

Social Action

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Introduction

Social action should not be seen only as a method but as an overriding philosophy behind social work education in India.
— Armaity Desai

The profession of social work has looked at the human environment situation through the remedial lens of the primary methods for long. Such a view was based on certain assumptions about human problems prevailing in the first quarter of the 20th century. The perception then was that there were certain individuals who were in need; that there were those who required leisure time engagements through associations and groups, and also those who needed better community services through coordination and cooperation. The methods which were evolved to address these larger groups were called social case-work, social group work and community organization in the professional literature. They qualified for inclusion in the primary category on the basis of above assumptions. Other methods were thought to be supportive to them were relegated to the secondary category. Further in the development of the profession of social work, the human situation was looked at more in compartments and clients were seen as fitting into one or the other method rather than the real need which was felt for them by the professionals.

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The need for perceiving human environment as an integrated whole required a holistic approach. As the nature of the problems humans face is complex and spiral, the use of a single method is inadequate to deal with the issues at hand. Hence an integrated approach was favoured. This is so because of the adoption of a rational approach to basic questions inherent in a social situation demanding intervention. These basic questions relate to: a) the nature of the problem situation - its magnitude and potentiality, its relationship with other situations and its impact on target groups/institutions; b) its dynamics - the know how and know- why; c) its likely resource absorption and generation and selection of an appropriate approach or strategy; and d) consequent action to alter the situation. Thus social action both in individual and structural contexts along with other methods will assume an inter-disciplinary professional endeavor, the choice of which will be determined by the situation or need rather than by its placement in a category or by the individual preferences of practitioners. The perception of problems experienced in the collective or individual levels are subject to changing norms. These would then form the background in which social work and its various methods operate. This calls for a total perspective and an integrated approach for tackling issues that social work profession considers as its subject matter.

Historical Development of Social Action in the West and India

In tracing the history of social action one can draw insights from society as well as from developments in the social work profession.

Social action is as old as human society. Social Action can be traced from available historical records– of the plebian protest against Rome in the 5th century B.C. From ancient Rome to the civil Rights movement in the United States it has had a long and varied history. Its examples in the West could be seen in the resistance of the Netherlands to Spanish rule in the mid-sixteenth century, the Boycott by Irish peasants in 1880., Bloody Sunday of 1905 (the Russian Revolution), the East German uprising of 1953, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Bus Boycott of Afro-Americans in the USA.

In India Buddhist and later other religious movements emerged as social protest movements. There were always movements against the oppressive rulers in the form of revolts of the masses against the oppressor. Examples in the recent colonial history of India are with reference to the revolts of 1857 against the oppressive economic and political policies that caused famine conditions and unjust land revenue systems, peasant movements of Bardoli and agrarian movements across the nation. These continued beyond post independence period.

Colonial India saw many movements for raising the status of the masses, seeking equality in educational opportunities and fighting against oppressive caste hierarchy and unjust taxation, in various parts of the country. Social reform became *sin-qua-non* with social action. Jyotiba Phule and Pandiata Ramabai, clearly focused on raising the confidence and status of the masses who were untouched by the educational efforts of the British. The freedom struggle saw the birth of the Indian National congress – for political reform– following a collaborative rather than confrontationist path in the early years. Movement for political reform got entwined with social reform and both these went hand in hand. Later on these two got separated.

Organised forms of protest with clear goals and strategies were initiated as part of freedom struggle. A major role was played by Gandhi's struggle against the British. Gandhian Social reform was linked to political independence as part of integrated socio-political movements. Gandhi creatively synthesized India's cultural and historical traditions with a unique interpretation of the principle of militant non-violent resistance to all forms of institutional evils.

He used the principle of militant non-violent resistance to all forms of institutional evils - evidenced through various movements such as the non-cooperation movement, Bardoli Satyagraha, the salt Satyagraha. In this as some writers have distinguished there were mainly three notable dimensions of Gandhi one of which is the revolutionary personality of Gandhi. In order to draw insights for the method of social action, it is the understanding of the revolutionary personality of Gandhi that is useful. Gandhian non-violent modes of challenging injustice were something that was used by Martin Luther King in fighting for the rights of the Blacks and Jaya Prakash Narayan in his movement for total revolution.

Gandhian experiments have stressed discipline, command and control, careful choice of weapons, targets, terrain and the time of the day and avoidance of impetuous recourse to provoked or purposeless violence for the success of the movement.

Jaya Prakash Narayan explicating the method said 'When a revolutionary movement is on its aim should not remain limited to whatever they were at the beginning. But taking advantages of the revolutionary atmosphere they should be widened to cover as many fields of social life as possible. He regarded political action as secondary to social action in bringing about

social change. These insights are a useful reminder that there is much action that goes beyond the professional institutions that is relevant to the social action strategies and method as an instrument for social change.

Post - independent India saw many struggles such as the bargar dar movement, the fish workers movement, the women's movement and the fight of adivasis and other landless for right to land, human rights and civil rights movements.

Professional Development in Social Work and Development of Social Action

Social action as a process of change to be brought about by deliberate group and community efforts was not unknown to the profession of social work. As early as 1922 Mary Richmond, one of the early Pioneers of the profession, referred to it as one of the four processes in social work. In fact, it is an integral part of the concept of social work arising from the liberalistic, rationalistic and democratic traditions. The early efforts to promote the settlement movement in the USA and to change the system of charities into a programme of family welfare were motivated by a desire to convert the services from ameliorative to curative and promotive. According to Kenneth L M Pray' the history of the profession tells us that social action once commonly called social reform has always been an integral and often a decisive element in social work practice as a whole. From the early days of the charity organization and settlement movements in England down to the mental hygiene and public welfare movement there has never been a moment when professionally conscious social workers have been content wholly to separate their day to day service of particular individuals and

groups from some measure of responsibility for controlling or preventing some of the broad social factors that caused complications or intensified the problems with which they dealt.

The genesis of social work in 19th century Britain as a social movement concerned itself through disciplined forms of social action to find more realistic remedies to social problems. With the advent of salaried and trained social workers and the beginning of the process of professionalisation 'a new social work emerged with change in form and content and a consequent shedding of its' movement qualities'. Some authors have analyzed the internal and external politics in the profession, the former relating to segmental conflicts and bureaucratic vs. professional interests, and the latter characterized by social work vs. state/local authorities, social work vs. other professions, and social work vs. the consumer.

The settlement houses started in UK and USA for improving the condition of the poor were considered as first step by professionals in the area of social action and reform. Such an approach was said to follow largely a cooperative and consensus building one.

According to S Pathak, in **India** the developments of the profession began with the establishment of the first school of social work in Bombay in 1936. The model of social work that was imported was the individual oriented ameliorative professional model. It was felt by many leading writers in the profession that it was highly unsuited to the needs and conditions of Indian society. Because Indian society is group oriented and collectivist oriented – emphasis was on the concept of duty rather than right. Such concepts emanated from the cultural milieu that was at the same time cosmopolitan (multi-religious, multi linguistic) as it was sectarian (casteism and communalism). The new emerging profession has

to locate itself in this social atmosphere. In Indian philosophical and religious traditions the concept of social welfare was much wider than the residual content of welfare to the handicapped and weaker sections of society and was much akin to the modern initial view of welfare and included preventive aspects as part of it. In contrast the social welfare model, including the professional model of social work that evolved in USA was influenced by a variety of factors that were specific to its context. Notable among them were the Judeo-Christian ethics, puritan ethics, individualism, self help, moral character of the individuals, the liberal social and political philosophy which advocated Laissez faire approach by the state including exploitation of natural resources, industrial economy, scientific developments and mass consumption. However the 1930 depression and economic recession has made the social and political philosophy to have a re thinking which led to the growing importance of government involvement in legislative measures for social security though it continued to be dominated by the philosophy of individualism. The professional role model envisaged social work as a value free, neutral and objective scientific activity. Professional social work had an ideology that consisted of certain conceptions of human society and human nature and their functions. The professional social workers generally viewed society as an aggregate of individual welfare. Domination by Freudian thinking led to the focus on role of professional social workers as an enabler who would facilitate individual change and help the individual to adjust to his social environment. Such perceptions captured the thinking of the profession, with the result, there was near exclusion of the method of social action and consequently very little concern for its development as a method.

The influence of sociological concepts began to be felt as they appeared in social work literature as a result of development of other major methods of social work - group work and community organization. The individual oriented approach in social work persisted for quite sometime even after this. Pathak identifies the middle of 1980's as a beginning of the reversal of this trend towards increasing professionalisation with its' associated consequences and a gradual swing back to the earlier social reform orientation'. There was an influence of the new concepts on social welfare especially social systems theory. Social reform and social action perspectives began to prevail because of particular social conditions in the US - which may be both internal and external. This had effects on the social welfare institutions in the form of growing sense of democratic factors about the nature of professional techniques and organizational procedures which seemed to take precedence over the needs and interests of clients.

Such professional changes taking place in the west had their effects in the developments of the profession in India. Thus the focus on social reform and social change and social action began to reemerge when the western world began to experience the influence of sociological theories.

According to Siddiqui the method of social action was given importance for bringing about social change in the social environment of clients as early as 1922 by Mary Richmond. But later the wider social realities were given less importance in understanding human and social problems. It was not developed both in curricula and social work literature.

According to RR Singh the profession of social work is rather a late comer on the scene of social action. Some

efforts on the lines of settlement houses was made in the thirties before and after the establishment of TISS. However he says in the late 80s after three decades of neglect, social action is talked about as an appropriate approach to deal with mass problems.

According to him the rise of public interest litigation and citizen action groups has given space and highlighted the need for and widened the scope for social action.

Definitions of Social Action

Social action has been variously described by various authors. Earlier evolving social work profession was content to place it in the realm of community organization method. Later the professional developments led to it being considered as a separate method. Let us consider some of the definitions

Porter Lee R (1937) has defined social action as efforts directed towards changes in law or social structure or towards the initiation of new movements for the modification of current social practices. This includes the organization of special interest groups to achieve through the class struggle a shift in the control of economic power. With the same belief behind it is social action. Safety campaigns and the promotion of the cooperative movement are social action. Any effort to promote social welfare outside direct and indirect media represented by our agencies is regarded as social action. Since it is concerned with voluntary group and inter group activity and social change it is regarded as an integral part of community organization by Lee.

