



---

## SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN INDIA

Mrs. Anika Sharma  
(Assistant professor)  
Guru Nanak Khalsa College Yamuna Nagar  
(anikasharma1426@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*The article discusses on background of social work & social work education as it began in India .it provides details on the objectives of social work. The article also traces, in brief .The developmental history of the social work in India, and it's also describes about field work in social work & what kind of challenge do you have to face .this article will be very useful for social work students & teachers it will help in understanding of social work education.*

**KEY WORDS :** *social work education ,field work ,India, challenges*

Social work is a practice based profession that promotes social change, development, cohesion the empowerment of people & communities. Social work practice involves the understanding of human development, behavior & the social economic & cultural institutions & interactions. Courses included men and women who were willing to volunteer for the

Professional social work in India has its origins because of a short term training course organized in Mumbai by social service league. The training Courses included men and women who were willing to volunteer for the course of social service. Till that time social workers did not get any remuneration for their work. This work was a social service to humanity.

This work training in national social work in its true sense began in 1936 with the establishment of the Sir Dorabaji Tata graduate school of social work in Mumbai, which remained the only institution to import social work education until independence.

After independence, kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi and the college of social service, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmadabad, started imparting social work education in 1947 itself. In 1948 , the north young women's Christian Association of India started Delhi school of social work with financial assistance from the foreign division of the American young women's Christian association; and this school of social work was given affiliation by the university of Delhi in 1961. The M.S.university, Baroda Started the teaching of social work as part of university system in 1949. Likewise, lucknow university started a diploma in social science under the aegis of J.K. institute



---

Prof. Sanjay Bhatt clearly categorized development of social work education in to in to various stages such as:

1. Initiation/ Inception (1936-46):

It is denoted by establishment of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social work established in 1936 and now called as Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS)

2. Experimentation (1947-56):

In this phase, Delhi School of Social Work, Kashi Vidyapith, Gujarat Vidyapith

And similar other institutions were established.

3. Expansion (1957-76):

In this phase, many social work educational institutions in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and other states were established and there was expansion in terms of number of institutions across the length and breadth of the country.

4. Moderation/Stagnation (1977-86):

Unlike expansion phase, in this period not see many new social work education institutions in the country.

5. Explosion (1987)

This phase crossed the 200 mark in terms of social work institutions in India (Thomas: 2010).

It is also observed that most of the social work educational institutions are located in urban areas; students practice fieldwork in urban places and prefer jobs in cities and metropolis. However, social work professionals are most needed in rural areas as a huge majority of population lives in rural areas.

**Structure and Content of Social Work: India**

In India, the structure of social work education in Bachelor (BSW) and Master's Degree (MSW, MA) is credit based semester system in many university departments and schools of social work across the country. The BSW is the first professional degree in social work in India, the main objective of the BSW degree is to equip the social work professionals with a generalist practice with individual, families, groups, organizations, and communities, while the Masters level other, while there are no single guidelines framing social work curriculum and the field-work component. On an average, the social work degree at the bachelor's level carries a maximum of 80 credits across theory and the practice components.

---



---

Some of the schools follow three days of theory class and three days of practice in the bachelor's degree level, while some others follow two days of practice. There are no block placements components of a month long work in an agency or community or the department of the government or a hospital in the bachelor's degree level but there is a provision for the study tour with supervised instruction by the faculty. At the Masters' level, the social work curriculum does differ from institution to institution and the specializations offered by the schools are also of different. The Master's course in social work bear 80-90 credits of requirement spread across four semesters. Out of the total number of credits, one third is reserved for the fieldwork practicum. Once again there is a variation in the specializations provided across the schools in India. Many schools of social work and institutions provide the three basic specializations like Human Resource and Personnel Management, Community Development/ Social Development and Medical and Psychiatric social work. The Masters level course has the provision for the block placement components as compulsory requirements in some schools of social work while an optional in other schools. Employment opportunities for social workers in India remain limited in the government sectors as such most social workers are employed in Non-governmental sectors. While roles may demand social work background a number of jobs do not specify any preference to social work qualification in job advertisements.

