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Concepts and Dynamics of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in Indian Context

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Introduction

Self help and mutual aid are the foundational principles of social work. Professional social work evolved in the West where self help groups were mainly used for addressing psycho-social issues. It was used to mainly to provide emotional support and train people through groups. However in developing countries SHGs began to be used for empowerment and economic development. Here we focus on those SHGs, which are used for these purposes.

SHGs are being increasingly used developmental programmes of government and NGOs. A number of strategies were used to alleviate the problem of poverty by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Some of them were partially successful and others were failures. Community based approaches, family based approaches and individual based approaches were used. However each of these strategies had its limitations. For example, in the community development programmes the elite and already well off gained at the expense of the poor thereby reducing the effectiveness of the programmes. Similarly individual based programmes imposed conditions

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on the beneficiaries that could not be regulated by the department and banks. Institutional constraints like the corruption and red tape in the government also remained which prevented the effective implementation of the programmes. Group based approaches like Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) were also used occasionally, but they did not have the wide spread recognition that they have today. SHGs have now become an integral part of development strategy of governmental as well as non-governmental organizations.

SHGs grew out of the developmental experiences of the various stakeholders concerned in the process- the beneficiaries, banks (creditors) and the government. We will see in the sections below the advantages of using SHGs for all these stakeholders. The wide spread use of SHGs for empowering people especially women, has upto a large extent proved its worth. But there are also criticisms of SHGs as a tool for development and we will look at them too.

Concept of SHGs

According to the Reserve Bank of India

Self-Help Group (SHG) is a registered or unregistered group of micro entrepreneurs having homogeneous social and economic background voluntarily, coming together to save small amounts regularly, to mutually agree to contribute to a common fund and to meet their emergency needs on mutual help basis. The group members use collective wisdom and peer pressure to ensure proper end-use of credit and timely repayment thereof. In fact, peer pressure has been recognized as an effective substitute for collateral. (Reserve Bank of India, FAQs).

Malcolm Harper has defined SHGs as groups of women whose primary purpose is to save and then to take loans, initially from their own funds but eventually from a bank.

Its main advantages are

An economically poor individual gain strength as part of a group. Besides, financing through SHGs reduces transaction costs for both lenders and borrowers. While lenders have to handle only a single SHG account instead of a large number of small-sized individual accounts, borrowers as part of a SHG cut down expenses on travel (to and from the branch and other places) for completing paper work and on the loss of workdays in canvassing for loans (RBI, FAQ)

But this definition is rather limited in as it views SHGs merely as an instrument of providing credit to the poor. SHGs are now viewed as having a role in empowering the whole community through the efforts of the members. SHGs members are credited with organizing successfully the community to ban arrack in AP, fighting against child marriage and protecting forests. Supporters of SHGs attribute the success of many community initiatives to the leadership provided by conscious members of the SHGs. Therefore the definition though useful does not fully satisfy our purpose.

Characteristics of SHGs

SHGs consist of group members, male or female who come together and form a group. Often it is an outside agency, a government agency or a NGO that encourage the individuals to form this group. The group has to be formed carefully as an unplanned group will face problem and in all probability will terminate leading to frustration in the members.

Ideal characteristics of SHGs

1) Number of group members is between 8-15. Ideally the number is upto 12.

2) Homogeneity or similarity in social background

- Group members are mostly women though there exist men's groups also.

- Same sub caste or caste group. Members existing solidarity helps increase group unity and prevent factions in the group

- Economically they belonging to the same class and do not have major difference in income levels

- Living close by; preferably within walking distance

- The group has an advantage if all members belong to Below Poverty Line (BPL) Category. The government gives subsidy to the groups, which increases the amount of revolving capital of the group and the morale of the group.

3) Members get along in a group and are ready to take instructions from group leaders.

4) Members are able to contribute the fixed amount of money to the SHGs.

5) Decisions regarding the group are made through democratic and participatory methods by the members.

6) After a period of time the SHG can be registered (many SHGs remain unregistered) and a bank account started which will formalize the functioning of the SHGs. Bye laws and rules are framed which regulates the functioning of the SHGs

7) The group also elects a group president, secretary and treasurer with prescribed roles for each post.

Process of Forming SHGs

Any group goes through certain stages of development from the beginning to the end. According to the widely applied

theory of group development advocated by Tucker the stages that group are (1) Forming (2) Storming (3) Norming (4) Performing and (5) Adjourning. The pace at which the group moves from one stage to another is based on number of factors that exist in the group. Hence homogeneous groups are preferred over heterogeneous groups; member who is previously known to each other is preferred over persons who are unknown; difficult persons are avoided. The length and effectiveness of the group will depend largely on qualities of the members. Often government and NGOs have set targets for their staff to initiate SHGs which results in poor quality of groups which either break into smaller groups or simply close.

First Stage

Government, NGOs or Banks, forms SHGs. Often employees or volunteers from any one organization go to the rural community or to urban slum community. They interact with the community women and explain to them the advantages of forming SHGs. It is pointed out to the women they often have to borrow money for emergencies or for investing in their economic activities. They usually approach the local moneylenders for their requirements who charge exorbitant rates for their loans. A 10 percent per month interest rate , which works out to 120 percent per year, is common. Further, the first month interest is deducted from the principle itself.

In course of time the principle and the interest become a large amount, which the debtor is unable to repay. Consequently she has to part a precious asset like land or jewelry or take another loan to settle the previous loan. Either way he has been pushed further into debt and poverty. People are very familiar with the pattern and understand the situation very easily. A skilled communicator will often ask questions regarding their

financial situation to the community members who would then tell her of their problems regarding money. Then the group worker will present the formation of SHGs as a solution to the problems. She will list the advantages of forming SHGs which are to promote savings, access cheaper credit and ensure better returns on the investment. The group worker will also tell how the SHGs can be linked to the bank and if all members are BPL can get subsidy (need not be returned).

People will generally have their doubts. Doubts can be related to the functioning of SHGs- Who will keep the money collected from the members? Who will prepare the accounts? Who will deposit the money in the bank? Who will decide who should be given the loan? Who will settle disputes between the members? Is there is a danger of losing money? What if the person who has taken loan does not return the amount? What options will the SHGs have to recover the amount? Can the members perform the functions needed for SHGs. Will all members cooperate? Will they attend the meetings and deposit the contributions regularly? What if due to genuine reasons members are unable to attend or deposit the amount?

The animator will answer the questions by saying that the group members can perform the required tasks by themselves. If needed they will be trained to conduct meetings, maintain accounts and deposit money in the bank. Attendance and depositing money is compulsory and fines will be imposed on members who are absent for the meetings or do not deposit their contributions on time. The animator will explain that these rules and regulations are needed for the proper functioning of the groups and they are applicable for all. Instances of successful functioning of SHGs and their benefits to the members are cited to boost the confidence of the members.

If the community's members are convinced and agree, one or more, groups are formed in the village. Usually it will take one to two months with regular weekly visits to the community to form the SHGs. If the animator is known to the community or is introduced by an influential person, the formation of SHGs may be quicker and easier. In some communities people might have had a bitter experience with savings and credit programme in which many of them losing their money to unscrupulous persons. The animator would have to work harder to persuade people to trust her.

Selection of members is based on the criteria, which has been mentioned before. Homogeneity in caste, class and social background; proximity; financial conditions are some of the criteria used. Close relatives cannot be members of the same group- mothers and daughters and mother in laws and daughters and sister-in laws are not allowed to be part of the same group.

Usually once groups are formed, members are encouraged to name it. The name can be of a flower like rose or name of the place or even a name of the member. Members are then shown how to perform these tasks- begin the meetings, take attendance, conduct the proceedings, maintain accounts, write the minutes of the meetings, get signatures/thumb impressions of the members, take decisions regarding the group functioning and close the meetings. Thereafter the members are ready to take responsibility of the group's meetings. Meetings are held every week or at least every month.

The following documents are needed (1) Minutes book in which the proceedings of the meeting are recorded. (2) Savings and loan register where the amount is recorded. (3) Weekly registers (4) Members passbook where the individual's saving and loans are recorded.

Some of rules and regulations that will have to be agreed upon are the following:

1) Venue and time of meeting are fixed which is convenient to all members

2) Penalties for non-attendance and late coming

3) Agreement on amount of saving for each member

4) Procedure for giving small loans to each other, interest rates and repayment schedule

5) Methods to take decisions regarding loans from banks and repayment

6) Procedure for taking other decisions regarding the group

A typical group meeting will start at the appointed time of the week. The place of the meeting can be the house of the members, the school building or the office of the e NGO or any other place, which is convenient to the members. At the appointed time the meeting begins. Members are expected to come themselves not send their children or anybody else. Any one coming late is usually fined a nominal fee, which is added to the common pool. However individuals with valid reasons are exempted- sickness to self, children or close relatives and being out of station are examples. But the group members decide whether the reason is genuine or not.

Once the members are all present, a song may be sung especially if a guest is present. Attendance is taken in the attendance register and then the contributions are taken from all members. The amounts are recorded in their personal passbook and in the accounts register. The secretary writes down the minutes and treasurer updates the accounts register. Then matters of common interest may be discussed. A member may want a loan for personal

reason or for making investments in a new enterprise. She may request for a loan of Rs.1000 from the common fund. Members have to decide whether the loan can be given or be refused. They will have to be taken into consideration the genuineness of the reason for requesting the loan, the capacity of the member to return the loan, past performance of the member in repaying loans, amount available with group and other factors. At times there may be more than one member demanding loan and the group has to decide to whom the loan will be given. Group members are also encouraged to discuss common problems facing the community and steps needed to address the problem. For example, the anganwadi needs a new worker and group may decide to present a petition to the panchayat. Different responsibilities may be distributed to the group members. All these discussions are recorded in the minutes book. If no group member can write then an outsider is requested to write the minutes of the meetings.

There are number of sources for conflict at this stage- members don't understand why they have to pay fine when they break the group rules especially when it is said that it their group; members are offended by the actions and comments of others; members are offended when their demand for loans are rejected by the group; factions; members feel that they are investing too much time for too little. There have been also instances where conflicts outside the group have adversely affected the functioning of the group.

The group worker usually settles these conflicts by speaking to the members and convincing them of the importance of the following the rules and staying in the group. The degree of the success of these efforts depends on the nature of rapport between the group worker and the members.

Second Stage

If the group survives the earlier phase then it goes to the next phase. Meetings are held regularly and members would accept the rules and regulations and agree that it is in advantageous for them. Loans should be taken and repayments done on time. The account books and passbooks are updated regularly. Conflicts are settled without outside help.

After two to three meetings the group can start a saving bank account with the bank. But usually it takes more time than that as the members must get used to the functioning of the SHG and build their confidence. Starting the account in the bank, which forms the first step towards accessing loans, is called SHG- Bank Linkage. The group members have to collectively pass a resolution to link their SHG with the Bank and apply for opening of the account. Three members should be authorized to operate the account and two of them can operate the account. A copy of the rules and regulations of the SHGs has to be submitted to the bank. Usually the secretary and treasure operate the group account and from then on the periodical collections of the group are deposited with bank within two days of the meeting. The updated passbook is presented to the group members in the next meeting.

The amount deposited with the Bank grows with the increase in group deposits and also the interests on the loans that the members have taken.

Once the SHG has been in existence for a period of time banks decide whether they are ready to get loans. The time period differ from bank to bank. For example Andhra Bank stipulates that the group should have been in active existence for at least a period of six months.

The bank will provide loans to the group as a whole not to individuals. The SHG is taken as entity and members serve as "guarantors". The amount of the first loan can be upto four times the amount of saving done by the group. The loan amount becomes part of the revolving fund from which members can take loan on an individual basis. Alternatively the group can collectively start an income generation programme. After the loan is returned by the members they can take another loan which is six times the saving of the SHG and the after its repayment the loan amount can be upto eight times the savings.

But first the heath of the SHG is assessed and seen whether it meets the criteria set by the bank to avail loan facilities. Fulfilling the criteria mean that the SHGs enjoys good heath and will repay the loans - the main concern of the lender.

The suggested criteria is given below-

Sr. No.	Factors to be checked	Very good	Good	Unsatisfactory
1	Group Size	15 to 20	10 to 15	Less than 10
2	Type of members	Only very poor members	2 or 3 poor members	Many not poor members
3	Number of meeting	Four meetings a month	Two meetings in a month	Less than two meetings in a month
4	Timings of meeting	Night or after 6 pm	Morning between 7 to 9 am	Other timings
5	Attendance of members	More than 90%	70 to 90%	Less than 70%
6	Participation of members	Very high level	Medium level	Low level
7	Savings collection withing the group every month	Four times	Three times	Less than three times

8	Amount to be saved	Fixed amount	Varying amount	——
9.	Interest on internal loan	Depending upon purpose	24 to 36%	More than 36%
10	Utilisation of Savings	Fully used for Loaning to members	Partly used for Loaning to members	Poor utilisation
11.	Loan recoveries	More than 90%	70 to 90%	Less than 70%
12	Maintenance of books	All books are regularly	Most important registers maintained minutes, savings, loans, etc.) are maintained	Irregular in maintaining and recording
13	Accumulated savings	More than Rs. 5000/-	Rs.3000-5000/-	Less than Rs.3000/-
14.	Knowledge of the Rules of the SHGs	Known to all	———	Not known to all
15	Education level	More than 20% of members can read and write		Less than 20 per cent know to read and write
16	Knowledge of Govt.	All are aware of Govt.	Most of the members know	No one knows programs

(**Source:** A Handbook on forming self-help groups, NABARD

Another facility for groups who meet the criteria and are formed by BPL members is subsidy. Subsidy by the government, which need not be repaid, ranges from Rs. 20,000 to Rs.100,000.

The savings of the members, subsidies if any received from the government, the interest on loans and bank loan are the financial assets of the SHG. The growth of the deposit

and growth of lending is the growth of the Self Help Group. As the amount grows so will the loans which can be given to the members. The objective would reach if the process continues....

Third stage

Once the group has stabilized itself then it should ideally become a people's institution. However even though activities other than collection and giving loans to members are encouraged many SHG limit themselves to doing only that.

