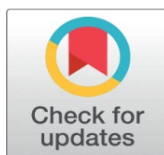
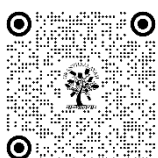


SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION: MAPPING CONTEMPORARY STATE OF PROFESSION

Jitendra Kumar Verma ¹, Shweta Patel ²

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Studies in Science Technology and Innovation Policy, School of Social Science, Central University of Gujarat, Gujarat

² Trained Graduate Teacher (Social Science), PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya No1 Cantt. Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India



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ABSTRACT

From the very beginning of human civilization, varied problems have been and are being faced by society. Poverty, unemployment, destitution, disaster, disease, displacement etc. are some global problems. These problems generate when human beings fail to properly adjust to and interact with their environment. Every society tries to mitigate these problems, so that people may lead a happy and healthy life. Social Work is a profession which is based on humanitarian and democratic philosophy. As per the global definition of Social Work, it is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline and social work profession promotes social change, social cohesion, and the development & empowerment for the wellbeing of people. The paper is based on secondary data and discusses major issues and state of Social Work profession in contemporary era.

Keywords: Social Work Education, Curriculum, Field Work Practicum, Practical Training

1. INTRODUCTION: EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL WORK AS PROFESSION

As a profession, Social Work started in Amsterdam in 1899 and progressed throughout Europe and United States before expanding to South America, the Caribbean, India, and South Africa in the 1920s. (Kendall:2000). It is a product of modernism in western state as industrialized economies developed in late Nineteen Century. The main features of this stage of Social Work have been:

- 1) It was based on belief that state could resolve social problems.
- 2) For resolution of Social problems science and knowledge have been used.
- 3) The commitment to science has been based on the assumption of development of universal knowledge as a profession and as way of intervention in lives of people.
- 4) The knowledge seeks to provide explanation and understanding about human beings, their behaviors and their society.
- 5) At this stage, emphasis has been laid on:
 - Change the individual but not on bringing changes in environment in which he/she placed.

- Make greater use of psychology than of sociology,
- Solution of psycho-social problems of people but not on fullest realization of human potential.
- Promotion of individualism but not collectivism.
- Getting whatever possible but not giving whatever probable,
- Living for one's own life but not promoting social well being by sacrificing personal life and liberty.
- Interpersonal relationship but, sometimes, called clinical practice.
- Recognition as a members of unique profession generally working as helper, healer, planner, agent of control for individuals, groups and communities in coping their problems of day-to-day functioning within the system.
- Remedial, rehabilitative, residual model focusing on problems of pathology i.e. micro level dysfunction of individuals, families and communities.

2. EFFECT OF GLOBALIZATION, POST MODERNISM AND POST COLONIALISM

Because of the processes of postmodernism, postcolonialism, and globalization, every social phenomenon is different depending on the historical and social context in which it occurs. Therefore, it is debatable whether western methods of social work practice are universally applicable.

For example, in case of India there are contradiction between western models of Social Work and spirit of Indian culture which emphasizes on:

- 1) Multifaced- integrated development of a person i.e. spiritual. physical and mantel development.
- 2) Willingness to make the highest possible personal sacrifice, if needed.
- 3) Encouraging people's well-being, especially that of those in society who are facing problem.

3. PARADIGM SHIFT AT GLOBAL LEVEL

The recognition of bringing Social Change in society as the focus of Social Work has taken place in 1982 when first International Definition of Social Work was developed by IFSW and IASSW which reads as follows:

“Social Work is a profession whose purpose is to bring about Social Change in society in general and in its individual forms of development.”

Beginning of Twenty First Century was marked the intensification of this paradigm shift in focus of Social Work by making further improvement in the Definition of 1982 in 2000. This International Definition of Social Work has been as follows:

“The Social Work profession promotes Social Change, problem solving in human relationship, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well being. Utilizing theory of human behaviors and social systems, Social Work intervention at the points when people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and Social Justice are fundamental to Social Work” (IFSW:2000)

The General Assembly of IASSW and the General Meeting of IFSW accepted a new Global Definition of Social Work in July 2014.. The focus of Social Work has to be changed due to processes of globalization, privatization and liberalization. This definition is as follows:

“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. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing”

4. EMERGING CHANGES IN INDIAN SCENARIO

Before understanding concern of profession of Social Work in twenty first century, social worker should know and understand the emerging socio-economic, political and cultural life change taking place in India.

