

Challenges in Imparting Social Work Education in India – An Overview

S.Sangeeta

Associate Professor, Dept of Social Science, Tamil University, Thanjavur

Abstract

Education is one of the dominant sectors of the Economy but my in term of enrolment of students in India that too in social work profession. Social work has evolved as professional activity and no longer as a soc3.al service. It has become a proactive, preventive and rehabilitative measure to tackle problems in the society scientifically. In India Social work Education owe its origin to short-term training course in the year 1936 with the start of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate school of Social work presently known as Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Gradually this education raised to graduate, Post graduate and research level and acquired a professional status. The university Grant commission set first review committee in 1960 and second review committee in 1975 to set, to promote and to maintain standards to social work education to be at par with training, research and practices. Many institutions were setup all over India to impart social work education but still social work is identified with the philanthropic and social reform movements considered as voluntary service. The lack of indigenouse base has resulted in a failure to promote firm commitments on the part of both public and private social service in the use of professional social work. Keeping in view all realities, an attempt has been made to project the major challenges faced by social work education in India to improve the standards and enhance recognition to the profession.

Keywords: Social work Education, Profession, Challenges.

1. Introduction

Education is one of the dominant sectors of the economy in terms of enrolment of students in India that too in Social work profession. Professional education for social work in India began in 1936 with the start of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (New known as Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai). Social work has evolved into a professional activity and no longer simply constitutes as charitable work. It has become as proactive, rehabilitative and preventive measure to tackle problems in the society. The growth and spread of social work education in India was recognized by government of India, with the UGC appointing First Review Committee for social work education in India in the year 1965 and Second Review Committee 1978 for the promotion, maintenance of standards to social work education to be at par with training, research and practice. In India professional social work owe its beginning with the start of short-term training course on social service organized by the social service league at Bombay.

Those training course included both men and women willing to do social service. Later with the start of Tata Institute of Social Science in the year 1936 gradually this education raised to graduate, post graduate and research level. Moorthy (1971) defined social work as an intense human activity believing in helping the helpless. Rao (2014) noted that social work educational institutions were traditionally the centres for knowledge production in the early decades. Since 1980s, there has been gradual emergence of research and knowledge production outside social work educational institutions. NGO's have contributed a great deal to the production of social work knowledge. The emergence of new modern of knowledge production, for example various tools used for assessing impact, vulnerability, organizational strength of NGOS, protection of human rights, developed by other then social work academia and practitioner, was expected to alter the discourse about the perspectives and substantive contents of social work education in India. Professional social worker's in India are engaged in development of welfare activities, from micro to macro levels, by governments, voluntary, corporate and international organizations and through people – oriented community based movements and action groups.

As Bodhi (2011) observed that, efforts to insert libratory and emancipatory elements into social work education, are now visible and are being articulated in the public domain. Social work Education and a strong vibrant profession without doubt can play a vital role in many different sectors in the region such as Health education, livelihood, peace building and soon. In spite of all above said realities, social work profession faces lot of challenges in imparting social work education. The forth coming pharas throw light on above said challenges.

2. Challenges in Imparting Social Work Education in India

2.1. Multiple Social Work Conception

Social work as a profession is still in low position in India. The very term social work lacks its definition. As a fact, still it is considered as social service and not a professional work. In India even today, it is generally used to include almost any activity which is intended to help. Some sort of physical or economic help. The official reports published by the Government of India have attempted to clarify the terms social service and social work

as used in the context of Indian Society.

All those misconception had resulted in non consideration of social work as profession which inturn resulted in hindrance in the path of social work education.

2.2. Dilemma of Specialisation

We have always assumed that a student should be familiar with all the techniques of social work. But social work education offers specialisation which restrict the students to nutshell.

2.3. Organizing Effective Field Work Experience and Development of Field Work Agencies

To find good and sufficient field work placements for students with experienced trained supervisors remains a continuing problem for education through field work. Agency practice Normally lags behind the class room and within to make necessary adjustment in reality and also agency supervisors have not had professional training. Yet they supervise student – trainees in their work at least to the extent of allocating work within the agency and keeping track of work done by them. The gap that separates classroom standards and agency practices in often great and frustration for the students.

2.4. Public Recognition of Professional Social Worker

Lack of public recognition of social work as a profession is another article short coming that has to lot with future prospects. A paid social worker however good, efficient and capable is more likely to be looked down upon by the people whom serves as a professional. This perspective also affects the image of social work education.

