



FIELD WORK PRACTICUM: A FUNDAMENTAL BASE OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Social Work Globally, education has been a professional and scientific field of study in higher education for more than a century, and it has experienced remarkable growth in recent decades. Mumbai-based Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (currently the Tata Institute of Social Sciences) established formal social work education in India in 1936. Indian educational system social work has been practiced for 88 years. However, issues regarding the professional standing of social work education have persisted since beginning in current environment. Social work is a practice-based human services profession utilizing Micro, Mezzo, & Macro levels of practice for handling significant requirements at the individual, group, & community levels. To resolve societal challenges in a scientific with professional manner, social work education must be crucial to comprehending reality and complexity of Indian society, as well as the impending socioeconomic & political trends including their effects on society. Human rights, peace, harmony, social justice, & equity are the main issues affecting the social work profession. Fieldwork practicums are essential in field knowledge wisdom development in social work education since they permit theoretical information to be applied to practical issues. For social work students to learn and develop during their field practicum, social work teachers requires for comprehending how social work students might apply theory to practice. Developing competent and resourceful social workers that might employ array of methods in social service sector is fieldwork objective in social work education. Students can build a positive attitude, knowledge, and skill set, as well as a productive professional cadre of social workers, by integrating the conceptual framework into their practice through the Field Work Practicum. Field Work Practicum allows thinking critically and acting analytically and makes aware about variety of realities on the field around the phenomenon. Every social work student must adopt scientific base for practices by using principles and values that are essential to serve human community. The subject of this paper attempts to advance a deeper

conversation and consideration of social work training & practice in Indian context. Current paper explains fieldwork practicum value in social work education conceptually. Current research establishes the foundation for future contributions to the global body of knowledge on social work practice in addition to offering suggestions regarding methods for enhancing social work practice & education in Indian contexts.

KEY WORDS: Social Work Education. Social Work Practice, Social Work Profession & Global Standard of Social Work Practicum

Introduction:

Established by Shri Dorabji Tata in 1936 as Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (now Tata Institute of Social Sciences), social work education is amongst oldest professions in India. Its unique teaching, training, and practice methodologies aim to advance human services professionally and scientifically. Nationally & internationally, social work education has evolved significantly since 1936. In addition to being an academic discipline, social work education is practice-oriented field that places high value on field intervention & practical application of theory to significantly improve people's lives. Indigenous social work concepts and methodologies are acknowledged by social workers worldwide as part of the profession's theoretical and practical expertise. Considering complexity & realism of Indian society, along with impending political, economic changes along with their implications, social work education is an essential element of any professional and scientific strategy for addressing societal issues. Primary challenges affecting social work profession include human rights, peace, harmony, equity, & social justice.

“Social work is a practice-oriented profession and an academic field that advocates for social change and development, fosters social cohesiveness, and facilitates empowerment & individual emancipation. Fundamental to social work are principles of communal responsibility, social justice, human rights, & tolerance for diversity. Grounded in theories of social work, sciences, humanities,

& indigenous knowledge, social work interacts with individuals & systems to confront life issues then promote welfare.”¹

National Council of Social Work Education core committee outlines novel & advanced social work specialties in India, *Professional social work is an academic field & a practice-based profession that is globally recognized. It has its foundation in the knowledge, techniques, along with abilities of working with people and systems. It is based on the ethics and principles of tolerance for diversity, attention to structural realities, & human dignity. Under the direction of the Indian Constitution and India's adherence to international human rights law, it advances social justice and social development. To achieve social justice, professional social work uses collaborative, participatory, gender-sensitive, strengths-based, and culture-sensitive methods to empower that include socially excluded groups. It additionally employs rights-based universal provision for basic needs to encourage community along with social development. In addition, professional social workers analyse policies, plan programs, build capacity, establish and operate civil society organizations, carry out micro, meso, as well as macro-level interventions, monitor and evaluate their results.*²

After two years of investigation, a generic credential known as 'Social Service Administration' was given to aspiring social workers to acquaint them with the field without providing any particular training. Dr.Manshardt justified the requirement for a general social work program by stating that school's primary goal is for providing an overview of all professional areas as well as scientific approaches to researching and studying social problems. Social casework, psychiatry, statistics, child-welfare, medical social work, public welfare history,

¹International Federation of Social Work and International Association of School of Social Work 2014

² National Council of Social Work Education

public welfare administration, welfare activity organization, social law, & philanthropy are required courses for all social workers.³

Theoretical basis of social work, direct human services profession, has been determined in interventional teaching techniques, encompassing fundamental as well as supplemental approaches. Core principles of social work education encourage social equality & advancements in society. Social work education may include field work practicum, applying social work theory to practical scenarios at Micro, Messo, & Macro levels. Social work education field component is cornerstone for creating future professional social worker cadres that remain knowledgeable as well as resourceful.