Kenneth L M Pray (1945) Social action as the systematic conscious effort directly to influence the basic social conditions and policies out of which arise the problems

of social adjustment and maladjustment to which our service as social workers is addressed. In discharging services to the society the social workers may come up with obstacles that prevent them from making the best use of services available and in dealing with those obstructions in the reach of services that one indulges in social action.

Arthur Dunham (1958) defines social action as efforts to bring about change or prevent change in current social practices or situations, through education, propaganda, persuasion or pressure, on behalf of objectives believed by the social actionists to be socially desirable. In a revised edition he refers to situations of conflict and allows for goals of change and methods to deal with them. Social action implies potential conflict situations and promotion of a cause, measure or objective in an effort to obtain support or official action. He advocates procedural and direct action to deal with conflict situations.

The Encyclopedia of Social Work in India (1965) defines social action as organized social work activity directed towards, shaping, modifying or maintaining social institutions and policies that collectively constitute the social environment. It is concerned with better adjustment of the social environment in order to meet the recognized needs of individuals and to facilitate those social relationships and adjustments necessary to its best functioning. Social action creates new institutional mechanisms, new programmes as welfare functions; prevent needs which welfare ameliorates and effect change in policies and institutional mechanisms or both..

Moorthy M V (1966) defines social action as a method to meet mass social problems, a way of not merely securing legislation, but also counteracting a common

danger. It is 'community organization in operation' and involves a 'series of endeavors concerned with the awakening and energizing the people to see, as well as foresee their own problems, and attack them through the swift course of combined action or legislative enactment through a democratic process.

Social action may not be limited to creating social change through social policies but may also include such efforts as in the case of catastrophes and calamities wherein collective effort arises to deal with the crisis situation.

Meaning of Social Action

Based on the analysis of the various definitions social action means:

- 1) It is a process whereby conscious, systematic and organized efforts are made by some elites and or people themselves.
- 2) That such efforts are directed towards bringing about changes in the system which is instrumental in solving problems and improving conditions which limit the social functioning of weaker and vulnerable sections.
- 3) That it is more close to social reform than social revolution.
- 4) That it is a means for improving mass conditions, enhancing social welfare, solving mass problems, influencing basic social conditions, and policies out of which arise the problems of social adjustment and maladjustment; and changing the environment.
- 5) That it should work within the ambit of social work philosophy and in harmony with other methods.

- 6) That it calls for a review of the existing social, economic and political environment and goes beyond what the primary methods seem to encourage.

Essential Components of Social Action

- 1) Although action might begin with the initiative of one or more individuals, group action is essential for its fulfillment, which begins with the awareness creation.
- 2) Action has to be organized and given the shape of a movement. For this there is a need to share analysis with the people, organize and plan for strategies.
- 3) Belief in social progress should form the motivation of the participants.
- 4) Action should be in accordance with the established democratic practices, within the constitutional rights of the citizen.
- 5) The authority of the group arises out of the consent of its members.
- 6) The force behind social action lies in group compulsion.
- 7) Social Justice has to be the very root of all social action. Social action should arise out of the conviction that social justice calls for such an action and the specific situation requiring change is a matter of relative urgency and could not be left to the slow process of gradualism or voluntary acceptance.

Some of the **strategies** identified with the method are:

- 1) Collaboration with authorities and agencies to bring about change.

- 2) Competition Campaign tactics to persuade negotiate and to bargain with a willingness to arrive at a working arrangement.
- 3) Disruption such as through strikes boycotts and sit-ins. This strategy is to be used or the tactics to be employed depend on the goal perceptions of social actionist and social milieu in which he/she is operating.

Others visualize that essentially social action has two sets of strategies- one of bargaining and the other of confrontation. The former includes such tactics as submitting petitions, lobbying and public campaigning. The latter includes such ones as strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins.

Britto (1980) considers two models of social action- one an elitist model of social action and the other popular model of social action.

Scope of Social Action

The scope of any method emanates from the way the profession shapes itself, its aims and goals, its commitments and how it defines its subject matter. Another set of conditions that determine the scope of any profession and its methods are the context in which it locates itself - that is the socio-economic and cultural (including its political context and the constitutional obligations that the state finds itself in).

Kenneth L M Pray in articulating the relation between social work and social action ponders over the basic question : does social work as a profession bear any specific responsibility to apply its knowledge and skill to the goal of adjusting social institutions and arrangements to the needs of human beings or is its responsibility limited to helping people find the utmost

of satisfaction and achievement within the social circumstances that surround them, whatever those circumstances may be? The answers to these questions set the tone for understanding what a profession ought to set its goals for.

Scope of social action depends on how its aims are formulated. Its aim is dependent on the aim of social work profession. If social work profession is concerned with providing wholesome, rich and abundant life for everyone, then it is logical for social workers to try to probe beyond end results, to uncover causes and to seek prevention rather than that of merely cure or treatment. It also depends on how the causative factors for human problems are understood. Also if the aim of social action is modification of earlier legislation, bringing in new legislation or the bringing about a revolution, then the social action centers on these activities. However if the liberal tradition informs the democratic systems, and there is focus on generating more economic growth and develop more social services to meet those problems – then social action will focus on the inadequacy of social services, social legislation and other similar issues. But if there are questions regarding whether growth is justified at the cost of equality, or whether it is required at all, and whether there are alternatives available to the development model proposed, then the scope of social action is linked to these questions and seeking solutions for these. Then it also goes beyond existing legal norms as the concept of legality in itself is a relative concept. The desirability of elitist and western led social goals and other questions related to who decides that these goals as desirable, legal and required by people and by what means become the focus of social action.

Constitutional and Welfare Provisions

Thus the scope of the method has to be seen in the light of the constitutional and other welfare provisions of the state as also the existing disparities and social concerns, emanating from the social context. These may include such areas as poverty, unemployment and livelihood issues - the NREGP and the social auditing of such programme, watershed management and public health, ecological disasters, displacement and relocation issues of both rural and urban population, SEZ issues and land acquisition issues, equity in educational provisions the right to development and the right to livelihood and the reduced space for the marginalized in the increasingly favorable climate for privatization of resources and services, demanding equity and access in energy resources are all areas which call for a mass, intermediate and micro level social action. There is a need to demand not only what is due but also prevent what is threatened in terms of loss of livelihoods, in the light of increasing spending on mega infrastructure projects, which may take away land of the poor and the marginalized in the urban fringes. Expansion and development of urbanization with Master Plans favoring the rich and the resourceful which at the same time reduce urban livelihood options for the self-employed such as vendors. Such issues are fertile grounds for social action. There are many Nandigrams and Singurs in the making in the light of India's urbanizing spree and the spiraling economic growth rates.

The right to information act that was the result of social action has to be carefully protected because of many attempts to dilute it by vested interests. The use of such instruments for ensuring satisfactory and quality service provision, ensuring transparency in governance

issues and decision making and empowering communities in its use is something that can fall in the genre of social action. Ecological struggles by various people's groups in India's developmental history are another example of social action. For example the people of Dakshin Kannada have successfully stalled the setting up of thermal power projects which would spell a doom to the otherwise ecologically sensitive area of the Western Ghats. Such struggles have seen coalitions between academicians, elected representatives of people, affected people and others. Discrimination by state and other vested interests, showing outright prejudice towards certain sections of population such as the religious minorities or the politically marginalized are yet another area for social action to alleviate distress and injustice. Questions of breach of civil, Political and social rights, and many other areas which impinge on the interface between ethics and human beings and their rights for rightful living are all areas that have considerable scope for social action. Issues of farmers' plight and their concerns, plant and seed patents and farmer's rights, access to water and power, WTO implications for agriculture are areas worthy of social action.

Thus matters related to systems, institutions, policy, practices, procedures could become by and large the focus of social action.

Channels for Social Action

Khinduka and Coughlin have mentioned three types of modes that the social workers could employ while using the method of social action:

- 1) Firstly social workers could involve themselves in influencing social policy through and understanding of the political process.

- 2) Secondly they can identify the stages of the action process; researching the problem, planning a solution, enlisting public support, presenting the proposal to those with authority for adoption and enforcement or execution of new policy Advocacy and using influence, through persuasion, inducements and pressure tactics are implied in such process.
- 3) Thirdly mobilizing group effort towards achieving social objectives by the removal of the offending problem or situation, through advocating a cause or a measure, or a struggle related to status, power and resources

Other writers opine that there are four channels of social action open to social workers; as employee, as a member of the profession, as worker and as a citizen. Social workers may decide to consciously violate the law if these are immoral and unconstitutional – but they should be ready to pay the price, of getting arrested.

Dunham opines that there are certain limitations for social workers practicing this method centering on such factors as civil service limitations, workers relationship to his agency and community pressures and the individual's conception of what is appropriate for his/her as a professional social worker.

Some writers are of the opinion that the scope should be determined keeping in view the prevailing social situation that social workers come across in their functioning. Meaning that it is limited by the goals set by a particular society, the means it has stipulated for their attainment, the conditions which prevail in a particular social setup and the type and magnitude of change desired by its people as well as the means and

methods that were to be employed to reach the goals. This however does not take into consideration the actions of majority of the society which may be deleterious and downright unjust to the rest of the society. Social actions for addressing them may not be perceived in a positive light. That should not limit one's approach and commitment while working with social problems limiting the social functioning of weaker sections. In undertaking developmental activities there is a need for informing them with social justice. The method of social action attempts to do this.

Place of The Method

The handbook on social work education facilities produced by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of India in 1976 reveals that social action occupies a very nominal place under the general heading of social work methods and social work methodology.

According to **Kenneth L Pray** ' the history of the profession tells us that social action once commonly called social reform has always been an integral and often a decisive element in social work practice as a whole. From the early days of the charity organization and settlement movements in England down to the mental hygiene and public welfare movement there has never been a moment when professionally conscious social workers have been content wholly to separate their day to day service of particular individuals and groups from some measure of responsibility for controlling or preventing some of the broad social factors that caused complications or intensified the problems with which they dealt.'

He asserts that this basic concept of social work as a profession necessarily involves and includes social

action as a professional function we can deal with the questions related to nature and scope of that responsibility. 'There is however one focal point to which all our professional services converge, whose specific significance sets off our tasks from every other part of social welfare enterprise. That is our concern with the actual impact of any or all of these problems upon the individual life and the way in which human beings face and meet these problems and thus attain through social relationships their mastery over them.' He further adds that since social workers are concerned with social process, the impact of social structure and policy upon individuals and the process by which people are enabled to meet and master the problems this impact presents ought to be an important focus. Then it is clear that the responsibility of social world for social action is both an individual and a collective responsibility. It cannot be entirely separated from individual practice, neither it can be given to an exclusive group of people – chosen representatives. According to him there is a dual responsibility that social workers carry. One to perform with all the competence and faithfulness one can muster the particular services which are entrusted to us by the particular agency with which we are identified. Second to contribute steadily to ones' understanding and skill derived from this experience to help the community constructively to relate its institutions and arrangements and services to the fundamental needs of human beings, as these are disclosed in service relationships.