#### PROSPECTS OF FIELD WORK TRAINING IN SOCIAL WORK

Social work students generally considered field work training as the most important component in their professional education. In social work curriculum, practice and knowledge (theory) are two integral components in the curriculum, and yet they are often regarded as separate and to some extent antithetical (the "theoretical" vs. the "practical"). A unique feature of fieldwork training is that training and practice take place in the same place. Hence, students are not learning "about" a practice as is the case in classroom instruction but learning "in" practice. Field placement is one of the most exciting and exhilarating parts of a formal social work education. It is also one of the most challenging. More than anything else, it requires students to look inside themselves and examine themselves as future social workers. However, most of the time, the students will feel better equipped for their professional career after finishing their practicum. The field work goal is to develop the student's competence in the practice of social work. Field education is an experiential form of teaching and learning that takes place in a service setting. Field work practices offered the most opportunity to understand the requirements of the people in the background of prevailing cultural traditions and values and thereby, offered opportunities to indigenize practice. It also gave opportunities for innovation.



- 
- A few definitions of fieldwork training in social work education as defined by professional scholars are given under:

1. Fieldwork in social work education means any kind of practical experience in a social organization or agency, if this experience has been deliberately arranged, for the education of the students who are undertaking the courses partly or wholly designed for those who intend to become social workers.

2. Fieldwork in social work education is a guided interactive process between a student and a social life situation. In this, social work as a profession has an abiding and deep concern that needs to be addressed, remedied, improved or changed for a fuller (a richer) development of human environmental potentials.

3. Fieldwork in social work is carried out in and through social welfare agencies and communities, where the student learns skills, tests out knowledge according to an educational plan. The whole programme is student and field specific. Fieldwork training is a supervised practice of student social worker under the guidance of a trained social work educator or field personnel. It has been defined as educationally sponsored attachment of social work students to an institution, agency, or a section of community in which they are helped to extend their knowledge, understand and experience the impact of human needs. Such an experience is deliberately arranged on a whole or part time basis.

#### PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN FIELDWORK TRAINING

The schools of social work in India face many problems which begin with the evaluation of their performance. The problems can again be classified into three specific groups, viz., schools specific, student specific and agency specific. The major problems of the schools of social work in India in general and impact on training are as under: School specific problems :

1. Finding suitable agencies and developing them as workshops for the students of social work education thereby restricting the scope of fieldwork training.
2. Lack of practical-oriented faculty, due to which the schools are not in a position to impart training in social work education in a professional and practical sense.
3. Lack of suitable content of fieldwork training due to which the training cannot be imparted as per the expectations of professional social work.
4. Lack of a fieldwork manual, due to which students are often confused as to what kind of work is to be carried out in the agencies during the training period throughout the academic year.



---

5. Dearth of literature on fieldwork, due to which students are unable to understand the concepts clearly from a practical point of view.

6. Lack of the required work culture in the schools due to which fieldwork is not practiced rigorously.

A widely used definition of fieldwork is one by Hamilton and Else (1983) who view it as, “a consciously planned set of experiences occurring in a practice setting designed to move students from their initial level of understanding, skills and attitudes to levels associated with autonomous social work practice.” As the social work curriculum is based on both theory and practice, the provision of sound theory is critical as is fieldwork experience. With fieldwork training social work students acquire, practice principles, values and ethics and the scientific basis for practice. They get an opportunity to apply the theoretical content covered in the classroom, to real life situations as part of the preparation to become a professional social worker. It takes more than academic fitness, but also evidence-based knowledge, field- tested skills and a wealth of hands-on-experience to become a fully backed social worker. As Shard low and Doel [12] observed, “these two contexts for learning about social work practice, class and fieldwork will be integrated, complementary and mutually consistent” turning this into a reality. Kaseke [7] had observed that “fieldwork is an instrument of socialization since it prepares the student for a future role as a social work practitioner”, further he asserting that, “a meaningful fieldwork placement enhances the students understanding of the social work profession and the nature of the problems the profession addresses itself to”. Learning therefore takes place at various levels, that is, intellectually, emotionally and practically. Furthermore, fieldwork is an opportunity to align theoretical knowledge and learning, with the needs of society and the market place. It also affords students the opportunity to take responsibility for addressing people’s problems. Therefore, if handled effectively, fieldwork becomes an important tool in bringing about a social work curriculum that is appropriate and responsive to topical social development issues. Safari [10] felt that “the student comes into contact with needy people, their problems, their reactions to the problems and their attitude towards social workers and thus the student discovers his or her ability to help”. Fieldwork also develops in students, skills that will enable them to respond appropriately to the needs of clients. Furthermore, Safari observes that, “In the field, the student comes into contact with needy people, their problems, their reactions to the problems and their attitude towards social workers and thus the student discovers his or her ability to help”. It is through observation and doing the job and feeling responsible for the job of helping people to cope with their problems, that social work students acquire skills. Likewise, fieldwork is designed to give the student exposure and experience on the functioning of social welfare agencies and social welfare provisioning. Hall asserted that, “a generally accepted view today is that field instruction is of equal importance to academic instruction”. It is therefore self-evident,