There are example of NGOs initiated SHGs encourage training programmes for the members like literacy classes, hygiene classes etc.

There have been instances when SHGs members have come together and demanded action from the authorities and succeeded in persuading them to do so. Example SHG members led a movement demanding the implementation of prohibition in the state which was accepted by the government

Creating federation of SHGs is a strategy to strengthen SHGs that has been tried out in some places. SHGs are grouped into clusters and cluster level association for the SHGs are started and many CLAs form a federation. Thus it enables the SHG members of a small group to become a part of the larger group and function as a pressure group.

Advantages of SHGs

The evolution of SHGs in India can be traced to the efforts of NGOs and governmental organizations to provide credit to the poor. SHGs proved to be very useful for all stakeholders.

Advantages for the people

1) SHGs provide cheap credit to the poor

Credit - plays an important role in the lives of the poor as it does in the lives of others. Credit is accessed for investing in any enterprise however large or small it may be. Rarely does even the biggest entrepreneur have enough money to start her business.

Credit can be accessesed in different ways. She usually has to access credit from any of the following sources-identify partners to invest, borrow money from banks and other lending institutions, borrow from non institutional lenders like money lenders, raise money from the public directly in form of shares and debentures. Each of them has weakness and strengths. However the sources for the credit for the poor is limited.

The poor hesitate to go to the institutional lenders. They prefer to go to the moneylenders and pawn brokers who charge them very high interest rate. But they are preferred as the credit they provide is quick and transaction costs low. Studies show that the poor often pay higher interest rates than the rich. Unfortunately they do not have many options and are forced to pay higher costs.

SHGs are promoted as sources for timely, cheap and viable credit. SHGs encourage regular savings as every member has to contribute an agreed upon amount of money every week. SHGs encourage disciplined borrowing and repayments. Group makes decisions as to whom to lend money and how it will be repaid. Defaulters are pressurized by group members to return the loans with interests. **Group pressure is the key to the success of SHGs.** Thus repayment rates in SHGs are comparatively better than in banks.

The transaction costs are low as the cost traveling; filling forms, producing necessary documents needed to apply for the loan in bank is not needed. The group members will assess the need of the member and provide the loan with minimal formalities.

SHGs charge interest, which are below that of the money lenders thus increasing the access to the poor to credit. The interest paid is also returned to the group common fund which ensures that no outside agency benefits.

Bank-SHGs linkage enables the group to take loans from the bank with group as collateral which means increased volume of credit available to the members.

SHGs also start new group business ventures that can increase their incomes.

Participation in SHGs with regular meetings, maintaining accounts interacting with bank officials and others improves the confidence of the members leading to women's empowerment. Often participation in the SHG related activities provides the only opportunity for many rural women to work without male interference and domination.

Increased income and participation leads to improved status in the family and the community. It is observed that awareness levels of the SHGs members are found to be higher than non-SHGs members.

Advantages to the Institutional Lenders

Lending to the poor has been part of government policy for many years. In fact this was an important reason for bank nationalisation in 1969 and again in 1980. However banks are reluctant to advance credit to the poor. Some of the important reasons are given below-

The poor have minimal assets which often cannot be used as security or a guarantee against a loan from the lending institutions. Hence they are not considered credit worthy and there is great reluctance to extend credit to the poor. Poor people including hawkers and micro entrepreneurs need credit but numerous problems making it difficult for them to access credit. The non-availability of credit is major barrier in the development of the poor in India.

Secondly bankers and institutional lenders are not trained to deal with small and marginal depositors. Many of them are illiterate or semi literate and require a lot of assistance for successful interaction.

Thirdly, transactions costs are high for the bank if it has to deal individually with small and marginal depositors and borrowers. These depositors deposit small amounts which involves a lot of paper work.

Fourthly recovery rates are poor as many borrowers default on their payments and it is too costly for the bank to take efforts to recover small loans through the legal and other options available

All these conditions lead to a number of problems for the lenders leading to-

Reduction of profitability; reduced viability; administered interests and lending costs leading to reduced margins; Poor monitoring and poor loan recovery (Karmakar,1999)

SHGs resolve many of the problems of the creditor-

1) Repayment rates are high and cheaper as group pressure ensures most loans are repaid.

2) Many small deposits are accumulated so the numbers of depositors grow without increased burden on the services of the bank.

3) The social function of the Bank is fulfilled.

Advantages to the Government

Decades of government sponsored poverty alleviation programmes have not been very successful. The credit-based programmes of the government have not been very successful. These programme have had major problems-identification of beneficiaries and subsequent recovery of loans. Beneficiaries default on their repayment and misuse the credit for non-productive purposes.

The use of SHGs has become a part of the government strategy for women 's empowerment and poverty alleviation. States governments promote SHGs. They are known by different names-

Impacts of SHGs

Bank-SHG Linkage

From the point of view the lenders the performance of the Bank –SHGs Linkage has been successful. The figure given below indicate this

Performance as on 31 march 2006

Sl.No.   Particulars

1)   No.of SHGs linked 2,238,565

2)   Percentage of women groups in total groups 90%

3)   No.of participating banks : 545

     i)   Commercial Banks 47

     ii)   Regional Rural Banks 158

     iii) Co-operative Banks 340

4)   Bank Branches participating 44,362

5)   No. of States/UTs 31

6)   No. of districts covered 583

7)   No.of Partners 4896

8)   Bank Loan Rs. in billion 113.98

9)   Refinance Rs. in billion 41.60

10)   No.of poor households assisted (in million) 32.98

11)   Average Loan/SHG Rs. 50,917

12)   Model Wise Linkage (Cumulative) (%)

    i)   SHGs formed and financed by Banks 20

    ii) SHGs formed by other agencies but directly financed by banks 74

    iii) SHGs financed by banks using financial intermediaries 6

(Source . *NABARD)*

Impact of SHG on the women

A number of studies have been done on the different aspects of SHGs. studies showed that most of women who are members of SHG belong to the Below Poverty Line (BPL).

1) SHGs and targeting the poor

The aim of SHGs is to assist the poorest of the poor. However there is always opposition in the community and in the family towards efforts to improve their status. Often, since the poorest sections of the society are difficult to organize SHGs are started for the well off.. However studies have shown that upto 51 percent of the members are from poor families(BPL), Many are women belonging to the Schedule Caste community.(EDA Rural system Pvt limited. 2006). Harper (2003) found 77 percent of women in the SHGs he studied are from the SC community.

2) Impact of membership on income

Many studies have shown that income of the members have increased significantly. However some studies also point out that the increase has not been sufficient to bring them above the poverty line.(Swain, Ranjula Bali and Fan Yang Wallentin Eda Rural system Pvt limited; 2006 Tankha, Ajay,). Further it is widely accepted that SHGs have helped to reduce the dependence on the moneylender by making available credit during emergencies and for creation of productive assets. Harper in his study found an increase of 37.5 percent in the assets of families who were members for seven years over those who were members only for three years. He points out that one reason could be the loans obtained from the SHGs. NABARD's evaluation study of 560 members of 223 SHGs linked to banks in 11 states showed that SHG members realized major increases in assets, income and employment. ASSEFA 's study showed 95% of members covered by the study reported increases in annual income and 52% have reported an increase in net worth over Rs. 10,000. These studies confirm that income and assets of families of SHG members have increased.

3) Impact of membership on social status

NABARD evaluation study showed that women members were found to have become more assertive in confronting social evils and problem situations.

Nearly half the poor member households had crossed the poverty line. The social status of women has increased in the family and in the community. (Ajay Tankha). Studies conducted so far have shown that the SHGs membership had a positive impact on the women and society. A major study of 72 SHGs undertaken earlier covering over 1,000 SHG members in Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka (.Harper et al.1998) observed improvement in

members' diet, assets and education. Similarly the EDA study showed thirty percent of the SHGs were active members in community.

4) Impact of SHGs on disaster related activities

Kim Wilson (2002) found that involving SHGs in pre-disaster and post disaster activities reduced the cost of relief and rehabilitation. The reason for this is the close cooperation that the SHGs could work with the community, Panchayat and relief agencies.

5) SHGs promote social capital in society

Social capital has been defined by Robert Putnam (2000) as network of trusts in the society. It has a public face and the private face. The private face means that having more social contacts will benefit the individual. The public face relates to the benefit the society has because of network of trusts existing in society. Putnam (1992) finds a positive correlation between the social capital and good governance. SHGs by their savings and credit activity promote increases social capital in the society.

Criticism of SHGs

SHGs have been criticized as being one more fad in the field of development which while not addressing the core issue of oppression and discrimination tries to solve the problem by providing credit to the poor. One commentator calls the strategy of using the SHGs for development as the last resort of the development planner. All other reformist strategies having failed the success of the Grameen Bank and other NGOs enabled the government and the funding agencies to grasp on to the concept of SHGs. At the first look, SHGs are ideal as it follows the participatory approach and emphasizes on self and mutual aid. But the strategy is meant again to avoid radical

measures that will hurt the interests of the powerful and the rich.

Secondly, SHGs suit well in the strategy of the international institutions like the World bank and other western based aid agencies to make people part of the market as consumers and producers. Critics who are suspicious of the motives of these institutions attribute the growth of SHGs to the furthering of this strategy by these institutions.

Thirdly, the entry of private micro finance institutions (MFIs) into the rural areas has created a confusion in the minds of the people. The aim of MFIs is to create profit for them by providing micro -credit without any security. Unscrupulous characters intending to cheat people run some of these MFIs. To increase the volume of credit they encourage poor women to form groups and assess easy credit. Many of them are do not assess the financial health of the group before the providing credit nor do they prepare the members for handling money. Sometimes they provide more than one loan to the same group without first one being repaid. People fall easy prey to these schemes as getting loans from them is easier and faster. They soon fall into the debt trap. People often mistakenly associate all types of SHGs with MFIs which brings bad name to the latter.

Conclusion

SHGs have become a key component in the developmental programme of the government and the NGOs. It has become the instrument through which the credit; a important prerequisite for development is being reached to the poor. But an important aspect is that SHGs if handled properly is a people's institution, which can play a role in the transformation of the society. Evidence from the field may

not give entire picture as research in same areas may be lacking or is not available in the public domain. However there is no doubt that the SHGs are playing an important role in developing disadvantaged women in urban and rural areas.

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14

Group Work in Community Settings

Joseph Varghese

Introduction

Group work is very useful in the community. We have discussed in detail the most widely used type of groups in the community- the SHGs. In this chapter the other types of groups will be discussed. Any number of natural groups is found in the community. Most of them are spontaneous efforts by the people themselves to control their lives by helping others and getting help from others. Most of them receive no or minimum help from professionals. However they are effective in assisting those who are part of it. The members do no think of their membership in the group as something outside their normal course of life. It is part and parcel of their life. For the poor the groups are crucial part of their livelihood strategies and survival strategies. They borrow money when needed, help building each other homes, take part in joys and sorrows of each other's lives and assist each other in emergency.

Community based groups are based on neighborhood, caste and extended kinship ties. Groups can also be formed on the basis of many different criteria- members may be suffering from the same illness; members may be recovering from alcoholism or drug addiction; etc. One important type of group that is increasingly being important

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are the social action groups that aim at achieving social justice for the disadvantaged. We will discuss the relevance and functions of these groups for the society and for their members. We will also study community-based groups, which serve people with different problems.

Social Action Groups

Social work is not only associated with treatment and delivery of services, it is also involved in challenging discriminating practices and advocating the rights of the marginalized. Right from the days of the settlement movement social work pioneers have aimed at system transformation and social reform. It has been realized that treating individual clients alone will not solve social problems. Social institutions have to be transformed and exploitative structures destroyed. These methods are usually considered part of the domain of the Social work method of Community Organization.

According to Rothman (1968) three models of community organization are- Social Planning Model, Locality Development and Social Action. Though community organization aims at mobilizing the community it is the groups that actually that does much of the work. According to (Staples in Gravin et al, 2004; 346) the "group setting is an ideal access point for most community members to engage in social action. Small groups maximize opportunities for participation in process of discussion, analysis, consciousness raising, decision making and planning". He further says that before every event held in the community, smaller meetings are held for variety of purposes including action research, leadership training, executive decision making, strategic analysis, community education, recruitment, action planning, negotiating, lobbying and evaluation. These tasks done largely in groups determine to large extent the success or failure of the community organization process.

As you know group work groups are divided into two types (1) Treatment group that consists of personality development groups, educational groups, recreational groups, support groups and therapeutic group (2) Tasks groups includes committees and councils. The main purpose of the task groups are to accomplish that tasks or programmes that has been entrusted to it. Social actions groups belong to category of Task groups. It usually consists of a small number of members who may belong to the community or are outsiders to the community or both. They take up an issue that they identify as having an adverse effect on the well being of the members of the community. They identify the causative factors that lead to the problem. Institutions, practices and values that cause the problems are identified. The agent can be the government itself or a government department, police, industries, social groups, organizations whose actions or inactions has lead to the problem. Many times it is the combination of factors that lead to the problems. Government inaction invariably contributes to the problem. The action group believes that the problem can be alleviated if people unite and challenge the powerful and force them to act in public interests. When people participate in the process of decision-making and thereby gain mastery over their lives it is called empowerment.

Empowerment is long process in which people first understand the reality of power structure around. They understand the interconnections between the social structures and how it controls their lives. Pablo Friere calls this process conscientization. They have to get rework on their images. They must stop seeing themselves as passive and powerless. They must begin see themselves as agents of social transformation.

Groups are ideal for this kind of activity. Cox (1991) gives the following reasons (1) Groups facilitate sharing of

experiences which will help describe the reality as they view it themselves (2) Successful cases of overcoming the powerlessness can motivate and inspire others (3) Members discussion can confront each other with their fears and hopes facilitating the consciousness raising (4) Learning with each other increases knowledge of the political dimension.

Social action groups are formed on the basis on the following (1) Geographical area like neighbourhood, community, and people living in close proximity. Since they live close by they are likely to have the same problems and more importantly share a common identity. Common concerns like housing, public utilities environmental issues are then taken up by the action groups. Sometimes the community members are part of formal organizations like resident welfare associations and community based organizations. Again often committees are formed within these organizations to deal with the authorities. (2) Another type of groups is based on the particular issue such as women rights, dalit rights and tribal rights, consumer awareness and rights and land rights. (3) The third type of groups is based on identity like ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and mental or physical disability.

