Chapter 1
Inclusive Approaches to School Counseling:
Arguing for Culturally-Responsive Psycho-Social Support for Learners From Indigenous Communities

Cynthy K. Haihambo
University of Namibia, Namibia

ABSTRACT

At the core of the education system in Namibia lies the philosophical underpinning of inclusivity and its underlying principle of equal participation. Thus, to exclude any individual or societal group, directly or indirectly, from participation in education is tantamount to violating the primary meaning of democracy as it pertains to education. This assertion is consistent with the United Nation's SDG 4, which strives at ensuring "Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Opportunities for All," and SDG 16, which is aimed to provide "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions." Two ethnic groups in Namibia, the Ovahimba and the San, are regarded as marginalized, and this marginalization cuts across all spheres of their lives. This research-informed chapter provides an insight into experiences of children from indigenous communities in schools. It further presents an argument for culturally responsive approaches to counseling for learners from indigenous communities.

INTRODUCTION

This study was situated within Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Towards the end of the chapter, suggestions are made for culturally responsive counseling to support the inclusion of children by helping them deal with institutions of stigmatization and discrimination in schools and establish resilience, while fostering the transformation of institutions. The desired outcome of culturally responsive counseling is to help children understand why they are treated in certain ways and build their resilience, while creating schools in which all children feel welcome, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds.

In Namibia, ethnic minority populations are regarded marginalized on the basis of their lifestyles which set them at the margin of what many regard as development, using economic variables as indicators for this so-called development. The Ovahimba own and value cattle; maintain semi-nomadic lifestyles, maintain unique traditional dress codes and kept their original cultural practices with limited western influence. Cattle-rearing, an activity mostly performed by children under parental supervision, is an important part of their culture. The San, who are regarded as the First peoples in Southern Africa, do not believe in property possession. Their family systems are their property. They were highly nomadic and depended on nature for survival. Now they are forced by conservation laws and by-laws to limit hunting and the harvesting natural resources, they had to adapt to being more stationed, rendering them vulnerable to influences of mainstream society to whom they are dependent for their day to day needs. Some of their traditional skills, such as hunting, collecting veld food, tracking, healing people) have become redundant in modern times. Other skills of the San people are under-valued in terms of monetary compensation. In order for them to be absorbed in the labor market and maintain an average living standard, they need education. According to Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution, (1990) education is a basic human right as stated in; Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990; the Dakar Framework for Action,1990; UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2015). To this end, many nations over the globe used education as a tool to overcome challenges such as poverty, diseases, inequality, and social injustices. Therefore, exclusion of the indigenous communities is tantamount to intentionally marginalizing them and purporting their poverty.

In Dakar, a commitment was made to the pursue of broad-based strategies for achieving learning needs for all through expanding and improving early childhood education, especially for the marginalized and most vulnerable; ensuring that all children have access to and complete free primary education; offering of equitable

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