

Strength and Weakness of Social Work Education

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Abstract: *In India it is high time social work education should attain professional status in a formal way like other profession. Social workers in India should take active measures to establish its professional status of social work education. The social work colleges in India have been demanding formation of national and state council for their courses. The demand is pending since last several years. It is hoped that such a council will accelerate the improvement of quality of education in social work.*

Keywords: education, council, social work, strength, weakness

1. Introduction

Social work is a helping or enabling profession and academic discipline. The very specialty of this profession is that it helps individual to help themselves. In 1936, this new profession was born with the inauguration of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work from Nagpada neighborhood house, Byculla. This institution was inaugurated by Dr. Clifford Manshardt. In 1944, it was renamed as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (D'Souza 1978; Narayan 2001). The year 1964 was an important landmark in the history of the Institute, when it was declared Deemed to be a University under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act (UGC), 1956. Following this tremendous growth has been achieved in the area of social work education especially in India

2. Strengths of Social Work Education

Social work as a subject has been introduced in most of the colleges and universities of India. Opportunities are increasing day by day for students who complete degrees in social work for example, successful candidates can get a job as Case Work Specialist in Jail Service, Assistant Labour Commissioner in Labour Department, Integrated Child Development Scheme Supervisor, Assistant Professor in Universities and Colleges, Medical Social Worker, Psychiatric Social Worker, Human Resource Executives, School Social Worker, Labour Welfare Officer, Assistant Jailor, Manager-CSR, Counsellor, Research Associate etc. Research works are widely carried out in social work discipline, which gives opportunity for updation of domain knowledge in social work. Most of the central and state universities, private universities; affiliated colleges are providing ample opportunities for doing Bachelor's Degree (BSW), Master's Degree in social work (MSW), M.Phil, and doctoral program (PhD)

3. Weakness of Social Work Education

Social work education as a profession is often considered as an emerging profession due to insufficient IKB, absence of indigenous orientation to knowledge component and lack of linkages between classroom learning and field realities (Howe 1987; UGC Curriculum Development Report 1990; Kulkarni 1994; Singh and Srivastava 2003:87).

For regulating medical education at national level, there is a Medical Council of India, but for regulating social work

education there is no such body at state or national level which is one of the serious limitations for social work related courses. With respect to the outcome of social work education, most of the students who had completed degrees in social work failed to showcase expected competencies. In India, only the state of Kerala has introduced social work at +1 and +2 school level, other states in India have not introduced so far at school level. Licensing system to practice social work is not introduced in India so far. For Civil Service Examination which is conducted to recruit candidates for higher level services like Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, Indian Foreign Service etc the Union Public Service Commission has not included social work as one of the optional subject so far. In India most of the colleges recruit their own students as Assistant Professors, this would lead to stagnancy and prevent innovation.

New things are lacking in social work researches that are being carried out in our country. In India we could not see name boards like Caseworker, Group Worker or Community Organizer. Though social work is considered as a practice profession, its purpose has not yet been achieved. As of now social work is not considered as a professional course in India. Recently the University Grants Commission and Human Resource Department of Government of India have not included MSW course for grant of scholarships for the students belonging to schedule caste and schedule tribes stating MSW is not a professional course

National Network of Schools of Social Work (NNSSW) document (2012) has brought out the issue of mushrooming of private schools of social work, mostly from northern states. The document mentions that the new institutions are commercializing social work education against the basic ideology of social work. They are self-financed and have expensive fee structures. Some of them also promote the concept of paid seats and charge capitation fee to the students. The fieldwork training component in these institutions is, however, weak. Besides this, distance education in social work is also becoming popular. The students were not exposed to actual fieldwork or research. Consequently, their competency level remains low and NGOs pay low salaries to them. Also, the teacher student ratio in some ISWE institutions is highly skewed, especially in the self-financed institutions with high-turnover of teachers in several of these schools because of the low salaries (NNSSW Report 2012). The issue of rapid increase

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of the ISWE in the country is frequently discussed by the social work educators.

4. Suggestions to improve Social Work Education

National and State council for social work courses may be formed to regulate social work education.

Social work as subject may be introduced in all the states at higher secondary levels.

Selection of candidates for teaching post from the same institution may be avoided.

Doing social work research in new areas may be encouraged

Union Public Service Commission may include social work as one of optional subjects in the civil service main exam.

5. Conclusion

In India it is high time social work education should attain professional status in a formal way like other profession. Social workers in India should take active measures to establish its professional status of social work education. The social work colleges in India have been demanding formation of national and state council for their courses. The demand is pending since last several years. It is hoped that such a council will accelerate the improvement of quality of education in social work.

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