



THE PRESENT PROSPECTIVE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

1. Dr. VEERABHADRAM BHUKYA

Assistant Professor

**Department of Social Work, South Campus
Telangana University, Telangana State**

2. H.Gangabai

Freelance Scholar, Telangana State

Abstract

The article looks into the past and present, present perspectives, and future challenges of social work education in India. The obsolescence of teaching, fieldwork practicum, and proliferation of social work trainees at present reveals the many issues with the present curriculum. This study underlines and addresses social work education curricula and the quality aspects offered by various institutions in India.

This study also highlights the perspectives of the present, the perception of professionals, and trainees, and its structure have faced many problems and challenges in India. There is a pros and cons of affecting social work education regarding the inability to translate theory into fieldwork practices at real ground practices.

Keywords: Curriculum, Social Work Education, Fieldwork Practicum, Problems, and challenges.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Social Work Profession that in existence for almost 75 years in the country, in 1936 a dramatic development took place and the first school of social work (Known as **Sir Dorabji Tata School of Social Work**) was renamed **Tata Institute of Social Science** established by an American missionary, **Dr. Clifford Manshardt with the help of Dr. J.M. Kumarappa**, who later became the first Director of the school. The purpose of starting the school of social work was to promote professional education in social work methods and techniques of doing social work in a professional manner therefore it has its own methods and ethical value base principles, skills, and techniques, Now when we look back at the development of professional social work education in the country,

continues its struggle to come into the forefront of the Indian nation-building processes in its way, challenges and future Prospectives arise in a professional manner.

“The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to and address problems in living”.

The alarming rise of schools of social work, especially in the recent past, has become a problem by itself, not because of its number but because of its unsystematic plan of expansion with regional imbalance, unhealthy competition among the schools of social work, and lack of concern for normative standards. Therefore a dramatic rise in the number of schools of social work in the country, where we have more than 300 (three hundred) institutions of social work now practices in India, They are mushrooming private schools of social work mostly new institutions are commercializing social work education which is against the basic ideology of social work profession, They are self-financed and have expensive fee structures, with some of them also promoting the concept of paid seats and many a time also charge capitation fee from the students. In this concern of the high fee structures of the self-financed institutions, distance education in social work is getting promoted as many consider it the most economical and best option for receiving a postgraduate degree in social work. The negative aspect of distance education is that it has poor quality contact classes, but most importantly the supervised fieldwork component is absent in the distance education mode. This has been affecting the quality of social work education. Therefore, these processes should be discouraged as far as social work education is considered. The challenges faced by the schools of social work in all all-regions in India include extreme variation in the social work curriculum in different schools.

Following are the challenges, issues, and strategies highlighted as many schools of social work maintain poor quality of education arising all over India, such as Teaching/Training, fieldwork practicum, adequate staff, and other infrastructural facilities some of these institutions have many marked weaknesses, among of them, with respect to different aspects of social work profession in the present scenario and future challenges.

II. COURSE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The curriculum can be viewed as a field of study. It is made up of its foundations in any disciplines (philosophical, historical, psychological, and social foundations), domains of knowledge as well as its research theories and principles. The curriculum is taken as scholarly and theoretical all over the development of human personality. It can concern broad historical, philosophical, and social issues. Therefore, the **curriculum** of social work is outdated and requires gradation focussing on the knowledge, skills, and ideology of social work, the need to introduce electives focusing on specializations. Therefore, the **knowledge** component should cover all areas such as culture, social structure, social issues, human psychology, planning and administration, current trends such as globalization, feminism, post-modernism, multi-culturalism, models of social development, and fields of social work. Then the **Skills** component should look at those skills which are helpful in the application of methods of social work. The **SKILL** is a **Structure of Knowledge and Lifelong Learning** at every step that helps to grow and helps that trusting and empathic relationship with individuals, and groups and looks into try uplift the society, and also useful for new emerging areas for social workers such as project management. Ideologies should include Humanistic Perspectives, Empowerment Thoughts, Liberation Ideas, Human Rights, and Ambedkar's Thoughts through Buddhist philosophy.

Roots of social work in India

- 1936–Sir Dorabji Tata School of Social Work (TISS) at Mumbai.
- 1946–Second School of Social Work at Delhi.
- Third School of Social Work at Baroda.
- Fourth School of Social Work at Varanasi.
- 1954–Lucknow University started Ph.D. programme in Social Work.
- 1956–Lucknow University started UG programme in Social Work.
- In 1975–there were 34 Schools of Social Work in India.
- In **2008**–there were 200 Schools of Social Work in India.

✚ After **2008** we have been more than 300 institutions and till now would be expanding number of institutions in India.

- Association of Schools of Social Work in 1960.
- Indian Association of Trained Social Workers in 1964.
- Indian Society of Professional Social Work in 1970.

