Abstract: Social work is a purely a practice base knowledge system where it is expected that the learner form the social work education learn the theories taught in the classroom teaching and accordingly practice the learnt theories and the methods into the given field work settings. The fieldwork settings in social work education may be the field work agencies and or open communities where the social work students are placed for the practicum. The present article attempts to study the theory, methods and practice in the social work education especially in URCD specialization. The article is based upon the data collected by the researcher through in-depth interviews with social work students, faculty supervisors, HOD/Principals and agency supervisors from 20 social work schools in Maharashtra state during his doctoral research. The data were collected from 20 schools of social work imparting URCD specialization in MSW course. A total of 260 samples were taken for the study, the variable studied were field work training, field work supervision, relevance of theory and practice and needs of URCD specialization are discussed in the present article.

Introduction

Social work education is a profession that applies to the working body of knowledge to the resolution of social problems and enhancement of social functioning. Fieldwork education is an integral part of social work curriculum. While class room learning focuses on discrete knowledge and theoretical background, fieldwork curriculum exposes students to wide range of problems and possibilities Anupriyo (2007). Social work education is a theory and practice based education, which basically adopted the philosophy of “Learning by Doing”.

Social work education was designed in U.S.A. in the 19th century and was introduced in India during the 20th century. Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work was the first school of professional social work in India, now popularly known as, “Tata Institute of Social Sciences”. The Tata Institute of social science introduced Social work education in Mumbai in 1936, and the founder director of this school was an American missionary, Clifford Manshardt”. Initially, the course was designed for labour welfare field; designed first as a post-graduation diploma and latter upgraded to a postgraduate course. Those who completed this course prove its utility in the industrial field; they were able to resolve labour and industrial problems effectively and efficiently. Hence the increased demand for these post-graduates trained social workers attracted the universities and college authorities in India. As result, other universities and college in India began offering social work education courses; currently these courses are popularly known in the field as M.S.W. course.

Specializations in Social Work Education

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. Tata Institute has been the pioneer in social work education in India. The specialization in medical and psychiatric social work was started at the Tata Institute by an American expert from the University of Louisville, Kentucky. She planned the classroom instructions and field work for this specialization at its initiation. She was at the Tata Institute between the years 1946 to 1948. In the meantime, an alumnus of the Tata Institute
was sent to the University of Chicago to undergo training in medical and psychiatric social work. On her return, this alumnus was made in charge of the specialization when the American expert left. Similarly, the preparatory work for family and child welfare specialization was undertaken by an American expert from Merrill-Palmer Foundation, USA, during 1946-47, when she was at the Tata Institute. The specialization was actually introduced in 1949 under the headship of an Indian faculty, trained at the University of Michigan. The introduction of criminology and correctional administration specialization in the Tata Institute was preceded by offering of a six-month programme by two UN experts. The specialization was formally started in 1953 under the headship of an Indian who was deputed for advanced study in that field at the Ohio State University. A specialization named group work and community organization was introduced in the Tata Institute in 1952, headed by an alumnus trained in the US. This ultimately became the specialization of urban and rural community development specialization (Mandal, 1989).

**History of Field Work Training**

Fieldwork is considered to be an integral part of social work education by all the schools of social work in India. It is the field training that distinguished social work education from other social sciences. In fact, social work education has started in the world in the form of apprenticeship. The credit goes to the Charity Organization Society of America which initiated to consider social work as a profession. In the year 1898 the Charity Organization Society started social work education for giving the job training to newly recruited personnel. There were no theory classes and it was just five weeks programme aimed at the practical training of the newly recruited personnel. The trainee personnel selected for the course were asked to observe the job of their senior colleagues during the office hours for learning in practical situation. In the beginning of this course there were neither the theory courses conducted for the candidates nor the assessment of their performance was based on the theoretical understanding. Thus, the social work education emerged out of the practical field training. Marry Richmond, a pioneer lady in social case work, tried to project the concept and ideas of social work education. A lady who was an official in the Charity Organization Society could be well considered as a successful projector of social work education. Thus, since its beginning the field work training in social work education is considered to be a major part of social work education. Lawani (2002)

