



SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Vura Parvathi Devi

Department of Education, Kakatiya University, Warangal – 506009

&

Enumula Ramesh

Department of Social Work, Kakatiya University, Warangal – 506009

ABSTRACT

Indian education system was confined to the elitist group. With the practice of Varna system, the education was tailored to suit the needs of the priest (Brahmin) community, who were taught to read and write for religious and ritualistic purposes. The education traditionally catered to the interest of the higher and upwardly mobile community, which was small in number. Consequently, large number of other socially marginalized groups (Dalit, tribal, OBCs, and NT/DT) remained away from the education system. As a result, the education system in India is often criticized for exclusion of the marginalized groups and for lack of relevance and indigenous knowledge. However, during the British rule, from 1700 to 1947, India's education policies reinforced the earlier elitist tendencies. By the early twentieth century other castes and marginalized groups realized the advantage of education and managed to acquire formal learning. It is hoped that with inclusion of these groups in the education system for formal learning the Indian education system will become more relevant, contextual and indigenous in its nature adequately contributing to the national development. Social work education is perceived as training of social work practice for the development of students' ability to recognize, respect and generate social work practice within their clients' indigenized cultures. Hence, the Social Work Educators are expected to impart and generate knowledge and skills for developing appropriate attitudes in the

students for working with people and establishing linkages between theories and praxis wisdom within the socio- economic, political and cultural context in which they are embedded. In this context, this research study attempted to examine the role of the social work educator in the development of indigenous knowledge base to strengthen the social work education. Factors such as profile of the Institutes of Social Work Education, their academic involvement that influences indigenous knowledge development, understanding about social work knowledge, contributions made and the constraints faced in the process of knowledge development were explored.

Keywords: Education, indigenous knowledge, learning, social work,

Introduction

Indian education system was confined to the elitist group. With the practice of Varna system, the education was tailored to suit the needs of the priest (Brahmin) community, who were taught to read and write for religious and ritualistic purposes. The education traditionally catered to the interest of the higher and upwardly mobile community, which was small in number. One of the main roles of the education system is to adequately contribute in national development (Shah 1981). The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. The system has many concerns like access, equity and relevance, re-orientation with emphasis on values, ethics and quality of higher education, finance and management, assessment of institutions and their accreditation. These issues are important for the country which intends to use higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st century (Nigavekar 2003).

The education traditionally catered to the interest of the higher and upwardly mobile community, which was small in number. Consequently, large number of other socially marginalized groups (Dalit, tribal, OBCs, and NT/DT) remained away from the education system. As a result, the education system in India is often criticized for exclusion of the marginalized groups and for lack of relevance and indigenous knowledge. However, during the British rule, from 1700 to 1947, India's education policies reinforced the earlier elitist tendencies. By the early twentieth century other castes and marginalized groups realized the

advantage of education and managed to acquire formal learning.

Review of Literature

Manshardt, (1941) the initiator of the first school of social work in Asia, was aware that it was ‘quite impossible to reproduce Western experience without first submitting it to a great amount of critical analysis and scrutinizing in the light of Indian conditions’.

Dumbrill, & Green (2008) is presented in first chapter of this study. However for better appreciation of the concerns expressed by the social work professionals about availability of indigenous knowledge for social work education and training it is necessary to understand the meaning of the term ‘indigenous knowledge ‘from different perspectives. Expression ‘indigenous’ implies that the knowledge has to take into account the socio-economic conditions and culture of the region in which it is applied. Besides this, field experiences of the professionals involved in imparting the knowledge also need to find a place in the knowledge base.

Datar et.al (2010) responded to the demand for indigenous textbooks and teaching materials for social work educators, scholars and students. The manual bridges the gap by providing concrete exercises for the development of method-linked skills. It covers a variety of topics, role plays, songs, case studies, street plays and includes theoretical inputs and exercises on the theme of understanding perception, self-awareness, sensitivity, communication and working with individuals and groups. It facilitates the inculcation of professional and global competencies essential for social workers.

Parekh (2004) emphasized that library unit was the indispensable mediator in the dialogue between the writer and the reader. Developing a quality social work library is a challenge which can be overcome by creative use of technology.

Mukherjee (2004) explained the concept of development fairs to promote alternative visions for more equitable society keeping with larger goals of communication through alternative methods. The author informed that the audiences in such fairs consisted of the wider public which was attracted to a wide variety of knowledge-seeking and object acquisition. Social work profession has scope to practice this strategy to serve as a forum for discussion and absorption of contextual knowledge.

Shah (2004) stressed high possibility of dissemination of social work knowledge through newspapers. However, the author observed that very few newspapers covered social work on a continuous basis and a few magazines and journals were well-researched, informative and actually studied social work practice. As a result, they were not able to attract the common person at the grass root level. He gave an example of the well-known magazine 'Humanscape,' published on human right issues and promoted critical thinking, stating that sustainability comes through better editorial contents, good presentation and visibility among people.

