

School Social Work: Its Origin, Scope And Challenges Faced By School Social Workers

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ABSTRACT: *Each student is unique and come to school with different expectations and issues with self, families, friends and they might also face problems in school. This is where the role and need for the school social work and school social workers comes into picture. The general population views school-based social workers as substitute educators, psychotherapists, social planners, and liaisons between school and home. In India mainly social organizations are performing various child development activities in school. Considering the problems prevailing among the students the scope for School social work is huge but Social workers are seemed to be the untapped resource for schools. The objective of this paper is to bring out the origin of school social work in India, its scope in future and also challenges faced by the School Social Workers. The researcher has used Case studies as primary data and also made use of secondary data such as Journals, Books and Literature to draft this research paper.*

Keywords: *School Social Work, Students, School*

1. INTRODUCTION

The School Social Work practice is a specialized area within the broad spectrum of Social Work. The vital objective of School Social Work is to bring inimitable knowledge and skillset to the student community and to the school system. The role of School Social worker starts when the role of the teacher ends. School Social Workers are trained in emotional wellness, they are experts who can help with psychological well-being concerns, conduct disorder, academics, absenteeism and classroom support and also, they help in providing individual and group therapy or counselling. Outside India, School Social Work is practised in more than ten countries such as USA, United Kingdom, Canada, Finland, Ghana, Argentina, Germany, Hong Kong, Malta, Hungary, Korea and Japan. (Huxtable 2002). Initially during the early 20th century, the need for the School Social Work began when the Settlement workers from Hartley House and Greenwich House believed that knowing the teachers of children was essential. School Social workers whom we call now, were earlier known as Visiting Teachers and on the other hand the settlement house movement gave birth to the social group work, social action and community organization methods. In 1936, Social Work education came into India, it was first introduced in Mumbai by Clifford Marshal but till date there is no council or licensing for Social Workers in India. Since there is no proper council in India, the Social Workers face problems in India when it comes to their job

description, roles and responsibility. The low level of professionalisation of social welfare, the lack of a well-defined social work role and functions, the lack of specification of a minimum level of training for specific jobs, and the poor service conditions of social welfare personnel as compared to other professions, are visible (Manohar,1999). Till date, the broad area of Social Work has got no meaning in India, the sub fields such as School Social Work, Clinical Social Worker, Psychiatric Social Worker have not found an identity in India.

2. METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study:

- To bring out the origin of School Social Work Practice
- To elaborate about the Scope of School Social Work
- To bring out the challenges faced by the Social Workers working in Schools in Private Schools

The research paper is drafted based on both primary and secondary resources. As Primary resources, the researcher interviewed Social Workers who are employed in Schools using Semi Structured Interview methods and for the secondary data, the researcher gathered data using Books, online articles and research journals. The interviews are conducted in order to use the data as a supplement to support the views of the researcher.

The Origin of School Social Work

Social work services in schools outgrew a worry for oppressed students. The service started during the school year of 1906-1907, autonomously, in New York City, Boston, and Hartford. In New York City, settlement laborers from the Hartley House and Greenwich House thought that it was important to know the educators of their kids, who went to the settlements, so they appointed two specialists to visit schools and homes to work intimately with schools and local community. In Boston, the Women's Education Association appointed visiting instructors in the schools to cultivate amicability among school and home and enable the children's education. The visiting teacher program was first initiated by the Psychological Clinic in Hartford and today there are referred to as School Social Workers. During the following years, the number of school social workers increased and their notion to serve changed to paying attention towards student specific problems. After the birth of the School Attendance law, another historical designation for the School Social workers came into existence, they were appointed as Attendance Officers, they understood the social problems of the community such as poverty, poor physical health-and their effects on attendance. At that period, the main activity of the school social worker was home-school-community liaison (Massat, Kelly and Constable, 1991)

Scope and Challenges of School Social Workers

As mentioned in the introduction, the School Social Work is practiced more than ten countries in the world (Huxtable 2002). The reason why it has not gained its position in India like the other nations is due to lack of professionalisation but the scope for school social workers is huge in India.

- The Social Workers can help in supporting inclusive educational by intervening with the policy makers to bring out required infra structure, even the New Education Policy 2020 Draft also talks about the inclusive education.
- The Social Workers, as they are trained in the various methods of Social Work, especially Case Work and Group Work and also in the basics of Counseling, they can act as effective counsellors after completing a specialized course in Counseling.
- They can act as excellent Life skill trainers and provide career guidance to the students.
- They can identify students with problem and provide necessary assistance like referral services etc.

Though the Professional Social workers have many roles to play and a huge scope, lack of professionalization and lack of role clarity, the social workers find it very difficult to play their role in their fields.

Unlike other countries, the social workers in India does not have a council and there is no licensure for them to practice privately. If there is an Act and Council then the Social Worker's role will be clarified and they can perform better in various fields.

An article on National Council for Social Workers bill was published in The Hindu newspaper, it stated that in year 1993, first bill on 'The National Council for Professional Social Work Bill' was drafted but unfortunately the bill did not get much attention and after almost two decades, more recently, 'The National Council of Professional Social Work Practitioners Bill, 2018' sought to establish a national council of professional social work practitioners to coordinate, develop and regulate professional practice of social work in India (Francis, 2020). Statutory provisions can exercise a professional authority on the management and implementation of Social Work Education, submitted by Prof. Richard Hay, Member of Parliament. In the year 2020, the Central government circulated the bill to regulate autonomy in social work practice, education and looking for any recommendations from the experts and general public but the status of the bill is still unknown (Mathew, 2020).

Case 1:

Mr. Mathew (Name changed) who is a professional Social Worker, employed in a School as a Social Worker. He works in a reputed School in Chennai past five years. He reported that the role clarity is lacking in schools, as a social worker. He is made to perform role of normal teachers in their absence. He mentioned that he did not sign up for such things, since there is no clarity and lack of professionalization, he finds it difficult to perform his task as professional social worker. He insisted that the National council for social work education and practice bill should be passed and new act should be brought to regularize Social work profession.

Case 2:

Mr. Farooq (Name Changed) works in a School as a Life Skill Trainer; he has completed Social Work degree. He has four years of experience, during his tenure he has only trained students on Life Skills and documented school programs. He mentioned he was recruited to play the role of Social worker but till date he has only handled Life Skill training classes. He

also added that role of social worker is not just limited to Life skill training but many more. He suggested that government should speed up the process of regularizing the social work profession and should show keen interest in installing a council for Social Workers to hear their grievances and take necessary steps.

3. SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

As the social organization are increasing day by day and as many professional social workers are graduating every year, there is a high need for a council and an act. The social workers need to be provided with a unique license so as to practice their profession. This will lead to better understanding and better role play. Bringing in the above said facts will improve the Social workers personal life and professional life and it will help the organizations to perform their task better and bring changes in the society.

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