Social Action and Social Legislation

Early writers saw Social Action as a method for bringing about a change in the existing system primarily through the means of social legislation. Nanawati (1965) saw social action as different from community organization

in that he believed that it does not end with the enactment and signing of social legislation but that the execution of policies was the real test of the success or failure of social action. He felt that when group work and community organization methods are unable to help in social advance then social action could fill the gap.

Social Action and Community Organisation

Earlier social action was considered within community organization as one of its three modes of working. Pritchard and Taylor have pointedly referred to political questions in social work as the one concerning distribution of power. They have also mentioned the limitations of the moral, ethical, psychopathological and the psychosocial (social democratic) approaches and have pleaded for a radical-political approach. From such a perspective R.R.Singh says 'questions pertaining to the definition of social needs/problems distribution of resources and selection of approaches' are increasingly being viewed as those of political priorities. He points out that developmental social work does not exclude an ameliorative or therapeutic approach. It is holistic framework, on the contrary, treats clinical –preventive-developmental dimensions as a continuum and as inter-related phases of an integrated approach to human services.

According to Siddiqui the development of social action as a separate method from community organization is intrinsically linked to how the community in community organization is defined. If the definition of community means a limited geographical entity then social action cannot be included in. But if the definition means a nation state then social action is included, the social in social action is a wider concept including nation state and civil society. He opines that some of the techniques are common for both methods but the goals may differ

in terms of the width and breadth with which the scope is defined. Thus social action as a process will be used for tackling issues which are of much wider nature than issues affecting a particular area. In this he draws from the work of study group on Community work group to suggest objectives that are way beyond the traditional community organization. Such objectives are:

- 1) radical activities which question the existing basis of society and proposes alternatives;
- 2) development of the democratic process through more effective communication, participation and sharing of decision within the present administrative and economic system;
- 3) the action of specific references through community action by pressure groups and consumer organizations; and
- 4) formation of community groups as a means to enrich the life members by fellowship, self-help and community service.

The concept of community action proposed by this group is close to social action. Social action as a separate method has to be seen as an endeavor to bring about or prevent change in the social system through the process of making people aware of the socio-political and economic realities conditioning their lives and mobilizing them to organize themselves for bringing about a desired change, or to prevent the change that adversely affects them, through the use of whatever strategies they may find workable with the exception of violence. Social action is to be considered as an alternative approach of trying to achieve the basic objective of social work practice in order to facilitate social functioning of the human beings in any society.

According to RR Singh social action is conceived in various ways such as treating it as one of the primary or secondary methods of social work; social action subsuming the theory and practice of community organization; and social action as an essential component of developmental social work practice which cannot be subsumed by the holy trinity of the so called primary methods of professional social work and hence should be treated as a separate method.

Importance of the Method

Social work in a developing country ought to go beyond the role of dispenser of social welfare services or a therapeutic agent. As per Kulkarni Social Action is most relevant as a method because in developing countries Social Action is crucial and must precede social work. Social action creates the necessary conditions and climate in which social work could be done more effectively. According to Siddiqui, welfare approach is gradually wearing off and the contradictions in democratic system underline the need for new alternatives. The importance of mass movements to press for desired changes is now widely acknowledged in social work literature in the west, thus making way for the incorporation of community action, political action or social action – various terms used to denote the new method of social work within the purview of social work education. He calls for a developmental perspective to inform current practice as well as teaching. He feels that such a perspective is important in facilitating a better access for maximum number of people to the essential social services needed for their development. He opines that such an approach demands the use of social action as the primary method. According to him this is the most controversial and most challenging method.

Social Action and Social Justice

Social work as a profession has its core values as social justice and equality. Social Action is the method advocated to achieve this. Thus it can be used in conjunction with the other methods of social work practice for effective goal achievement. Social action aims at making the programmes of development and welfare more functional for their respective clientele than any other method could do. In procuring the welfare services that are their due or in the claims for their right to develop, the method can be very effective. For instance the physically challenged can effectively use this method to lobby for their representation or inclusion in services which were earlier not considered. Similarly hitherto unrepresented groups can use the method to get their representation done. If any group or institution is negligent or harming another group social action can be used to stop this. By advocacy and lobbying things that were unjust could be changed to something akin to just. Be it the social environment or physical environment or the developmental dislocations that many groups are affected with, social action becomes a necessity.

Conclusion

Social action is any action taken by an organized group or movement to achieve some reform or to promote a particular cause, outside the normal or formal channels of a government or political system, and aimed at gaining support from the wider public. The rise of public interest litigation and citizen action groups has given space and highlighted the need for and widened the scope for social action. Social work as a profession has its core values as social justice and equality. Social Action is the method advocated to achieve this. Thus it can be

used in conjunction with the other methods of social work practice for effective goal achievement.

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Social Work Research

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Introduction

Social Work is a unique profession in many ways. It works towards helping people to develop their potentialities, adjust better with their environment and work towards the amelioration of social problems. Thus interventions are carried at the micro, meson and macro levels. The professional social workers have a body of knowledge, skills and attitudes with which they respond to the needs of their client groups. These skills are generic, that is, they are used by the social workers in diverse settings. Their relevance is seen in settings of social welfare, health care, family welfare, schools, foster care, the courts, prisons, mental health, adult care and other settings.

According to Fanshel (1980) every profession must systematically carry out high quality research about its practices if its performance in the service of clientele is to remain effective and up to date. He states that a sustained and creditable program of research is also essential to a profession's self-respect and to its ability to maintain the positive regard of outsiders whose opinions help support and legitimize the profession's endeavours. Given the above, an important area of practice skills is of research for the social work practitioners. Research offers numerous tools to professional social workers to describe, define, measure and evaluate their work. (a) A **description** of the

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situation our clients come from and a description of the complex phenomenon that impact upon the lives of our clients are important. It may be a description of the strengths and potentialities of our clients. (b) With use of research we learn to **define** the concepts we use in social work in an accurate and consistent way. (c) We follow this with **measurement** of the phenomenon. Research tools help us to measure the needs of our clients, prioritize them and then determine how to help them. Measurement is also necessary to determine the progress of a client. (d) With measurement tools one can measure the client's progress or lack of it over time. It helps to make a decision on the effectiveness of our interventions.

It can therefore be seen that research skills are important for social work practice. Social work is both a science and an art and research is a source of knowledge for social workers. As social scientists, there is a lot of dependence on data base that informs social workers about the client's situations. Empirical data base is therefore an important pre-requisite for social work intervention.

Definition of Social Work Research

Research can be defined as a critical and exhaustive investigation of something. It is somewhat like an exploration of something in order to gain more clarity and at times to know its advantages and disadvantages, its strength and weaknesses. It is well established that scientific research is different from other types of information gathering and is based upon certain values and principles: (a) It has a systematic set of procedures that is to be followed; (b) all elements of bias have to be eliminated or controlled as far as possible; (c) It follows a special code of ethics that includes integrity and

neutrality in conducting research, and a concern for protecting people; (d) it is intended for public use (see Dudley, 2005).

The aim of scientific research is to test and validate existing theories and to generate new theories. Dudley (2005) states that a theory consists of several inter-related explanatory statements or propositions about a phenomenon. These propositions are often referred to as hypothesis. These are researched and validated by research studies.

Scientific research is an important part of information gathering and investigations. It has certain values and principles that distinguish it from other types of information gathering. According to Dudley (2005) these values and principles include:

- a) seeking to discover something that exists or is a truth
- b) following a special code of ethical behaviour, including integrity and neutrality in conducting research, and a concern for protecting the people it studies
- c) being universal in its interests and representing the concerns of all of society, even though the focus may be on one subgroup of people or a narrow topic
- d) being intended for public use
- e) using a methodology that minimizes bias
- f) expecting a commitment to report findings accurately
- g) having a methodology that involves a systematic set of procedures that can be flexibly employed.

The aim should be to fulfill the principles of scientific method as far as possible. The problem solving process of social work practice draws from the basis of scientific method.

Research studies have behind them a certain intention or reason, and this includes the basic values and beliefs. It can well be said that there is a philosophy behind every research and it can be broadly classified as inductive or deductive.

Inductive research: Research is inductive when data is collected about a phenomenon before an explanation is hypothesized or suggested. Researchers are open to learning new things and then use the data to theorize new concepts.

Deductive research: In this type of research, existing theories are used to design a new idea and to conceptualize it. Data is collected and analysed to see whether it is scientifically supported or not. Deductive research also involves exploratory studies conducted to study the extent to which theoretical explanations are applicable to different population groups. They mostly attempt to generalize findings from a small sub-group to a larger group and this as can be well understood has to be done with a lot of care and caution.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Quantitative research involves analysis of numbers. It is a method that makes extensive use of structured surveys, structured observations, and data reports. The method is used mostly in deductive studies to find support in the real world for something. In contrast, qualitative research uses open ended questions, unstructured surveys, focus groups, participant

observation, and examination of existing research documents.

According to Dudley (2005) quantitative research has several advantages over qualitative research. They provide more standardized measures of a concept and more accurate measures. Also the findings can be generalized from a sample to a larger population and can be used to test hypotheses. Also, statistical tests are used to analyse and interpret data.

In contrast to quantitative techniques, qualitative methods do not have an intent to generalize their findings. However, they do have a potential to be transferred to similar situations. For example, a social worker planning to work in a tribal area can learn about this specific population through studies conducted with groups of people with similar characteristics and circumstances.

Qualitative methods are characterized by semi- or unstructured research techniques. They study situations or behaviours that mostly cannot be placed in predetermined categories. The questions are open ended and responses are in word form. Researchers prefer to keep the information they have gathered in that form and not reduce it as it would deprive it of some of its meaningful depth.

It can well be said that qualitative research methods have an advantage over the quantitative methods. They help us understand phenomenon which are little understood and their investigation and analysis need a considerable amount of flexibility in terms of the methods used. Also, many investigations are of a nature in which concepts cannot be reduced to variables amenable to quantitative analysis. Also, these methods

are even useful to those who have difficulty in reading and fully understanding English language.