III. UNCHANGING PATTERN OF FIELDWORK PRACTICUM

The fieldwork practicum is an integral part of the social work profession with an emphasis on learning through the practicum. The students will place in real-life work situations, and under the guidance of a fieldwork supervisor, who is expected to deliver services commensurate with the professional requirement. The fieldwork practicum gives students opportunities to combine theory and practice and the major goal of the fieldwork practicum is the integration of academic learning with the beginning of the social work profession it will be laid the theoretical and skill foundation upon which every practice will be based and Bridging the gap between the classroom learning and in real life work situation. That exposure will help professionals make the transformation from studying to doing and developing students' confidence. The Fieldwork practicum is a structured experience as a continuum of learning and provides students with an opportunity to gain experience in a social work setting, receive regular professional supervision, and engage in a dynamic process toward development as a beginning professional generalist practitioner.

Fieldwork practicum is the essence of the social work profession because it is a practice-oriented discipline therefore, a number of important components of fieldwork should be made a compulsory part of the training of students. These may include **orientation programme, observation visits, individual and group conferences, rural camps, study tours, social work internships as well as concurrent fieldwork**. Students should be required to spend at least 15 hours per week in the field which would total 225 hours of fieldwork per semester.

Social work education has many challenges as far as the fieldwork component in social work is concerned. The decision-making authorities at the university level and field agencies do not understand the importance and uniqueness of the fieldwork component in social work therefore, they need to be sensitized about the same. Several schools of social work in various regions have faced difficulties such as an inadequate number of fieldwork supervisors for students. There should be a common fieldwork manual structure for all the schools of social work in India to improve the standards of on-field training in social work but at the same time, the selection of fieldwork agencies should be based on context-specific indicators. Finally, the placement of students in fieldwork agencies should be based on the interests and prioritized goals of the students.

IV. THE SLOPING QUALITY OF STUDENTS

When the social work profession took place in India as a response to the fast-expanding demand, better students sought admission to schools of social work in the country and at the same time assured employment prospects. The situation continued initial the 2007s. In 2008s the new era of privatization, and globalization there is a number of schools of social work established due to the lack of inadequate attendance and the quality of students it's sloping down. Now barring the prestigious schools of professional social work education is not drawing upon the best brains. It appears that social work has become the last resort for boys and girls in search of economically rewarding professional education, notably management education. Therefore, lack of enthusiasm for students' attitudes.

V. DEFICIENT RESEARCH BASE IN INDIA

Research has played a key role in any discipline, either in science, art, or scientific way without it cannot generate future fruits for roots upcoming generations, methods of the Social work is one of the primary and direct methods of social work research is social work research, Since its inception in India deficient in this area and practice of social work professions. India does not have an Adequate Research Base. The curricular input in research methods varies from level to level and from Institution to Institution. Only a few institutions have regular systems of orienting students to computer applications.

VI. THE FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA

The above has provided a brief overview of disheartening and mournful things improvised would still be spontaneous in nature cycling. Social work profession in India of the knowledge base, the theoretical frameworks, and organizational and policy context of social work in the 21st Century as we have shown social work as a profession has consistently had to adapt to changing contexts. We have shown how social work has consistently sought to locate itself within a socially liberal as opposed to a socially authoritarian position. However, within this process whatever the specific characteristics of successive social policy phases, there is a set of enduring tensions that require a social work response.

Following the above-suggested future directions for professional social work education in the country suggests that the profession of social work stands at a confusing crossroads not knowing where to go and how? The profession is still uncertain about formulating and comprehensive framework there are following needs to bring out for the professions.

1. The need to establish a National Council for Social Work Profession under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment or Ministry of Human Resource Development
2. The needs of the social work profession such as enhancement of partnerships with the government and non-government sectors, initiation of a research center in all regions once centre to promote research and theory building on social work in the region, streamlining of admission procedures to reduce dropouts, and improving both the quality and quantity of study materials on social work for the students.
3. The need is to develop strategies and approaches to suit the new socio-economic reality.
4. The changing of the Teaching and Practice orientation from an individualized clinical and therapeutic perspective to organizational development and Reorganizing fieldwork system and methods of Teaching and Research.
5. The need to Develop a cultural bind theory of the social work profession and social work philosophy such as ideologies of Humanistic Perspectives, Empowerment Thought, Liberation Ideas, Human Rights, and Ambedkar's Thoughts through Buddhist philosophy.
6. A need to initiate capacity-building programmes for social work educators in new institutions of social work, the responsibility for designing, initiating, and executing such programmes should be undertaken by the national network by creating supportive mechanisms.

The visible to all of us where social work is being equated only with employability and the values of social work such as social justice, human rights, and empowerment are being pushed into the background. In such a scenario it becomes important and responsible for the schools of social work to come together at a national level and ensure minimum standards of social work education in the country. At the same time, there is a need to relook at the curriculum and pedagogy of social work education based on the local context of each of the schools. Hence the minimum standards and innovation must go hand in hand in order to ensure quality social work education in India.

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