even from the history of social work in Europe and North America where it originated, that social work education and training has always embraced the view that fieldwork and classroom instruction are essential elements of social work education.

Key events in social work education

Year	Events	Importance
1936	Tata institute of social sciences, Mumbai	First institution for social work education
1947	Indian conference of social work (ICSW)	Formulated social work curriculum
1948	J.K, institute of sociology, ecology and human relations, lucknow Delhi school of social work in 1948	First school of social work in Central & northern India
1949	Baroda School of Social Work now as The Faculty of Social Work, Baroda	First school of social work in Western India
1952	Madras school of social work, in india	First school of social work in South India
1959	Madras School of Social Work, Chennai in (then Madras).	It was the only pan indian body connecting social work institutions
1965	University Grants Commission (UGC), Government of India First Review Committee on Social Work Education.	Report titled as- Social Work Education in Indian Universities.
1968	1st Encyclopedia of Social Work in India	The Planning Commission, Government of India. In 3 volumes mapped the concepts of Social Work
1975	UGC's second review committee	Report Titled as- Review of Social work Education in India: Retrospect and Prospect. Social Action, Social Policy and Social welfare administration papers



		introduced.
1987	2nd Encyclopedia of Social Work in India	Ministry of Welfare, Government of India. Five Volumes on varies social work themes and agencies
1986	Curriculum development centre at TISS, Mumbai.	Stand alone centre to plan, review and to promote social work education in India
1990	Report of the curriculum development centre in social work education, UGC, New Delhi.	Proposed model curriculum.
1997	Declaration of Ethics of Professional Social work	Indian Journal of Social work.
2000	Declaration of Ethics of Professional Social work	Guidelines in offering subjects and credits.
2003	National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) -“Self study manual for social work institutions”.	Criteria of assessment and accreditation. Minimum and quality standards in social work education.

### Challenges in Social Work Education

The challenges that are related to the social work education and practice are discussed further relate to curriculum design; teaching of field practice, research and accreditation and registration. In the Indian context curriculum is understood as ‘the total learning experience provided by a school i.e. not just the content of courses (the syllabus), but also the methods employed (strategies), and values, norms, which relate to the way the social work school is organized. The present curriculum of the social work India appears to be requiring changes and updating of its contents to meet current day requirements (UGC second review committee report on Social work education 1975.p15). Keeping in view of above all the realities, the author has listed out some of the problems and challenges related to professional social work education in India which need to be addressed collectively for improving the standards, enhancing the recognition of the



---

profession and developing literature in consonance with the social context and work force requirements apart from achieving National Council for Social Work.