Joshi (2004). It necessitated evolution of new methods of making information more accessible and affordable. Electronic publishing presents electronic communication as a speedy, cheap and easily accessible solution to accessing knowledge and information in the era of changing roles of author, publisher and information professionals demanding development of new skills. The author discussed the need to evolve and access policy for full text online and inclusion of different formats of publishing in electronic form.

D'Souza (2004) stated that organizations working for poor would have to establish information center addressing the issue concerning them. The centers should be established as a part of regular day-to-day information seeking mechanisms for the different groups such as youth, students, teachers, activists, social and public workers and NGOs into the information circuit. The author believed that the information centers predominantly played secondary role to activism, movement or NGOs. He argued that in the new globalized context of privatization the institutions like the press, television and academic institutions need to play their role firmly in the public domain as information centers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the profile of the selected institutions of social work education with regards to the following areas;
 - a. Organizational set-up
 - b. Curriculum aspect
 - c. Institutional Facilities available
 - d. Knowledge developed by the ISWE

2. To assess the role played by the social work educator's personal and professional profile in enabling them to become generators of indigenous knowledge for social work education.
3. To identify the contributions made by the social work educator's in the development of indigenous knowledge for social work education.
4. To study the constraints and challenges faced by the social work educator's in developing indigenous knowledge for social work education in India and to consider the suggestions made by them for improvement.

Social Work Education: A Global Overview

Being a global profession, education for social work takes place in most of the countries in the world. It has an outreach of around 3000 schools of social work in over 114 countries in the world (Garber 2000; Midgley 2000). Besides the regular social work, International social work is taught in schools of social work and cross-national cooperation between training programs is common practice (Hokenstad & Kendall, 1995, Cox and Pawar 2006). 'The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well being, vitalizing theories of human behavior and social systems. Social work intervenes at the point where people interact with their environments.

This social crisis in the western countries which tore a vent through many western societies in the 18th and 19th centuries is commonly referred to as the 'industrial revolution'. Rapid industrialization and urbanization transformed the lives of all people. Social work emerged as a response to this crisis. State social welfare initiatives such as schemes for public sanitation, education, juvenile correction, public workhouses accompanied with legislation as well as new mechanisms for recording population change originated in the 19th century. The social work professionals from the west and from the third world countries who were trained in the western countries attempted to develop theories, knowledge and models and started to apply them in the third world countries.

Indigenization Movement and Social Work

The contemporary indigenization movement in social science is a post colonial

phenomenon (Boroujerdi 2002; Chang 2005). Atal (1981) argued that the third world suffered both political and academic colonialism because social sciences, like colonialism and capitalism, were implemented from the west to the colonies to secure and perpetuate western power (Huang and Zang 2008). However, some proponents of indigenization attacked the assumptions and principles of western philosophy such as objective, reasons, humanism, the idea of progress, cultural transcending knowledge, the dualism between religion and science. They proposed that new concepts and theories based on indigenous intellectual traditions, history and culture should be developed to build indigenous social sciences. Thus indigenization is a continuous process encompassing broad understandings of knowledge in the present globalized context. The process of globalization and the ensuing problems showed that the social work strategies should not only be 'indigenized', but should also be 'internationalized' for practice and to form the basis for local-level decision making in various systems such as agriculture, health care, food, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural and urban communities (Warren 1991).

Development of Social Work Education in India

A renowned Indian sociologist Singh (2006) depicted the reality of Indian society in the following manner. As a nation, India is very diverse in cultural characteristics. Influenced by the West, it is pluralistic and democratic with several political ideologies. Consequently, the Indian social work professionals are faced with an extremely complex reality. There is interplay of many socio, cultural, economic, political and even geographical factors within and from one location to the other. People within India are divided along ethnic, linguistic, cultural, regional, caste and religious lines. India has more than 2000 ethnic groups and sub groups. There are 4693 communities, which include several thousands of endogamous groups, speaking 325 functioning languages and writing 25 different scripts. With 1.19 billion population size, it is characterized by a multi-ethnic, multi cultural, multi lingual and multi religious environment that makes the society highly diverse. To add to the complexity, 72.2 percent of the population lives in about 638,000 villages and the remaining 27.8 percent in over 5100 towns and over 380 urban agglomerations.