For addressing problems and challenges, social work dynamic discipline consistently engages individuals, organizations, along with broader society. It also creates intervention tactics to address societal concerns. It addresses human issues and prepares competent cadres of professional social workers with right based and helping approach to bring concrete change in society and human life through its field training methodology.

Most crucial component of practice for social work students for developing their abilities & techniques is fieldwork, which forms social work education foundation. Aiding in developing analytical competence among students by engaging them in practical learning.

Social work students can effectively conduct field interventions with people in social contexts array by integrating social work theory into practice through fieldwork.⁴

Data and Method:

Current research is conceptual and utilizes secondary data sources on social work education & fieldwork that have already been published. Upon comprehensive literature review of social work practice & education in connection to fieldwork

³ Dr. Manshardt 1936

⁴ Kappor 1961

practicum, all pertinent research materials were incorporated. This research elucidates fieldwork practicum significance in social work education as a catalyst for change, that supports social work interventions for aspiring professional social workers. This study conceptualizes development solely from secondary sources, such as academic journals, papers, and internet data related to social work practice & education. Objectives were derived from theoretical framework:

1. To ascertain the information "of social work education and field work in meaningful way.
2. To describe the significance of social work practice in social work education.
3. To assess the relevance of global standard of social work education and practice in present situation.
4. To understand the level of social work practice"at community level.

Current paper employed secondary source method to conduct an integrative systematic review of qualitative & quantitative documents.

Review of Social Work Education & Practice:

Participants in field practicum-based social work education programs may be placed in situations where they are directly performing social work or making indirect assistance. Fieldwork promotes critical thinking, scientific behaviour, followed by competency in student social workers.⁵

Fieldwork in social work In many settings, education is the process of learning, and training is the term for education.⁶

If understanding society is the main objective of social work practice in social sciences, then social work practice's goal is to solve social problems by offering treatments. However, natural connection within social work & social sciences is informed by social research.⁷

⁵ Johnson, (2012)

⁶ I.S. Subedhar, (2012)

⁷ Nanavatty (1966)

Fieldwork aims for providing students with direct exposure to social & personal issues they study, to instil the capability to apply techniques pertinent to various social work domains for resolving these issues, and to offer experience in routine procedures related to documentation and administration. In social work, fieldwork aims to assist practitioners in recognizing issues, diagnosing them, treating them, using & maintaining necessary protocols and documentation.⁸

As an educator, the fieldwork supervisor assists students in expressing their views, feelings, uncertainties, and confusions, as well as their anger and resentment regarding their experiences and working conditions. Even though the student is primarily responsible for his learning, accumulation, and integration of all that he has learned as well as what he will learn, the consultant often makes observations to speed up the student's ability to align this (ability) with the learning situation with regards to parts to the whole.⁹

“**M. A. Momen (1970) claims**, Fieldwork program is designed to help and guide a student to develop his skill and competence for his independent professional functioning and carrying out appropriate responsibilities.”

“**R.R. Singh (1984) reported**, Fieldwork is an educationally sponsored attachment of social work students to an agency or a section of the community in which they are helped to extend their knowledge and understanding and experience the impact of human needs.”

“**W.A. Friedlander (1963)**demonstrated, Fieldwork is designed to integrate the academic knowledge, practical understanding and personal skills of the student by personal contact and to direct the clients”.

“Fieldwork comes to mean learning as far as possible to speak think feel and act as a social scientist from a different culture as per **International Encyclopaedia of Social Science.**”

⁸ M. Vasudeva Moorthy (1953)

⁹ J.M. Kapoor,(1961)

“The field practicum is an integral component of the curriculum in social work education. It engages the students in supervising social practice and provides opportunities to apply classroom learning in the field settings as stated by **Commission on Accreditation of CSWE (1994).**”

Significance of Social Work Practicum in Social Work Education:

During fieldwork practicum, students of social work are prepared to conduct scientific interventions in social difficulties by strengthening their skills and approaches and emphasizing the development of practical learning. Theory and practice are integrated through fieldwork. Cases without theory have no scientific significance, whereas theory without cases is insignificant.¹⁰

