



## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN KARNATAKA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is the outcome of an empirical study emphasizing the issues and challenges of Social Work education in Karnataka state. It was descriptive research conducted in the schools of social work including university departments and affiliated colleges offering social work education. This paper highlights the issues and challenges of social work education and the results are discussed in light of the prescribed guidelines of the University Grants Commission, besides suggesting measures to enhance the quality of social work education in Karnataka.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Work Education, Issues, Challenges, Quality.

### INTRODUCTION

Social work has evolved in to a professional activity and no longer simply constitutes as charitable work. It has become a palliative, protective, rehabilitative, and preventive measure based on mobilized human and material resources for dealing with all kinds of social problems. Social work is a multi-dimensional model of professional practice. It includes intervention in models that deal with individuals and households, communities and organizations, and in social action and

advocacy with many other groups in society (Roy, 2012). Social work has a role to perform in maximizing the quality of life, which is a component of our standard of living. Hence, social work has become an organized humanitarian profession.

Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work (presently known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences), Mumbai established in 1936 was the first to offer social work education in India. Since then, there has

been a proliferation of institutions offering education and training in social work.

Before independence, there were three institutions in India offering social work courses at the PG level. Later on according to the UGC Review Committee Report (UGC, 1980), there were 34 institutions offering a social work programme in the late 1976 and early 1977, of which 23 were offering master's degree. The number of schools offering social work education in India is on the increase more particularly in the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. The state of Karnataka is unique in terms of offering social work education at the post - graduate level.

Unfortunately, the growth of the schools of social work is not evenly spread in the state and most of the schools especially institutions run by private management do not have qualified faculty members on their staff. Further, some institutions are poorly equipped in terms of physical infrastructure.

Social work education at the master's degree level should comprise the components of classroom teaching including the core domain of social work profession theory and practice, the supportive domain of the human growth environment and socio-political base, and interdisciplinary and elective domain as suggested in the UGC Model Curriculum (UGC, 2001), and the same has been adopted to a large extent by the schools of social work in India. The objective of social work education is that of imparting integration of social work knowledge, more so of multi-disciplinary knowledge, attitudes, and development of people-centered skills including practice-based and participatory research (NAAC, 2005).

In backdrop of the above, it is important to find the issues and challenges of the schools of social work in Karnataka so that appropriate measures can be suggested to improve the

quality of education, keeping in view the recommendations and minimum standards prescribed by the University Grants Commission.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In order to understand the issues and challenges and to enrich the existing body of knowledge on social work education, the following objectives have been formulated:

1. To study the admission procedure and method of teaching adopted in the schools of social work;
2. To examine the infrastructural facilities including the library and hostel facilities made available in the schools of social work; and
3. To explore the course content followed in the schools of social work in Karnataka.

### **UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE**

The study is confined to the schools of social work in Karnataka state offering post graduate programme in social work functioning in the academic year 2008-09. It was found that eight universities were offering M.S.W. programme in the academic year 2008-09 in Karnataka. Some universities had P.G. centers, and some had affiliated colleges offering M.S.W. programme. Overall, 8 university departments, 6 P.G. centers, thirty-nine affiliated colleges, and 53 departments were offering post graduate programme in social work. These existing eight universities come under the jurisdiction of 25 districts of Karnataka. Hence, the universe of the study constitutes all the 53 departments of social work offering post graduate programme in social work including university departments, post graduate centers, and affiliated colleges.

The researcher approached and administered the interview schedule to 53 Chairpersons/Heads/ Principals of the social

work department offering post graduate programme in social work, of whom only 14 positively responded. Some did not reply, while others provided incomplete information. Hence, it was possible to study only 14 heads of the social work departments.

## DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered from the Chairpersons/Heads/Principles of social work of different post graduate departments of Karnataka was subjected to processing. It was tabulated by drawing univariate tables and calculating percentages.