According to Rothman the goal of social action is to bring about a shift in how resources and power is distributed in the society. It is their belief that there is asymmetrical division of power and resources, which leads to the dominant sections using power to attain their goals at the costs of the community. Consequently the disadvantaged sections experience injustice and deprivation. Conflict, confrontations, agitation, protests, PILs, negotiations and strikes would be some of the techniques to be used

For example, an industry lets untreated affluent to the river, which causes pollution, contamination of water

bodies and land degradation. If industry is unwilling to listen to the pleas of the people the only strategy that would yield results would be challenge the factory using the legal means, holding protests and publicizing the problem using the media.

Social Action Groups in India

In India social action groups began to make its presence know during the 1970s. That decade was turbulent times in the life of the nation. The declaration of emergency; the war with Pakistan; rise in prices; the frequent strikes and protests; the controversial family planning programme and demolition of slums; numerous arrests of social activists; rise of naxal movements; student protests are some of the important events that shook the nation. . The political system especially the political parties to a large extent lost their creditability. The police and the bureaucracy also lost its credibility. Many people felt that there is a need for alternatives from outside the prevailing system. Social action groups emerged out of this situation.

Most of activists were from middle class families. (Kothari, 1987; 441, Sheth, D.L.,1984; 258, Sharma, S.L.255, Sethi 1984;305). They were disillusioned with the mainstream parties who advocated change but in practice maintained status quo. Their bitter experience during the emergency made them ideologically anti state and anti bureaucracy (Kothari, 1984; 220). They rejected the idea that the state could ever be an instrument of justice and liberation. They rejected the developmental paradigms set by the state (Kothari, 1984,220, Sheth D.L.,1984, 259). They saw the problems of India not only in economic terms but also in cultural and social dimensions.

Consequently their strategies for development were different. They believed in living among them and taking part in their struggles rather than dictating instructions

to them for development. People's knowledge and experience was respected and integrated with the group strategy for development.

Conscientization and building people movements were the main instruments. Marxian and Gandhian ideologies influenced most of social action groups. However over the course of time many of these groups turned in formal organizations- some of them even became as bureaucratic and corrupt as the government institutions that they challenged. It is also observed that some of them built alliances with the government and co-opted into the system.

Another controversy with these groups is the foreign funding and its role in the emergence of these groups. Prakash Karat (1984) accused action groups of building micro social movements with the intention of breaking the larger workers and peasant's movement, which had a greater chance for social transformation-worker's movement, peasant movements and women movements. According to him foreign agencies promote this role of the action groups in mind when they fund the action groups. So he concludes that social action groups organize people into micro movements, which aim at small changes while neglecting the macro level problems of capitalism and imperialism. However as mentioned above these groups emerged when large formal organizations like political parties and the bureaucracy failed in attaining their objectives.

Political leadership of even revolutionary parties lost their radical agenda when they attained state power. (Michel, Robert, 1915). Therefore social activists were more comfortable while working in small groups in which the members knew each other personally and ideologically similar rather than large organizations that could be

manipulated by the leadership for serving selfish motives. Moreover small groups can give importance to every member opinion, thereby reducing alienation of it members.

Social action groups have been helped by the Supreme Court and High Courts accepting Public Interest Litigation (PILs) to deal with problems. Public Interest Litigation allows the activists to take up issues of public concern and ask for judicial action. Similarly, the Right to Information Act has enabled the activists to ask information from the government departments and use it to compare the reality on the ground. Both these developments opened new avenues of action for the groups.

But it cannot be denied that there are number of shortcomings of action groups. Some of them are as follows-

1) Factionist and frequent splits in the groups

2) Personal factors often interfered with professional conduct leading to blurring of line between professional and private.

3) Empire building and monopolizing of issues

4) Working for publicity and fame and thereby neglecting the real causes

5) Often outside leaders of these groups have overshadowed community leaders because of their knowledge and social network.

6) Corruption and mismanagement.

7) Leadership is authoritarian and dictatorial

8) Foreign fund based activity and priorities

Some of the areas, which action groups have contributed, are as follows-

1) Promotion of human rights issues including protection of the under trials; police atrocities including custodial deaths rights of the arrested; encounter deaths; juvenile justice; rights of sexual minorities. The People's Union for Civil Liberties and Human Rights Law network is just two examples of action groups.

2) Rights of people are displaced due to Development Project. Examples -the Narmada Bachao Andolan and Protest Movements against Tehri Dam in Uttrakhand.

3) Women rights issues like domestic violence, dowry, and sexual harassment. Many of legislations have been passed and existing laws modified due to the pressure from action groups. For example, the Visaka judgment, which deals with sexual harassment at work places, is result of the action group's case against atrocity in Rajasthan on a community worker.

4) Tribal issues like land alienation, displacement and exploitation

5) Environment issues pollution of rivers, lowering of water table because of over exploitation by corporate, damage to monuments has been taken up by the action groups. The Centre for Science and Environment, Delhi and Cost Ford are examples of action groups that have intervened in environmental issues.

6) Protest against forcible Land acquisition

7) Protection of the rights of informal labour like workers working in house (domestic workers), brick kilns, glass-manufacturing units.

8) Child labour

9) Animal rights

10) Right to housing and rights of people living in slums.

Steps for social action group

According to Carr (2008) the following steps can be implemented to create and sustain a social action group

1) **Engaging**

The process in which the group worker engages the target group- a community (a village where the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is not implemented properly); a section of society whose rights are denied (sexual minorities); collection of people whose rights are violated (workers whose factory have terminated their services illegally). The engagement phase will include familiarizing herself with the various dimensions of the problem. The laws related to the problem, government policies, the response of the local authority, research available and news articles could be studied. Another step in the process is build rapport with the existing leadership in the community and knowing their limitations and strengths.

Initial reflections- the group worker must understand the situation and identify the principles that will guide her action and her relationship with the target group.

Assessing system barriers- the group assess the various barriers that stand in between the target group and its objectives. Some of the barriers can be related to the situation (like government indifference to the issue) or to the target group themselves (lack of awareness) or be related to the other issues (leadership of the group, past events).

Finding allies and making contacts

Networking with like-minded groups, developing contacts in the media and academic world and obtaining the support of other communities are important function of the group leader. In India personal contacts with the police, bureaucracy and professionals (lawyers, doctors) are also very useful. These allies and contacts can be useful in many ways- increasing the knowledge base, for providing professional guidance, recruiting new members, contributing resources, arranging publicity and giving encouragement.

2) **Initiating the Group**

Identifying members, seeking ways to motivate them to join the group, finding resources and venue meetings are the important tasks that have to be done. This phase can be stressful one as convincing people to join is tedious job. The group worker must be able to withstand the problems of forming the group before she moves ahead

Recruiting participants

Individuals may initially agree and then refuse or refuse many times before agreeing to join. There maybe occasions in which personal and professional disagreements can threaten to split the group or even end it. It is found that recruiting members from the disadvantaged section is difficult.

Finding a venue and obtaining needed materials

An accessible place for meeting and materials needed have to be organized. It is better if available resources are used.

Building trust

Any group has to have a certain level of trust and goodwill among its members. This is crucial maintenance function.

The level of trust can be increased if opportunities and a climate exist in the group to express one's opinions and views. Similarly others should be able to respond to these views freely without worrying about hurting the other members or retribution.

Establishing collegiality

Perfect equality may not be possible in the group as the group worker often is a person with more knowledge and skills. However he should take care that he works with the group rather than for the group. His example will help set norms for the group regarding the rules of participating and engaging. Further as mentioned earlier the various processes in the group is itself an empowering experience for the participants.

3) Facilitating the group

Establishing ground rules

Rules and regulations agreed upon by every members help in maintaining the group. These rules and regulation can be to govern a whole gambit of activity of the group. Group discussions and interaction, decision making and other process of the group should be subject to rules.

Facilitating consciousness raising

The discussions that take in the group has to raise the level of consciousness in the group members. The group workers should encourage group members to draw connections between the problems that identify as personal and the collective manifestation of these problems as political issues (Carr, 2005). For example, the discussion on poverty of families in a community is linked to the lack of accessibility to economic resources and education resources, which in turn is a political problem. The process of raising consciousness will include challenging and

removing many of the existing perceptions of the members on their situation.

Supporting action

Group action should follow the raising of consciousness. Action requires the utilization of all available resources - personal and community based. The support network built by the group including personal contacts and community members, concerned students, activists is used. Action should identify the target - the institution or person against whom the action is taken. This target should be carefully chosen as the success of the action depends on the how much change is achieved in the institution.

Encourage praxis

Paulo Friere described praxis as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed'". Thus any action should follow by reflection about its consequences, successes and failures. A certain amount of learning takes place in every action even if it fails in achieving its objectives. The learning can be about the group itself, or the community as a whole or about the power structures. These learning can be analyzed by getting the members to talk about it. The sharing of the views will increase the level of consciousness. Based on these learning, future action is planned and taken and the process goes on...

4) **Transferring power**

The ultimate aim of the empowering process is to make the members independent, not make them depend on the group worker. After a period the group members should be able to function with limited or no support from the group leaders. The group workers should be able to transfer his skills and information to the group members. Some of the methods used to build the capacity of the members

are training; handholding (members, performs under close supervision) and delegation of authority.

5) **Wraping up**

The group worker must be able to leave the group at the right time. The group members should be prepared for this. Leadership should be created and trained and resources identified for future use. Groups, whose members are from highly disadvantaged sections, require more time before they can function independently.

Social action groups will remain relevant for a long time to come. Their effectiveness in countering social injustice make them ideal vehicles for social transformation.

Group Work with Disaster Victims

Disasters are sudden events that cause large-scale damage to human being and their property. The victims of a disaster are not only those who die and are injured but also those who survive. Both the category of survivors; injured and the unharmed need psychological support. Another important category of people who are in need of support is the caregivers. Caregivers are those who give the survivors emotional and social support. But the experience can be stressful for the caregivers themselves.

Victims of the disaster are classified into six categories by Taylor and Frazer

(1) The primary victims are those who are directly affected by the disaster

(2) Secondary victims includes the friends and relatives of the primary victims (3) The tertiary victims are those involved in the rescue and recovery (4) The fourth category are those in the community that are involved in the disaster work (5) The fifth category are those

who have not experienced by the disaster but experience grief and pain (6) The sixth category of victims are those who could have been victims, but by chance escaped.

The care that the victims need are the following (1) Shelter temporary and later on permanent if house destroyed (2) food and medicines (3) Medical facility if injured (4) Livelihood (5) legal aid filing for compensation, filing case against perpetuators (6) Compensation (7) Psycho social care and (8)Self help leading to self reliance.

Social worker is involved in every action

But the most important aspect of his work is psycho-social care. The aim of psychosocial care is to treat the victims who have undergone a traumatic experience.

According to Newburn (1993) the common reactions to traumatic events are the following

1) Reliving the experience through dreams, flash backs etc which may last for a period of time. For a proportion of the survivors these reaction may develop into Posttraumatic Stress disorder. (PTSD).

2) Bereavement Intense grief and feeling of loss. Relatives and friends of the deceased may feel a sense of unreality and numbness. Secondly, the feelings of guilt of having survived when relatives and friend have not. Some these feelings are mixed with that of elation at having survived. Thirdly, there maybe a need to know how the disaster happened.

3) The experience of the disaster affects the relations in the family. Some families became stronger as a unit while other families disintegrated.

4) Phobic reactions to sounds, smells and sights

5) Lives of the disaster victims disrupted due to various tasks like filing for compensation, inquests requests

6) Intrusions by the media and others who want to obtain information

7) The experience also affects the behaviour in the workplace in the future.

Seven basic principles of psychosocial care are given below. (Sekar et al, 2005).

1) Ventilation. The most important work with the victims of disaster is listening to the accounts of the relative and the survivors (Newburn, ibid). The ventilation process can be done individually and in groups. Groups have a number of advantages, which will be elaborated, in the next section.

2) Empathy

3) Active listening which includes the following (1) Maintaining eye contact (2) responding occasionally while listening (3) Avoid interruptions (4) Accept and (5) empathize

4) Externalization of interests of the survivor which means that the survivor is encouraged to engage in productive purposes which will increase their self worth and self esteem.

5) Social support; encouraging people receive and give emotional support.

6) Relaxation and recreation yoga, games and physical exercises help recovery of the victims

7) Facilitating reconciliation and rehabilitation.

You can see that all these principles can be effective if it is done in the group. The advantages of group-based treatment of victims are as follows.

1) Sharing the victim's painful experiences in a group where other victims are present. Universalization of experiences and identification with every other problem take place in the group sessions. Knowing that others also have gone through the experiences and knowing how they are coping with the situation is helpful for the victims.

2) Recreational and relaxation activities are more enjoyable if they are done in groups.

3) Engaging in productive work (for example gardening, basket making building houses)in team motivates the members to engage in these activities on regular basis

4) Efforts like starting SHGs for women can be a start for the rehabilitation of the victims.

A large number of victims can be treated using group work. Secondly, special groups for the vulnerable Groups for women and children can take care of their special needs as these sections are more vulnerable than others and need special care. Thirdly, these groups survive even after the social workers and the administration go and is a source for support for disaster victims after a long time.

Groups Work Among the Substance Abusers

Group work among the substance abusers can be done in institutions as well in the community. Usually the group members meet in a common place- religious places, school or community centres. There are a number of approaches available to solve the problem of substance abuse and alcohol.

According to Fisher (in Gravin(2004)), group work is an appropriate method to deal with the problem of addiction-

1) Group reduce the sense of isolation often experienced by persons with the substance use disorders, who may experience a sense of relief to discover that other people are struggling with similar problems.

2) Groups can instill hope in the persons that they can recover when they observe others deal successfully with similar problems.

3) Groups provide opportunity for the members to learn to cope with problems of substance abuse when they observe others coping with similar problems.

4) Groups can give new information to the members given by the group worker, guest lecturer, instructors and other members.

