

Challenges Before Professional Social Work Education and Today's Student

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Abstract: *Social work is a anthropocentric science and works for the overall development of individuals, groups and society. In today's era of globalization, technology and changing social values, social work education is facing new challenges. The quality of education, realistic experience in training, availability of teachers, employment opportunities, and changes in social values in the society are all having an impact on social work education. This research article has analyzed in depth all these aspects of the current status of professional social work education, the challenges it faces and the reflections on it. The study shows that values-based education, research-oriented approaches, and real-world experiences in practice are needed to sustain professionalism in social work education.*

Keywords: Social Work Education, Challenges, Reflection, Professional Social Work, Research.

Aims objective: To know the challenges facing social work education and the current student.

Hypothesis: Students face social and economic challenges while pursuing social work education.

Study Method: The study method of student observation and secondary source of published materials has been adopted for social work education.

1. Introduction

Social work has become a very important and sensitive field in modern society. This education is not only a source of knowledge but also a tool for bringing about changes in the society. In Indian society, many social problems like poverty, inequality, caste discrimination, women's issues, child rights, elderly welfare, disability rehabilitation, and health are being solved through social work.

Social work education started in India in 1936 with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). There are 52 aided social work colleges in Maharashtra and about 29 unaided social work colleges are coming up. Today, social work education is imparted in hundreds of colleges across the country. But with this growth, many challenges have arisen such as quality, shortage of trainers, shortcomings in practical training, and decrease in motivation among students.

2. Concept of Professional Social Work

Professional social work is an organized service that works to increase the social efficiency of individuals, groups, and communities. Its professionalism is based on the following factors.

- 1) **Use of scientific method:** In the study of social work, direct methods - case work, group work, community development methods are used. In the indirect method - social welfare administration, social action, and social work research methods are used.
- 2) **Training and value-based approach:** There are colleges for providing training in social work. Training is provided in these colleges. Also, fieldwork is provided to

gain practical experience. In it, training is provided according to the value of the study of social work.

- 3) **Ethical code of conduct:** There is an independent ethical code of conduct for social work.
- 4) **Research and evaluation:** In the social work curriculum, actual research is given for the research method. And their evaluation is done through the examination method.
- 5) **Service, social justice and human rights** are also included.

Social work is not only service, but it is a scientific and professional activity. Therefore, the aim of this education is to enable students to respond to various situations in society.

3. History and Development of Social Work Education

Social work education started to be studied systematically in the UK and USA and the foundation of social work education in India was laid during the British rule. In 1936, TISS started formal social work education in Mumbai. Later, social work education institutes were established in Delhi, Madras, Kolkata, Pune, Nagpur, Hyderabad etc. After 1960, social work courses were recognized at the university level. After 1980, the need for social work increased in the fields of rural social work, women's welfare, health, and industry.

At present, social work education is offered in India at the degree, post-graduate and doctoral levels. However, its quality has not been uniform everywhere due to lack of practical training and research.

4. Objectives of Social Work Education

- To create awareness and understanding of social problems in students.
- To strengthen humanistic attitudes and values.
- To develop research, analysis and business skills.
- To enhance communication and leadership qualities with various segments of society.
- To prepare students for social change. Some of the main objectives are as follows.

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5. Importance of Social Work Education

Social work education increases sensitivity to inequality, injustice and poverty in society. This education prepares students not only for employment but also for service and social justice.

Social work education is essential to mainstream the disadvantaged sections of society, to participate in the policy-making process and to guide development movements.

6. Components of Social Work Education

Social work education is based on the following three major components:

- 1) **Theoretical education:** Social work, social science, psychology, sociology, economics and policy science are included.
- 2) **Experimental Training:** Field Work, project reports, observation and evaluation techniques are adopted to gain hands-on experience.
- 3) **Research and Extension:** Studies and research are conducted based on problems in the society. From this, short research projects and research proposals are prepared by identifying the causes, diagnosis, conclusions, recommendations and solutions to the problem.

7. Contemporary Changes in Social Work Education

In the last two decades, the impact of technology, digital media and globalization on social work education has increased. Online education, digital field work reporting, participation of international NGOs, and skill-based training have all become part of the new education system.

However, this is reducing teacher-student interaction. Value-based education is decreasing, and the study of local reality is being neglected. The gap is widening day by day.

8. Major Challenges for Professional Social Work Education

1) Financial Challenges

- a) **Adequate funding for institutions:** Social work institutions do not have adequate funding. Institutions providing social work education face a shortage of funds. Due to this, they face difficulties in providing various technologies to provide quality education in the era of increasing competition.
- b) **Many difficulties for field work:** Colleges in rural areas face many difficulties for field work. When students want to go to various agencies for field work. At that time, they do not have access to suitable agencies. In such a case, they have to do field work in the same agency that is available. And besides, they have to face financial difficulties.
- c) **Lack of funds for research:** - Due to lack of funds for research, quality decreases. In the present time, if social work education wants to make its mark, quality research work is necessary. Due to lack of funds and lack of

resources and to some extent apathy, the quality of research is decreasing.

2) Educational Challenges

- a) **Lack of skilled and trained teachers:** - Skilled teachers are required to impart social work education. It is intended to recruit teachers keeping in mind the proper qualifications and quality of the teacher. In such a case, the board of directors brings interested people closer to some extent and the recruitment is done by filling those who meet their expectations. Due to this, the quality is deteriorating. Also, the government does not approve the recruitment of posts even though there are vacancies in many colleges. This creates many problems.
- b) **Lack of continuous improvement in the curriculum:** The curriculum is improved from time to time. It needs to be complete so that our students can survive at the global level. Thus, challenges arise while preparing the curriculum. After preparing the curriculum, there is a lack of appropriate reference material. Due to this, students have to face difficulties while pursuing their education.
- c) **Lack of practical experience for students:** Without practical experience, students will not be successful in professional life. Difficulties arise while providing practical experience for that.
- d) **Lack of research and writing culture:** There are obstacles in creating research and writing culture for students to study the problem in depth.

