exposed to inhumane treatment within and at the external borders of the EU. This at the same time constitutes

major challenges for Social Work practice on an individual level of counselling specific cases but also in light of a broader responsibility to make inequalities and violation of rights visible and subject to society related change.

In the eighth chapter *Andrew Carlson* gives an insight into social and behaviour change and communication and draws conclusions for this field out of experiences from the COVID pandemic. He describes challenges, such as a lack of engagement of communities through remote interventions, and advocates to capitalise on those experiences for future research and interventions. Realising new opportunities for digital engagement can strengthen SBCC's role in fulfilling the rights of people and communities and building trust among stakeholders. In his opinion Communication will continue to play a key role in ensuring that participatory approaches and the commitment to fulfilment of human rights remain central to efforts to influence change.

In the last chapter *Chaitali Das* introduces the problematic history and current neo-colonial power issues that shape international social work. She, therefore, demands critical engagement with the same while nevertheless highlighting its relevance. In a globalised world, numerous structural inequalities must be addressed beyond nation-states. Das reasons, that ethical, critical, and conscious engagement to jointly address issues can provide us with opportunities to reconceptualize ideas and address global issues solidly united. An exchange of ideas can lead us to think about different practices and consider their implications in diverse contexts.

An approach, to which this book ultimately contributes by giving insights into different backgrounds, understandings, and methods.

References

- Desai, A.S. (1985). The foundation of social work in India. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 46(1).
- Gray, M. (2002). Developmental social work: A strengths' praxis for social development. *Social Development Issues*, 24(1), 4-14.
- Hammerschmidt, P., Weber, S. & Seidenstücker, B. (2017). Soziale Arbeit – die Geschichte. Barbara Budrich, Opladen & Toronto.
- Hering, S. & Münchmeier, R. (2000). Geschichte der Sozialen Arbeit. *Eine Einführung*. Juventa, Weinheim & Munich.
- Ibrahima, A. B. & Mattaini, M. A (2018). Social Work in Africa: Decolonizing methodologies and approaches. *International Social Work*, 62(2), 799-813.
- IFSW – International Federation of Social Workers (2014, July). Global Definition of Social Work. *Principles*. <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>
- Jones, J.F. (1978). *Human well-being: Challenges for the 80's*. Bombay

- Kuhlmann, C. (2014). *Geschichte Sozialer Arbeit*. (4th ed.). Wochenschau Verlag, Schwalbach.
- Kulkarni, P. D (1993). The indigenous base of social work profession in India. *The Indian Journal of social work*, 54(4), 555-565.
- Lohrenscheit, C., Schmelz, A., Schmitt, C. & Straub, U. (2023). *Internationale Soziale Arbeit und soziale Bewegungen*. Nomos, Baden-Baden.
- Lutz, R. (2008). Perspektiven Sozialer Arbeit. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, (13), 3-9.
- Reinecke, P. (2012). *Die Ausbildungsstätten der sozialen Arbeit in Deutschland 1899-1945*. Lambertus, Freiburg.
- Wendt, W. R. (2020). *Kurze Geschichte der Sozialen Arbeit*. Springer, Stuttgart.

Spiritual Social Work: Reflections from a Buddhist Perspective

Tshering Dorji

1. Introduction

There is an increasing need for social work education to emphasise on actualizing the potential of social workers to discover their innate goodness and energy for the benefit of individuals, the community, and society. This article explores the significance of inculcating spiritual values in social work practice. The paper attempts to define the need and purpose of dynamic indigenization of theory and practice within the given context while also recognizing and adopting the well-tested methods, principles, theories, and core values of universal social work practices, skills, and approaches. To set a context, this paper explores a brief history of traditional social work practices in Bhutan and the current practices and changes taking place over time. The establishment of the first social work education in Bhutan in 2019 was a fundamental milestone in the process of professionalising social work in Bhutan. The primary essence of the current social work education is based on the profound wisdom of compassion and generosity derived from ancient social work practices in Bhutan. Therefore, this article examines the challenges and opportunities of nurturing spiritual values in social work education and practice from the experience of the first social work education program in the country.

2. Defining Social Work from a Bhutanese Perspective

Buddhism has played a vital role in guiding the thoughts, speech, and actions of people in traditional Bhutanese society. Therefore, the essence of Buddhist values and its close connection with the natural environment has guided the functioning of the overall Bhutanese society. The understanding of social work in Bhutan was profoundly based on the core Buddhist values of compassion, generosity, and service to all sentient beings. The practice of helping each other during times of need in traditional Bhutanese society was, therefore, guided by the principles of interdependence, co-existence, and cause-and-effect relationship. The Central Monastic Body is one of the oldest autonomous organisations in Bhutan that was established in the 17th Century by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (Tashi, 2019). The monastic institutions in the country played a fundamental role in propagating spiritual values of interdependence and social integrity through