5) Positive feedback about their worth, skills and abilities from other members will improve their self concept (self worth and self image)

6) Groups provide reparative(alternate) family experiences as the group members give the support and assurance that they sometimes do not receive from their own families. They may try out new behaviours which can be used in the their own families.

7) Groups provide emotional support to the members when they experience stressful and difficult situations outside the group. Encouragement, reinforcement and coaching can happen in the group.

8) Groups help the members acquire social skills that are needed to cope with anxiety situations instead of depending on substances for dealing with difficult situations in life. Members can coach and guide the members who need such skills.

9) Group members can confront each other in very powerful ways regarding the substance abuse. Confrontation in substance abuse is important as most

of the abusers are in the state of denial. Confrontation by other who had similar problems is particularly powerful.

10) Groups are cost effective as many members can be treated simultaneously.

11) The benefits of group work may exceed beyond the group and benefit others who are in some way related to the members- family members, employers.

Important principles and techniques as suggested by Corey and Corey (1987)to increase effectiveness of Groups

1) Emphasize on abstinence from the substance/ alcohol is important.

2) A minimum degree of motivation is needed in the group members to make the group experience work for their benefit. This requirement is important as many of the patients in the groups are forced by their family members to join the group. Thus group members lack interest in the group process and therefore neither contributes nor gains from the experience. Many of them are not confident about the role of groups in their treatment process.

3) Another important requirement is that the members should have the capacity to perform as a group member. Often his physical and mental condition is such that he is not able to participate in the group. Substance abuse has destroyed or retarded his capacity to act normally; if the person is undergoing treatment drugs are administered to him to detoxify his body, which has sedative effects on the body. It is observed that many members are not even able to sit in upright position and listen to the group worker.

4) Members suffering from mental illnesses is to be excluded as these group often refer to a 'higher power',

which will increase their tendency to hallucinate. (Fisher, ibid)

5) The first phase of the group work should have sessions that are highly structured- well planned with clear objectives . After a few sessions an interactive approach can be used and greater freedom allowed to the members.

6) Most of the activities are focused on here and now activities, activity-based programme like those needing movement of the body are recommended.

7) Role plays; problem solving, feedback, self-disclosure, confrontation, creating social support network and providing information are important techniques.

Alcoholic Anonymous

Alcoholic Anonymous(AA) is a global organization, which uses the group approach to stop alcoholics, abstain from alcohol. AA was found in 1936 by Bill Wilson who himself was a recovered alcoholic and through his experiences concluded that the best persons to help an alcoholic are other alcoholics. Based on the principles of self-help and mutual aid AA has developed a model for helping alcoholics.

The AA has been estimated to be more than 2 million around the global. Local chapters (called fellowships) of AA can be found in major cities and towns in India. Usually newspapers list the AA meetings taking place in the city.

AA follows a well-defined program structure of steps and traditions that have been codified in the books, pamphlets and brochures.

AA follows in the twelve traditions their experience has taught them to be useful.

1) Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

2) For our group purpose there is one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

3) Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

4) With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

5) Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose*—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6) Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals,

which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A.—and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.

7) The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries, which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8) Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counselling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholic. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. "12 Step" work is never to be paid for.

9) Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area, their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10) No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11) Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12) And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual

significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility.

The success of AA is seen in the millions of people who have benefited from the programme. It is acceptance can been seen in the groups being formed on the similar principles for other problems- schizophrenia, parents, child abused adults, overeaters etc. Some of these groups uses approaches which are slightly different from the AA but the AA remains a popular model for handling problems through life changing peer led self groups. (Kurtz in Gravin, 2004)

One aspect that is interesting to social group workers is in the emphasis on the nonprofessional approach, which means that for the core activity of conducting group meetings, strictly no outside professional assistance is allowed. Professional assistance is used for the other services needed.

Group work among the caregivers

Caregivers are individual who take primary responsibility of attending to the needs of the patient and the victim(in a disaster). Care giving can be a stressful activity due to the following reason.(1) The needs of the person has to be taken care of which can takes a lot of time which will reduce the time available to the caregiver for his/her personal and professional issues. (2) behaviour of the person can lead to frustration to the caregiver. (3) The grief and frustration of the patient affects the mental well-being of the caregiver (4) Care giving is physically demanding and can lead to fatigue and physical strain (5) In some diseases like AIDS caregiver may be stigmatized by his/her association with the patient (6) Caregivers suffer from the knowledge that there is no hope of a cure for the ailments affecting the patient and that the condition is life long. (7) Caregivers

often have to sacrifice many of their own hopes and aspirations because of their primary duty as a caregiver.(8) Care giving can have financial loses in terms of loss of income for the caregiver and because of medical costs of the patient.

Care giving is defined as "Due to someone whose life is in some way restricted by the need to be responsible for the care of someone who is mentally ill, mentally handicapped, physically disabled or whose health is impaired by sickness or old age".(*Baroness Pitkeathley* It's my Duty Isn't it? 1989). The physical and psychosocial affect on care giving has been subject of numerous studies. The caregiver often experiences conflicting emotions. On the one hand, she is aware that the person is in need of care and on other hand she may begin to dislike the patient for being a burden on her. These issues have to be dealt with if caregivers have to be effective and at the same time maintain their own psychosocial health. Caregiver groups has thus become a major research issue (Campbell in Gravin, 2004)

The groups are categorized as (1) Psycho educational groups, which focus on information about the problems and improving emotional health, mainly coping with frustration. (2) Psychotherapy groups dealing with the problems of loneliness, hopelessness and loss of companionship.(3) Support groups which involves mainly sharing of experiences and problems

Group Work Among Young People in the Community

Group work among children, teenagers, adolescents and youth are important in India. Each of these categories will have a different set of problems depending on the situation that they are in. The major factors that will have an influence on their behaviour are

1) Type of family

2) Neighbourhood

3) Whether studying or no

3) Educational qualifications

4) Type of school

5) Income level of family

6) Personal History

The type of groups which can be organized for them are (1) Educational groups which will teach them social skills, help them cope with difficult life situations and develop attitudes (2) Recreational groups which give the members enjoyable experiences which will keep them away from risk behaviour and develop healthy lifestyles.(3) personality development groups which will enable them to improve their self image and improve confidence levels.

Some of the themes, which can be taken up by Corey and Corey are-

1) Dealing with alcohol abuse and drug abuse

2) Learning to cope with feelings of depression, guilt, anxiety, anger, rejection, hostility and loneliness.

3) Exploring conflicts at home

4) Post school plans and careers

5) Discuss matters related to love and intimacy if culturally appropriate

6) Defining sex roles

7) Exploring identity issues

8) Considering issues related to autonomy and dependence

9) Conflicts with parents and how to appreciate them

In Indian situation the following themes can also be tried out

1) Academic performance

2) Influence of media and how to deal with it

3) Rights of the children

4) Concerns of environment.

Dealing with young people

1) Young people may resist the group workers efforts to deal with relevant topics and express preference for games and sports. While group self determination is an important principle of group work. The group worker must find ways and means to reach the objectives without alienating the members. These efforts would include relating the activities to the objectives.

2) The group worker must in his actions earn the trust of the members without which the group will not function. Therefore he should be open and honest with the group members. He can also reveal information about his own experiences as a child and youth to the degree that he is comfortable. It need not be strictly a professional relationship.

3) The group member must remind himself often that it is for the benefit of the group members that the group work is being conducted not for his persona; benefit. In the hierarchical society like ours often the group worker thinks that he knows better than the members. Most often, he does not nor must assume to know better.

4) Individual meetings should be held with members who are not cooperative or are disrupting the group functioning

5) Group worker should delegate tasks to the members whenever possible trusting in their capacities. Mistakes done by the members in the tasks should be seen as a learning process.

6) Most importantly groups should be formed of same sex and the same age group. Heterogeneous groups rarely work in India.

Conclusion

The chapter has shown the different settings in the community where group work can be practiced. We have seen the role of the social action group, which fights for justice. The contribution of these groups in securing justice for the disadvantaged is significant. When formal organizations are increasingly seen as ineffective groups are seen as better options.

Funding agencies are increasingly looking at these groups to bring about change in the society. They provide funds for capacity building and leadership training in these groups. The courts in India have also in its various judgments appreciated the role of these groups in bringing to issues to the public domain. In India, where opportunities for group work in institutional settings are limited, group work in community becomes important.

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15

Group Work in Institutional Settings

Joseph Varghese

Introduction

Group work is used in numerous institutions- hospitals, child welfare institutions, alcoholic and drug rehabilitation agencies, old age agencies, family counselling agencies and industries. Group work, if effectively used can alleviate the problems and reduce its psychosocial effects.

Every institution has its own ideology, implicit or explicit. It influences the way the organization leadership and other employees' view group work. It will determine to a large degree, the support, the group worker will get from institution for doing group work. The institution will also expect the group work sessions to further those goals that are set by the organization. Thus the group worker will be expected to work within the framework.

Group work in formal institutions has its own advantages and limitations. The group worker will have to understand the organizational context in which group is being done. Every organization is unique and has to be understood in its own way. This chapter will introduce the different institutional settings; their unique characteristics and the use of group work in these settings.

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According to Kirby (quoted in Trecker, 1972) the major areas in which the group worker performs in an institutional setting are as follows

1) The direct practice of social group work with small groups of clients and patients.

2) Working with other staff members toward helping them understand the group process in the institution.

3) Sharing with other staff members the group worker's observation and recommendations with reference to individual and group behaviour in the agency.

4) Sharing with other staff members the group worker's observation and recommendations with regard to social climate and group living factors in the institution.

5) Analyzing the need for and recommending the formation of various kinds of groups to meet the needs of the individual clients of the agency.

6) Assuming the responsibility for coordinating and enriching the recreational program along with supervising and training recreational staff and students.

7) Assuming the responsibility as a professional group worker for helping in maintaining the limits and standards of the agency.

8) Interpreting the agency programme to the community through contacts with volunteer groups, community agencies, service clubs and similar organizations.

Group Work and Child Welfare

The function of child welfare is to ensure that workers evaluate incidents of potential maltreatment, supervise children deemed at risk for ongoing abuse and neglect,

develop effective services to reduce re-occurrence of maltreatment, and discharge those children believed to be safe (Rittner, 2002 quoted in Rittner in Handbook of Social Work with Groups, 2004; 245).Child welfare programmes in India are reflected in the constitution and five year plans. The National Policy for children 1974 provide the much needed guidance. The constitution advocates that the State shall provide adequate services towards children, both before and after birth and during the growing stages for their full physical, mental and social development. A comprehensive health programme, supplementary nutrition for mothers and children, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, promotion of physical education and recreational activities, special consideration for children of weaker sections like SCs and STs and prevention of exploitation of children are some of the major benefits enlisted. The legislations related to the child welfare are *The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992* The Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique(Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994, The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, *The Guardian and Wards Act, 1890*, The Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956.

Various governmental ministries and departments look after child welfare in India. In the Union government the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Labour along with other ministries are involved in child welfare policies and programmes. State governments run observation homes,

children home for boys and girls, sishu bhavans etc. The state governments also run the juvenile justice board and child welfare committee. The civil society is also engaged in a large scale in child related issues. Many NGOs have taken up the cause of child rights, prevention of child labour, adoption services and, the care and rehabilitation of juveniles. Orphanages and homes for children are also run by NGOs and religious organizations. It is but natural that a variety of organizations at different levels work for the welfare of the children-they being future citizens of the country. Child welfare and child rights are important areas of social policy. From social work profession point of view child welfare is important for one more significant reason. Many problems of adults are directly related to their experiences as a child. The Adverse Childhood Experience Study on about 17,000 adult participants show significant correlation between childhood trauma and negative sequences in later life. Thus to prevent social problems later on, it is important that problems of children are handled effectively and sensitively.

Group work has been used effectively to deal with many of children's problems in different institutions. We will see how it is used in different settings. It would be not be possible to cover all settings. Before we see how group work principles and knowledge is useful for practice with children its usefulness to the professional themselves has to be highlighted. Different professionals work in these organizations and often have to work together- a group activity in itself. Social workers often work with lawyers, doctors, child psychologist, policemen and public officials to solve children problems.

Group work objectives in child welfare agencies are:

1) Training them in alternate behaviour patterns. Many children are from dysfunctional families and lack

appropriate role models in the family. Handling frustration, anger, and disappointment becomes difficult for these children leading to harmful reactions.

2) Training in survival skills-maintaining relationships, seeking assistance, keeping jobs etc.

3) Treatment for symptoms related to anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance abuse and poor interpersonal relations. Many children in the street are addicted to fluids (mainly whiteners) and drugs, which need cure. Incidence of Psychiatric problems is also high.

4) Training in personality development especially building self-confidence and self-esteem, public speaking and ability to face personal interviews.

5) Recreational activities in their free time- play groups etc.

Group work in juvenile homes

According to the Juvenile Justice Act 2000, two types of children need intervention (i) children in need of care and protection and (ii) Children in conflict with law. The first category are children who have been child labourers, found begging on the street and the second category are children who have committed crimes but cannot be tried in normal courts as the law does not allow children (below the age of eighteen) to be tried here. The first category children are produced before the Child Welfare Committee(CWC) which then determines what is the best course of action for securing the child's future. The CWC may order the child to be placed in a government run Children home for Boys/Girls if they find that the family does not exist or is incapable of looking after the child. Alternatively it may hand over the child to NGO run fit institution. Either way these institution will then look after the child till he is an adult and fend for himself or herself. Meanwhile if any parent wants him back arrangements are made.

An effective child rehabilitation programme will be sensitive to the child' s psychological condition and his social environment.

Unfortunately, the organizations are bureaucratic in nature and the special needs of children are ignored. Problems of the child due to ill treatment and abuse are not addressed adequately. Current research demonstrates that if earlier maltreatment occurs, most likely the child is to develop associated behavioural and emotional problems. (Heffernan & Cloitre 2000, Zanarini et al., 2002) To make matters worse often the condition of children deteriorates after they experience neglect and abuse in these organizations. The group worker should be able to take into consideration these factors when he plans his group work programme.

