

Problem of Social Work Education in India: Sharing From Empirical Experiences



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Abstract

Social Work in India has crossed seven decades of its initiation. Social work is unlike other professional services which are meant for commercial gains and monetary benefits. Social work profession is different in nature as well as orientation. Devoted to the welfare, development and empowerment of common people social work profession is different in many aspects from its counterpart partners like economics, management, commerce etc. With its different, approach, orientation as well as subject contents the profession is facing difficulties in gaining full acceptance from the public and policy makers. It is high time to retrospect and critically analyze the lacunas and shortcomings of social work. The present paper deals with the overall problems social work in India is facing today.

Keywords: Social Work, Problems of Social Work, Social Work Education.

Introduction

Indian social work has entered into 74th year of its inception. It is the age of experience and wisdom but even after so many years' social work profession has not yet fully accepted in the country. The profession still struggling to get sanction from the common and uncommon people, now it is high time to identify the reasons as to why the noble and pious subject not been able to get what it deserves to get in the country. From my experiences I could sense that social work profession has not yet established as need based profession. Unlike the western world, here in India client does not reach to social worker, rather social worker search the client. The professional social work borrowed from the USA and UK, the concepts, theories, methods as well as methodology derived from European literature. The social case work, social group work and community organization the three primary methods of social work with three auxiliary methods of social work proved unpopular in the Indian society. One accepted reason is the difference that lies between Indian society and western world. As it is the widely known fact that 'literature is the reflection of the ideas of the society'. The literature and ideas that flowed upward from root and soil of the society to the social scientist and social work educators were the outcomes of the European civilization. But the needs of Indian society were different; our goals are altogether different from the west. Mass poverty, illiteracy and ignorance that prevail widely in India and Indian subcontinent are the toughest proposition to handle by professional social work, but unfortunately professional social work failed to redress these issues of masses. Therefore, now in India we can see loud voices advocating dramatic change in the outlook and attire of social work profession. Undoubtedly, to make a makeover of professional social work in India we need indigenous literature as well as we needs to adopt local solutions for local problems.

Aim of the Study

The present article is the small attempt to provide the condition of social work in India.

Beginning of Social Work Education in India

Social work education in India started in the year 1936 as an adaptation of the education program in the United States of America, where social welfare service were meant "to assist the people in their adjustment to an industrial, urban and metropolis dominated social milieu."(UGC,1978 Para 1:16)

Social work profession in India begun from the efforts of the house of Tata's. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences of today was initially named

after Sir Dorabji Tata and was known as Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, in the beginning institute awarded the Post Graduate Diploma in Social Service Administration. The school got recognition by the University Grants Commission in the year 1964 and the diploma converted into a master degree course. After the establishment of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work many other university also adopted the newly launched MA social work program. The pioneer universities to establish social work department in India were- University of Delhi (1946), Department of Social Work, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi (1947), Faculty of Social Work, MS University, Vadodara (1950), Indore School of Social Work (1952), Madras School of Social Work, Chennai (1952), College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai (1955), Udaipur School of Social Work (1959), Karve Institute of Social Sciences, Pune (1963), Department of Social Work, Loyala College of Social Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram (1963) and Department of Social Work, Jamia Islamia (1967) New Delhi were amongst the first few departments of social work in India.

Milestones achieved in India: At a Glance

Year	Achievement
1936	Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work
1940	The Indian Journal of Social Work was started by TISS
1949	The first book on social work called students and social work was published by TISS
1958	The International social work was started by International conference of social work and International association of school of social work with base in Mumbai
1962	Lucknow university journal of social work was started by the department of social work of lucknow university, now called 'Contemporary Social Work'.
1963	Indian Association of Trained Social Worker (IATSW) started publishing a journal called social work forum.
1968	The first edition of encyclopedia of social work was published by the planning commission.
1981	Social Work forum stopped being published.
1984	A journal called perspectives in social work was started by the college of social work Nirmala Niketan Institute.
1987	The second edition of encyclopedia of social work in India was published by the Ministry of Welfare, New Delhi.
2000	National Journal of Professional Social Work was started by the Indian Society of Professional Social Work.

(Source- Murali Desai, Ideologies and Social Work, Historical and Contemporary Analysis)

Problems of Social Work Education in India

As far as higher education is concerned in India, there are many problems, many faculties at the

post graduate level facing many problems peculiar to themselves. Some of the common problems are problem related to communication, acceptance, language, curriculum etc. The profession of social work has same problems. Some problems are common to higher education in India while some problems are peculiar to social work subject only. One of the most perceived problem in India is the problem of the communication of knowledge. Undoubtedly most of the available books in social work libraries are written in English language. Although, English is known to be an International language, commonly accepted by the Indians but acceptance of foreign language and absence of literature in indigenous language has deteriorated the level of education in general and especially things have become difficult for the students coming from rural hinterland of the country. Many students find difficulties in grasping the concepts, theories written and explained in English language, much of their time invested in either translating or understanding the books written in alien language. Though, at the same time subject matter and literature available in Indian language is either poorly constructed or translated from other book. This results into fall of standards, comprehension, clarity and expression among aspirants of social work subject. The dearth of pure Indian literature has created much problems among social work educators. Another problem is the gap between Indian and International social conditions. The international social work talk much about problems related to individual, care of aged, children etc., they focus higher on behavioral problems and seek answers from clinical social work. Problem in India are entirely different, we have problems of poverty, population, illiteracy, ignorance, governance, unemployment etc. Available social work literature rarely focuses on how to combat these giant problems.