Concurrent fieldwork practice incorporates theories into practice to encourage continual learning while providing social work students opportunities to practice their intervention skills in real-world situations. Fieldwork enables social work students to establish self-awareness, ethical behaviour, & the ability to handle a variety of social problems. In particular, it helps students improve their documentation report writing skills.¹¹ Concurrent practice training enables student’s opportunities to further develop their intervention abilities in real-world scenarios, resulting in the development of a multifaceted, comprehensive personality. It enables students to do direct practice at individual, group, and community level client systems during fieldwork. During fieldwork practicum, social work students gain abilities & understanding necessary for utilizing available resources and services to improve society.¹²

Social Work Practice Components:

Practice of Social Work in Social Work Education enables students in gaining field knowledge on various social issues at group, individual, & community levels.

¹⁰ Moti Ram Maurya, 1961

¹¹ Learning outcome-based curriculum framework (LOCF) for BSW, UGC, New Delhi, 2019).

¹² UGC Model Curriculum Social Work Education, 2001, New Delhi.

Through various components of fieldwork, students get in-depth understanding the ground realities on the field by doing actual intervention and observation that helps to develop comprehensive approach towards social issues.

Table 01: Component of Social Work Practice

Sr. No.	Field Component	Work Description	Students Gain
01	Induction Programme	Detailed Orientation about whole structure of the fieldwork and its major salient features of the fieldwork practicum.	Gets clarity about fieldwork and its importance.
02	Orientation/Exposure Visits	Students are taken to observation visits to various social organizations, rural, tribal areas, and government organizations to explore their social and welfare fields and issues of development.	Students get first-hand exposure to social issues, development, and welfare issues, and how the various organizations address the issues.
03	Skill Labs	Various skill-related workshops are being organized on social issues to develop personality of the students.	Students are equipped with a variety of skills and strategies. It helps them dealing with the problems whenever they come across.

04	Classroom Teaching	Teaching Methods of Case Work, Group Work, Community Organization, Social Work Research, Social Welfare Administration, & Social Action.	It helps them to apply in practice and enables them dealing with individual, group level, & community levels effectively.
05	Field Work	It's nothing but learning by doing	Students get opportunity to work closely with social settings, and governmental settings to understand pattern of their work and various approaches to work.
06	Individual Conference (IC)	Once a week IC is arranged to facilitate interaction between students and faculty supervisors about fieldwork learning.	It is professional discussion platform where student gets inputs to strengthen fieldwork learning effectively.
07	Group Conference (GC)	Students are required to give Field Work Seminars twice a semester followed by group discussions with faculty supervisor, agency supervisor, and student of social work.	It helps students to understand field knowledge gaps and weaknesses to overcome them. And also develops the presentation skills.

08	Rural Camp	10 days residential rural or tribal engagement.	Helps to understand rural /tribal culture, living patterns, local issues, local authority, local dynamics, developmental needs, etc.
09	Study Tour	Pre-employment exposure around the nation or world	Gets chance to visit national-level social organizations as well as international exposure through domestic and international study tours.
10	Summer Placement Training (SPT)	30 days of continuous field-based training in an approved agency after completion of II semester and before commencement of the III semester.	Students get opportunity to learn advanced knowledge about their specialized field which they supposed to choose specialization in their final year of social work education i.e. MPSW, HRM, URCD, FCW, etc.
11	Block Placement Training (BPT)	30 days continue fieldwork training in government or non-government organization	Gets opportunity to work with social organizations even after completion of training.

Source: Compiled by the author

**Table 02: Global Standard of Field Work Practicum in Social Work
Education**

Objectives of Field Work Practicum	Guidelines of Field Work Practicum
To enable students to develop and enhance their capacity to relate theory to practice and vice-versa.	Field education should go long enough and provide ample opportunities for learning and demanding assignments ensuring students are prepared for professional practice.
To develop the necessary skills in helping those in need through the use of social work methods.	Orientation for lecturers or supervisors of fieldwork
To offer purposeful learning experiences to students through interaction with real-life situations under supervisory guidance.	Establishing provisions for field teachers to be included and involved in curriculum development
To foster increased self-awareness and professional self-development.	Ensuring the provision of sufficient and suitable resources to fulfill the requirements of the program's fieldwork component.
To develop professional values, attitudes, and commitments such as respect for human dignity.	Strategic coordination & associations within school & agency/field placement, as well as cooperation of educational institutions with an agency.