The purposes of doing group work in juvenile delinquents centers are -

1) **It seeks to facilitate adjustment in the center**

   Group can be used to develop a positive attitude in the inmates about the agency. The inmate will learn to accept the unavoidable strains of life there and make use of the opportunities available.

2) **It seeks to further diagnostic understanding**

   Individual's behaviour in a group situation helps the social worker in getting data about the inmate. This data is useful to understand his present situation and to plan his future.

3) **It sought to contribute to the beginning of the treatment process**

   Again it is in the group situation that the nature of the inmate relationship with others can be assessed. The value systems that the inmates have are understood and its consequences are known. Through

the group process the inmates receives feedback about his behaviour and gains insight into his behaviour. Greater self-awareness could be the beginning of the treatment for the inmates.

4) **It sought to meet normal growth needs**

The inmates are experiencing a crucial developmental phase in their lives and confinement to the agency can be frustrating. Opportunities for making choices, self-expression, exhibiting leadership and participating in activities could help them develop healthier personalities.

5) **It seeks to influence the institutional milieu**

Obtaining opinions. feedback and views of the inmates improves the agency climate.(quoted in Trecker, 1972)

Example of group work in juvenile delinquent

Group approach to intervene in client problem is used in an agency for juvenile delinquents. The agency is a fit institution under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000. It is allowed to reside delinquents who have been ordered by the juvenile justice board to be placed in institutions for reform and observation. Most inmates are from economically backward and dysfunctional families. Often families are unwilling to accept them after the police charge them with a crime. Arrested for crimes and public humiliation as a result of it, and bitter experience in the police station and with the police causes trauma to the juvenile. His self esteem and confidence is negatively affected. There is a need therefore to reconstruct his personality.

The agencies training programmes and activities are done in groups. They are open-ended groups which do not go beyond the use of groups in a very general way. But group work is used in the weekly meeting this agency has with

the inmates. It is held every Sunday with the director and the inmates only. Other staff members are not allowed so that free communication takes place in the group. The aim of the group sessions is to empower the inmates by giving them opportunities to participate in the functioning of the agency. Secondly, there are often problems between inmates as they live together in the agency. There are quarrels and fights between inmates. Thirdly, many issues related to division of responsibilities and common problems faced by inmates are addressed through group work. Often, there are complaints about the staff members' actions which the inmates find offensive. The aim of group sessions is to address these issues. There is no restriction on the members raising any issues if they are done so in a proper way. But the issues are to be resolved in democratic and participatory way. The director who is also the group worker discusses the matters raised by the members. The aim is to train the inmates in democratic ways of behaviour and control of frustration and anger. Further the self esteem and self confidence of the inmates is improved as they are treated with this respect. The group feedback improves the agency's functioning as bureaucratic and insensitive practice are identified and set right. This group can be termed as a training group which trains new behaviour to the inmates.

Group work with street children

An international NGO conducts a week end camp for street children. Street children many of whom come to their open shelter- shelter for street children are without any compulsions or rules and regulations. Children are free to come and leave the shelter whenever they please. The shelter provides them facilities to sleep, to take bath and watch television. Many children become attached to the agency and to the staff members. Once a rapport is established the staff members' attempts to influence the

child's behaviour through various life skills and survival skills are common. A variety of means are used to do this-activities mainly group based, games and sports, film shows etc.

An important element in the education of street children is organising an annual camp. The annual camp is held for three days in a location away from the city. The location has an informal situation again with minimum restrictions-only time for various activities are fixed and children are not allowed to hurt each other. Otherwise the campers are allowed to move freely and act without restrictions. Learning sessions are organised where information about various issues are given. Issues are directly related to the life of a street child. Issues like HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and vocational trainings are discussed. Animators who can communicate skillfully with the target group conduct these sessions. Subjects are presented in very simple and informal way. Question regarding the subject is thrown open to the audience and they are encouraged to try answer them. Clarifications are given when necessary. The sessions prove to be beneficial to the campers.

In between the sessions camper spend their time watching movies and playing games. Some climb the coconut trees and pluck coconuts. Others even indulge in habit of inhaling whiteners and smoke.

The agency has adopted this strategy to reach to the most vulnerable and at the same time the most unreachable section of children. Street children for all the trauma they experience in the street still prefer to be free and away from the fetters of the institution. Thus the agency has modified its institutional approach to the open approach.

Group work has been also modified in line with this approach. No longer does the group worker insist on the group meeting on the predetermined place and time

regularly. However, most of the principles of group work can be observed in the approach. Principles of acceptance, group self determination, functional flexible organization are used with suitable modifications. Self-help and mutual aid are stressed. Members are encouraged to help and learn from each other. Networks among the children are encouraged to substitute for families as a support system. mentoring by 'senior' street children of the younger children is done purposefully.

The approach of the agency can be seen as a innovation in group work in institutional settings. Its adaptation of the group work is creative and can be used in other agencies.

Group work with parents of mentally challenged children

An NGO work with Spastics children organizes support group for the parents of the children of mentally challenged. A staff member of the agency says that the parents of these children need treatment as much as the children do. Newly enrolled parents are encouraged to join existing groups. These groups are meant for sharing and learning session. Parents are often in the state of denial about the condition of their children. They cannot see why this should happen to them and their children. Parents are depressed and anxious about the future of the children. They do not know how to react when their children are unable perform the actions that other children are able to do. Answers to most of the problems are found in the group-shared knowledge and from the experiences of other parents. The group facilitates the process of universalization of experience and the installation of hope.

Group Work and Geriatric Care

Geriatric care is becoming important in the present world as people are healthier and live longer. The problem is

more in Western countries than in India and other developing countries. In India the breakdown of joint families, rise of the nuclear families, individualism and lack of living space in urban areas have made the care of old age a challenge to society. The government of India has list of about 1000 old age homes in India which provide free care while others do so on a paying basis. The number of old age homes are likely to increase in the future.

Old aged persons suffer from a number of mental and physical ailments. More importantly, their social situation and their somatic condition affect their physical condition. They need special care and attention. According to Corey and Corey(1982;348) some of the major characteristics of the old aged are-

1) Intense loneliness and social isolation; loss; poverty; feeling of rejection; struggle to find meaning in life; dependency; feeling of uselessness, hopelessness and despair; fear of death and dying; grief over other people's death

2) Difficulty in reaching the old aged and greater resistance to counselling and other intervention.

3) Short attention span

4) Medication induced problems of concentration.

5) Poor reality orientation

6) Poor attendance at group sessions

7) Need for support and encouragement is greater than that of confrontation

8) Greater need for being listened to and understood.

The types of group that can be organized for the aged are the following.

1) **Support group**

These groups can give psychosocial support to the members which will address the problems of social isolation and loneliness. Very often the elderly live together but have minimal interaction because of some of the problems mentioned above. Groups bring the members together and promote interaction. Often the focus of discussion is the feelings of hopelessness, uselessness, despair and regret over past events.(Susan Rice in Greif and Ephross,2005; 152)

Many group activities have been suggested - going on an imaginary trip with the other members, picking up a new name and discovering what it means to them, drawing picture of yourself and your family and describing pleasant experiences of the past(Corey and Corey, 1982;343). Reminiscencing in an important process for the elderly and is proved beneficial for them. It can be in the oral or written form. Butler called reminiscences as 'a naturally occurring, universal mental process characterized by the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences and particularly the resurgence of unsolved conflict, simultaneously and normally these reviewed experiences and conflicts can be surveyed and reintegrated. (Quoted in Campbell in Gravin et. al.2004; 281). However Campbell also mentions that not all want to review past experiences and the technique should be used based on the need and willingness of the elderly themselves. Another technique used is to list down the various items related to the life of the members- Most stressful situation, aspect in the personality one want to change and something one wants to self disclose (Corey, ibid; 354)

2) **Recreational group**

These groups can be used to enable the elderly spend time in an enjoyable manner. Activities can include

group games which will involve all the members of the group either as direct participants or as a team. Depending on the physical and mental condition games can be chosen.

3) **Therapeutic groups**

Therapeutic groups include standardized and non-standardized group therapies. The standardized group therapies are Dialectical behavior therapy and Cognitive behavioural therapy while the non-standardized therapies use non structured means focusing on emotional condition of the members and life review. Studies have found these therapies to be useful. (Campbell in Gravin et.al.; 2004;278-280). Members have been empowered by these group experiences, reducing isolation and achieve greater control and meaning in their lives.

Group workers who have worked with elderly found that much of the "information" about the elderly are wrong and based on false assumptions. Some of the false assumptions include (1) The inability of the elderly to change for the better (2) Ability to contribute positively to the betterment of others (3) Willingness of the elderly to take part in group activities. On the contrary group have been found to be generally beneficial to the elderly.

Groups Work in Psychiatric Setting

Group work is an important component in the treatment and care of mentally ill people. It is being increasingly used in mental health setting in India and abroad. The incidence of mental illness is high in India.A trend in the care of mentally ill which is influencing the practice of group work is de-institutionalization- increasing numbers of mentally ill people were being taken care in the families and in their homes rather than being confined to the hospital. (Gravin in Greif et al.; 2005)

Some of the characteristics of the seriously mentally ill are-

1) Many suffer from multiple problems- Mental illness with substance abuse or alcoholism.

2) Severe mental illness limits the ability to cope with stress and function adequately in stressful situations.

3) They are unable to perform daily tasks.

4) Their behaviour is unpredictable leading to difficulties to the family members and others

5) Incidence of homelessness and destitution is high

6) Many of them having exposed to drugs and alcohol exhibit aggressive and rebellious behaviour which makes managing them a big challenge to the social workers and other professionals. Gerhart, 1990, quoted in Garvin in Greif, 2005; 32)

According to Rostov the goals of group work in psychiatric settings are:

1) to socialize including forming satisfying social relations, establishing an awareness of others, learning and relearning social skills

2) to offer ego supports and develop ego strengths as well as broadening interest and scope of activities, building self confidence, self esteem, self worth, achieving tangible things, acceptance..

3) to test and see cause-and-effect relationship

4) to increase responsibility, develop good judgments and self control and handle group living problems

5) to influence one another in a positive way, develop better morale , and challenge group hostility

6) to feel and exert some control over one's future

7)   to adjust to a new mode of living and interrupt the deterioration process and counteract the regression of institutional living

8)   to prepare and test for discharge and return to community life

9)   to promote insights, develop the proper perspective on problems and feelings, release and drain off tensions

10) to accept one's illness and prepare for and use the individual and other therapies more positively

11) to increase the opportunities for observation and diagnosis by the staff. (quoted in Trecker,1972; 178)

Research available has indicated that group work has been useful for the members. George Getzel surveyed the available research and summary of his findings are presented here. Some of the research he surveyed -Moore and Starkes observed that the use of group work with mentally ill individual in short stay homes increased their capacity to avail its services. In other words the organizational milieu improved when group work was used. Somewhat similarly, Robert and Smith found that group work created a sense of community in the psychiatric ward and improve their capacity to adjust to the external environment. Armstrong who observed that groups do prepare the mentally ill for the future did increase their capacity has supported these conclusions. Group work has also been found to be useful in the treatment of mental illness.

Garvin suggests principles, which has been found useful in the process are:

1)   Groups sessions with the mentally ill should be highly structured, meaning that the group worker should take control of sessions by planning the activity well.

Patient's condition does not generally allow them to take initiative and contribute to the session beyond a certain level. Hence, it will be upto the group worker who has to plan how he is going to give his presentation to share information, identify problems and resolve the various issues.

2) Training the members in new skills is an important component in the treatment process which while increasing their capacity to become self reliant to the extent possible also increases their confidence.

3) Each group session should be a rewarding one in the sense that the members should derive some pleasure and enjoyment from it. Patients may be undergoing significant stress to attend the session and unless they feel good they may not want to attend the sessions. A game, a play, a music or a craft may be ideal activity.

4) The group worker must be able to create a sense of accomplishment and achievement in the members which can be done by teaching a social skill or improving on the existing skill.

5) The group worker should also be careful that anxiety producing events and actions should be avoided and be prepared to deal with them. For example, the abnormal behaviour of one of the members like hallucinations, will create fear in others. The behaviour should be explained to the members, if possible or else avoided altogether.

Example of group work in mental heath setting

Group sessions were conducted for patients in a mental health setting for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). As you know OCD is a neurotic disorder that compels individuals to repeat specific behaviour though he or she has no desire to do so. It may affect 2 to 3 percent of the population. The main activities were role-plays, counselling

and skill training. At the end of the group sessions the researcher finds that adherence to treatment and social skills are improved. (George, Tony Sam, 2002)

Group Work in Hospitals

Hospitals are important settings for social work practice. Psychological factors and physical health are related. Adverse psychological negative factors can worsen the health conditions of the patients. The recognition that the healing process is more than what the medical model advocated is wide spread in India and more so in the developed countries. Getzel notes an increase in the interest in group work practice and corresponding increase in the health system 's efforts to make group work more responsive to the clients need.(Getzel in Garvin ;2004;196).

Another important factor is the growing importance of multidisciplinary teams which will address the various dimensions of the illnesses and its effect of the patient. Teamwork, therefore is an important method of work in health care settings. Thirdly, group work is seen as humanizing the bureaucratic system and giving holistic care for the clients. Lastly group work is cheap and effective in disseminating information to the clients.

Type of groups that are used in the hospital are:

1) **Educational Groups-** Educational groups disseminate information about the disease and its effects on the patients. They educate the person about the causes of diseases, its effects on the body, its pattern of progression and its debilitating effects. They are trained to avoid those behaviour patterns that will worsen the conditions. Adherence to the treatment process like taking medicines and taking the necessary tests are taught. For example, cancer affected individuals are told about the cancer and its treatment.

In the sessions the group members are educated about the various aspects of cancers- its causes and its effects. Fears about early death, pain and disfigurement are discussed. Patients fear about the effects of chemotherapy on the body and hair are discussed. Clarifications and doubts are removed. Often it is the members themselves rather than the group worker who provides knowledge to the group members. Experiences are shared in the group to help others.

The free sharing of experiences and information is more an effective tool for educating the patients rather than through other methods

2) **Support groups-** These groups provide the necessary social and emotional support to the patients. Often the experience of knowing that a potentially life threatening illness is shocking to the patient.

