



SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION: PRESENT STATUS AND FUTURE STRATEGIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA STATE

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Cite This Article: Dr. Indushekara G V & Dr. Gangadhara Y V, "Social Work Profession: Present Status and Future Strategies with Special Reference to Karnataka State", Journal of Applied and Advanced Scientific Research, Volume 6, Issue 2, Page Number 36-38, 2021.

Abstract:

Social Work is a helping profession where a skilled and trained professional Social Worker help the individual, group, and the community to solve the problems. The goal of professional social work is to solve problems and bring about change. As a result, social workers influence society and the lives of the individuals, families, and communities they serve. There are few laggings in this profession and there is need for certain changes. Change is a concerted effort by the theorists, practitioners, NGOs, Social Work trainees, Academicians, Clients and all the other stakeholders. Survival of the profession and development of the profession both are very important. While we think about upgrading the theory, practice and profession, respecting cultural diversity and bringing uniformity in the profession both are very important since Karnataka has 30 districts and each district has a uniform culture and the problems are also different. Creating a strong base requires sharing of knowledge and indigenisation of the practice with an effort to build the literature. Let's work on all these issues to strengthen the profession. This article investigates present scenario of Social Work profession and tries to know the future strategies with illustration of some situations. The literature in the field is very low compared to other streams. Admissions also becoming very thin. The quality of students is also not to such extent. We need to increase the strength of the stream. Unless we develop, it will be difficult for the stream to survive.

Introduction:

Since the beginning of social work, the pursuit of status and identity has taken centre stage (Gibelman, 1999). Social Work is a helping profession where a skilled and trained professional Social Worker help the individual, group, and the community to solve the problems. The goal of professional social work is to solve problems and bring about change. As a result, social workers influence society and the lives of the individuals, families, and communities they serve (Jacob, 2016). For Social Work practitioners, there are three broad types or levels of involvement. The first is "Macro" social work, which involves the whole society or community. On a national or international scale, this sort of social work practice would encompass policy formation and advocacy. "Mezzo" social work practice describes the second stage of intervention. Working with agencies, small organisations, and other small groups would be part of this level. Making policies within a social work organisation or designing programmes for a specific neighbourhood are examples of this activity. The "Micro" level, which entails serving individuals and families, is the last level. (Hazra, 2016). This article tries to know the present status and future strategies in Karnataka State. It investigates present scenario of Social Work profession and tries to know the future strategies with illustration of some situations. The literature in the field is very low compared to other streams. Admissions also becoming very thin. The quality of students is also not to such extent. We need to increase the strength of the stream. Unless we develop, it will be difficult for the stream to survive.

Why to Know the Present Status of the Profession?

One of the basic things is the survival of the profession and another thing is about overtaking or by-passing of the profession by the groups which are not by the Social Work Profession. New courses have introduced contents or syllabus which are partially similar to Social Work degrees. Upskilling is the need of the hour for the present problems since the problems in the society are very challenging and have an orientation towards digital interventions and have the root cause from the digital reasons. Are Social Work Professionals getting good salary or earning from practice? The answer is imbalanced.

Why there Should be Future Strategies?

Longevity of the profession needs a good strategy. Most of the senior professionals are from classical background. As earlier discussed upskilling requires a good strategy and a vision for the profession. Society is changing on the requirements of changing economics and technology. Fine-tuning the theoretical base and practical approach require a systematic strategy which should be auto-updated with the dynamics of the society.

Some of the hurdles faced by the profession are:

- Low pay for the professionals: In Karnataka, majority of the trained professionals are getting a less salary though it is called as a professional course. For the freshers, it starts at ₹ 7000 to a maximum of ₹ 20000. This is very pathetic for trained professionals.