**Table-1: Admission Process**

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sanctioned intake of students each year	30:40	07	50.0
	41:50	02	14.3
	51:60	05	35.7
Take more students than stipulated	Yes	00	00
	No	14	100.0
Eligibility requirement for admission	Any Bachelor's Degree	12	85.7
	Bachelor's Degree with social sciences background	02	14.3

An attempt was made to understand the profile of the students in the post graduate departments of Social Work in Karnataka. According to the University Grants Commission (1980), the intake of students in professional institutions should be based on the manpower planning keeping in view the societal needs, goals that are to be achieved, and the tasks for accomplishing the goals. A majority of the Social Work departments (50%) have a sanctioned intake of 30-40 students. A significant proportion, more than three-tenth institutions have an intake of 51-60 students. A good proportion, more than one-tenth institutions have an intake of 41-50 students. The intake of students was not found to be in proportion to the availability of infrastructure in the departments., It should be in proportion to the availability of infrastructure facilities, teaching faculty, library, and fieldwork opportunities. It is noted that a few of the private institutions are increasing the intake capacity without bothering with the quality

of education. No institution should admit students in excess of the stipulated numbers as this would make it liable to pay penalty to the affiliating university.

A majority of the Social Work institutions, more than four-fifth, admit graduates from any stream. A small proportion, more than one-tenth institutions admit Bachelor degree holders with social science background. Since Social Work is a professional course and ~~it is~~ interdisciplinary in nature, admitting graduates from various streams to the M.S.W. course will prove to be helpful for the development of the profession. It should attract graduates from science, commerce, medical, and law background so that it will become dynamic and sustainable. **Manshardt (1985)** did opine that Social Work students should have background knowledge of sociology, economics, psychology, anthropology, political sciences, biology, and history.

**Table-2: Course Content/Curriculum**

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Type of course offered</b>	Generic	06	42.9
	Specialization	08	57.1
<b>Specialization offered</b>	Community development or Social development	08	57.1
	Human Resource Management	08	57.1
	Medical and Psychiatric Social Work	06	42.9
	Correctional Administration	00	0
<b>Criteria followed in allotting the specialization</b>	Merit and choice of the student	08	57.1
	Student's option	04	28.6
<b>Satisfaction on method of allotting specialization</b>	Satisfied	04	28.6
	Not satisfied	04	28.6
<b>Reasons for non-satisfaction</b>	Students prefer only one specialization	04	50
	Non-availability of required specialization	04	50
<b>Favour generic course</b>	Yes	06	42.9
	No	08	57.1
<b>Reasons for favouring the generic course</b>	Exposure to various field possible	06	100
	Better avenues for employment	06	100
	To avoid unhealthy competition among students	06	100
<b>Reasons for advocating specialization</b>	Master's degree course should be offered in specialization	07	50.0
	Intensive knowledge in one field	04	28.6
	Better opportunities for job placement	13	92.9

Curriculum plays an important role in developing Social Work professionals. Curriculum development in Social Work is gaining increasing attention among Social Work educators tasked with the responsibility of keeping the content relevant to the tremendous changes in the human service environment (Carmen, 2009). Hence, the Post Graduate departments of Social Work in Karnataka adopted the present curriculum. A majority of the Social Work institutions, about three-fifth, are offering specialization in Social Work course in Karnataka. A significant proportion, more than two-fifth are offering a generic course in Social Work. Ilango and Francis (2012) opined in their edited book that one of the major weaknesses of professional Social Work education in India is the lack of uniformity and standardized curriculum all over the country; in fact, even within states, there is a lack of uniformity with university

curriculum being different from the syllabi of autonomous colleges. Out of 14 Social Work institutions, about three-fifth institutions each, offer Community Development/Social Development, Human Resource Management, and Medical and Psychiatric Social Work specializations. It is surprising to be note that no Social Work institution offers Correctional Administration specialization in Karnataka state. This may be because very few opportunities exist in the field of Correctional Administration. Naturally, students do not opt for this specialization. Social Work education should concentrate on producing a curriculum relevant to Social Work activity and also acknowledge the educational difficulties of professional training (Cox, 1982) so that in the field of Health, and Industry and Community development there is increased demand for M.S.W. graduates.