Weissman defines 15 coping strategies in cancer patients but the same coping patterns have been applied to other types of patients(Lillington, Barbara: !985)- rationalization; seeking of additional information; sharing concerns with others; Displacement; confrontation; Fatalism Acting out ; repeating previous behaviour; Tension reducing behaviour like taking alcohol ; social isolation; blaming others; compliance to authority and masochistic surrender. Many of these coping strategies have a negative impact on the psychosocial health of the patients.

Group work can enable the patients to have an appropriate coping mechanisms keeping in mind the individual's needs and her environment. It will result in better quality of life and better adherence to treatment programme. Universalization of the experience and identification with others are important processes which take place in the group. Newcomers whose have been recently diagnosed

with cancer are relieved to see the cancer survivors who have successfully battled with the disease. Cwikel and Behar(1999) study of intervention in cancer patients found that group interventions helped in the treatment phase.

3) **Training groups-** Training groups focus on teaching new social skills to the patients which would help them after they are discharged from the hospitals.

Practice principles health settings

Daste and Ross (in Grief and Ross;2005) make following suggestions:

Firstly, Group work in health setting needs to understand that patients suffer from pain and fatigue due to illness and often due to their treatment. She should therefore encourage patients to attend the meetings but not use excessive pressure.

Secondly, the group worker should be flexible in her approach to group. The treatment cycle may vary with person to person and therefore the time period of attending the group sessions cannot be specified.

Thirdly, individualization of clients is another important aspect, as client's characteristics will differ in terms of stages of disease, social support available in family, community and workplace and the psychological condition. Fear of death, fear of disease recurrence, problems related to treatment (pain, changes in appearances, fatigue), changes in relationship and economic issues (income, future job prospects, costs of treatment,) are important concerns that group worker must address.

Conclusion

The practice of social work in different settings has been described briefly and important practice principles have

been highlighted. The list is not comprehensive and as group work in its generic form can be practiced almost anywhere. Also institutions differ in many ways even when they are dealing with the similar problems. This will no doubt influence the practice of social work. The group worker would therefore be flexible in his approach. Group work practice has to adapt to the institutional requirement and clients need.

These are some of the important institutions that group work is practiced. The practice of social work in different settings has been described briefly and important practice principles have been highlighted. The list is not comprehensive and as group work in its generic form can be practiced almost anywhere. Also institutions differ in many ways even when they are dealing with the similar problems. this will no doubt influence the practice of social work. The group worker would therefore be flexible in his approach. Group work practice has to adapt to the institutional requirement and clients need.

Group work is certainly being practiced in many institutions in India. But as mentioned earlier mostly non-professionals are practicing it in a generic form and in majority of the cases no particular theory seems to guide the practice. More importantly, no efforts are made to evaluate the process. Records maintained convey bare minimum from which nothing very significant can be learnt. The benefits of group work are evident. But there is need for evidence to show the importance of group work in these settings. Professional social workers have to work towards that goal.

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16

Group Work in Educational Settings

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Introduction

Educational institutions offer diverse opportunities to practice group work. The group members are readily available and no special efforts are required to collect them and form groups. The students learn in groups and are therefore comfortable to be in groups. A variety of activities can be done with the group. Most importantly, the young enjoy the sessions and simultaneously be benefited. The chapter will give an account of the practice of group work in different educational settings.

Present day educators seek to provide holistic education to the student, not just improve his memory and his retention powers. Holistic development aims at producing a balanced and well integrated human being with sensitiveness to fellow human beings and his environment. While teachers are required to teach the syllabus it is being recognized that other professionals are needed to take care of other dimensions of the student's personality. Group work seen in this context is an apt method to bring about this transformation in the student.

Group Work in Educational Setting

Modern life imposes significant stress on everybody including the students. Sometimes it is wrongly assumed

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that just because there has been an increase in the technology and comforts available to present students they are better off than the earlier generations of students. But they face pressures from many quarters- parents who expect them to be excellent in academics, friend and peers who expect them to conform to their norms. The media creates expectations which when unfulfilled creates frustration. According to Coppock and Dwivedi (Dwivedi, 2005, 265) upto 20 percent of children experience behavioural and emotional problems that require professional help. US schools have seen incidents like shooting by students of their classmates and teachers due to emotional problems. Schools in India have not witnessed similar incidents but there are indicators that school related problems will increase. Media has often reported cases of students hurting and murdering their classmates for money or avenging past insults.

Educational institutions have begun to respond to the situation and employed counselors and social workers to deal with student problems. However schools need group work not only to address behavioural problems but also to enhance the capacity of normal students to deal with their life situations. These issues can be related to education beyond the curriculum; personality development; life skills education, health and recreation.

The practice of group work in school will be influenced by the dynamics of the larger social systems- the school and the society. The various use groups will be put to and its goals will be determined by the ideology and the approach of the school management. The resources and administrative support the group worker receives will depend on the priorities of the management. The least available resource in the school is time and the place to conduct group work. Syllabus centric teaching practiced in most of our schools leave little or no time for other

activities. Teacher need to finish the syllabus find time spend for other activities a waste of time. Management should be convinced that student would benefit from the group work in tangible terms. Further, parents should be convinced of the benefits of group work. Last, but not the least students should be convinced that group work will be beneficial for them. Convincing the various stakeholders about the usefulness of group work is an important task for the group worker.

The advantages of using group work in the school are (1) Students spend a lot of time in groups and are comfortable working in it (2) students are familiar with the school environment and no special efforts are needed to make them participate in group. (3) Group work can be expected to improve the relationship between students and teachers, and between students, which will improve the quality of learning.

However, there are a number of factors/ disadvantages that can restrict the use of group work in schools. Some of them are the following (1) The lack of time does allow the practice of group work (2) Place for doing group is lacking (3) The paucity of staff who are equipped with the necessary skills and attitudes. (4) Evaluating the effectiveness of the groups which will increase support and participation (5) if only children with problems are forced to participate there maybe resistance as they feel that they being singled out from others. (Ibid, 268).

The major problems identified among school students are-

Excessive fighting; Inability to get along with peers; frequent hurting of other children; violation of school children; poor attitude toward the school; stealing; violent or angry outbursts; neglected; neglected appearance; hunger symptoms; chronic tiredness; lack of supervision

at home and excessive truancy. (Corey and Corey, 1982; 255)

The type of groups that can be used in the schools are-

1) **Educational groups** Educational groups will enable the students in learning about subjects that are not part of the curriculum. The areas of education can be life skill education, HIV/AIDS, public speaking etc. Value education can be taught through stories and parables. Songs that motivate the members can be sung. Competitions like essay writing, handwriting and spelling can be organized.

2) **Recreational groups** Recreational groups will provide the activities like games and sports. It is advisable not to limit the activity to the game and have a discussion on the group dynamics observed in the group. The contributions of members, the presence of subgroups and isolates can be observed and discussed. Group experiences if carefully chosen will help growth in their personality.

3) **Personality development groups** seek to develop self-confidence and self esteem. Skills to face interviews, public speaking and grooming habits can be improved in groups.

4) **Treatment groups** These groups can identify the causes of psychosocial problems found in the children. Students may need social skills training. Verduyn, Lord and Forrest studied the outcome of one such training on children in the age group of 10-13years and found significant changes and specific changes. (Dwivedi, 2005; 274)

But given the nature of the setting it would be difficult to conduct formal group work at fixed time and place.

Trecker suggests using the adaptations based on Wyers contributions. Wyer suggests five kinds of groups can be formed

1) **Cluster groups-** These groups were used when one or two isolate or scapegoat were referred to the group worker. Since the number of such students referred at a time was small it was not possible to conduct group only for them nor was it possible for students from different schools to come together. One solution tried out was the cluster approach wherein the referred student was placed in a group in which other members were students functioning normally. The group sessions are so designed that the dysfunctional students' needs are addressed- his/her problem is described, the student's view point is brought to the open and perception of the other members are discussed. Support from the other members for the dysfunctional student is encouraged. The interaction between the members and the dysfunctional student is expected to bring about change in the behaviour of the student.

2) **Classroom groups-** Classroom groups are used when it is found that it is not individuals or group of students that are dysfunctional but the entire class is dysfunctional. Therefore the whole class should be taken as a group and needs to be treated. The causes for these problems can uneasiness with teachers, guilt over scapegoating, over identification with the students who are victimized, conflicts between groups within class and inability to perform as per expectations. The cause of the problem may lie in a few students or the whole class. The group worker uses the whole class as group and address the problem by using group discussions and role plays.

3) **Splinter groups** These groups consist of problematic children who cannot be separated and treated. The difference between the cluster group and this group is the different approach used. In this group the dysfunctional members are identified and his identity revealed. He chooses from the class a smaller group consisting of a few members. The group worker then describes the problem to the group and its affects on the affected student. Certain activities are chosen which will attract the larger student body to the smaller group and interact with it. If successful the smaller group status improves and so does the status of the dysfunctional student.

4) **Telescopic groups** are groups which meet five or six times in a short period of time. A current problem is taken up as a major issue. For example absenteeism, and group formed by members who are found to be excessively absent. The members are made aware of the reason for being part of the group. A plan is made for a group which includes activities which are gratifying and ego supportive.

5) **Socio educational groups** These group involve the other stakeholders like the parents and staff members to improve the school functioning. For example ,suitable parents are depending on their need, aptitude and interest are taken as members of the group. They are informed that the purpose of the groups is to improve their performance as the parents. Sessions are planned which will provide them with new skills and knowledge. Films, lectures, role plays and member presentations are the best means.

Student Friendly Environment

Group Work has to ensure that a student friendly environment is prevalent in the school. In this context the group worker has to focus on the following issues:

1) Sensitizing teachers to understand the common emotional problems of students

2) Training teachers in basic counseling skills (bare foot counseling)

3) Training teachers to identify and refer students who need professional mental health intervention.

4) Training students in sex and sexuality

5) Imparting life skills education.

6) Promoting a conducive environment and to eliminate problems like ragging, teasing and bullying.

7) Helping students to cope with academic stress

8) Training teachers to adopt non aggressive styles of promoting discipline.

9) Interacting with parents as a group and to educate them on the psychosocial needs of their children.

Principles to be followed while working with children

1) Confidentiality is very important as children are not often able to keep personal information to themselves. Hence the group worker should use terms very carefully. Words that will be understood wrongly by students should be avoided.

2) Avoid using sides. Students may blame teacher or parent for some of the difficulties they face. It is important that the group works describes the problems rather than point fingers at others.

3) Explain the purpose of the group and its goals to the members. Do not underestimate the student's capacity to understand the group work.

4) Listen to the opinion of the members even though you may disagree with it.

5) Choose those activities and games which will be useful and enjoyable for the members.

6) Prepare for termination as students may become attached to you and will suffer if you leave them suddenly.

7) Homogeneity in terms of age, sex and class is a prerequisite for successful group work in children.

Camping and Indian Youth Organizations

Camping signifies the establishment of temporary living quarters in an underdeveloped area (Schwartz). The purpose of camping is to give opportunities for people to move outdoor and use the natural environment for recreational purposes. Many organizations use camping as means to develop young minds. The experience of camping is aimed at the following goals- to improve the teamwork skills among the members; to help members develop a better understanding the behaviour of others and their own behaviour; improve communication skills; better his/ her leadership qualities.

According to the American Camping Association the following are the benefits of camping-

Social Skills Development

- Leadership

- Communication

- Participation

Self-respect and Character Building

- Responsibility

- Resourcefulness

- Resilience

Community Living/Service Skills

- Caring

- Fairness

- Citizenship

- Trustworthiness

Camping provides group worker numerous opportunities for practice. According to Schwartz 'the group workers concern with both learning and play coupled with the intense preoccupation with the benefits of the small group experience, found in camping both a stimulating outlet for service and a ready-made laboratory for demonstrating the social importance of group experience under professional leadership'.

In India a number of organizations conducts camps for children and young people- National Social Service (NSS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), Bharat scouts and guides and Nehru Yuvak Kendra (NYK). A number of private organizations also conduct camp. We will briefly study about these organizations.

NSS was started on 24th September 1969. The main Objectives of NSS are:

i)   Understand the community in which they work.

ii) Understand themselves in relation to their community

iii) Identify the needs and problems of the community and involve them in problem solving.

iv) Develop among them a sense of social civic responsibility.

v)   Utilize their knowledge in finding practical solution to individual and community problems.

vi) Develop competence required for living and sharing responsibilities.

vii) Gain skills in mobilising community participation.

viii) Acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitudes.

ix) Develop capacity to emergencies and natural disaster, and

x) Practice national integration and social harmony

An important activity of the NSS is the 10 day rural camp in remote areas. Usually a theme is chosen for the camp- Literacy, development, health. Spreading awareness among the people about the issue, sharmadan, community meals and group games are the important component of the camps.

National Cadet Corps

National Cadet Corps is a Tri-Services Organisation , comprising Army, Navy and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens.

The aims of the National Cadet Corps (NCC)

1) To develop qualities of Character, Courage, Comradeship, Discipline, Leadership, Secular Outlook, Spirit of Adventure and the ideals of Selfless Service amongst the Youth of the Country.

2) To Create a Human Resource of Organized, Trained and Motivated Youth, to Provide Leadership in all Walks of life and be Always Available for the Service of the Nation.

3) To Provide a Suitable Environment to Motivate the Youth to Take Up a Career in the Armed Forces

Nehru Yuvak Kendra

Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan was started in 1972, and has been active ever since in providing the youth of the country with opportunities to grow and develop themselves. It currently has 500 district level offices, 2.16 lakh village level youth clubs and 80 lakh rural youth affiliated to it in 13-35 age group. The NYKS today prepares over 11,000 youth leaders every year.

Possible Activities for Young People

Play

Play is used as recreational and a therapeutic tool. Recreational activities of the children like games and sports are useful for the children to develop healthy physical and mental status. Play can be used in children' groups for the following (1) Play is a natural activity for the child and the worker gets to observe him in this situation. These observations will be more helpful in assessing the child's behaviour than in a formal setting interviewing the child. He is likely to be intimidated by a formal interview (2) Playing helps build rapport between the child and the worker (3) Playing also contributes to creating a favorable child friendly atmosphere in the school (4) It can give opportunities to develop a person's social skills.