Apart from the above mentioned variations inductive and deductive, qualitative and quantitative and qualitative there prevail other variations that are due to the manner in which research is conducted. One such area used by social workers is of participatory action research (PAR). The aim of PAR is to involve research participants in almost all parts of the research process. Depoy, Hartman and Haslert (1999) have listed the key principles of PAR as follows:

- a) Collaborate with those affected by the problem to clearly articulate the problem, its scope, and all stakeholders.
- b) Articulate the purpose of change that the research is designed to accomplish.
- c) Have both professional and lay researchers on the team.
- d) Train the lay researchers how to design, conduct, and use appropriate research methods.
- e) Report findings in accessible formats for all stakeholder groups.

Encouraging the participants' inputs in all or some parts of the study gives them more understanding and interest in the purpose of the study and also more control on the effects the findings may have on them, directly or indirectly. Researchers in Social Work have also been meaningfully using this technique in intervention strategies.

The difference between social research and social work research was not clearly differentiated earlier.

According to the Report of the Workshop on Research in Social Work, 1949, sponsored by the School of Applied Sciences, Western reserve University, U.S.A. "Social Research is directed towards the advancement of any of the basic social science, while research in social science deals with the problems faced by professional social workers and by the community in relation to social work functions. In social work research, the problems to be investigated are to be found in case of doing social work or planning to do it. Whilst the methods and the theories of social science may be utilized in both, they are useful to social workers only as they help in seeking answers to questions arising out of social work' (see Verma, 2003).

Ramachandran and Naik (1987) have defined social work research as the use of scientific method in search of knowledge, including knowledge of alternate practice and intervention techniques which would be of direct use to enhance the practice effectiveness of social work methods. In brief, it helps social workers to find ways and means of enhancing social functioning at the individual, group and social levels.

History of Social Work Research

There is no composite picture available of social work research in the West. Hasan (1961) had remarked that 'social work research is in under-developed state even in the United States' where the profession of social work has a much higher tradition than in India'. Ramachandran (1990) has commented on the changing nature of the issues being addressed by research. The west has a greater demand for casework interventions and issues related to the changing nature of family. Increased emphasis is laid on evaluation studies. These

evaluations may be of case work interventions, of groups and different specialized services like mental health and health care services, or of entire agencies and their welfare programmes. There has also emerged a trend of participatory research techniques with the client groups actively participating in the research exercise.

Reportedly, till the fifties, student research was the only research activity in the schools of social work in India (see Ramachandran, 1990). The change in the nature and quantity of social work research was gradual. An impetus to social work research came from the Planning Commission setting up the research programmes committee. The aim of this committee was to hand out projects to various research agencies and institutions in order to obtain base line data to be used for planning purposes. The next impetus came from the Central Social Welfare Board which started sponsoring research projects to be undertaken by schools of social work in the area of social welfare. The initial progress of research was slow as was the movement of social work as a profession in India. In 1968, the committee on social science research observed that 'much of the research in social work cannot meet the standards of rigorous professional work and there is conspicuous absence of a competent criticism which could ensure minimum standards of quality. There has also been an obvious fragmentation of research in this field and unrelated studies on different problems. Even when a number of studies have been conducted on the same problem, these are invariably non-comparable because the methodological tools differ, the basic concepts vary and the very presentation of findings is divergent. The sporadic nature of research in social work and related fields

in India has, to a large degree, contributed to the poor quality in terms of initial preparation of design of the study, reliability and accuracy of data, strength of evidence to justify conclusions and lucidity of presentation.

The Contribution of Social Work Research to Practice

Research gives a scientific base to social work practice. There is consensus that social work practice should have a scientific base. One of the most significant contributions of research is building scientific knowledge. When research methods are applied to support and build theory the scientific knowledge is generated for professional use. There are two different approaches for building knowledge. The positivist approach uses the deductive method of theory building. It deduces premises from theory and then puts these to test. The interpretist approach uses the inductive method in which information is collected and data organized. From this data, theory is built.

The development of knowledge through research is a central function of research in Social Work. Research helps to generate information on the nature, extent and causes of social problems. It helps to study the impact of different interventions and the effectiveness of various programmes. This kind of research base helps the social work practitioner to enhance his practice. Quite understandably, this scientific base is important, if social workers do not want to base their practice on hunch, intuition or past experience. For example, social work research in the area of women and health related issues has helped shed light on many aspects that have had an impact on planned interventions. Research has brought out that there

are multi-dimensional aspects of reaching out to women with health services in India. Women, by and large, do not go to clinics alone. They refrain from accessing health-care especially when suffering from diseases such as sexually transmitted infections. Also, absence of female doctors in clinics becomes a hindering factor. Entire programs are developed on the basis of research. To conclude, information base available pertaining to diverse human situations is a critical factor for enhancement of contemporary social work practice.

Research in social sciences, and especially in Social Work, is concerned with human beings and their social environment. Social work research deals with all such issues. The aim of research is to shed light on ways and means to enhance the social functioning of individuals, groups and communities. Whereas in earlier times the concern of the profession was charity and social welfare, now the emphasis has broadened to encompass participation, empowerment and development. This, alongwith the pace of change, has created a demand for a database on individuals, groups and communities and on the conditions that hamper their professional growth.

Professional social work practice is based on the premise that every individual, group and community is unique. So is the case with their situation. In any attempt to modify or improve their social functioning, they have to be properly and systematically understood before any effective approaches or strategies can be chalked out. There are needs of which people are aware and there are needs of which people are at times ignorant. When it comes to improving their social situation, they mainly think of external resources and rely on their own capacity. Has social work research addressed these issues?

Needless to state, given the complexity of human situations and their environment, research is an indispensable tool in the hands of the social work practitioners. Aided by research, they can develop viable and cost-effective intervention strategies, but also they innovate, readjust, and improve their approaches and techniques. Khan and Kakkar (2003) have reviewed the contribution of social work research to practice. In a study done with eighty schools of social work in India, they observe that project research and doctoral research have paid considerable attention to emerging social problems. There are a large number of studies on social issues such as beggary, dowry, drug abuse. However, what is lacking is the amount of attention paid to the specific issues having a bearing on social work practice. They lay stress on the importance of research as every social work intervention proposed is required to be based upon data-based decision making.

Singh (2003) has looked into the linkage of Social Work practice and social work research. The former helps identify research problems and the latter works towards the generation of knowledge for improved and better social work practice. Polansky (1960) states that Social Work research begins with practical problems, and its objective is to produce knowledge that can be put to use in planning or carrying out social work programmes.

Nature of Social Work Research

Reid has elaborated on the two main components of Social Work research, namely the substantive and the methodological. The latter is concerned with methodological issues and the former has been classified into four main groups (see Reid, 1987).

- a) Studies concerned with the behaviour and personality problems of individuals, families and small groups, both clients and non-clients.

- b) Investigations of the characteristics, utilization and outcome of services.
- c) Research on the attitudes, orientations and training of social workers on the social work profession or on inter-disciplinary concerns.
- d) Studies of organizations, communities and social policy.

In 1958, Gordon had listed that research in Social Work (a) is directed towards the solution of problems and may attempt to answer a question or to determine the relation between two or more variables; (b) emphasizes the development of generalizations, principles, and theories that will be helpful in predicting future occurrences; (c) tries to be objective and logical by applying every possible test to validate the procedures employed, data collected and the conclusions reached; (d) examines various Social Work interventions, their pros and cons and select appropriate intervention in solving specific problem or handling specific solution; (e) accumulates knowledge in a practice field in order to increase the practitioner's ability to exercise conscious and deliberate mastery over his fields; (f) broadens the professional practice of Social Work beyond the more traditional activities of conducting studies; (g) examines our research tools, the type of research thinking we bring to Social Work and whether the latter is getting the profession anywhere either in Social Work education or practice; (h) questions who the Social Work scientist is going to be. In order to fulfill the above mentioned activities, the significance of research in Social Work lies in studying processes and awareness of interventions, clarifying problems for amelioration, using and fostering theory in the context of problem amelioration; exploring society's

response to the human conditions; developing a database for an information system; and focusing on specific constellation as the unit of analysis (Caputo, 1985). It has been well reiterated by Goldstein (1962) that scientific standards and scientific method would make social work practice more scientific, systematized, focused, and well directed.

In professional practice, social workers have to be well informed on research for ethical reasons. In the United Nations, the National Association of School of Social Workers' Code of Ethics (1997) has given special attention to this:

- a) Social Workers should educate themselves, their students, and their colleagues about responsible research practices.
- b) Social Workers should monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programmes, and practice interventions.
- c) Social Workers should promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge.
- d) Social Workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice (see Marlow, 1998).

Research plays an important role in facilitating accountability to various stakeholders. The welfare sector is characterized by paucity of funds and with funding being largely from government and charitable organizations, therefore accountability of the money utilized assumes a pointed significance.

It can also be mentioned here that certain research procedures seek involvement of the clients in such a

manner that they are part of the research process from planning to its implementation. According to Marlow (1998) this kind of participation means empowerment of the clients. This holds true even in the case of participatory action research. The different ways in which this takes place is first through generation of knowledge and action directly useful to the people, and second, through continuous efforts made to promote collaboration at all stages of the research process.

To conclude, research helps the social workers to adopt two roles, that of the producer and the consumer of research. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2001) social workers are expected to be both effective producers and consumers of research. It can well be understood that social workers have to understand research in order to use it in various programmes. A social worker who understands research tools and techniques is well placed to make an objective assessment of the quality of research base and become a consumer of already validated theories. Also perusal of existing data base helps the practitioner to plan interventions and avoid errors.

In their second role the social workers need to essentially know about research methodology. When answers to various social situations cannot be found in prevailing literature or when there is a need to study the effectiveness of interventions social workers conduct their own research. Also, research is sometimes carried out to establish the need for a new service. In fact, social workers continuously access data from multiple sources, document the progress of clients in individual or group interactions towards predetermined goals, write reports and carry out many tasks that fall in the purview of research process. They use research techniques to map communities, to carry

out need assessment, compare needs of different population groups, and many times to convince a funding agency that a project should be launched.

As producers of research social workers conduct their own research or assist others to do so. There are many situations in social work practice where social workers conduct research and produce their findings. For example, they may conduct opinion surveys to study the level of satisfaction with agency services among their client groups or of former clients. Research is also undertaken to identify the needs of client groups. Many times interventions are evaluated for their impact upon the clients by professional social workers. According to Dudley (2005) in achieving these objectives the professional social worker has to have an understanding of the following aspects of social research: the steps in scientific research process; the kinds of research that are occurring in social work; the ethics of social research; the importance of diversity into research; ways in which research can support and promote social justice; the importance of evaluating your practice as a social worker; and the impact of the research design on the quality of the results.

