
CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

School social workers play a vital role in addressing the various needs of students in an educational setting. Some of the primary challenges that school social workers face include being unable to fully resolve the problems they encounter, working within a system that often lacks adequate resources, and shouldering the emotional burdens of students and their families. There also may be limited resources to support service delivery such as a lack of confidential and private space, supplies, and training. Their roles can vary from student to student, providing a variety of experiences on a daily basis. However, like many social workers, the caseloads of school social workers are often high. School social workers can be assigned to more than one school, requiring time to travel between locations. Often the school social worker performs in isolation and may not have access to consistent supervision. Social workers provide social, emotional and physical development services to children and also strive to modify the environment for the best interest of child.

Key Words: School Social Work, Role of School Social Worker,

Introduction

School social workers support students who are struggling with mental, emotional, social, behavioral, or familial issues that are negatively impacting their academic performance and overall well-being. School social workers support students through

individual and group counseling, conflict mediation, interventions to address crises, resource navigation services, and the development and implementation of school programs. School social workers can work in a number of different settings, including public schools, private schools, and academic programs that serve vulnerable populations.

Statement of the Problem

Social Work Education in India dates back to 1936. Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work, now popularly known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS, Mumbai) was established in Mumbai under the leadership of Dr. Clifford Manshard, an American (Mathur, 2007). Naturally, TISS, Mumbai School was based on the pattern of Schools of Social Work in the United States of America. Social work education in India was a generic program in the pre-independence period (1936–46) (Singh et al., 2002). The introduction of specializations in social work emerged in the post-independence period primarily under the American influence and partly due to the felt need (Singh et al., 2002). All the subsequent Schools of Social Work started in post-independence period borrowed the TISS's model of Social Work Education (Singh, 2006). Due to the proliferation of American model of education the indigenous practice realities were neglected and this led to non-realization of an Indian Model of Social Work Education in the budding stage of Social Work Education in India.

According to the second UGC review committee (1980), existing syllabi for social work training were not relevant to the profile of the country and there was hardly had any scope for practice. Social work curriculum in India remains rather westernized and seems to be missing the components of indigenized social work. Till now, Social work curricula lacked response to the Indian realities and over emphasized the remedial, rehabilitative, residual model which focused on problems of the individual, families and communities at micro level rather than problems of individual and society in the context of development (Desai, 2013).

Lack of indigenous literatures about the social work practices and interventions, is also a factor that separated the young budding social work professionals from the social issues/realities that existed in Indian societies and the interventional strategies used to solve these issues (Jagdale, 2014). In order to be useful, the professional social work education must have an effective linkage with practice to respond to current social realities, which professional social worker can explain from his/her experience. However, Indian social work has not adequately modified western social work to meet local cultural contexts. In other words the synchronization of Schools of Social Work with the local realities will merge with the needs of the people and it will create opportunities for the profession. Social Work is no different even today as it was in the last century as it spread from the west to the rest with its colonizing civilizing mission replacing local, indigenous healing practices and communitarian values (Grey & Webb, 2015). Gray, et al., (2008) feels that 'it is essentially about the development of culturally relevant social work *for, with, and by indigenous people*'. Therefore the social work trainee believes that this study will bring changes in social work education through the suggestion given by professional social workers.

Social work education in India and Kerala

A historical sketch provides an idea as to how and when Social Work education in India got started. The University Grants Commission in its report Social Work Education in Indian Universities, 1965, claims that the first short-term course of social work was organized by the Social Service League in Bombay in 1920. It was a short-term course designed for voluntary workers engaged in public welfare work. The services for industrial laboring classes conducted by the Nagpada Neighborhood House highlighted the need for trained workers around that time and this led to the commencement of full-fledged professional education in social work with the establishment of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work in 1936. This institution was later renamed as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) (D'Souza 1978; Narayan 2001). For 11 years from 1936 to 1947 TISS was the only institution for social work training in India till independence. The founding-director of the institute Clifford Manshardt, was an American missionary and J.M. Kumarappa a well-known Indian educator with MA and PhD degrees from

Columbia University was his collaborator. Thus the seed of social work profession in colonial India was sown by the American professionals (Kendall 2000). Since then the American-tradition of social work tremendously influenced social work education and training in India (Nagpaul 1972; Mandal 1989; Mohan 2008). Influence of American model on the pattern of social work education in India was further reinforced by the appointment of an American social worker as a visiting lecturer at Tata Institute, Mumbai (Pathak 1975

Interestingly, it is after India's independence, that social work education in India was profoundly influenced by the American ideas through the US government's Technical Co-operation Mission and the Council of Social Work Education Exchange Program. Social work education in India was a generic programme in the pre-independence period (1936-46). The introduction of specialisations in social work emerged in the post- independence period primarily under the American influence and partly due to the felt need developments.