The criteria adopted by Social Work institutions in allotting specialization to M.S.W. students vary. About three-fifth institutions allot specialization based on merit and choice of the students, while more than one-fourth institutions allot specialization according to the student's choice. More than one-fourth institutions are satisfied with the present method of allotting specialization and the same proportion of institutions reported that they are not satisfied with the method of allotting specialization. The reasons for non-satisfaction are students prefer only one specialization and non-availability of the preferred specialization. In some cases, the lack of specialized fieldwork agencies and lack of specialized faculty members restrict the institutions from offering specialization based on the demands of the students.

A majority of the Social Work institutions, about three-fifth are in favour of specialization- based Social Work education. A significant proportion, more than two-fifth

are in favour of generic Social Work education. The reasons reported by institutions for advocating generic Social Work education are exposure to different fields of Social Work, more employment opportunities, and avoidance of unhealthy competition among the M.S.W. graduates. The reasons for supporting specialization- based Social Work education are better job opportunities in specialized area, gaining intensive knowledge in one area, and master level study should have specialization. There is a difference of opinion among social educators about offering Social Work education in specialization and generic courses. So far, in India, the Social Work profession is not being recognized due to lack of indigenous knowledge base and practice-based approach by Social Workers in the development field. **Manis (1971)** states that it would be a major handicap if the teaching textbooks are written in a foreign language because the illustrations would be unfamiliar to the culture and at other times, the concepts would be irrelevant.

**Table -3: Method of Teaching**

N=14

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Teaching aids used</b>	Charts	08	57.1
	Maps/Graphs	05	35.7
	Slide projector	06	42.9
	Overhead projector	12	85.7
	Video	03	21.4
	Cassette player	02	14.3
	Films	08	57.1
	Blackboard	06	42.9
<b>Audio-visual aids help the students to understand the concepts</b>	Yes	13	92.9
	No	01	7.1
<b>Medium of instruction</b>	English	06	42.9
	Kannada	01	7.1
	Both	07	50.0
<b>Medium of examination</b>	Only in English	01	7.1
	English or Kannada	13	92.9
<b>Percentage of students writing exam in English</b>	5%	04	28.6
	10%	08	57.1
	15%	02	14.3

Teaching is an important component of any professional course. This study attempts to explore the teaching practices in the Post Graduate departments of Social Work in Karnataka. The teaching aids used by the Social Work educators vary in the institutions. Out of 14, a majority, more than four-fifth institutions use Overhead projector; more than half each use Films/Documentaries and Charts, less than half use each Blackboard and Slide Projector, respectively; more than three-tenth use Maps/Graphs; more than two-fifth use Video shows; and more than one-tenth use a Cassette player.

Well- established Social Work departments in universities and colleges have facilities of modern audio-visual aids. It is to be noted that many of the Social Work departments do not have Overhead projectors. Some of the faculty members are not familiar with the use and application of computers and making a PowerPoint presentation. Except for one institution, the remaining Social Work institutions are of the opinion that using audio-visual aids is effective in teaching. With reference to the medium of instruction, half the institutions teach both in Kannada and English medium. More than two-fifth institutions teach only in the English medium. One institution teaches only in Kannada medium.