Ethics and Social Work Research

As with other methods of Social Work Practice, an understanding not only of the values and principles of practice is important. The same can also be stated for the ethics of research. Over the years much emphasis has been laid upon the need for researchers to incorporate several safeguards into their research to prevent ethical problems from occurring. One of the first efforts in this direction was the policy statement on ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of biomedical and behavioural research in 1979. This document, namely the Belmont

Report, was released by the Department of Health and Human Services.

In the context of Social Work research the most important ethical safeguards to be kept in consideration are: (a) confidentiality; (b) informed consent; (c) monitoring the effects of a study on the participants and offering assistance if necessary; (d) involving research participants in decision making about the study; (e) selecting researchers without a conflict of interest (see Dudley, 2005).

- a) Confidentiality: A primary responsibility of the researcher is to protect the privacy of all research participants by ensuring their anonymity. The researcher knows the names of all the participants but promises not to reveal their identity outside the research team. Oftentimes, researchers change the names of their respondents in order to conceal their identity.
- b) Informed Consent: The informed consent is sought from the research participants prior to the research process. Mostly the document of informed consent should cover the following areas: general purpose of the study; qualifications and organizational affiliation of the researcher; expectations of the research participant; assurance of confidentiality; identification of any possible negative effects the study might have on the participants; identification of any possible benefits resulting from the participation; an explicit reminder that the participants can stop participating at any time; the name of someone who can be called to answer the queries of the respondents.
- c) Protection of the respondents at all stages of research is a prime concern of the researcher.

These concerns are manifold, greater if the participants are in any way vulnerable or can face any physical or psychological harm.

- d) An innovative way to increase the protection of the participants in research is by involving them in some or all of the steps of the study as it progresses. The Participatory Action Research is a way of doing so. Some researchers even consult the prospective participants during the designing of the study.
- e) An important aspect is in relation to the report of the study. Misrepresentation of the findings of the study and other actions that compromise the integrity of the study must be looked into (see Dudley, 2005). This is usually possible through taking the services of qualified outside researchers who can lend the research the much desired objectivity.

Future Directions

It can well be said that considerable research has been carried out in the field of welfare. However, it is overlapping and not necessarily having good methodology and technique. Ramachandran (1990) has cited nine main problems that social work research has encountered in India. According to the committee on social science research these are: (a) inadequacy of funds, (b) shortage of research personnel, (c) inadequacy of research facilities, (d) load of teaching among the faculty members, (e) lack of research incentives, (f) lack of research training, (g) obstacles to communication and utilization of research, and (h) absence of machinery for research planning and coordination. The ninth problem cited by the committee was the 'youth of the profession' itself.

There is no doubt that research and documentation in social work has been building up in the past two decades. In many conferences, research based data is used to present trends. Much attention is also paid to the rigours of research and the kind of research design, tools of data collection, measurement techniques and procedures of data processing and analysis. The complexity of social phenomenon has made practitioners realize the importance of training in research skills. Most schools have research methodology as an input at the level of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. Also, doctoral research has gained momentum.

It goes without saying that research is an important component in the growth of a profession. It enhances practice and helps in building up a base of indigenous literature. Social Work research has to continuously work towards paying more attention to specific aspects of practice.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, we have discussed the basics of social work research which is yet another method of social work. Social work research is very useful for individual practitioners, NGO functionaries, donor agencies as well as the profession itself. In this Chapter we have presented only the definitions, historical perspectives, contribution of social work research to practice, its nature, ethical aspects and future directions.

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Social Welfare Administration

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Introduction

Social welfare administration has twin concepts of social welfare and administration embedded in it. Thus it requires an understanding of welfare and its origins as well as administration as a tool for achieving welfare.

Administration as a part of governance is as old as society itself. People in a society have inherently tried to take care of destitute and underprivileged individuals either because of benevolence or because of religious and customary obligations. As governance systems evolved, with the changing political and social systems, there was an effort to institutionalize welfare. The issue of society meeting human needs has been part and parcel of human societies. Such an effort led to incorporating these in constitutional obligations. The welfare discourse has seen changing dimensions from charity to needs, to rights based approaches. Whatever may be the mode of approach, welfare provisions have become an integral part of governance system, hence a part of administration. Thus understanding welfare administration perforce needs an understanding of welfare and its linkages to other concepts like justice, development rights, equality etc. At the same time the administration of welfare provision requires an understanding of administration structures, processes and participatory approaches. The administration of welfare has been perforce linked to

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bureaucracy hence requires an understanding of the functioning of bureaucracy catering to welfare provisions in specific locales. The knowledge and skills associated with administration are heavily drawn from 'managerial sciences'

In order to make a voluntary agency more effective to render social welfare services to the community, it has to adopt certain administrative, financial and procedural practices which every voluntary worker has to understand. These are studied under the broad term social welfare administration. It is one of the six basic methods of social work practice namely Case work, Group work, Community organization, Social action, Social research Social welfare administration.

Social welfare administration is a process by which we apply professional competence to achieve certain goals. It is called a process of transforming social policy into social action

wherein two clusters of knowledge and skills are involved. One deals with the knowledge of techniques of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating and budgeting and the other knowledge of the subject matter of the programme and the field in which these techniques are applied. The latter concerns the specific client groups and their needs.

In order to understand social welfare administration it would be useful to look at some definitions.

Definition

Social welfare administration refers to the process of applying professional competence to implementing certain programme of social welfare through social agencies in fulfillment objects and policy of the agency

The concept of welfare while it is important in ancient times, the emergence of modern nation states saw welfare undergoing change. This change was clearly associated with the notion of democracy. Further the importance given to individual rights and concepts of liberty, equality and freedom influenced the nature of the treatment meted out to people. The development of democratic governance systems was concomitant with the provisions of taking care of the needy and the destitute. Even though capitalist developments ran parallel to democratic thought processes, the socio-political contexts influenced the way the individual in society was conceived. Each individual as a citizen was entitled to certain rights associated with certain obligations. The negative effects of the industrial development on certain sections of the population led to the analysis of such issues in depth with the help of some social surveys –on the poor and marginalized, (surveys by Booth and Rowntree in Britain). Such a research base provided a rationale for the development of provisions for the welfare of these sections. Associated with these are the developments in the profession of social work in terms of the settlement house movement and the charities organization of societies. Methodological sharpening and fine tuning took place in these periods. Social welfare administration was then very essential for the welfare state emergence and sustenance. With the development of the welfare state all the activities undertaken by the state are called welfare activities. Such well defined activities when grouped together as activities for social welfare may then be brought under the sphere of social welfare administration.

Because of the contextual nature in which welfare unfolded in various countries, each with its peculiar needs and concerns, state provisions for welfare

emerged differently in different countries. Thus the definition of what constitutes welfare varies from countries to countries and from time to time.. Concomitant with this the focus of welfare administration also varies.

Since many definitions of social welfare administration involve the term *social services*, it is useful to look at some terms, before we proceed further. *Social services* are a wider term which includes 'social welfare services'. *Social welfare services* are the enabling services designed for those groups which cannot take full advantage of the established services such as educational, health, recreational or other facilities. In addition it is to be understood that social work is a discipline using specialized techniques for administering social welfare services, while social welfare is an overall term signifying a state of total well being of the community.

John C Kidneigh 1950 : social work administration is "the process of transforming social policy into social servicesa two-way process: 1) transforming policy into concrete social services, and 2) the use of experience in recommending modification of policy".

Social work dictionary defines administration social work as 'methods used by those who have administrative responsibility to determine organizational goals for a social agency or other unit; acquire resources and allocate them to carry out a program; coordinate activities towards achieving selected goals; and monitor, assess and make necessary changes in processes and structure to improve effectiveness and efficiency. In social work, the term is often used synonymously with management".

Arthur Dunham 1962 describes administration as the process of supporting or facilitating activities which are necessary and incidental to the giving of direct service by a social agency. Administrative activities range from the determination of function and policies, and executive leadership to routine operations such as keeping records and accounts and carrying on maintenance services.

Harleigh Trecker interprets social work administration as a process of working with people in ways that release and relate their energies so that they use all available resources to accomplish the purpose of providing needed community services and programs. The major principles of social work administration as:

- a) administration is a continuous dynamic process.
- b) process set into motion in order to accomplish a common purpose or goal.
- c) resources of people and material harnessed to achieve the common goal.
- d) the above is achieved through coordination and cooperation.
- e) implicit in these definition are the elements of planning, organizing and leadership.

Skidmore (1995) offers a summary

‘Social welfare administration may be thought of as the action of staff members who utilize social processes to transform social policies of agencies into the delivery of social servicesBasic processes most often used are planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling.

Social work profession involves enhancing the social functioning of individuals and groups for which various methods are employed. Case work, group work and community organization are considered as core methods. In addition social welfare administration, social research and social action have developed subsequently as separate methods which are found to be very effective in performing the social work role. It has been found that every case work, group work or community organization involves agencies as institutions for service delivery. This service delivery is the major mode by which social welfare services are rendered. In that case it becomes imperative to understand the nature of welfare services and how these are administered. The method of social welfare administration enables one to acquire an understanding of the principles, knowledge of administration as well as develop skills in efficient and effective service delivery. Administration involves the ability to bring to bear on decision making the knowledge and the information which are essential for wise judgments. Such knowledge and information are painstakingly acquired by education, by experience and by deep immersion in the work of social agency.

The ability to perform well and wisely, to steer the social agency constructed for humane purposes, is best acquired by professional social work education and experience, combined with powerful identification of social work values and ethics. The ability to put all these together is to be sought in the professional social worker rather than in the professional administrator.

Social Administration As a Field of Study and Process

Titmuss defines 'Social administration may broadly be defined as the study of the social services....it is concerned with the historical development of these services, both statutory and voluntary with the moral values implicit in social action, with the roles and functions of the services, with their economic aspects, and with the art they play in meeting certain needs in the social process.'