3) Technical Challenges

- a) **Lack of digital skills:** The current era is of information technology. But since many students are from rural and tribal areas, they cannot be exposed to this technology. Or they have to face many obstacles. Due to this, obstacles arise while creating digital skills.
- b) **Limitations in online education:** Online education was started during the Covid period. At this time, teachers and students had to face many challenges while providing online education. And there have also been many limitations in it.
- c) **Low efficiency of virtual alternatives to field work:** Various agencies are required to do field work. If students do field work there, they will get real experience. But if they are given virtual alternatives, they will not get field work experience. This creates obstacles in the development of students' skills.

4) Social and Value Challenges

- a) **Service spirit and ethics:** Service spirit and ethics are decreasing among students. Students are seeing a decrease in service spirit and ethics in the current period. People are working with the help of machines. Due to this, the speed of work has increased. The traditional form is changing in this. Similarly, it is seen that social values and ethics are being neglected while following. Due to this, the distance in the society is increasing.
- b) **Low recognition of social work in the society:** Social work education has started late in India. Many people still do not even know about social work education. It seems that there is a small number of people from the general category who want to take social work education. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce social work education to many people in the society.

c) **Employment-oriented education:** After completing social work education, there are no reserved posts available to students in the field of social work immediately. Since the government has made it a condition that no graduate should be a candidate while issuing the advertisement, students of any degree can apply for any post. Therefore, there are no reserved posts in the field of social work. Due to this, there are no suitable and reserved posts for social work students. As a result, the flow of students coming to social work has decreased due to the increase in employment and income-oriented thinking.

5) Employment and Professional Challenges

- a) **Limited posts in government and non-government organizations:** The number of government-approved posts in various government offices is less. Even though the government-approved and subsidized posts are less, there are no reserved posts for social work in various areas of social welfare. The government does not create posts. Therefore, the students have less familiarity with social work education.
- b) **Employment Lack of employment in voluntary organizations:** Unstable employment in voluntary organizations. There is a lack of employment in voluntary organizations. In voluntary organizations, they want to work in organizations for very little remuneration. It is not possible for students to get employment and work for little remuneration. And it becomes impossible for them to earn their living with little remuneration. In such a situation, if students want to get employment in voluntary organizations, they do not get the salary or honorarium that they want. And the organizations do not provide large salaries or salaries. Because they do not have sufficient financial resources.
- c) **Struggle to get professional recognition:** - There is still confusion from the government level to the last level about whether social work education is professional education or traditional education. There is a demand from various organizations to get the status of professional education for social work.

6) Mental and emotional challenges

Emotional fatigue (Burnout) of students: While studying social work, the student should not feel any form of laziness or emotional fatigue throughout his life. It is necessary for them to develop. But it is seen that the emotional perspective of the students is weakening. Social work education should make the student a strong student from an emotional and mental perspective.

When facing the problems of the society directly, when solving the mental stress problem, if we look at it from many perspectives, we see that problems arise in the society from time to time. When those problems arise, a joyful and pleasant situation does not arise. It is not the case that all the elements of the society contribute in the same way. To a large extent, solving the problem depends on the cooperation of the people of the village or the cooperation of the people of the community, so the student cannot solve the problem in an enthusiastic atmosphere and it is not possible to get hundred percent results.

7) Role of Teachers, Institutions, and Government

The following roles should be played to remove various obstacles in social work education.

- a) **Teachers should create a value-based approach in the students:** While imparting social work education, teachers should teach the students without instilling value education and morality in the society. Which will create a love for social work in students and also instill values in the society.
- b) **Institutions should implement research projects based on local problems:** Currently, many forms of social organizations have been formed in the society. In such cases, they have projects of various types. While implementing those projects, they should be selected on the basis of the problems of the society. On the same basis, they and the students should be encouraged to work.
- c) **The government should formulate a policy for funding, research grants, and employment generation for social work education:** At the government level, many types of specific and reserved funds should be provided for social work. In which social research should be encouraged for students, scholarships should be provided for students, employment opportunities should be provided and employment opportunities should be provided. So that the love for social work is created more among the students. And professionalism can be instilled among the students.
- d) **Increase partnerships with voluntary organizations to provide students with real-world experience:** Sign agreements with many organizations, industries and various sectors regarding social work education and provide funds that will give students the opportunity to work in it and work on the development of society on that basis.

8) Reflection

Professional social work education is not just education but a tool for social change. Today, education has become more certificate-centric. Due to this, the basic values of social work are disappearing.

Against this backdrop, there is a need for reflection —

- Are we really creating activists who work for the weaker sections of society?
- Do students have human sensitivity and social responsibility?
- Is the goal of education employment or social change?

Many such questions will determine the future path of social work education.

9. Suggestions for Improvement

- Make field work more realistic and value-based.
- Organize continuous training (Faculty Development Program) for teachers.
- Establish research centers.
- Use of digital tools should include new experiments in education.
- Psychological support and guidance to students.
- Increase participation of government and NGOs.
- Increase planning of employment opportunities and professional networking.

10. Conclusion

Social work education is an effective tool for nation building. Through it, social equality, justice and development can be achieved. But to maintain the quality of this education, it is necessary to strengthen the three pillars of ethics, values and professionalism.

Educational institutions should aim to produce not only certificates but also charitable, sensitive and efficient social workers.

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