Outdoor games like cricket, football, throw ball, kho-kho can be used, so can indoor games. The effectiveness of the experience of the game is increased if discussions follow the game. The discussion that follows should focus on the behaviour of the members during the game. The team work they exhibited, the levels of cooperation they achieved and so on. The discussion should be aimed at increasing their self-awareness and thereby contributing to their personal growth. The group worker should therefore encourage members to share their feeling and opinions on the game,

his own performance and of others. Members are also encouraged to react to the opinions expressed by others on them. The group will be a mirror for the members which will increase their insight into their own behaviour.

Play is also used therapeutically. But it is only after adequate training should group workers use these therapies. Play in children is equivalent to association in adults (Dwivedi, 2005). By using the techniques of association the adult's unconscious mind is probed and understood. Association can be used in children and a suitable alternative is play. Many of the child's feelings and emotion that remained unexpressed is revealed while playing with toys and drawing. The group worker interprets these actions and assesses the child's behaviour.

Songs, dances and exercises

Songs, dances and exercise which is done along with children of similar ages help improve the child's mental health. Such activities require the child to coordinate with the actions of others. Also most of these activities involve numerous repetitions of the same actions. The true effects of messages and learning in ritualized context are powerful in penetrating the depths of consciousness. (Dwivedi, 2005)

Drills are used to develop coordination and alertness in the students.

Psychodrama

Psychodrama is a more advanced means of treatment for children, adolescents and youths. Drama can be used to provide learning experiences to the participants and the viewers. Boehm and Boehm give the seven stages of community theatre:

a) Establishment of a group of community members who initiate the idea;

b) Group discussion of issues, problems and conflicts in the life of the community and the actors;

c) Collection of material in the community (for example, articles, photos, recordings);

d) Creation and writing of the play by the group;

e) Production and rehearsal of the play, as well as preparation for its performance (with the help of other community members, such as in preparing the stage, building the scenery and selling tickets);

f) Performance of the play in the community and elsewhere, with an emphasis on dialogue with the audience;

g) Development of leadership within the group and a common effort to influence the socio-political system outside the framework of the theatre.

Conclusion

Group work in educational setting can play an important role in moulding individual personalities beyond the curriculum. Equally important the maladjusted student can be better addressed by combining the group work with counseling. It also helps other students to understand the problems of the students who take part in the treatment process.

Problems like time and support for group work can be dealt with if its results are positive and shown to the management. Existing organizations like NSS and NYK can be used to boost group work practice in educational settings.

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17

Role of Social Worker in Group Work

*Manju Kumar

Introduction

You may look at this chapter as a recapitulation of all that you have learnt about the method and practice of social group work, especially, in terms of what a group worker does in different kinds of groups, within the context of values and philosophy of social work profession.

Social workers adopt many roles to achieve their goals of social justice, the enhancement of the quality of life of people, and the development of the full potential of each individual, family and group in society. Some social workers act as planners and developers of services. Others manage services and try to ensure that systems work smoothly. Some act as advocates and negotiators for those discriminated against or unable to act for themselves. Other social workers work as therapists with individuals, couples, families and groups as they deal with issues that arise throughout their lives. Some social workers act as information givers, providing enquirers with information about a large range of resources and services. In some areas of practice, such as corrections and child protection, social workers make assessments of situations and may write reports with recommendations that may affect the lives of those with whom they work.

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The very fact that social group work has been acknowledged as a method of social work implies that group work method shares with other social work methods the goal, basic premises, values and beliefs, generic principles and interventional strategies of social work profession. The concept of 'role' is widely used to clarify group worker's authority, responsibilities, functions, and tasks; thereby highlighting the impact of group work practice on persons who come together as members of a group.

For the sake of convenience, the term 'group worker' in the masculine, rather than 'social worker in group work', will be used throughout the following discussion.

Concept of Role and its Implication for a Group Worker

Role and status are two important concepts which prove to be valuable in explaining the responsibilities, obligations and power that devolve on the group worker in his capacity as a professional associated with some social agency.

Role: Definitions

The dictionaries define role as 'the actions and activities assigned to or required or expected of a person'; 'normal or customary activity of a person in a particular social setting'; and, 'behavior in relation to a specific function or task that a person (the group worker) is expected to perform'. The roles are concomitant to a status or a social position. A set of expectations govern the behavior of persons holding a particular role in society; a set of norms that defines how persons in a particular position should behave.

As a sociological term, a role is described as a comprehensive pattern of behaviour that is socially recognized, providing a means of identifying and placing

an individual in a society. It also serves as a strategy for coping with recurrent situations and dealing with the roles of others.

The social 'worker' is an achieved status, a position that a person assumes voluntarily which reflects personal skills, abilities, and efforts. Roles associated with this status are governed by the norms, standards and professional ethics.

A role, therefore, is a series of actions which guide and determine our behaviour according to what is expected of us in a certain situation. Roles generate consistency and predictability of behaviour. All roles are functional in that they serve some purpose.

Each social status, further, involves not a single associated role, but an array of roles or role-set, that is, a complement of role-relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular social status. While working with groups the social worker performs a variety of roles, depending on different situations, groups and persons. However, the roles remain relatively stable even though different people occupy the position of a group worker.

The discussion of roles of group workers, therefore, is useful in conceptualizing their activities, evaluation of professional interventions, and training of new professionals.

Roles of a social worker working with Groups

Widely quoted authors Compton and Galaway (1984) focused on social worker's, interventive roles whose enactment meant the translation of expectations (of the profession) into behaviour. These roles refer to the behaviours through which the client – an individual, a family, a group or a community – expects the worker to help accomplish goals, agreed upon mutually by the client

and the worker. The roles conceptualized by the authors include the following:

a) **social broker –** connecting the client system with the community resources based on broad knowledge of community resources and the operating procedures of the agencies; the worker may bring the specialized resources to the group; referral is a basic part of enactment of the broker's role.

b) **enabler –** assisting clients to find coping strengths and resources within themselves to produce changes necessary for accomplishing the stated objectives with the supporting and enabling function for the client, whether individual or group; for example, the worker who assists a group of residents in a community in thinking through the need for and then in identifying ways of establishing a day-care centre; who helps a group to identify sources of internal conflict and influences blocking a group's goal achievement and then to discover ways of dealing with these difficulties is serving as an enabler in relation to the group. Encouraging verbalization, providing for ventilation of feelings, examining the pattern of relationships, offering encouragement and reassurance, engaging in logical discussion and rational decision-making are other avenues through which enabler's role may be enacted. (Compton & Galaway, 1984, p. 430)

c) **teacher –** providing groups with new information necessary for coping with difficult situations, assisting group members in practicing new behaviour or skills. It is different from broker's role as it implies providing additional resources to members' environment; for example, supplying information about low cost nutritional diet; informing parents regarding child development for coping with difficult problems of children; providing vocational guidance to adult

patients requiring rehabilitation after loss of limbs. Teacher's role helps group members make informed choices and cope better with social reality. One important dimension of this role is role-modelling - offering to group members a model of behaviour, of communication and relating.

d) **mediator –** efforts to resolve conflicts that may exist between the client system and external systems like other persons or organizations by finding a common ground on which they might reach a resolution of the conflict (utilizing techniques of constructive conflict resolution); for example, residents' group wishing to secure a playground but not having adequate political clout to do so.

e) **advocate –** Speaking for the client (individual, family, group or community) by presenting and arguing the clients' cause. It becomes essential when working with client-systems who belong to disadvantaged and marginalized groups in society, are oppressed due to structural social inequalities, or are invisible and voiceless. Advocacy is becoming increasingly popular role of social workers in the context of focus on social justice concerns and human rights. Unlike other roles, advocacy can be used without direct involvement of the client-system.

Besides these roles conceptualized by Compton and Galaway, others mentioned in social work literature include the roles of Organizer (covering planning and implementing action), consultant and facilitator. The role of facilitator is relevant in the changed perception of group members as interdependent entities engaged in mutual aid based support groups and self-help groups which require minimal professional intervention.

On one point all the experts agree that the roles mentioned above are neither discreet entities nor comprise an

exhaustive list. There is often blurring of boundaries and hence overlap. The roles also get into a new constellation as and when required by the demands of the situation, purpose of the group (the client) and the dynamics emerging out of interaction among the three basic elements of group work practice, that is, group (along with its members), worker and the social environment.

Group Worker as A Leader of the Group

One of the frequently debated dimensions of the role of a group worker is that of leadership. While some authors perceive group workers in the role of group leaders others focus more on the worker's 'helping' role. A brief exposition of both the perspectives follows below.

A) Leader refers to a person who is designated to exert positive influence over others. The process and the function through which he does so are defined as leadership. Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the group in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leadership is critical—for the vision and to see the commonalities; to see the group through; and to identify and mobilise resources for the group.

The group worker occupies the position of a leader on account of his employment with the social agency; the position which gives the worker authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives, based, in turn, on professional knowledge and skills.

As a leader, the worker is the **'central person'** in the group, often being the person who formed the group and to whom more communications are made than anyone else. At the initial stages of group formation, the worker decides about the membership, structure and the rules of conducting the group sessions. Even

later, if the members are not sufficiently confident, the worker may have to play an active role in guiding members to take necessary decisions about group structure, norms and tasks to be performed by different members.

Another facet of the role as a leader is that the worker acts as an **'influence person'.** 'Influence has been defined as the general acts of producing an effect on another person, group, or organization through exercise of a personal or organizational capacity. Influence is powerful in that it can produce change, persuade or convince, overcome obstacles, motivate and bring about attitudinal changes. As a leader and an influence person, the worker's input is to create a climate favourable for the needed work (achieving the group goal), heighten the motivation of those who need to work, 'provide a vision' for the work to be done together, and deal with the resistance involved. An important base for influence is the skill and knowledge of the worker in developing and using relationships with a variety of persons in a variety of situations. The relationship between the worker and the group members is a major source of a worker's influence. Influence can be exerted by those who know about and can use the planned change process. Influence derives from understandings about human development, human diversity, the variety of social problems, and the availability of services and resources. (Johnson, p. 89)

The real power of the worker arises, therefore, from his capacity to influence situations within the group - to influence, guide and direct group processes and interactions within the group. The fact that group work is described also as 'guided group interaction' goes to validate the group worker's role as a leader who guides

as well as directs group situations and processes so as to achieve group goals. The worker is an important influence on members' behaviour, interpersonal relationships, patterns of communication, on roles members are willing to perform, and on realization of group's purpose. The worker may, for supporting the group's purpose, influence persons and systems operating in the external environment of the group in the form of negotiation, mediation, referral, and advocacy.

Despite the fact that the worker has authority and power to influence the group processes, the worker is bound by professional ethics or code of conduct to use this power in the service of the clients, that is, the group members and not for his own ends. Workers need to be aware of the nature of the power and influence they wield in relationship with the group members. Every effort needs to be made to guard against the potential for abuse of power with the clients (group members). These two facets of group work functions, namely, expertise and its selfless use for the benefit of group members place the worker at a distance from the members. Although the worker participates in the group processes, he is not a member of the group in the same way that the other participants are. Unlike the group members, a worker is mandated to participate in the group on account of his professional understanding of the members' needs and interests. The worker, in fact cannot deny authority devolved on him. "Reluctance or refusal by the group worker to provide leadership to act on his authority can be very damaging at critical stages of transition when the group rightfully looks to the worker for guidance, reassurance and structure". (Benson, p. 38)

B) The other view point focuses on the worker in the helping role. The worker is seen in the group as an **enabler** to do things *with* the group rather than *for* the group. His influence, it is claimed, is indirect rather than direct. A great deal of facilitation may be done nonverbally, with eye contact and a nod to someone who is trying to participate or a smile when a member has made a valuable contribution. He works through the members of the group, helps members to determine group's objectives and purpose; helps them to develop group-feeling; acquire an understanding of their capacities and limitations; recognize internal conflicts and problems and to resolve the same with the worker's help. The worker helps the group to identify indigenous leaders to take responsibility for group's effective functioning. (Trecker, p.26)

Another role which is preferred by those favouring a non-leadership stance is that of a **facilitator**. The group worker is not seen as the only expert in the group. In fact, each group member is a potential leader and helper for the other members. The primary task of the group worker is to facilitate the group process so that the group becomes a prime influence on the behaviour of the group members. Facilitating the group process involves motivating and assisting members to participate actively and collaboratively in the process because the primary means of help in the group is the support and challenge members give to each other, supplemented by the worker's inputs to the members' work. The group dynamics comprising of interactions, relationships, communications, and role performances within the boundaries set by the members themselves by definition, is the prime source of change, growth and satisfaction. The worker facilitates this process to run smoothly, without conflicts and road blocks so that members can benefit from positive and constructive group experience. The group worker makes it possible that the

group becomes a mutual aid and mutual need-meeting system, a primary source of help.

In the role of a **teacher** the worker teaches the group how to function as a group. The group members, identifying with the worker, are likely to learn roles of a leader. Leadership will shift during the course of a group's life with several members taking turns as leaders, or sharing leadership depending on the session or content.

In a support group of parents of disturbed children, the worker and parents both perform the role of experts, though in different spheres. The worker has to appreciate the expertise of parents in the context of their experiences of having a disturbed child. In encouraging and guiding one parent, the worker shares his helping role with other members (parents) of the group.

The aim of the facilitator is a) to establish the conditions and trust in the group whereby members can help one another and then to 'get out of the way' to allow them to do it; b) to benefit the persons in a group through making as full use as possible of the potentials of the group as a medium for help. Although, the extent to which this is possible will depend on the type of group in question. (Whitaker, 1985) In the final analysis, however, the facilitator has ultimate responsibility for the group and can never give this over.