When social administration is referred to as a subject of study includes a study of the social services there is a certain ambiguity in the meaning of social services. Should we restrict it to mean services required only by those in need or all? Titmuss takes the widest view when the terms social services' has come to be applied to more and more areas of collective provision for certain needs. It has indeed acquired almost elastic quality; its expanding frontiers formerly enclosing little besides poor relief, sanitation and public nuisances now embrace a multitude of heterogeneous activities' also. He says that there is no consistent principle seems to obtain in the definition of what is social service. Social services could include national insurance, social security and family allowances, health services, physical and mental education, housing which must be linked with town and county planning maternity and child welfare, care of the deprived and the delinquent child and of the adult offender youth employment, youth work and community welfare, welfare of the family, the disabled, the aged and the homeless, legal aid, advice and information services.

Thus social administration as a *field of study* would include the purpose or intention of social services,

their historical development, their content and finance, the national and local, statutory and voluntary bodies responsible for their provision and administration, their staffing and structure and the problems of individual, understanding citizen participation, objection, and protection. In addition social administration has also to be understood as a process – directed to the solution of a social problem, the promotion of social welfare or the implementation of social policy. Friedlander gives an illustration.

“For example a case conference is one example of a method in social administration. – wherein a group of people who are all concerned in one way or another with the welfare of a particular person, let us say a child in the setting of his family. One or other members of the group are concerned with his physical, mental and emotional health, his safety, moral or otherwise, his home environment, education out of school activities, or any other aspect of his life. They have met together in the hope and intention, by a process of discussion and mutual assistance, to promote and further the child’s welfare, in unity, not in competition, with simplification and not complication of the issues involved. Such persons are connected with one social service or another. They probably comprise a health visitor, a child welfare officer, a housing officer as school welfare officer possibly an officer of the National society for the prevention of Cruelty to children, a family case worker, a probation officer or a representative of the/department of Health and social Security. Individually each will be concerned primarily with a particular aspect of the child’s life and individually and corporately they should be generally concerned with his well being and that of his family as a whole. In addition case conference helps in identifying one or more other institutions that could be of help”.

In all these it is to be seen how smoothly, effectively, quickly and successfully such processes whether they are in relation to the old, the young the disabled the homeless, the sick the widowed or any other persons in need, are not completely depend upon a variety of factors. These include the personality and attitudes of individual councilors, social workers, administrative officers or committee members, good or bad relationships between people inter departmental or organizational co-operation or rivalries understanding or misunderstanding between field and officer workers professional attitudes or pre-occupations personal imagination or apathy and the availability of the necessary resources. Many such cases are seen in the case of implementation of welfare services, like the provisioning of old age pension, pension for widows and implementation of various schemes for rural and urban poor. Official apathy and insensitivity are seen in the way administration for social welfare services functions in India. Hence it is a must that the administrators are not only well versed in case handling but also with administrative procedures. If the procedures are not sensitive these could be changed for the purpose for which it is created.

In administering the welfare services it is also concerned with the body of persons forming the hierarchical structure of an organization in which some one begins a process of collection or consideration of ideas, information or evidence relating to particular policies, persons, services or problems, about whom or which some decision has sooner or later to be reached. In this rational, purposeful, consistent and orderly techniques are employed. In that it is intended to be objective, careful just and impartial. It involves established procedures, recognized degrees of authority

and where it relates to government departments, public accountability.

Clearly different methods or techniques in social administration when referring to a process directed to the promotion of social policy or welfare will in some cases be used at one and the same time. Such as case conferences, committee meetings, the passing of minutes and policy decisions in relation to the same persons or the same set of problems may all be taking place together.

It is essential to ask three questions in relation to any aspect of social administration, whether it relates to the introduction, contraction or expansion of social services, the making of social policy, the solution of social or personal problem, or the promotion of social welfare,. These questions are why, what and how .That is, what is the rationale that is employed in the provision of social services, what kind of services are provided and how these are being provided. The rationale would logically involve human necessities and recognition of human rights.

What service or services or what opportunities are required in order that problems may be solved, objectives reached or suffering relieved. How questions relate to the criteria in choosing the beneficiaries, the buildings equipment, the money manpower knowledge skill administrative machinery and organization. Without this policy cannot be translated into practice. In brief the why, what and how together comprise the essential questions that lie behind principles, policies and practice in social administration. The reformer and politician, the government and legislator and the administrator and organizer must pay attention to each in turn.

Historical Development

In India : In India the reigns of king Ashoka, Chandra Gupta Maurya and Akbar are the land marks in the field of administration suited to social needs. British colonial administrative exploitative but developed efficient administrative systems. – Bureaucracy that is people sensitive in certain areas such as Cotton in Rajahmundry and other benevolent administrators. Sher Shah Suri etc. British administration set up intended mainly of maintain law and order and revenue collection.

After independence the old administrative patterns was more or less continued. In the field of social welfare India has unique administrative machinery consisting of an autonomous body the CSWB constituted of social workers of repute, representatives of the Parliament and the Central Ministries concerned with the social services.

D.V.Kulkarni says ' Social Welfare administration is a relatively new concept. Unlike public administration, social welfare administration has only a short history.' According to him, India has no exception to this. He adds that the welfare of the subjects in ancient Indian times has been taken care of by their rulers. But the 'elements of the modern concept of Social Welfare administration can discovered in the ancient Indian politico-religious and socio-cultural thought.' Even with such linkages he further adds that 'what comes into the compass of social welfare administration today was at best a personal component of the duties of the king and the 'organized activity that aims at helping towards a mutual adjustment of individuals and their social environment.'

In USA: The American way of life with its democratic emphasis has been conducive to the initiation and development of social welfare services. The pages of history reflect that almost from the beginning of the colonization of this country, humanitarian men and women, both in public and private agencies and situations have been interested in establishing and supporting services and activities to help distressed and unfortunate individuals and families.

The roots of social welfare in America had their beginnings in Europe particularly related to the Elizabethan Poor Laws of England. Towns and local communities assumed responsibilities for aiding the unfortunate and disadvantaged.

Most of the other beginnings in social welfare were private in nature and involved philanthropic programs and activities. Gradually civic minded individuals and leaders proposed Welfare programs financed by the tax dollar. Various state programs were started.

Social welfare administration as a method had its beginnings with the proceedings of meetings of the national conference of charities and corrections. The International congress on charities correction and philanthropy in 1893 suggested that schools should be organized to train workers to help give effective social services to those in need.

In 1897 Mary Richmond, then general secretary of the charity organization society of Baltimore, Maryland made a similar suggestion to the national conference of charities and correction in US. Charity organization movement held to bring into existence school of social work that taught knowledge and skills related to administration or similar concentrations. Several schools offered various courses on social work

administration with the university of Chicago in 1901, offering a series of courses in social welfare under the extension Department formalized in 1908 with the incorporation of Chicago school of civics and philanthropy, that became forerunner for the schools of social service administration .

World war I and great depression added stimulus to more formal education for those who would provide leadership in administering social service program. In early years social welfare administration was not thought as distinct from services and functions. By 1914 a course in administration was established in at least one school of social work with the content being borrowed from adjoining fields.

In 1930's and 35s the cooperative committee in administration was established. Several national agencies such as YWCA and YMCA and family welfare association of America began to set standards and qualification for their administration which gave considerable expansion of social welfare programs of the new deal in 1930's, brought many significant developments in Social welfare administration, both in education and practice.

In 1936 a paper on administration was presented for the future in the national conference of social work which gave specific consideration to the administration process for the first time.

In 1946 at the national conference on social work – a program section on administration was included with such topics for consideration as process of administration, dynamics of leadership, salaries job classification, boards, public relations organized labour and social work civil service.

Johnson (1946) stated administration as an important part of social work since its inception” ...problems of administration are as old as social work. Indeed, the National Conference of Social Work owes its origin to the problems of institutional administration which beset the state boards of charities when they were organised the last quarter of the 19th century. When the representatives of nine states met in New York on May 20, 1874, the first committee appointed was that on uniformity of statistics, a subject on which committee is still meeting....’

Gordon Hamilton 1949 expressed the need for skill building in administration process and community planning’It has been amply demonstrated that neither the business man nor the case worker becomes a good administrator by intuition. Administration is a highly skilled technical process at its best, using the basic philosophy and skill of democratic social work.’

1962 CSWE statement on curriculum stressed three important areas:

- 1) Social welfare policy and services
- 2) Human behavior and the social environment
- 3) Methods of social practice- the methods include casework, group work and community organization with research and administration presented as enabling methods.

Initially administration was not mentioned specifically in the course offering of various schools of social work but as concentration which schools were invited to provide in keeping with generally sound educational guidelines and principles.

In 1962 and 1969 curriculum statements did not emphasize administration as a specific required methodology. Nevertheless these statements provided flexibility and opportunity for emphasis in this area. Administration is included as a possible concentration in the 1982 curriculum policy statement. The guidelines state: Practice Roles and Modes: Practice with individuals, Families and groups, consultation, training, community organization social planning, program planning and development, administration, policy formulation, implementation and analysis and research. By 1977 interest in the social work administration had developed to the extent that a new journal appeared. *Administration in Social Work*, a quarterly devoted to the theory and practice of management and administration in social work and related human services fields. "In 1978 the council on social work education in America issued communication that indicated administration in social work was being given high priority. Many social workers were being hired as social administrators in large social service systems such as state hospitals and state divisions of family services.

Assumptions Involved in Social Welfare Administration

Spencer in the pioneering curriculum study in 1959 suggests that several underlying assumptions should be kept in mind in relation to administration.

- 1) Administration of social agencies is the process of securing and transforming community resources human and financial into a program of community serviced. This process involves active participation of the board, executive, staff and volunteers or constituency in varying degrees.

- 2) Administration in social work is concerned in a major way with enterprise determination, which includes goal formation. This means that the agency itself has the primary responsibility for the creation and control of its own destiny and community planning bodies exercise only a secondary role.
- 3) Administration in social work is concerned in a major way with provisioning of the service. It has to do with the logistics of the program and activities of the particular agency.
- 4) The executive is not a neutral agent. This means that creative leadership is needed in all phases of the agency's operation
- 5) The executive's functions within the agency combine the following:
 - a) to provide a seeing the enterprise as a whole quality, b) to participate in a leadership capacity and policy formulation, c) to delegate coordinate and control the work of others to promote and enhance the work of board and staff, d) to provide for board, staff and community an executive who represents in personal attitudes, abilities and activities a person with whom they can identify positively.
- 6) Administration is involved with the creative use of human resources board staff and volunteers. The social agency is a group enterprise.
- 7) The parts of the enterprise are interrelated and interacting. This principle is basic to the operation of the social agency and means that a part of the executive functions to establish roles.

