

**FIELD WORK PRACTICE: AN INCLUSIVE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION****Dr. Abhay Jadhav¹ & Dr. Jitendra Gandhi²**¹ Assistant Professor, Dept. of Social Work, Walchand College of Arts & Science Solapur,² Assistant Professor, Dept. of Social Work, Walchand College of Arts & Science Solapur,**Abstract**

Social exclusion and inclusive policy are key concepts that are being talked about much worldwide. Field education is a core component of Indian professional social work education that is intended to assist students with integrating theory and practice. The goal of social work field education is to provide a dynamic program that supports students to demonstrate adaptability; to critically reflect on their own practice and that of others; and to perform independently at a level expected of a newly qualifying practitioner. Professional social workers are recruited in various capacities in government and non-government sectors. Professional social workers have ample scope to contribute their self in uplifting the poor, marginalized and socially excluded groups of people for which they need to have a strong foundation in the theoretical constructs of social exclusion, inclusive development, inclusive policy and related aspects. This paper highlights the scope of social work education and practice in different fields.



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Introduction:

The word “inclusive” has become not only fashionable but also quite relevant in our country. The recognition of the need for more inclusive growth by our planners is a welcome shift in emphasis from mere increase in growth rates to improvement in standards of living of those below the poverty line through increase in employment opportunities as well as better delivery systems to ensure access to intended benefits by intended beneficiaries (Baskin, 2003). Inclusive approach helps to promote decentralised planning and monitoring while simultaneously increasing the resources available to specific sectors that are critical for enabling inclusive growth.

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people (IFSW, 2014). Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and

respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

Professional Social Work:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex transactions between people and their environments. Its mission is to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction (Ferguson, 2005). Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice.

Values in Social Work Education:

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion (Nampoothiry, 2006). Social work values are embodied in the profession's national and international codes of ethics.

Integration of Theory and Field Work Practice-

Field Education is integral to the social work curriculum and provides students with the opportunity to apply test and develop theory and practice skills (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Field experience enables students to develop their understanding of practice reality and from this, to contribute to building the theoretical and skills base of their own practice (International Federation of Social Workers, 2005). A core educational principle in the Social Work course is that theory and practice are inseparably linked. A major objective in the design and implementation of the course is to ensure that the class-based and the field education components of the curriculum are integrated and mutually reinforcing.

Professional Social Work & Inclusive Development:

Social exclusion (and inclusion) is a topic of major importance in contemporary social work and has been a core feature of social policy developments in India in the past decade. Michael Shepperd (2006) argues that the issue of social exclusion lies at the very heart of social work and he examines the implications of this position for both theory and practice. He discusses a range of major themes in social work, looking at how they reflect an underlying concern with social exclusion. They include empowerment, need, and the exercise of authority, choice, evidence-based practice and reflexive practice. He also makes clear that even though the term ‘social exclusion’ is of recent origin, it provides a framework for understanding the enduring themes of social work.

Implications for Professional Social Work Practice:

Upon defining and describing marginalization as well as the various levels in which it exists, one must now explore its implications for social work practice. Mullaly (2007) describes how “the personal is political” and the need for recognizing that social problems are indeed connected with larger structures in society, causing various forms of oppression amongst individuals resulting in marginalization . It is also important for the social worker to recognize the intersecting nature of oppression. A non-judgmental and unbiased attitude is necessary on the part of the social worker. The worker must begin to understand oppression and marginalization as a systemic problem, not the fault of the individual (Mullaly, 2007). Working under an Anti-oppression perspective would then allow the social worker to understand the lived, subjective experiences of the individual, as well as their cultural, historical and social background. The worker should recognize the individual as political in the process of becoming a valuable member of society and the structural factors that contribute to oppression and marginalization (Mullaly, 2007). Social workers must take a firm stance on naming and labeling global forces that impact individuals and communities who are then left with no support, leading to marginalization or further marginalization from the society they once knew (George, 2007).

The social worker at various spheres in government and non-govt. sector should be constantly reflexive, work to raise the consciousness, empower, and understand the lived subjective realities of individuals living in a fast paced world, where fear and insecurity constantly overcome the individual from the collective whole, perpetuating the dominant forces, while silencing the oppressed (Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005).

Conclusion:

There is a huge scope for professional social work education and practice in India. Even though the entire philosophy and practice of professional social work, right from its inception, has been addressing issues of marginalization, alienation, oppression and various forms of social exclusion and its resultant detrimental effects on vulnerable and affected groups, there is not much of concentration, in the professional training and practice in India, on the theoretical constructs of ‘social exclusion’, ‘inclusion’ and related concepts such as ‘inclusive development’ or ‘inclusive growth’ besides the policy issues. It is highly imperative that social work education and training have to be geared to consciously and comprehensively address social exclusion, inclusive policy and related issues with the ultimate objective of enabling ‘professional social workers’ to get a proper understanding and develop genuine appreciation of the need for an ‘inclusive perspective’ to the professional domains of training, practice and research in the field of social work.

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