**Rationale of the Study**

Although there is no hard and fast rule or system for employment according to specialization in certain places employment is given on the basis of specializations. There are Social Work education courses that do not offer specialization, such course is known as generic and those completing this generic course are eligible for employment in any field. People from different academic disciplines/fields have come to know about the specializations of social work education and their significance and utility value. And as result, new graduates and professional from other fields have started considering the social work education specialization. As the demand for specialization and micro specialization increases, so does the scope of specialization in rural and urban development studies.

Although rural populations are majority in our country, every rural population has its typical and conventional problems. Similarly, urban population is also sizable today and due to technological development their problems have become complicated. As result, the old methods and techniques to identified and implement solution to social problems have become obsolete in this changing rural and urban society. Thus, modern or new techniques are needed to solve arising problems. Therefore, in order to meet the demands Universities and Colleges have developed Rural and Urban development specialization in Social Work Education.

The social work practitioners & educators have developed the methodology for training in any
course of social work and/or specializations. This methodology consists of three phases: I) Orientation training, II) Concurrent training and. III) Block placement training. This theoretical and practical training system has been in place and used for the past 75 years; little changes can be appreciated in the theoretical papers but no changes have taken place in fieldwork training. Therefore the trained social work professionals in India have been trained based on these old theoretical and practical methodology. There has not been; however, any attempt to evaluate the social work training methodology; its utility value and contribution, its progress, development and results; the potential problems and difficulties; and the expectation for the social work professionals in modern rural & urban, communities in the changing Indian society. Similarly there has not been any research conducted to assess the relevance of the current theoretical and practical framework used for the education and training of Social Work professionals. Although “NACC” (Organization of evaluation work) has evaluated the departments of social work of the universities and the colleges and made recommendations, the expected change in training and practice in the field have not taken place.

As other institutes and similar disciplines have started to offer specialization in Urban and Rural Community Development, it is needed that Social Work education start to develop its own specialty and professional requirements. Thus the relevance of theory and practice in the Social Work field needs to be examined in order to redesigned social work course (curricula) suitable for the context of Indian Society and its Rural and Urban social issues. Also the redesigning of the social work courses are necessary to compete with the other similar disciplines in terms of employment, practice, development, welfare and rural and urban development in professional social work perspective.

The changing scenarios, social issues, challenges, current social system disciplines expectation of what social work should be as profession/occupation; and on the other hand social work educators’ critics of Singh (1985) the theory and practice currently in use for training of new social work professionals, Maurya (1962) the employment standards and practice issues, Kapoor (1961) current professional approach and practice served as background and rational for carrying out this researcher. The main objective of this thesis was to examine the relevance of social work education specialization in Rural and Urban Community Development and respective fields in Maharashtra.

**Research Studies on Social Work Education in India**

There are very few studies conducted on the social work education and there were no such studies made specifically focusing on Urban and Rural Community Development specialization in India. Surprisingly review of research reveals that there are very little research and writing exploring field work aspects of social work education in urban and rural community development in India.

In the attempts of developing and defining started right from the inception of social work education in India in 1936 with establishment of the first institution of social work in Mumbai, now known as Tata Institute of Social Sciences. While there is a tremendous production of social work literature in the west, a few are seen from Indian contributors. There is very little which is contributed by social work practitioners from India.

However, since field work done is not documented scientifically and systematically by the schools of social work and the field work agencies the information does not become retrievable and cannot be used by other social work educators. Thus, very little knowledge about field work and social work practice in urban and rural community development added into social work body of knowledge. Tracing the trend of research articles published in the Indian Journal of Social Work, Mumbai, from 1971 to 1990 a study made by Vijayalaxmi, Deviprashand Vishwararao (1996) highlighted that only 1.0 percent of 102 articles published between 1971 to 1980 were on field instructions and no article were published in 1981 to
1990 indication that only one article was published by journal on social work instructions in field work in twenty years. A negligible numbers of articles are contributed after 1990 till date.