#### Public Recognition of Professional Social Work(er)

Lack of public recognition of social work as a profession is another critical shortcoming that has a lot to do with its future prospects in India. The notion of the professional social work in the people's mind is in contradiction to an idealized image of conventional social service worker who possess the sterling qualities of heart rather than of mind. The idea of a paid professional social worker is still an anathema to most people in India who even now cling to the notion that doing social work is quintessentially a voluntary activity of a selfless kind. Under Indian conditions 'service' and 'sacrifice', this is selfless and without any remuneration, is looked upon as higher. A paid social worker, however good, efficient and capable, is more likely to be looked down upon by the people whom he/she serves as a professional. With no self-sacrifice to his/her credit, many persons would not regard the professional social worker as a social worker at all. They would regard him/her as an 'officer', a 'para-professional' or a 'mercenary' (Srivatsava: 1999).

#### Low Prevailing Level

The prevailing level of Indian social services and welfare services is extremely low and that most of the voluntary welfare agencies lack the necessary resources to meet some of the basic human needs of common people. Even the Central Social Welfare Board which assists financially more than 12,000 voluntary social welfare agencies has failed to promote the cause of professional social work. Actually, the Board which employs a large number of specialists has not given proper representation to professional social workers. It is true that formal education for social work has taken root and about thirty institutions offering graduate courses at present, besides many other which are imparting training in related field undergraduate levels. It is also true that a number of organizations do exist which continue to promote the cause of professional social work. But there is no denying the fact that both at the graduate and fact that both Indian social work education and its professional organizations have been propagating a system of social work which derives its inspiration mainly from American social work philosophy with its ideas, techniques, structure and goals (Ranjana: 2009).

#### Lack of Indigenous Materials or Literature:

The major shortcoming of social work education in India is its inability to sufficiently indigenize its knowledge-base. The basic teaching material with respect to interventionist methods (the holy trinity of social case work, social group work and community organization) is still primarily American. The challenge, as mentioned before, has not been met and there is often a lingering

---



---

doubt in the mind of many social work educators and trained social workers whether social work in India can afford to be only concerned with specific individuals, groups and communities when the problems are really the problems of large masses of people (Gore, 1985:151). Many of the problems that are identified as problems of the socially oppressed and economically deprived sections cannot be called adjust mental problems (to use the American phraseology). The social and cultural context of these problems is well beyond the reach of moral-ethical and /or psycho-social paradigm of intervene Since social work literature, modes of practice, approaches, theories, have been heavily borrowed from western countries, so we need to develop the indigenous approaches too. This requires that the academicians and practitioners must document their experiences so as to facilitate the process of developing indigenous approaches (Thomas: 2010).

At this juncture the authors glad to expresses that School of Social Work (SOSW) at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) contributed a lot and lot for the social work education by developing social work materials indigenously under the dynamic leadership of Professor Gracious Thomas, with the support of several eminent social work educators, from different central and state level universities of India as well as from several foreign universities.

Missing of Fundamental Feature:

The professionals alone have not yet acquired any dominant place to shape and formulate social policies or to administer social welfare organizations. Again, the professional group itself has not developed any social code which the profession also should accept and practice as the fundamental feature of their profession. In view of the dominance of foreign influence on the existing professional social work in India (Srivatsava: 1999). Since social work literature, modes of practice, approaches, theories, have been heavily borrowed from western countries, so we need to develop the indigenous approaches too. This requires that the academicians and practitioners must document their experiences so as to facilitate the process of developing indigenous approaches (Thomas: 2010).

At this juncture the authors glad to expresses that School of Social Work (SOSW) at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) contributed a lot and lot for the social work education by developing social work materials indigenously under the dynamic leadership of Professor Gracious Thomas, with the support of several eminent social work educators, from different central and state level universities of India as well as from several foreign universities.

Strengthening of Professional Associations

The absence of effective functioning of professional association of social work practitioners and educators is the most pronounced handicap in professional development in the country. Unless

---



these are revived and made effective, the future of the profession of social work is likely to remain bleak (Nanavathi: 1997).

The history of two national level of Association viz. Indian Association of Trained Social Work (IATSW) and ASWI is a checkered one. In addition to these associations, Regional Associations of trained professional social workers are situated in different states. However only a few of these Regional Associations are active (Gowda: 2010)

In fact, among these national levels associations of the profession, the National Association of Professional Social Worker in India (NAPSWI-2005), Indian Society of Professional Social workers (ISPSW-1970) are doing tremendous work for the professional advancement and for the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of the educators, practitioners as well as learners of social work across the nation by organizing national level seminars and conferences. The Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI-1959) did lot of work for the profession after its inception for several years, unfortunately now it is not in that much active position.