Relationships, rules and regulations that will produce the optimum of good effects and the minimum of bad effects.

Place of the Method in Social Work

Any method of social work is concerned with promotion of the goals of social work and fully cognizant with the ethics and values of social work profession. As any practice of the methods of social work practice require agency setting for us to achieve the goals of the profession Social work today is utilized in a variety of settings and agencies. Some of the important ones are psychiatric; medical; marriage and family counseling; the school; rehabilitation; corrections; public welfare; workplace; drug abuse; and child welfare. Schools of social work train a student to work in any agency giving him or her the generic understandings, skills and attitude that make it possible to function adequately.

According to Skidmore, many social work educators and practitioners indicate that there are five main social work methods one of which is administration – others consider all under the rubric of problem solving method that encompasses all of the other five, with a focus on understanding and solving problems related to social function and social relationships.

Skidmore considers administration as a significant process—it is in reality a kind of social work practice—the way in which social services take place whereas case work concerns helping an individual or family with social relationships, group work uses the groups as a tool to do the same. Community organization means solving social problems through neighborhood and community action, administration is the process that has to do with running an agency and involves

goals, policies, staff management and evaluation. Effective administration can really make a difference in the delivery of social services.

Skidmore further says that Administration is the method that makes the others possible, the one that helps. Social welfare administration as a method is very much interrelated to other methods of social work practice. Perlman and Gurin consider the agency setting for the planning or the organizing work to have the most powerful influence on facilitation or constraining the social action/activities of the workers.

Friedlander mentions that some of the components associated with community organization have strong similarities with the social welfare administration. The seven components of community organization are:

- 1) the problem or the issue situation
- 2) goals, values and objectives
- 3) strategies, goals and tasks
- 4) socio-political context
- 5) knowledge, theory and resources
- 6) planning, organizing structure
- 7) evaluation –response system.

The components mentioned above are interlinked with social welfare administration. Without goals and objectives, there are no structures for integrating the plans and participation. Task oriented and goal directed activities need an organizational support. Such an organizational support for the provision of welfare services and planning for them is achieved through social welfare administration.

Social welfare administration helps to understand the foundations of social welfare, analyze organizational, local, state, national and international issues in social welfare policy and social service delivery. Analyze and apply the results of policy research relevant to social service delivery, understand and demonstrate policy practice skill in regard to economic, political, and organizational systems and use them to influence formulate and advocate for policy consistent with social work values and identify financial, organizational, administrative and planning processes required to deliver social services.

Social workers don't pick and choose what problems and issues they would like to address. They see a problem even a very difficult problem, and try to help people solve it. They must prepare themselves to help people with individualized personal problems on the one hand and very broad problems that affect whole organizations and communities on the other.

Generalist social work provides a contemporary approach for meeting the purpose of social work. This view moves beyond the confines of individually focused practice to the expansive sphere of intervention with multi person systems. Broadly defined, generalist social work considers the interplay of personal and collective issues and works with a variety of human systems- societies, communities, neighborhoods; complex organisations; groups informal groups, families and individual to create changes which maximize social functioning.

Generalist social work practice requires the worker both to be able to explain human behaviors and to decide on courses of intervention to improve social functioning. The paradigm assists the practitioner to continually assess behavior across the micro, mezzo and macro systems and to understand the tremendous

forces that are brought to bear on the individual by these systems. The paradigm also utilizes the notion of systems theory, which recognizes the continual interaction of the systems and helps the worker understand the constant reconfiguration of the systems.

Since the generalist social worker must work with the micro, mezzo and macro systems, it is important that each new social worker be grounded in the traditional social work methods. The rich history and methodology of social work practice with individuals, groups and communities should be understood by the generalist social work practitioner. In addition to the three traditional methods the social work profession has always been interested in the methodology of administration. Because social work requires knowledge of the interaction of the individual with various systems as well as the organization of services required for meeting the needs of the client groups.

Welfare provisioning, their rationale, their efficient organization for meeting client needs effectively is thus *sin-qua non* with social work profession. This requires that social work methods have to be seen in an integrated manner. Thus dealing with an individual, a variety of methods needs to be used. Casework for understanding the individual's particular social position, his/her motivations, as well as vulnerabilities, and dealing with institutional and other factors affecting the vulnerabilities, improving institutional and organizational responses, making them more sensitive to the needs of the client, all are part of the profession.

Scope and Relevance

In the context of the present day social problems the size of welfare services and a large number of organizations make administration very important.

Social welfare services are increasingly becoming complex. There is a need for people who care and competent in terms of knowledge, abilities and skills in administration for effective service delivery. Administrative efficiency is required. Administration of huge social welfare programs is complicated and important and the training of persons in the art and skill for administration especially geared to the administration of required services is an extremely important and significant contribution.

Usefulness of studying administration - 3 major goals CSWE identified that:

- 1) all students should have some knowledge concerning administration to use in their direct entry positions
- 2) all students should have enough knowledge of administration to allow them to move from direct practice into later administrative position
- 3) students choosing to specialize in administration should acquire enough knowledge and skills to allow their entry positions to be in administration.

Social welfare administration is to deal with areas of management and human relations in the social work arena. The scope has expanded tremendously with both the government and voluntary organizations engaged in welfare activities.

Conclusion

Administration is as old as human society. Social welfare measures evolved in course of time. Social welfare and development agencies employ professionals to plan, organize, implement and evaluate social welfare programmes. Social welfare administration has been

viewed as an important and essential component of professional social work. That is why it has been given an important place as one of the methods of social work. In some of the schools of social work, social welfare administration is taught as a specialized course. In this chapter we have presented the definition, the history and the place of social welfare administration in social work. We have also presented the scope and relevance of social welfare administration and its assumptions.

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Generalist Practice

* Mohd. Shahid

Introduction

Generalist social work is described by *The Encyclopedia of Social Work* as:

- 1) Having focus that is equally attentive to person and environment,
- 2) Involving a process that begins with the unique situation of the client system, then selects the most appropriate theories to explain the situation, and finally applies suitable intervention strategies, and
- 3) Including a commitment to maximizing humanism, democracy and client empowerment when carrying out practice activities.

Johnson, et al. (1998:1), describes generalist practice as “requiring that the social worker assess the situation with the client and decide which system or need is the appropriate unit of attention, or focus of work, for the change effort. As the unit of attention may be an individual, a family, a small group, an agency or organization, or a community, the generalist approach emphasizes knowledge that can be applied to a variety of systems”.

The theoretical underpinnings of this approach were the general systems theory and the ecological approach. Both these theories will be discussed briefly below.

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Even though the introduction of general systems theory (GST) was made as early as 1940, it was only in the 1970's that a marked increase in its application to social work occurred (Pincus & Minahan, 1973). The late 1970's and 1980's saw the development of the ecological and life models that utilize the ideas of GST. GST provided an alternative to the medical model and contributed greatly to the person in environment model.

General Systems Theory

A system is an entity in which more physical and mental energy is exchanged within its boundaries than across them. A family unit or a small group is an example in social work. If the family rules are strict and they don't permit much interaction with neighbors or community then the boundary is closed and energy is not passed through it. If the family is open to communication and exchange of help with the community and friends, then the boundary is open and there is free flow of energy through the boundary. This creates the feedback loop when the family takes the help of a community member (input), makes use of the help (processes the input) and reciprocates to the community in some kind (output). The mutual helping process keeps the family system in a stable state (or homeostasis).

The permeability of the boundary, or the degree to which it permits information of energy to pass through, determines the amount of interchange across the boundaries, making a system open or closed. The energy (information or resources) fed through the boundary into the system (as input) is used within and energy passes out of the system, impacting the environment (output). Open systems gather information about the system which is fed back into the system as input to

guide the operation of the system. The tendency of the system to use its own energy to keep going is entropy. The system tries to maintain a steady state or homeostasis despite changes in parts of the system that may affect the whole system. GST assumes that the whole system is greater than the sum of its parts.

It has alerted social workers to alternative ways of achieving the same goal (equi- and multi-finality) and places changing the environment in the forefront of practice rather than changing the individual alone. GST avoids linear, deterministic cause-effect explanations of behavior and social phenomena because different systems are affected in wide variety of ways. It is integrated (Pincus & Minahan, 1973) and has a holistic perspective. Social workers choose the theory and method that is best suited to the situation and are not partial to any particular one. The client has the advantage of the workers' wide repertoire of knowledge with different theories, models and values. Social workers are involved in both individual change and social policy or social action. A generalist should be well grounded in GST (Zastrow, 1995).

However, there were problems associated with the GST. It does not explain why things happen or why connections exist. According to Germain (1979), it is not prescriptive, in that GST does not give directions on what is to be done, where, or how to affect systems. The effects of intervention are difficult to control because one does not know how interventions affect the system and these (systems) impact others in turn. It assumes that all parts of the system are needed to maintain stability. It is not always true that one part affects the others in practice. Every aspect of the theory may not be relevant. GST also assumes that homeostasis is desirable (and that conflict is less

desirable), even though change can be positive and indicate growth. Feedback implies slow change and radical change is not dealt with. Entropy and survival are concepts suited to the physical and biological systems. In social systems, survival may not always be the desired outcome. The concepts of GST are complex and technical.

Ecological Systems Theory: The Life Model

GST is also critiqued as oversimplifying the person and environment by placing everything on the same level regardless of whether it is a single-celled organism or a complex high order system. This reductionism and the complexity of the GST led social workers to incorporate ecology to form the ecosystems perspective in social work. Germain and Gitterman's (1980) Ecological Systems theory proposes the life model. It parallels ego psychology and its focus is on environment, action, self-management, and identity.

There is a reciprocal adaptation between the people and their environment. The environment changes the individual and the individual makes an impact on the environment. The constant adaptation of the people with their environment either reduces or enhances the good fit (between individuals and their environments). Living systems maintain a good fit with the environment by taking in appropriate inputs. When the smooth balance is upset due to stress, problems result and upset the homeostasis or equilibrium of the system. Stress could occur due to many reasons:

- 1) Changes in the developmental stages of life and adjustment to new status and roles.

- 2) Problems in the environment due to inequality, unresponsive organizations or injustice.
- 3) Interpersonal pressures due to exploitation, over-expectation of roles or personality conflicts.

The life model emphasizes that all stresses need not negatively impact the individual. The importance is given to strengthening the individuals' adaptive skills and defenses to control the environment and influence it to be more conducive to the good fit. The individuals' perception of the problem and cause is considered to be important. Sometimes the perception of a situation may seem to be a problem when in reality it may not be so. There may be stresses in any of the three areas or more than one area simultaneously.