The Indian thesis Database ‘Shodhganga’ shows that no doctoral studies have been undertaken on social work education and field work practices in urban and rural community development specialization in Maharashtra. However D'Souza's study in (1978) on ‘field instruction on social work education’ has been the only thesis exclusively on field work instruction in India. The study pointed the theoretical base for field instruction and examined the patterns of field work instructions in 14 schools of social work in India. The study has stressed on the needs of pedagogical skills and techniques in field instructions. The study suggested that schools of social work should have special cell to take responsibilities of improving field work field instruction. Some of the studies carried on graduations of schools of social work, on perceptions regarding training and field work, by Macchhiwala and D’souza (1983), Mittal and D’souza (1987), D’lima and Anand (1993) and Mehta (1996) and Cardoz (2004) identified the following, 1) graduated gave low preferences to industrial and administration field placement 2) graduated were moderately satisfied with field work trainings 3) junior graduated were more satisfied compared to seniors graduated with field work 4) field work supervisors were the major supports to the students social workers in practicing field work.5) Graduates were satisfied with faculty supervisors rather that agency supervisors.

None of these studies have attempted to study the relevance between theory taught in class room and field work practice done in the field work agency and in open community setup specifically in urban and rural community development specialization. Studies have focused only on perception of graduate students on field work trainings.

Research Methodology

Significance of the Study

The finding of study will redound to the benefit of social work education system considering that URCD specialized social work plays a crucial role in community development and professional preparation of social work students. The study will bring up crucial data on social work education imparting in schools of social work in Maharashtra especially the URCD specializations needs and restructuring the workings of the specializations. The study will find out the potentials which will be beneficial to schools of social work to redesign and upgrade their social work course on URCD. Thus the schools that apply the suggestions made by the findings of the study will be able to train the social work student professionally. For the researchers the study will reveal the crucial areas in the social work education.

Objectives of the Study

Social work education and training is imparted in many colleges of social work and universities in Maharashtra and a number of them offer Urban and Rural Community Development (URCD) specialization. There seems to be a number of differences in terms of framework, practice training syllabi and theoretical and practical examination among these Colleges and Universities. And as mention earlier in previous chapter, the framework, fieldwork training and field practices in the social work specialization of Urban and Rural Community Development seem not to meet the needs of Indian society. Therefore, the general objective of this study was to explore the differences and relevance of the framework, practice training syllabi and examination. The specific objectives set for the study were to

1. Study the nature of theoretical and practical curriculum of Urban and Rural Community Development course in social work education in the universities and the affiliated post-graduation colleges of social work in Maharashtra.
2. Find out the relevance of theoretical papers taught in the class-rooms and fieldwork training
in the agencies and also in the open community and the practice done in the respective agencies and the community at large.

3. Examine the existing phases of fieldwork in schools of social work in the study region.

4. Explore the need of redesigning the specialization of urban and rural community development for establishing its professional specialty and to produce the specialized professional trained manpower.

Summary of Findings

It is found that, a majority of the students (68 percent) joined the MSW course because it was their personal interest. A few students (04 percent) said that they joined the course because their parents told them to join the course. Significant number of students (44 percent) came to know about the MSW course through their friends. Only (5 percent) got the information about the MSW course from the newspapers, TV or radio.

It is found that, a majority of students (34 percent) said they do not have guest lecturers for URCD. Many students (15 percent) from the colleges affiliated to state universities said they never had guest lecturers for URCD. And (14 percent) of the students who were from deemed to be universities said they did not had any guest lectures at all. Only (05 percent) of the alumni were invited for guest lectures.