Social Work Training Curriculum and Pedagogy

The objective of any professional curriculum has to be to prepare the type

and quality of manpower capable of performing the task and functions to achieve the goals of the profession in the context of that particular society which it seeks to serve (UGC Report 1980). Curriculum development for social work education is a process of inter-relating and integrating the basic constituents of professional education, namely, context, purpose, structure, content, practice and process (Nanavatty 1990). According to the second UGC review committee (1980), existing syllabi for social work training were not relevant to the profile of the country and hardly had any scope for practice. Social work curricula of that time lacked response to the Indian realities and over emphasized the remedial, rehabilitative, residual model which focused on problems of the individual, families and communities at micro level rather than problems of individual and society in the context of development. (Desai 1981; Verma 2003).

Considering the fact that the task of curriculum designing is a specialized task, the UGC started Curriculum Development Centers (CDC). The CDC for social work education submitted its report in 1980. It was suggested to include the following broad areas in social work curriculum at post graduate level.

1. Social work Profession: Philosophy and Concepts
2. Social Work Interventions: Methods and Strategies
3. Social Work Research
4. Social Science Concepts for Social Workers
5. Human Development and Health
6. Social Systems and Social Conflict
7. Social Development, Policy and Planning
8. Social Work Practicum including fieldwork (filed visits; structured experience laboratory; study tour; rural camp; workshops; concurrent field work; block fieldwork)
9. Optional courses

Social Work Educator- as Bearer of Knowledge

'Social Work Educator' means an academician, faculty member or teacher who holds a prescribed social work qualification and has been engaged in teaching, research and fieldwork supervision in a recognized social work educational institution (NCSWPI Bill 1993). Qualifications in social work such as Master in Social Work (MSW) or M.A. in social work are one of the eligibility criteria for entry in the social work teaching profession. Attending Orientation Courses and Refresher Courses was one of the mandatory requirements for career progression as per the University rules (UGC 2010).

Direct recruitment to the posts of Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors in the Universities and Colleges are made on the basis of merit. In a move to improve the quality of higher education the University Grants Commission (UGC) had issued a new regulation for teacher's recruitment and promotion on June 2010. According to this regulation, good academic record, 55 percent marks at the Master's level and qualifying in the National Eligibility Test (NET), or an accredited test (State Level Eligibility Test - SLET/SET) was a precondition for appointment to the post of Assistant Professor. Higher educational qualification, such as Ph.D. in the concerned discipline, engagement in research with evidence of published work with books or research/policy papers were part of the eligibility requirements for the post of Associate professor and professor (nehu.ac.in). Significant contributions to the knowledge in the concerned discipline substantiated by credentials were also laid down as the pre condition for appointment of professor (Ibid).

Role in Development of Indigenous Knowledge

The social work profession is purely human oriented and is directly concerned with human problems. Education in social work is a foundation for development of social work profession. Social work educator's role in general refers to their workload assigned by the social work educational institution. Singh (2008) stated that the development of education system depends on the role played by the planners, administrators, educationists and especially the teachers. The UGC Review Committee Report of 1980 and 'Curriculum Report: UGC Model, 2001' has allocated various responsibilities to the social work educator to perform their role. Besides teaching in the classroom, the role of SWE includes supervising students for field work, guiding their term paper/research and seminar

presentations, directing research and field action projects (FAP), organizing seminars, workshops, conferences, camps, staff development program, heading and participating in the activities of NGOs and professional associations, if selected, be a member of board of studies of the university, university grants commission (UGC), handle other administrative responsibilities at the department/college level, develop and modify curriculum, prepare proposals and policy drafts and also write and publish papers, articles, monographs, books, compendiums and editorship to generate knowledge base. In this background, to study the role of the social work educator in knowledge development to strengthen the social work profession, the contributions made by them and the constraints and challenges faced by them in the process is appropriate to know the theories like role theory, knowledge theory and critical theory in context of this study.

Conclusion

Professions based on human relationship such as social work must have its knowledge base truly reflecting values, culture, problems of society in which it has to be taught and practiced. About social work education in India, it will be inappropriate to say that social work educators have not responded to the need of indigenizing social work knowledge. Social work education as a stream is seven decades old in India, though a century old globally. As a professional discipline, it deals directly with human beings, affecting and at times influencing their cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic values, handed over from generation to generation. So much so, knowledge base of the discipline in its concepts and context has to be to large extents-local and native. The core and task of the social work professional is to bring in a change and transformation of society for better. And, inevitably the knowledge base must be indigenous to facilitate interaction which is smooth and beneficial to both, social worker educators and receivers. This will provide an opportunity to the giver to enhance their understanding of theory and practice and to receiver for a change in their life style and values there on. The social work knowledge base, therefore, must be at tandem with locals without losing sight of global changes and current cross cultural trends. One finds this requirement more pronounced in a pluralistic society like India, which is made up of multi-linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic groups and again dispersed in a large area as regional clusters. It compounds problems of effective communication. For any meaningful interaction and inter connectivity social work professionals have to use local knowledge.