The Helping Process in the Life Model

The relationship between the empathetic social worker and the client is a transaction that is compounded by the transactions brought in by each party. Transactional problems may arise in some areas between the social worker and the client. Social definitions of role and status might make the client feel inferior to or of lower status because the client receives services. The functions and structure of the agency may involve politics that may affect the client. Professional code or policies could affect the client worker relationship.

During the initial phase, the social worker tries to get a theoretical understanding of the problem and builds a relationship with the client. An objective evaluation is made of the clients' responses and an agreement is reached between the social worker and the client to go ahead with the helping process. The problems are prioritized and the resources are identified. The timeline for solving the problem is chalked out with the client's involvement.

The middle or ongoing phase deals with stresses in any of the three areas mentioned before. Transitions in the developmental stages may not be anticipated and cause a problem. The roles associated with the change in status may be too much for the client to handle. Society, organizations or institutions may have high expectations of the client which cannot be met. Events not foreseen like a crisis could very well cause stress. The social worker may be a facilitator, teacher or enabler while empowering the client to deal with the stresses and strengthening the adaptive mechanisms.

Natural or man-made physical environment, political, economic or social structure or the attitudes of organizations may be or perceived to be obstacles in the good fit. The social worker uses mediation, advocacy and organization skills to enable the client access the environment for any input necessary. The social worker works with the families, groups and communities when the interpersonal relationships and communication between them and the client are not conducive to the good fit.

The termination phase may be fraught with separation anxiety, and needs preparation. The time for terminating the helping process is determined by the type of services rendered completion of the program or treatment, or the amount of time that was predetermined for the helping process. Problems in separation could arise because of previous experience with loss or separation, type of service (intense case work) or the relationship of social worker with the client (i.e. becoming "parental" rather than remaining professional). Good preparation that plans for working through the end stages of the relationship, denial, sadness or loss would minimize the trauma of

termination. Proper evaluation of the helping process would highlight the strengths of the helping process while cautioning against bad judgment calls for decisions.

The systems theory and the ecological approach have both contributed greatly to the development of social work and to the development of the generalist approach. The focus of the generalist practice lies in defining the knowledge, values, skills, purpose, sanction and method of social work which will be discussed below.

GST, Ecological Theory, the Life Model and the International Definition of Social Work

Acknowledging that the world had changed technologically, politically, economically and culturally, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) together adopted a joint international definition of social work (agreed on by IFSW in 2000) to define the boundaries, knowledge, values and skills of social work so that the social work structure would suit its complex, changing environment (Hare, 2004).

The definition focused on the person-in-environment, reinforcing the concept that the client is influenced by the environment and at the same time is changing it to some degree. The intervention concentrates on the interface between the person and environment or at either end. The other component of the definition addresses social change at the macro level (families, large groups and societies) and individual change at the micro level (individuals).

This holistic approach draws from general systems theory. The focus is on wholeness, integration of parts and the interplay between the parts (Meyer, 1995).

The problems of GST led to the focus on the Ecological theory and adoption of the life model. The generalist practice of today has its roots in all the theories and models discussed above. Drawing on what has worked, the IFSW definition of social work focuses on the person and the environment. This ensures that the social worker should be trained in all methods of social work in order to be able to work at either end (person or environment) or at the interface. This is why the generalist practice has come to stay and is taught in schools of social work.

Generalist Practice

Every social worker works at various levels (with individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations and larger communities) at different times in their helping process. The U.S. Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) stipulates that all social work programs should train their students in generalist social work. The training enables the social worker to assess and intervene at various levels, drawing on a wide repertoire of skills and methods.

The Schatz-Jenkins-Sheafor model characterizes the generalist perspective as:

- a) informed by socio-behavioral and ecosystems knowledge,
- b) including ideologies of democracy, humanism, and empowerment,
- c) requiring an open approach to the practice situation theoretically and methodologically,
- d) focusing on the problem and is client-centered,
- e) using direct or indirect interventions, and
- f) taking a perspective based on research.

Generalist Foundation

Social work has a generic foundation of knowledge of social work profession, values, skills, purpose and sensitivity to diversity. According to Morales and Sheafor (1995), at the initial generalist level, the social worker with the generalist foundation, uses the generalist perspective to:

- a) engage in effective interpersonal helping
- b) manage change processes
- c) use appropriate multilevel methods of intervention
- d) intervene in different sized systems as determined by the practice situations
- e) perform various roles
- f) assess and evaluate ones own practice, and
- g) function successfully within the agency.

The generalist practitioner performs various roles (facilitator, advocate, educator, broker, enabler or/and mediator) and tasks (assessment, evaluation, referral or/and supervision) within systems and person-in-the-environment framework (or the ecological model) requiring intervention with more than one system (Hull, 1990). The name ecological suggests that there is adaptation and relationship between organisms and their environments.

Skills needed for social work practice (according to the CSWE curriculum policy statement and global standards suggested by IFSW and the IASSW)

- Defining issues.
- Practice skills in collecting and assessing data.

- Planning and contracting.
- Identifying alternative interventions for the purposes of social support, developmental, protective, preventive, and/or therapeutic interventions.
- Selecting and implementing appropriate courses of action to confront inequality, social, political, and economic injustices.
- Using appropriate and ethical research to monitor and evaluate outcomes.
- Applying appropriate research-based knowledge and technological advances.
- Termination.
- Application of social work values, ethical principles, knowledge and skills to promote care mutual respect and responsibility among members of a society.
- Use of social work research skills and critical appreciation of research in social work practice.

Variety of Roles Played by a Social Worker

A generalist social worker uses various methods in helping individuals, groups, families and communities. Different levels of practice require various roles. Each client brings in a specific situation that calls for a unique method or blend of methods. These methods require special roles to be taken on by the social worker. The generalist social worker may take on a particular role or adopt many roles, depending on the problem in hand and solution that are proposed. The following are some roles that a social worker adopts (Zastrow, 1995):

- An enabler works with individuals and groups to identify their needs, problems, resources and helps them to choose appropriate solutions.
- A broker's role is to connect clients in need to the resources in the community and make them aware of available services.
- An advocate works exclusively on behalf of the individual or group he is serving. Without being aggressive an advocate fights for his client who is facing apathetic or openly hostile institution or services.
- The activist's role is to initiate or bring about change in social injustice, inequity, or deprivation. An activist would employ conflict, confrontation, and negotiation techniques.
- Mediators work with individuals and groups involved in disputes to reconcile differences, compromise, and resolve problems. A mediator does not take sides and is neutral.
- A negotiator works for one side of parties who are in conflict. The negotiator brings together those who are in conflict to bargain compromise and find an agreeable solution.
- The initiator brings to light an existing, or a potential problem. This role needs to be followed up with other work to resolve the problem that is brought to the attention of concerned parties.
- A coordinator brings together various components in an organized manner to meet specific needs of individuals and groups. A social worker works as a case manager to avoid complication and duplication of services xc

- The researcher role is one that every social worker plays while doing literature searches on topics of interest and evaluating outcomes of practice, programs, and needs of clients.
- As a group facilitator the social worker is a leader of a group that could be educational, self-help, sensitivity, family or other therapy group.
- The public speaker role is adopted by social workers when they speak to various groups in schools and other organizations. This communicates knowledge of services and interprets problems to the groups.

Relevance of Generalist Practice in India

In India, the students are taught the generic course content in the first year of some of the masters programs on the basic premise that a social worker needs to be able to manage various types of situations, playing different roles and adopting appropriate methods. The second year would allow the students to choose their specialization area. Even while working in a specialized center, the social worker may encounter problems that require a generalist practice approach.

India is rich in diversity with regard to religion, language, lifestyle, geography, castes, and culture. It would be difficult to have one approach to dealing with clients from different parts of India. It is therefore even more important to have a basic generalist foundation and use specialized techniques where appropriate. For example, a woman may not be forthcoming with her problems in marital therapy (because of her submissiveness in the presence of her husband) but be more comfortable in a group of women. A social worker with a generalist foundation would be able to apply various methods, skills and values

appropriate to different situations. The social worker can use marital therapy techniques with the couple, try individual therapy with the woman and if needed group work skills with women dealing with abuse. Only a generalist social worker can use various methods. A social worker trained in specialist techniques would find it difficult to switch methods when needed.

A generalist social worker would be sensitive to different cultures and be able to approach with varied skills. In families where the young girl child is given up to the temple in prostitution (devadasi system) a social worker would work as a social activist in promoting the rights of the girl child at the macro level. The social worker would also have to work with the family with sensitivity to the cultural needs. A generalist social worker also works with the girl child at the individual level.

Young girls in India exist to work for the parents and brothers. Wives live for the husbands, their families and the children. The elderly women still do as much as they can for their children. The lower status of girls and women is an important aspect that is not challenged in a problem situation. While a woman can be empowered subtly, an open confrontation by the generalist social worker would not be acceptable.

A student of social work needs to have different skills to work with clients in urban areas and rural settings. A generalist social worker from an urban setting would have to draw on a different repertoire of skills when working with clients in a village. One cannot be too direct with the men in the village. The social worker may fare better in working with existing groups in the village (mahila mandal /women's' group and Balawadi/ pre-school.

The student would have to acknowledge personal prejudices while working in an urban slum. A hut dweller may have a television set at home but insist that he has no money for health care or to buy school text books. If the student gives in to the prejudice that the hut dweller is wasting his money on conspicuous materials (while he should be taking care of his health), then the social worker may be directive and try to change the client's attitude (and the client may be resistant to change). On the other hand if the student understands his/her own bias, and the client's right to determine his priorities, then the helping process may be beneficial to the client.

Conclusion

Social workers bring about change in various systems by working with individuals to communities (Sallee, 2003). Every social worker is involved as a change agent in working with individuals, groups, families and organizations. Practicing social workers know that one cannot exclusively be a caseworker, group worker or a community organizer. Borrowing from the systems theory and ecological approach and focusing on the person-in-environment, the social worker needs to have the capacity (foundation, skills and values) and the willingness to assume different roles, and intervene at various levels. The generalist practice method has provided a legitimate framework for the inclusion of empirical knowledge and theoretical concepts from other disciplines to be incorporated into the social work education process (Leslie & Cassano, 2003). The generalist approach is a move in this direction (Sallee, 2003). The generalist approach has revolutionized social work education at the baccalaureate level.

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