Methods Used for Recording

It is found that, a majority numbers (79 percent) of the students submitted their diary and journal at fix time every week. But the students used the traditional methodology of recording the field work practice. There is hardly any scope for students to use the innovative method of field work recording as it is found that a few students less than (01 percent) submitted diary and journals and used audio and video methods of field work recordings. It is found from the table that most of the students (73 percent) of students did not recorded during field work.

Professional Preparation

It is found that, (31 percent) students got motivated whenever they attend a workshop. It has been found out that though there were some schools of social work organised workshop, there were many students (31 percent) who has never attended any type of training. Very less focus was given on professional preparation of social work students for example like report writing training (07 percent), CV/Bio-data writing (03 percent), facing the interviews (02 percent), proposal writing (14 percent). Thus social work institution/colleges/ university department were lacking in organising workshop especially for professional preparation of URCD students.

Fieldwork Recording Methods other than the Traditional Methods Used

It is revealed that majority of the social work institutions/departments (85 percent) provided diary and journal for students and most of the institutions/departments according to faculties they used process recording method the most for field work recording. Whereas when the same question was asked to students the students’ answers were different as they said, they were also using innovative methods for recording field work like photographs and audio video recordings. Thus it is found there was communication gap between students and faculty supervisors.

Methods of Sending Students to their First Fieldwork Visit

It is revealed that, a majority of the respondents (65 percent) said that they had different curriculum/syllabus for field work for working in open community and in agency. There was no similarity in introducing new URCD students in field work settings and also (35 percent) did not had different curriculum/syllabus for field work for working in open community and in agency. A few (10 percent) were found to be training students and then sending the in the first field work visit.
Workshops Conducted by Schools of Social Work

It is found that a majority of (75 percent) of the respondents said their students were not trained by the field work agency. And (40 percent) also said that, there students were not trained by social work educational departments/institutions.

Training Organized for Capacity Development of Community

It is found that a majority of the social work faculty (65 percent) had never arranged any training for open community people for their capacity development in field work settings. And (65 percent) never had provided assistance to open community people through field work practice.

Availability of Infrastructure for Field Work Conferences

It is found that, (40 percent) of the field work agency supervisors were not having any space to conduct field work conferences and were also not conducting separate individual and group field work conferences in the agency. Whereas (60 percent) of the field work agency supervisors had space to conduct field work conferences. And conducted separate individual and group field work conferences in the agency.

Arrangements of Theoretical Induction Programmes

It is found that, though (95 percent) of the HOD/Principal claiming that they have separate room for field work supervision and they conducted training for theoretical orientation for URCD, researcher has observed that many institutions are using same classrooms for both teaching and for field work supervision and a few colleges/institutions were found to be having separate room for field work conference.

Conclusions

It is revealed from the study that the teaching methodology is traditional. Majority of the faculties taught URCD syllabus by lecture method and a few were using innovative teaching methods like role plays field work experiences sharing in class. It is seen that traditional method of teaching has not yet improved in social work profession. Students have no or very less chance to share their views in the class room teaching a few students said that they had seminar method of teaching. Guest lecture were organized but most of them were from NGO field, URCD student alumni were not all invited for guest lectures. Many students from the colleges affiliated to state universities said they never had guest lecturers for URCD. Students from URCD specialization were more interested in working in open settings or the agencies where the agencies are directly working in open (community) settings. Majority of the students were not using innovative methods to record the field work activity. If there is a systematic and standard timing and system of reporting and submitting the records, students can be professionally prepared. Most of the schools of social work education provided diary and journals to students for recording of field work activity. There was no similarity form of writing or any standard of writing diary and journals even in same institutions. Many a times students get confused what to write in the diary and journals as there is no training or format given to them. Sharing the experience of field work is an important part of field work education but students are seen to be missing these inputs. If students are not mentored properly in the field work practice they may get wrong impression about field and this may results into losing interest in the field work practice.

Thus it can be concluded that the four pillars of social work education those are schools of social work, field work agencies, faculty supervisors and administrators should have coordination for professional preparation of social work students in URCD specialization.

References