Social group work is often best done by combining these roles. A competent worker will move from one to the other as needed by the group. It is important not to be more active, not to be a leader or a teacher, when the group can do just fine with a facilitator or enabler. The idea of many groups is to have members exercise self-determination and learn how to make more effective decisions. The achievement of these goals is threatened by a dominant group worker. It is also important to recognize when the

group needs a leader and to act effectively if so, or to teach when the group needs to learn new ways to interact or need new information. The most important thing is to be aware that groups have different needs at different times in their development, and that different groups need different mixtures of these roles. Three main activities of the worker, described first by Benne and Sheats in 1948 (cited by Benson, p.70) whether as a leader or a facilitator/enabler include task, maintenance and personal functions. Task functions refer to those needs and behaviours and roles that are required to help the group achieve its goals; the second, maintenance functions encompass those behaviours and roles that help the group look after its emotional and interpersonal well-being; and the third functions are concerned with personal motives, needs and interests that each individual member brings to the group.

Role Differentiation: Factors Affecting Roles of Group Worker

In the preceding discussion, there have been numerous references to changes occurring in the perception of group worker's roles according to different group situations. Here we are selecting two important factors which influence the roles of a group worker, namely, the purpose and types of group. Because groups and the situations within which they operate are so different, the worker needs to first understand the group and the circumstances surrounding it before attempting to define specific aspects of his role. (Trecker, p.34)

Purpose of the Group and Roles of a Group Worker

Purpose for which a group comes into being is the most basic determinant of what the worker's responsibilities are.

The amount and nature of help that the group members expect from the worker, the amount of autonomy that the members are anxious to retain and the content of the group experience (programme) that is essential or advisable to achieve the specific purpose – are some of the important determinants of the worker's role.

Purpose is the dynamic force that can be mobilized into different groups. Groups based on purpose provide different group experiences to its members. Accordingly, the interventive roles expected of the group worker also vary. While the basic three elements of the worker's role – task-achievement, group maintenance and personal need satisfaction – remain constant (though with varying emphases and combinations), the purpose determines the nature of relationship between the worker and the group members through which these functions are performed. Given below are some of the categories of purposes for which the groups come into existence.

- Enhancement of relationships – to resolve problems in social relationships, to cope with deficits, to strengthen mutual and reciprocal relationships. Whether the purpose is to correct maladaptive patterns of relationships or to help 'normal' persons grow socially, the worker has to use his authority in a flexible manner. The specific purpose will determine whether he provides direction, support, a role-model, a comfortable and a stress-free environment in which to interact and relate; or he facilitates content of the group experience (programme) that offer opportunities for expression, mutual give and take, and growth.

- Dealing with problems of social functioning- One of the purposes which traditionally belong to group work practice is dealing with problems of social functioning. The worker engages the group members in problem-

solving process and helps them to acquire coping skills in the context of problems of social functioning. Whether the worker has a more directive and active stance or relatively more non-directive depends more on the needs and capacities of the group members than on the worker's orientation.

- Enhancing Social competence –is preventive in nature. The need for group work service stems from lack of adequate knowledge, social experience, and skills for coping with anticipated event or situation out of a psycho-social development phase or transition to a new or changed role like persons about to get married, or prospective adoptive parents; and persons with physical disability to get socialized into new or changed roles expected of them. Teaching, information giving, brokering, facilitating role-rehearsing and help develop a structure to the group that provides safe and comfortable group environment for experimenting are some of the roles expected of the worker. The worker may also have to engage in referral, negotiation for procurement of needed resources and services, mediation, and advocacy.

- Coping with stress –development of capacities to cope effectively with stress caused by situations due to life transition, life-threatening illness, divorce, physical violence, or rape. Members need support from the worker but also from their peers or members of the group. They need to disclose and manage emotions, release tension, enhance damaged self-esteem, and discover new ways of dealing with stress and realities of life. The worker's role primarily is that of an enabler or even that of a therapist. The worker, though, encourages the members to draw upon the potentials of group processes as medium of help. He offers necessary information about available services and

provisions that the members can have recourse to so as to deal with post traumatic experiences. Handling emotions, clarification and interpretation are important inputs by the worker. His role in establishing group structures and patterns of open communication, and encouraging participation in group processes go a long way in alleviating stress of the members.

· Empowerment – Democratic, empowering and participatory approaches are inherent in the ethos, Group Work as being a part of the broader Social Work Philosophy. "Helping people to help themselves" implies worker's intervention to empower people to take charge of their own lives. However, empowerment belonging to the category of purposes of group formation is more specific. It acquired prominence relatively recently due to social work's adopting securing of social justice as its mission.

Empowerment comes through being able to understand how the problem lies outside the individual and results from oppressive policies, practices, behaviours and the ideas on which these are founded. Empowerment becomes a strategy of choice while working with minority groups, disadvantaged groups, women or populations at risk. It is meant to provide the group members with support, skills, understanding needed to allow them take control of their own lives and achieve power in situations where earlier they felt powerless. Considering that power equation is tilted in favour of the worker in worker - member relationship, it is essential that the members feel equal to the workers, engage in a dialogue rather than submit to directives of the worker. Once the necessary information for consciousness-raising has been provided, the members are expected to take their own decisions, deal with internal conflicts, and negotiate with external systems. The worker may need to be more active initially while motivating the

members to form the group; then, perform the role of a teacher, facilitate the process of capacity building, engage in supportive roles to enhance their self-esteem and sometimes assist in negotiating with the systems which have been oppressive and discriminatory towards the group members. However, the purpose of empowering the members precludes continued or active role of the professional. The mutual-aid potential of the group, rather than the expertise and authority of the worker, is heavily drawn upon. People, who come together as a consequence of having similar problems or concerns, find themselves in a position where they can collectively confront these forces of oppression, in ways which they could not do single-handedly. Empowerment connotes that members have acquired necessary capacity, skill and confidence to deal with oppressive life experiences. The role of the professional facilitator who is successful in empowering peer leadership will gradually transfer into that of a consultant to deal with specific work-related problems.

The discussion above does not include a complete list of purposes for which people come together in groups. It is only illustrative of how purposes affect the kind of roles a group worker is expected to perform in the group.

Types of Groups and Roles of a Group Worker

One of the important determinants of roles of a group worker is the type of the group with which he is engaged. The worker's inputs, stance, approach and style is differentially aligned to the type of a group – is it voluntary group or involuntary? Has the group been deliberately formed or has sprung up spontaneously? Is group open-ended with fluid membership or closed with specified tenure and fixed membership? Is the group comprises of

children, adults; able-bodies or differently-abled? Is it a support group, self-help group, social action group, interest group or a treatment group? Keeping generic roles in mind, the worker offers a combination of different roles, in varying emphases and perspectives.

Involuntary groups in which members' participation is mandatory- like group of probationers or delinquent youth – the worker has to put in considerable time and effort to clarify the purpose and win the members' trust. As the worker is perceived to belong to the establishment with power to supervise their bahaviour and reactions, maintaining records and reporting to authorities, this task is very tough and requiring deep empathic understanding. The worker has to deal with internal conflicts, to facilitate establishment of safe and stress free group structures and norms, and to encourage interest-based programme content. Challenging and confrontation, interpretation and building self-esteem along with provision of support are vital interventive roles of a worker in such groups.

In **open-ended groups**, the worker is responsible in helping existing members to accept new members, the latter to understand the group structure and rules of participation; and help members review group's purpose. Since composition of a group impacts the group dynamics in a significant way, the gate - keeping becomes an important function of the worker. Open-ended groups pose another challenge to group leadership-whether professional or indigenous -, that is, the size of the group at any given time. The kind of programme that the group wishes to engage in may present limitations either because the group has become too large or too small; the skill levels may also change. The worker has to quickly assess the situation and enable the group members to adapt to the new situation; divide the group into sub-groups or change the programme.

We have already mentioned that worker's role in **support groups** is of a facilitator; helping members to draw upon the helping potentials of their peers (members) in the group. The worker's role in **self-help groups** involves more behind-the-scene activities, such as recruiting, linking group members with other groups and systems, limited role as a facilitator within the group, supporting indigenous leaders and acting as a consultant. Worker rarely has an active role in the group's activities.

The worker has considerable control over who is invited to join a **therapy group**. Therapy groups seek to produce individual growth and change through the relationships established among members with the help of a professional therapist. Using professional methods, therapist encourages and interprets "here and now "events among members to produce insight and change. The worker often plays an active role in helping the members decide group structure and group norms. As far as the interpersonal relationships are concerned, the worker is more of an enabler than a leader. The worker, however, is responsible for group maintenance and personal growth tasks, encouraging the members to identify and plan positive programme content as an instrument for achieving treatment goals.

Task groups clearly focus more on accomplishing a specific task**.** While the task-related responsibilities of the worker take precedence over the other two, namely personal growth and group maintenance, the latter are nevertheless as essential because it is through the instrumentality of the positive group experience that the goal of task accomplishment is achieved. Depending on the level of skills and capacities of the members, the group - feeling in the group, the worker has to undertake roles comprising all the three components. **Recreational** groups also need development of group cohesion before the content of group

experience adds to the pleasure and satisfaction of the members.

Stages of Group Development and Roles of A Group Worker

In earlier chapters you have learnt that groups change overtime. Group process is "a frame of reference which limits, focuses and directs the worker's efforts in a group" (Saari & Galinsky quoted by Benson, p.74) It is based on the assumption that group process can be controlled and influenced by the worker's actions. Group process can be defined as change over time in the internal structure, organization and culture of the whole or part of the group or individual member. There is a movement and change in the quality of interactions, relationships and communication patterns, in the degree of trust and cohesion, and in the nature of members' participation in group's programme. To observe and understand these changes occurring over time in the group's life span, comprehending the concept of group development is very useful for the group worker as it helps him to determine what needs to be done at a given point of time. Groups do not move sequentially through discreet phases; they may move backwards and forwards or sideways. Each group may spend different amount of time at any one phase of growth or may even move cyclically. Consideration of broad phases of development in terms of major tasks expected of the worker is likely to prove more useful, especially to a new professional.

At the **pre-group** or pre-affiliation stage, the worker acts as a visionary who establishes the need and feasibility of launching a group and then a motivator to recruit potential members to the group. The role of the worker changes once the members have come together. At the **initial stage**, variously designated as inclusion, forming, orientation or

affiliation stage, the members look to worker for direction, structure, approval and help at difficult times. The worker has to be more active at this time as the members are dependent on the worker. The worker welcomes all the members; allays their anxieties; helps members to communicate with each other and explore; clarifies purpose; to make connections among the members; and establish tentative group structure and norms, that is rules for conducting group sessions and for members' participation. The worker assumes a nurturing and guiding stance with the members.

At the **beginning of the middle stage**, the previously friendly members may reveal a negative streak. The members here are seeking individual roles. In what is described as storming or stage of seeking power control, conflicts develop and there is search for individual autonomy. If not handled appropriately, there may be drop outs. The worker recognizes this conflict as a natural phenomenon and helps the group to revise group structure and group norms. Development of new norms is ensured through members' sharing of ideas and feelings about their expectations from the group and about how the group should function. Giving opportunity to the members to express their feelings and ideas, the worker plays a vital role in group maintenance. He encourages the members in the tasks of harmonizing, compromising, setting standards and expressing group feeling. At the same time he ensures that individual goals are not submerged in the group goals. He ensures that each member gets an opportunity for expression of ideas and feelings. The worker, while performing the roles of facilitator and enabler, does not relinquish his control over the group processes. Judicious use of challenging and confronting and clarifying issues helps the members to view their behaviour in the right perspective. His interventions enable the members

move from less intimate to more intimate system of relationships within the group. Setting of norms (also called stage of **norming or negotiation**) and emergence of indigenous leadership take the group to the next level of development. The members engage in conflict resolution; goals, roles and tasks are designated and accepted. Group traditions are stronger, norms develop, personal involvement intensifies; group cohesion is stronger; and members are freer in sharing information and opinions. (Johnson, p.207)

After the control issues are resolved, the group now settles down to work on its tasks and goals, whether dealing with personal problems and anxieties of the members or accomplishing tasks for which the group came into being. Variously called **performing**, functional, operation or cohesion stage, the role of the worker becomes less active and more facilitative or consultative. The worker provides support, or relevant information, The members work together more effectively. There is growing ability to plan and carry out projects relevant to the purpose of the goal. There is higher degree of integration and cohesion. The worker moves into a less central role. The worker monitors the group's functioning, gives appropriate feedback to the group whether there is an affinity between the purpose and the group programme. Here the worker's influence is more indirect and subtle than direct. The group will expect the worker to be available and provide necessary inputs in case of crisis or some difficulty. Encouraging members to make choices and fostering creativity are other tasks that a worker performs at this mature stage of the group.

Termination, disintegration, separation, mourning or ending stage requires different set of inputs from the worker. According to Benson (p.155), the worker is again more dominant in this stage and offers a mix of nurturing, guidance, and protection and support roles. The worker

deals with physical fact of separation; feelings of anxiety and facilitates members' intellectual understanding of what have they gained through the group experience. The worker helps the members to assess their group experience and to identify ways of stabilizing the gains achieved.

Identifying a group's stage of development allows the worker to respond to the group with better understanding about structures and functioning of the group – which is a means for enhancing the interactional process of the group. (Johnson, p. 208)

Conclusion

Depending on the needs of the individual members, purpose of the group and the stage of group development, the group worker performs a range of roles in his work with the groups- ranging from role of a leader, organizer, motivator, and planner to helper, broker, enabler, facilitator, guide, consultant, mediator, advocate and role-model.

Authority and power are inherent in a group worker's position on account of his professional knowledge, skills and access to certain resource. While the worker need not deny this, he is expected to make judicious use of his authority in the service of the client groups and not for his own benefit. The professional code of conduct offers a number of safeguards to make it possible. The challenge before the group worker is that even while performing the role of a leader, he shares this role with group members. Each group member is a potential helper in the group and may offer a particular kind of expertise. Even when he directs the group members, he is expected to facilitate the members' capacity to get empowered to do things themselves, to take control of their own lives; in short, encourage the emergence of indigenous leadership. The

worker has to operate from democratic, empowering, participative perspectives maintaining strength - based orientation. He is committed to foster group's mutual-aid propensities. Besides, the worker does not perform any one role from among those mentioned above, at any given point of time. He is usually performing a mixture of different roles, the emphasis and amount of the ingredients being different in different groups and situations. As mentioned earlier, social group work is often best done by combining these roles. A competent worker will move from one to the other or combine them as needed by the group.

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