#### Lack of Awareness on ODL

In spite of over thirty years of the existence of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system in the country and over 40 years of the existence of social work education through ODL in several advanced countries, the social work fraternity in India are yet to recognize the need, relevance, scope and feasibility of ODL for social work education in India. The principal tenet in distance education is social inclusion justice and equity. In educational management these principles play a crucial role in making available the fruits of development across the different sections of people aiming at fundamental social work principles of social justice and equity.

#### Conclusion

Seventy five years of professional social work in India has been marked by few triumphs and too many travails that warrant a serious discussion on what the future holds for a 'profession' beleaguered by several internal and external constrains and considerations. During the period of seven and half decades after its inception in India achievements are very few the problems and challenges are very many. In this paper the author tried to consolidate the problems and challenges, reasons for those and recommendations for addressing those problems & challenges Teachers, practitioners and learners should come together with collective vision and mission to overcome all those problems and challenges to strengthen the social work education and training in India at least by end of the eight decade.



---

## References

1. University Grants Commission, (1965), Social Work Education in Indian Universities, New Delhi.
  2. Nair, Krishnan, (1981), Social Work Education and Social Practice in India, Madras, ASSWI.
  3. Singh, R.R (Ed: 1985), Field Work in Social Work Education: A Perspective for Human Service Profession, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company.
  4. Manshardt, Clifford (1985), Education for Social Work: The Indian Journal of Social Work, Vol. XLVI No.1
  5. 2013: Report of Consultation on social work education, North East Zone, TISS Guwahati.
  6. 2013: Report of national Network of schools of social work for quality enhancement of social work education in Indi, TISS, Mumbai.
  7. Akhup , a. (2009). Interface between State, Voluntary Organization and Tribes: A perspective towards Tribe-Centered social work practice. Indian Journal of Social Work, 70(4), 507-615.
  8. Andharia, J. (2007). Reconceptualising community organization in India: A Transdisciplinary perspective, Journal of Community Practice, 15(1-2), 91-119. bodhi, s.r. (2014). On the politics of social work curriculum and pedagogy:
  9. Reflections of a social work educator. Indian Journal of Dalit and Tribal Social Work, Vol.2, Issue 2 (6), 71-83. <http://www.daltrijournals.org/ijdtsw/Volume/v2issue2/V2I2no6.php>.
  10. Desai, a.s. (1985). The foundations of social work education in India and some issues, The Indian Journal of Social Work, 46(1), 41-57.
  11. Madras schools of social Work, (2014). Retrieved October 04, 2014, from <http://www.mssw.in/>
  12. Manshardt, c. (1936). The Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, Ceylon Men, July 1936. Reprinted in The Indian Journal of Social Work, Education for social work, Vol. XLVI (1), April 1985.
- Prabha, t. (2014). Study of institutions of social work education and role of social work educators in developing indigenous knowledge (Doctoral dissertation). Available from Shodhganga@INFLIBNET Centre <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/23970>
-



raMaiah, a. (1998). The plight of Dalits: A challenge to social work profession. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 59 (1), 124-146.

ranaDe, s.n. (1987). Social Work, in *Encyclopaedia of Social Work*, Vol. 3, 134- 142. New Delhi: Ministry of Welfare, Government of India.

Saldanha.D. (2008). Towards a conceptualization of social action within social work: Teaching social action as a dialogue between theoretical perspectives and between theory and practice. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 69 (2), 111-137.

Sastri, v.s., (1937). *Life of Gopal Krishna Gohale*, Mysore University Extension Lectures, Bangalore: The Bangalore Printing and Publishing Co.Ltd.,.Siddique, h. (1987). Towards a competency based education for social work. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 48 (1), 23-32.

srivastava, s.p. (1999). Addressing the future of professional social work in India. *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 60(1), 119-139.