Source: IFSW & IASSW, 2004

Social Work Practice is an essential practical element which able students to develop comprehensive attitude. Fieldwork is a vibrant learning process that

directly connects with people and their issues that can be addressed through proper implication of social work knowledge and skills towards betterment of human beings. It is an essential aspect of graduate and postgraduate education in social work.¹³

Table No.03: **Major Goals of Field Work Practicum**

Goals of Field Work Practicum¹⁴

- A. To offer purposeful learning experiences to students through interaction with life situations under supervisory guidance for professional growth in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- B. To foster attitudes in the student toward professional self-development, increasing self-awareness appreciation of both capacities and limitations.
- C. To develop in the student the required skills in helping the needy through organizational work, use of social work methods, listening, participating in communication, and so on.
- D. To enable the student to develop and deepen the capacity to relate theory to practice and relate the experience to theory.

Fieldwork practicum is key in social work education for acquiring vital understanding and perspective through employing social work procedures and treatments adopting scientific and methodical approaches. Fieldwork equips students with critical thinking skills and cultivates future professional social workers that possess analytical and evaluative abilities to proactively address social challenges. In social work, the significance of fieldwork Education attempts at developing the skills and advanced knowledge of the democratic process necessary for professional social workers to meaningfully lead social inclusion and integrated development of excluded groups. Through its fundamental component of fieldwork, social work education cultivates students' capacity for providing human services and transforms the attitudes of future professional social worker cadres.

¹³Robert, 1995

¹⁴R.R Sing (1985, 44-45) in Field Work in Social Work Education

Levels of Social Work Practice in Community Level

Social work practice has three levels. Social work education includes micro, mezzo, & macro social work practice that assists students in transforming society at individual, community, group, & policy levels.

Table No.04: **Levels of Social Work Practice**

Levels	Descriptions
Micro Level of Social Practice	This involves social workers working with individuals or groups to address their issues.
Mezzo Level of Social Work Practice	Its emphasis on community, that is a broader collective (Community Organization).
Macro Level of Social Work Practice	Interventions' goal is reforming current social policies through social action.

Table No. 05: Community-Level Practice Intervention

Micro Level Intervention	Identification of Beneficiary at Village Level & Mobilization of Resources to meet needs of Individual and Group level.
Mezzo Level Intervention	Village-level intervention with socially excluded communities, gathering people around their needs, and facilitating communication among the community and the LSG
Macro Level Intervention	Determine the problems of gender-based discrimination and caste-based marginalization at local level. Here Social Work Practice involves analyzing the problem organizing people and empowering them.

Contextualization of Social Work in Practice:

Through application of micro, mezzo, & macro-interventions, social work education effectively prepares students for commitment to social change and the inclusive growth of the general population. Global social work practice standards have placed strong emphasis on:

Global Standard of Social Work Practice

1. Social work theory scientific application in practicing human development throughout lifespan.
 2. Development of critical thinking among the social work students on how social dysfunctions lead to uncertainty among people in terms of social, economic, physical, emotional, and psychological.
 3. Encourage positive, harmonious, and non-oppressive interactions between individuals and organizations at all levels, including organizations, programs, groups, families, and communities.
 4. Advocate for and facilitate the inclusion of a variety of perspectives particularly those of marginalized and excluded groups.
 5. Recognize the association within social work practice & individual life experiences and value systems.
 6. Depending on the program's specific concentration or professional practice orientation, social work education prepares aspiring social workers to perform developmental, protective, preventative, and/or therapeutic interventions in addition to offering social support.
 7. Examine critically how social policies and initiatives uphold or fail to uphold justice and human rights.
 8. Intervention strategies employ nonviolent activism, human rights-based advocacy, and peacebuilding.
 9. Capability to engage and cooperate with additional concerning complexities, ethical considerations, details, multidimensionality, legal
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implications, and dialogical aspects of power.

Assess relevance of national, regional, & global social work ethical guidelines to circumstance.

Source: *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training, IASSW-IFSW*

Conclusion

Social work education is key element in social work practice, allowing students apply their theoretical knowledge to practical problems. Fieldwork makes students practically competent with analytical and research skills through direct intervention in the field. Field-based learning is constantly required to implement theory in social work education, allowing students to be shaped and producing future social worker cadres who are professionally reflective. Social work practicum lets students learn & practice fieldwork techniques. Fieldwork cannot be done into four walls it has to be done in open and closed settings by proper intervention with client system. To fulfill fieldwork in social work education's primary function, especially in the face of adversity, the fieldwork curriculum must be reorganized under the requirements and circumstances. Additionally, new comprehensive fieldwork models must be developed. There is no substitute way to do the field work without engaging students in actual field.

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