1) Changes in Social Fabric

In last few decades demographic changes have impacted societal structure at large scale and due to the change's nation noted various changes in demography. Some of major changes are Decline in the number of female populations, increase in number of aged populations above the age-group of 60 years, increase in youth population demanding special provision for their development. These demographic changes lead increase in migration of rural population to urban settlements for employment and subsequent settlement in urban area leading to unprecedented increase in slum population and increase in socially disadvantaged, weaker and vulnerable as well as physically and socially disabled people. Social work educators must navigate these complexities and diversities while designing course curriculum, field practicum and placements of students for experimental learnings that are relevant to local contexts. There is a need for more Social fabrics sensitive approaches to teaching and practice that take into account India's diversity.

2) Changes in Socio Economic and Political Landscape

India's rapidly changing socio economic and political environment presents both opportunities and challenges for social work education. Due to corrupt practices and increase in importance of politics and party system. Politics has become power seeking enterprise having commercial gains. Criminalization of politics and politicizations of criminals having nexus of politician, criminals and moneyed persons. Decline/end of collective leadership in political party system resulted costly election and political activities leading to corrupt practices. Existence and continuance of old system of colonial administration having few positive measures such as: Involvement of local leadership in development process through Panchayati Raj Institutions and transparency and accountability through rights to information and Citizen Charter. The emergence of new social and political movements and increased awareness of various social issues demand that social work educators and practitioners adapt to these emerging trends. Social Work educators and practitioners must prepare their students to work in a variety of contexts who directly address socio economic and political landscape where social work interventions are needed.

3) Technological and Psychological Landscape

Technological advancements have been making people dependent on technology as well as striving for technological gadgets leading to life having several possessions. The lust for acquiring more and more facilities has resulted into a life full of stresses and strains. The tendencies of increasing impersonal relationships as well as alienation generate the problems i.e. drug and substance abuse, neglect of family members specially children and as a persons.

4) Changes in Environment: Natural and Social

The exploitation of natural resources for getting luxurious life has resulted in several types of natural calamities such as disaster in forms of flood, earthquake and cloudburst leading to over raining at a particular place. Gradual degradation of natural resources such as forests, a water source etc. has made the lives of indigenous people (tribals) difficult for their survival. Displacement of people due to development projects again a problem not less than disasters. The use of modern gadgets and technology has polluted air, water, food stuffs in a big way affecting health of common people. The social environment has become quite complex, conflicting and stressful leading lack of security, frustration, isolation in daily life of people. Increase in violence and crime in general but against weaker and venerable sections including women in particular has made the lives of people frustrating.

5. CONTEMPORARY STATE OF PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

1) Professional Status

Social Work profession in India faces a significant challenge in achieving professional status. Despite the high demand for social work educator and practitioner, the social work profession is often not seen as a recognised profession. Professional status of Social Work has always been debated and questioned mainly due to weak and non-functional professional organizations and no licensing for Social Worker which is an important element of any profession. Non-recognizing Social Work as profession due to misconception with social service and other related concepts. Use of term Social Work suites to different sections of people i.e. politician, religious persons, voluntary workers, Gandhian workers etc. giving diversified and confused meaning. This is due to a lack of standardization in education, an absence of licensing of Social Work professionals or country level regulatory bodies, and low paid professional social workers, which limits the recognition of the profession. Moreover, there is no unified national policy in India on social work education and

practice, leading to discrepancies in educational training, professional practice standards, and recognition across different states and institutions.

2) Institutional Arrangements

The Social Work education and practice is continuously evolving in India and currently country observing mushrooming growth of institutions of Social Work education having diversified nature i.e. university departments, autonomous colleges, affiliated colleges, institutions run by voluntary efforts mainly by non-professionals etc. with the diversified system of organization of Social Work education i.e. department system, school system, centre system, part of other established departments of Institution. Institutions have been established in India for teaching and learning of profession of Social Work has no coordination and interface among institutions due a unwritten system of self-gradation of institutions and diversified ownership i.e. government, government aided (So called autonomous), voluntary organization, religious organization, private family ownership etc.