In Kerala, the first school of social work training was started in 1954 at Sacred Heart College, Thevara, which later shifted to Rajagiri College of Social Science, Kalamassery. At present a number of universities and institutions are offering graduate, post graduate, M. Phil and Ph. D level training in social work. The introduction of social work at higher secondary level resulted in many changes in the field of social work training and practice in Kerala. In a developing country like India, social workers have a major role in the socio-economic, cultural, health and related areas. The major associations of social work are NAPSWI (National Association of Professional Social Workers in India), ASSK (Association of Schools of Social Work in Kerala), and KAPS (Kerala Association of Professional Social Work).

Objective of school social work

Is a helping profession which fundamentally and radically aims to assist the individuals, groups and community to cope with their complex socio-economic psychological problems through enabling themselves so that they can solve their problem by helping them.

Role of School Social Workers:

The mission of school social work is to support students' well-being and academic engagement. To accomplish this mission, school social workers collaborate with school staff to provide a wide variety of services to students and their families, including but not limited to the following:

- Academic Support Programs
- Individual Education Programs (IEPs)
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Individual and Group Counseling
- Student, Parent, and Community Education
- Crisis Interventions
- Connections to Community Resources

Social workers are responsible for helping individuals, families, and groups of people to cope with problems they're facing to improve their patients' lives. One aspect of this is teaching skills and developing mechanisms for patients to rely on to better their lives and experiences.

Challenges Faced by School Social Workers :

School Social Workers face many challenges, (as do all social workers). Here are a few challenges they face as told by school social workers themselves:

1. As a social worker in a small school, you are typically the only social worker available to students and staff. Therefore, you are responsible for the entire school population and will most likely have a very heavy case load.
2. Kids respond differently to social workers depending on who they are. As the only social worker in a building, you will have to find ways around this in order to establish a relationship with the client.
3. As the only social worker in a school, you do not have immediate access to a support system of colleagues or a supervisor. This is why it is important to have a good network of colleagues in the field whom you can contact if you ever need advice or help with a specific situation.

4. In smaller school districts, many programs are grant funded and money is very limited as are resources in the community. It is a social workers job to ensure the connection of a client to appropriate and necessary services in the community even while working with a smaller budget.
5. Often times in school social work, there can be a power struggle between the social worker and teachers/administration. When a teacher or principal asks for information regarding a client, the social worker is not always allowed to provide that information due to confidentiality issues, even if the faculty member asking has a good reason for needing it.

Implications for School Social Work

In many schools social workers can enhance educational opportunities for homeless children and youths, especially in the context that educational opportunity is a social justice issue and consistent with the mission of social work. Given the lack of affordable housing available to many poor families, school social workers can advocate for policy that establishes funding for family housing. . At the practice level, school social workers can focus on involving parents in the education of homeless children, specifically parents of preschool children and parents of children with disabilities. They can provide direct services to parents in shelters and community-based agencies or link parents with available services in the community. Specifically school social workers can facilitate parent training programs, including literacy. Finally, school social workers can engage in research evaluation to improve the identification of both students and resources, as well as to determine the effectiveness of services and programs already in place. Simply, school social workers can conduct needs assessments and determine whether interventions meet those needs.

Conclusion

In India, many social organizations are established by people who are not social work professionals but the work done by these organizations deserve appreciation and recognition as they are bringing lot of innovation into the formal social work practice. On the other hand, there are also organizations that need guidance to

develop proper agenda for intervention. Some agenda of work and programmes of these organizations are matching with teachers' demand, few things are not yet in their agenda and there are few areas which need to be taken care by the collaboration of schools

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