2.5. Lack of Indigenous Materials or Literature

The major challenge of social work education in India is its inability to sufficiently indigenous knowledge – base. The foreigners of social work education is so much all – inclusive and pervasive as reflected in its basic organization, curricular and the teaching material that most social work graduates fail to pursue careers in professional social work.

2.6. Strengthening of Professional Associations

The absence of effective functioning of professional association of social work practitioners and educators is the most pronounced handicap in professional development in the country. Unless these are revived and made effective, the future of the profession of social work is likely to remain bleak.

The history of two national level of Association viz. Indian Association of Trained Social Work (IATSW) and ASWI is a checkered one. In addition to these associations, Regional Associations of trained professional social workers are situated in different states. However only a few of these Regional Associations are active (Gowda: 2010).

2.7. National Council for Social Work

We need to have national level council to maintain the uniform standards of education and give accreditation to institutions as well to practitioners. Efforts have been made to form National Council in the lines of Medical Council of India through discussions between eminent social work educators and practitioners at various fora (Thomas: 2010).

Unless a uniform system of accreditation on all India bases is developed and enforce, the development of social work education and programmes on sound lines is likely to proceed very slowly for a long time. In 1965, one committee recommended the establishment of a national social work council, and then another committee in 1978 supported this recommendation. But no action seems to have been taken in this behalf so far. The second event related to the emergence of a national organization of professional social workers in 1961. Earlier there existed an informal organization of social workers since 1951. This organization, however, had not been effective in attracting a large number of social workers as members (Ranjana: 2009).

2.8. Inbreeding in Several Institutions

Inbreeding that is appointing their own students within the Departments due to political and other pressures. This is resulting in lack of innovation and very stereotyped disinterested practices in teaching, field work practicum as well as research. By absorbing outside candidates only best practices can be adopted.

2.9. Meager Salaries to Social Work Teachers

Low salary and job stagnation, high turn-over, easy burnouts are some of the crucial issues that would be resolved if we are able to bring standardization in the social work teaching, and practice and at the same time portray a desirable and advantageous image of social work profession in the country (Ranjana: 2009). Paying

Meager Salaries to Social Work Teachers lead to poor quality of teaching, practicum and research and best practices cannot be adopted.

2.10. Developing Field (Service) Action Projects

The University Grants Commission (UGC) clearly mentioned in its major of areas of concern for the development of social work education and training in India that is development of field and field service project to provide learning opportunity to the students, growth opportunity to the staff and service opportunity to the people. But the process of developing projects and executing is missing a lot.

3. Suggestion to improve standard of social work education

- Provision of positive learning experience through field action projects.
- National and state level professional bodies should be encouraged.
- Conviction for value based social work education.
- Efforts to promote scholastic performance among staff and students.

4. Conclusion

Recent study reveals that social work education in India was become irrelevant to the needs of Indian Society, because what is needed in Indian Society is primarily preventive and macro based social work. Indian educators should accept this challenge and frame new strategy to transform existing social work education. Focus can be made on the recommendation made in this article to overcome the issues and challenges to impart social work education in India.

References

- Ganguli .B.N., Social Development, Streling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Hans Nagpaw, Social Work in urban India, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi.
- University Grants Commission, (1965), Social Work Education in Indian Universities, New Delhi.
- Nair, Krishnan, (1981), Social Work Education and Social Practice in India, Madras, ASSWI.
- Singh, R.R (Ed: 1985), Field Work in Social Work Education: A Perspective for Human Service Profession, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company.
- Manshardt, Clifford (1985), Education for Social Work: The Indian Journal of Social Work, Vol. XLVI No.1
- Jacob,K.K, (1994), Social Work Education in India: Retrospect and Prospect, Udaypur, Himamsu Publications.
- Desai, Murali (1997), Literature on Social Work Profession in India, 1936-1996: An Overview, The Indian Journal of Social Work, 58(2), 149-160.
- Prasad, Devi, (1997), Literature on Undergraduate Social Work Education, The Indian Journal of Social Work 58(2), 244-264.
- Nanavathi, Meher, (1997), Professional Associations of Social Work: An Analysis of Literature, The Indian Journal of Social Work, 58 (2), pp-287-300.
- Srivatsava, S.P, (1999), Addressing the Future of Professional Social Work in India, The Indian Journal of Social Work, 60 (1), pp-118-139.