In case of methods of social work also we find similar problems. The internationally accepted six methods are not universally applicable. These methods must be altered according to the social conditions of a particular society, otherwise, it will not be able to make a mark and may result into unacceptance. Methods like social case work is good but but it could be better if developed and refined to suit the Indian mind set. Here, Indianization has role to play with social work methods.

Another problem of social work in India is the problem of social work as a profession. Indian society is more service oriented and considers social work activity not confined to few individuals rather Vedic literature highlight social service as an ultimate service every individual should perform through various mentioned ways for their countrymen. Therefore, orientation of common men towards professional social work is full of ambiguity. Thus, professional social work do not enjoy the status and position in a satisfied manner. Though, professional social work is gaining importance among people in metropolis and urban areas.

The early history of social work education indicated an emphasis on the study of labor welfare, personnel management and industrial relations. In the

thirties, till seventies social workers in India were largely serving in industries and looking after basic amenities for labors in industries like canteens, crèches, recreational programs, salary administration, welfare, safety etc. The social workers were recruited in industries to ensure the implementation of Factories act 1948 and Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. As it is mandatory to employ a welfare officer in industries where five hundred or more employees are employed. Creation of job opportunities in the industries have created a dilemma among social work aspirants. The dilemma still continues as it is a buzzword among academicians now 'whether we should consider labor welfare and personnel management as our specialization or not.' It is a specialized skill and now a management subject however, human resource management and personnel management are taught as field of specialization in Indian social work colleges, but these highly employable specialization is facing tough competition with management studies now a days.

In addition to this another problem of social work education is that it failed to attract the bright students. Even in the best of times social work education did not attract the cream of the student. Though, social work philosophy rejects the concept of 'creamy students' but categorically if we assess we will find that the so called bright students list of preferable career choice is medical, engineering, administration, banking, finance etc. in this list social work appears last. Though, these generalizations is not absolutely true as there are many bright students choosing social work every year in all schools of social work in India, but their numbers seem to be dwindling.

The nihility of professionally trained social work teachers is also one of the problem social work in India is facing today. When we insist on professional trained teacher we not only means UGC NET qualified teachers but also means well experienced teacher who have empirical knowledge of field. A teacher having NET qualification but no knowledge base of grass root realities will find hard to train students. If a teacher who had already worked in any industry for few years would be the best person to share the problems of labors in industry or trade unions or a teacher who had already worked in NGOs could confidently explain how to fetch the projects from funding agencies.

Without the presence of a regulatory body for social work education in India, the degree of social work can be grabbed through regular as well as distance mode. With all the positives distance mode education has there is an urgent need to assess what degrees are suitable to be awarded through distance mode and what not. Only last year UGC banned all universities to grant B.Tech. degree through distance mode because of the nature of the subject (technical as well as practical). Social work is a pragmatic and field oriented subject, our uniqueness is concurrent

field work training that can't be given through distance mode. So many universities imparting M.A. in social work or M.S.W. through distance mode, eventually passing on merely degrees without much professional knowledge.

Another problem is related to unemployment. Problem of unemployment has been related to the problem of acceptance. Because of lack of acceptance among government and industries, highly specialized post which otherwise should be filled with professional social workers are filled from professionals belonging to sociology, psychology, home science etc. which in turn, creates unemployment among social work professionals. The most pivotal among all other problems social work in india facing is the problem of absence of social work council. A government recognized council is necessary to regulate social work institute and social work profession as a whole. Recently, a social work council bill was introduced in the lower house of the parliament but it failed to draw attention of other parliamentarians, thus a good move went in vein. In the absence of social work council colleges providing social work education having no uniform pattern of entrance, admission, curricula, teaching pedagogy and evaluation. Resulting in disorderly trained professionals, closely connected to this is the problem of mushroom growth of social work education institutions in the country. In the year 2002 there were merely 125 social work institutes throughout the country (Desai Murali,2002). The emergence of number of institutions of social work education to a lot extent compromised from quality of education is unproductive for the professional health of social work in India.

Conclusion

Social work in India is still struggling to be considered as profession in India. Though, last few years have been positive for social work profession, the demand of being considered as 'professional' was never ever as vociferous as it is today. Still much concerted and uninterrupted efforts required to accord social work a recognition that it deserves.

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