- No council like Indian Medical Council: A united effort is needed to know the interest, grievances and advocate. Since the profession has no council, it will be very difficult to come into the mainstream to tell the actual scenario. This is a very big lag when compared to other professions.
- Decrease in the admissions to the course: Most of the academic institutions are failing to attract the students from under-graduation because of the decreasing demand for the course. Except some of the best institutes like Roshni Nilaya, other institutes are failing to continue with their persistent standards. To tell the strength of a professional course you need a good admission to the course. But the admissions are becoming lean both for undergraduate and post-graduate colleges. The syllabus is old and no periodic updates which intervenes the present problems of the society. This is diluting the interest on the profession.
- Less literatures compared to other streams: After getting the degree, the professionals are not generating much literatures in terms of theory. Even in the academics also, not much emphasis is given to produce much needed literature. Despite the fact that some studies of social work effectiveness have yielded unfavourable results in the past, more current assessments of social work effectiveness research reveal generally good outcomes (Plath, 2006). Respecting cultural diversity and bringing the uniformity in the practice come into fore when it comes to preparing the literatures.
- No job security: Job security is another worry in this field. The professionals work for projects with stipulated time. After the project ends, he/she will be terminated. In Karnataka State, in academics also majority of the teachers are Guest Faculties or on-contract with a salary of merely ₹14,000 to a maximum of ₹ 28,000 and which is for nine to ten months. Remaining two months they are unemployed. So how do they live their life?
- Lack of identity or no licensing in India: In USA or UK, if you want to practice Social Work as a profession, you need to get licence that will definitely give you the identity. Here in Karnataka, even any person can pose as a Social Worker in the disguise of social service. This system can have a big impact on the profession. Again you need a council to get organised and get licensure.
- Outdated Skillset: We still not upskilled our methods. We have two interests in India or Karnataka. One is indigenisation of Social Work and another is upskilling our methods which is in par with advanced skills of European or US methods.
- Less or zero leverage of advanced technology: Information and Communication Technology based Social Work practice has not been practiced in Karnataka or in India. Where as in USA or in European countries, practice is more advanced with the utilisation of Information and Communication technology. In Karnataka, we still use traditional or classical methods to solve social or individual problems.

Future Strategies:

In USA, the Social Work professional should possess a licensure to practice his profession. It uplifts the weightage of his career. But in India or in Karnataka, we don't have any license to practice. This downgrades the profession again. Pay respects the profession. Fight for a good pay. Unless the professional Social Workers get, a decent pay, it will be difficult to get a qualified, trained and skilled worker. Let's work for Council, license and for a decent salary.

In evidence-based practise, there should be a strong push for social workers and researchers to collaborate to set research priorities, create acceptable methodology, and produce valuable and relevant study findings (Plath, 2006). Academicians and practitioners have to develop some modules to strengthen the domain. Social workers are faced with a plethora of unsolved questions, some of which are extremely ethical. The "helping profession's" value base, as well as its dedication to promoting and ensuring social justice, human rights, and equality, has been gravely questioned, leaving its guardians, social workers, in a state of confused uncertainty (Galmath, 2018). This is the time to correct all these uncertainties.

Professional activity is dependent on payment, whether under private or public authorities, and professional services are only available to those with an urban living quality of life, thereby restricting them to urban regions (Nanavatty, 1993). There should be a greater effort to extend the services to rural and tribal communities.

Specialization like Human Resource Management, Community Organisation, Medical and Psychiatric Social Work, Correctional Setting has fragmented professional commitment and disrupted the profession's unity (Nanavatty, 1993). An Extra effort is needed to narrow down this gap.

We should also work for indigenisation of the profession along with development of indigenous literature. Strategies should be formulated for upskilling and for harnessing digital methods in the profession.

Conclusion:

When we go through all the aspects and present scenario in Social Work in Karnataka, we have to have thorough makeover of the theory and practice. Compared to USA or European countries, the practice is still in slow pace. Let's give a new momentum to speed up the changes.

Changes cannot brought by a single practitioner, it is a concerted effort by the theorists, practitioners, NGOs, Social Work trainees, Academicians, Clients and all the other stakeholders. Survival of the profession and

development of the profession both are very important. While we think about the upgrading the theory, practice and profession, respecting cultural diversity and bringing uniformity in the profession both are very important since Karnataka has 30 districts and each district has a uniform culture and the problems are also different. Creating a strong base requires sharing of knowledge and indigenisation of the practice with an effort to build the literature. Let's work on all these issues to strengthen the profession.

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