Absence of local knowledge inhibits the development of local community. The Indian ISWE (s) and SWEs did respond to the need of indigenizing the social work knowledge. However, as apparent from the writings of the experts, the quantum of IKB produced and disseminated in India so far is less than required to strengthen the social work training. More efforts are required as principal agents, to align the theoretical framework, models, components, and strategies of social work knowledge with the local socio cultural and economic context to make the knowledge relevant to the peoples' need. The time is apt to systematically study and create 'Indigenous Knowledge Development Model'

References

1. Shah, M. 1981. *Role and Responsibility of Teachers*, University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Shetty, L. 1996. Professionalization of Social Work in United States and India. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 57(2), 259-277.
2. Nigavekar, A. 2003. Secretary, UGC Higher education in India Issues, Concerns and New Directions, UGC, New Delhi. (<http://www.ugc.ac.in/pub/heindia.pdf>, retrieved May, 2012).
3. Manshardt, C. 1941. Education for Social Work. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 2(1), 12-22
4. Dumbrill, G. C., & Green, J. 2008. Indigenous Knowledge in the Social Work Academy. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 27 (5), p. 489-503.
5. Datar, S. Bavikar, R. Rao, G. Rao, N. Masdekar, U. 2010. Skill Training for Social Workers, A Manual, Sage Publication, New Delhi.
6. Parekh, 2004. Planning a Library for Institutions for Social Work Education, *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 65(1)
7. Mukherjee, C. 2004. Development Resource Fairs: A Means of Knowledge Dissemination. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 65(1), 141-150.
8. Shah, J. 2004. Production and Dissemination of Different Forms of Periodicals for Social Work. *The Indian Journal of Social Work* 65(1)

9. Joshi, M. 2004. Electronic Publishing, *The Indian Journal of Social Work* 65(1) 126-141
10. D'Souza, J. 2004. Role of Documentation Centers in the Volunteer Sectors for Social Change. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 65(1): 117–25.
11. Garber, R. 2000. Launching of an International Census of Social Work, Social Development and Social Service Education. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 61(2).
12. Midgley, J. 2000. New Directions in Social work Practice: Learning from the Developing World. Ninth Annual Sarnat Lecture, Los Angeles: *School of Social Work*, University of Southern California.
13. Hokenstad, M. C. and Kendall, K. A. 1995. 'International Social Work Education', in National Association of Social Workers, *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, pp. 1511-1520. Washington, DC: NASW Press
14. Cox, D. and Pawar, M. 2006. International Social Work Issues Strategies and Program, Vistar Publications, New Delhi.
15. Boroujerdi, M. 2002. 'Subduing Globalization: The Challenge of the Indigenization Movement', in R. Grant and J.R. Short (eds) *Globalization and the Margins*, pp. 39–49. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
16. Chang, M. 2005. The Movement to Indigenization the Social Sciences in Taiwan: Origin and Predicaments. In J. Makeham & A.C. Hsiau (Ed.), *Cultural Ethics and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan, Bentuhua* (pp. 221-260), New York Palgrave:Macmilan.
17. Atal, Y. 1981. The Call for Indigenization. *International Social Science Journal*, 33 (1), 189-197. ASSWI, 1979. Report on Sub Regional Workshop for Social Work Educators and Trainers on the Development of Indigenous Teaching Material for Preparing Social Welfare Personnel for Work with Rural and Urban Poor, Madras.
18. Yunong Huang and Xiong Zhang 2008. A Reflection on the Indigenization Discourse

in Social Work <http://isw.sagepub.com/content/51/5/611>, *International Social Work* 51(5).

19. Singh, Yogendra. 2006. Social Cultural Change in India. In B.E.Singh (Ed.). *The Sociology of Culture*. Delhi : Rawat Publication.
20. UGC Review Report, 1980. Review of Social Work Education in India, Retrospect and Prospect. New Delhi, University Grant Commission.
21. Nanavatty, M.C. 1966. Social Work Education in India-A Critique. *Social Work Forum*, 4(2), 67-74.
22. Desai, A, 1981. Social Work Education in India: Retrospect and Prospect in T.K. Nair (Ed.) *Social Education and Social Work Practice in India* (pp.204-233). Madras: Association of Schools of Social Work in India.
23. Verma 2003. Revamping Social Work Education in India: A Model for the 21st Century. In Singh and Srivastava (Ed) *Social Work Education in India: Challenges and Opportunities*. Lucknow. The New Royal Book.
24. UGC Regulations 2010. UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers, (<http://www.nehu.ac.in> retrieved on 12 June 2012)
25. Singh, U. 2008. Quality Ethos for Effective Teaching in Higher Education. *University News*, 46(46),17-23