3) Knowledge Base

Dominance of western knowledge which is not suited to Indian culture and tradition mainly due to over emphasis on individual not on environment, greater use of psychology not sociology, emphasis on solving psycho-social problems but not on fullest utilization of human potential, promotion of individualism not collectivism etc. Most of the knowledge informs of concepts and theories have been borrowed from other Social Sciences, mainly from psychology, psychiatry, sociology, political science, economics etc.

4) Skill Base

Skills are important for any profession. The Social Work education in India lacks proper and effective skill development among students mainly due to absence of skill development arrangements (i.e. skill development laboratories) in most of the Social Work institutions. And emphasis on method based skills which is based on western model of Social Work not core skills for Social Work.

5) Courses

The level of courses in Social Work is generally Undergraduate, Post Graduate and Doctoral Programmes through regular courses, self-finance courses and distance mode courses. However, the UG Course is less in demand so their openings and continuance are neglected. Presently, institutions running another pattern of courses is Generic and Specialized/Elective courses. Social Work departments are also opened allied PG Diploma Courses such as in NGO Management, Human Development, HIV/AIDS, Early Childhood Development, Criminology, Criminal Justice Administration, Human Resource Management, Labour Laws, Labour Welfare and Social Security, Social Duties and Human Rights, Human Development, Rural Development, Corporate Social Responsibility as well as PG Degree Courses such as in Population Education and Rural Development, Criminology and Criminal Justice Administration, Community Medicine, Yoga, Human Rights, etc.

6) Inadequate Field Practicum Practice:

Most of the institutions in India operate concurrent Field work in which academic classes mostly four days in week and field work training mostly two days in a week go simultaneously followed by Block Placement of more then two weeks during vacations. In some institutions only concurrent field work is in operation. Another component of Field Practicum which are in operation are Orientation Programmes, Observational Visits, Field Exposure Visits, Rural/Urban Camps, Study Tours etc. and these type of component basically adopted by affiliated colleges. There is no uniformity in recording system and no use of recording for the purpose of sharing of field experience due to poor supervision of field work.

7) Curriculum and Pedagogical Challenges

A major concern in social work education and practice in India is the outdated syllabus based on western methods and philosophy in several institutions, which fails to effectively address the contemporary challenges faced by the Social Work Profession. The outdated syllabus lacks to integrate present changes in social fabrics and Social Work interventions in various fields i.e. gender studies, addiction therapy, mental health, addiction therapy, and technology etc. As a concern of pedagogical challenges, the approaches utilized in teaching learning process by various institutions are traditional, conventional and mainly depend on lectures, rather than innovative, interactive or experiential teaching learning techniques. This constrains students' capacity to engage critically with the content and cultivate the practical skills essential for proficient social work education and practice.

8) Faculty Status

The high standard of social work education and practice is compromised by various educational institution in India specially by self-financing private institutions due to a unqualified, low paid and less experienced faculty members. In some cases, the academic leadership of the department/school as well as Chairmanship/Convenorship of Board of Studies in Social Work are given to non-professionals which can impact the quality of teaching learning and supervision as per curriculum. Moreover, In the field of Social Work Education and practice there is very limited opportunity available for faculty development, with few interdisciplinary programs dedicated to the continuous professional growth of social work educators in the field of higher education. This leads to hinder the overall quality of Social Work education and the development of new teaching learning approaches in contemporary scenario.

6. CONCLUSION

The social work profession in India faces various issues and challenges since inception that made an impact on the growth of profession. These include inadequate acknowledgement and recognition of profession, insufficient financial support from various government funding institutions for development and recognition of social work profession. The lack of limited integration of social work practice with policy-making contributes to the challenges in recognition of profession. Despite these issues and challenges, the Social Work profession continues to play a important role in addressing various issues of society, but there is a need for proper support, research, training, and recognition. The government has taken minimal action to support the social work profession for the recognition and promotion of profession through education, research and training. In present time, the profession of social work in India is likewise growing and experiencing numerous changes. The social work profession has been advocating for their acknowledgement and recognition. This is not a new strategy within the evolving social work profession, as this profession has been lobbying for recognition ever since its inception.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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