Students from rural and semi-urban areas come from Kannada medium. As opined by **Kulkarni (1971)**, the ultimate goal of teaching

is to ensure learning. **Desai (1994)** found that several institutions are increasingly utilizing regional languages towards Social Work education. Hence, both Kannada and English are found to be appropriate mediums of instruction in many institutions. According to Towel (**Mathew, Grace-1975**), individualization in teaching is an important principle, which can be effectively used to facilitate the learning process. **Thomas (1996)** found in his study that 81.01% educators taught the subject in the English language and the rest (19.99%) used both English and a regional language. **Desai (1994)** found that almost two-third of the faculty showed readiness to teach in one of the Indian languages and only a little, over one- fourth could not do so. Except in one institution, in all other institutions permit the students of MSW to write their examination in English or Kannada language. The percentage of students writing examination in English in various institutions varies. Nearly 15 percent of students (14.3%); 10 percent of students (57%); and 5 percent of students (28.6%) writes examination in English. The percentage of students writing examination in English language is less when compared to other professional courses. The reasons are that many of the students come from rural areas with Kannada medium background and majority of them hold a Bachelor of Arts degree.

**Table-4: Library and Hostel facilities in the Institute of Social Work**

N=14

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Have separate library in the department/institution</b>	Yes	11	78.6
	No	3	21.4
<b>Number of books in the library</b>	500	4	28.6
	1000	2	14.3
	2000	2	14.3
	More than 3000	3	21.4
<b>Number of journals subscribed</b>	Four	2	14.3
	Five	1	7.1
	Eight	3	21.4
	Twelve	1	7.1
	Fourteen	1	7.1
	Fifteen	1	7.1
<b>Satisfied with the quantity of books and periodicals</b>	Satisfied	12	85.7
	Not satisfied	2	14.3
<b>Have hostel facilities for male students</b>	Yes	12	85.7
	No	2	14.3
<b>Have hostel facilities for female students</b>	Yes	11	78.6
	No	3	21.4

The Library, Transport, and Hostel facilities available in the departments of Social Work have a bearing on the quality of education. The **University Grants Commission (1980)** mentions that holding of books by the institutions are very meagre and there is a need to have their own specialized collection, as books are very expensive and most students cannot afford them. Out of 14 Social Work institutions, a majority of them, more than three-fourth, have a separate library. The number of books available in the libraries of the departments are 500 books (28.6%); 3000 books (21.4%); 1000 and 2000 books each (14.3%). At post graduation level, the availability of a sufficient number of books published by reputed writers and publishers is important for the development of students. In Social Work education, reading original writings is largely neglected by both teachers and students.

With reference to the availability of periodicals in the library, more than one-fifth institutions have eight journals. A small

proportion, more than one-tenth institutions have four journals. One institution each has five, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, and twenty journals in their libraries, respectively. Periodicals are essential sources to gain knowledge on the latest developments in the field of social work. Periodicals are also essential for doing review of literature while conducting research. The refereed journals, for instance, the Indian Journal of Social Work, is hardly available in the private colleges of social work. In such cases, the M.S.W. students complete the course without leafing through a single Journal of Social Work.

More than four-fifth institutions are satisfied with the availability of existing books and periodicals. Significant proportions, more than one-tenth institutions, are not satisfied with the available books and periodicals. Due to advancement of internet and availability of material on the web, the importance to reference books and periodicals is declining. The reading habit is also declining both among the students and teachers.

With reference to the availability of hostel facilities for students, a majority of the institutions, more than four-fifth, have hostel facility for males, and more than three-fourth have got hostel facility for females. In case of the University departments hostel facility is

available for both male and female students. In many private un-aided colleges, hostel facility for both males and females, are neglected. The performance of the students is likely to be affected in case of non-availability of hostel.

**Table-5: Physical Facilities in the Institute of Social Work**

N=14

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Own building</b>	Yes	4	28.6
	No	10	71.4
<b>Number of classrooms</b>	One	3	21.3
	Two	1	7.1
	Three	5	35.7
	Four	2	14.3
	Five	2	14.3
	Six	1	7.1
<b>Classrooms are sufficient to hold classes</b>	Yes	10	71.4
	No	4	28.6
<b>Spacious classroom</b>	Yes	12	85.7
	No	2	14.3
<b>Rooms properly ventilated</b>	Yes	12	85.7
	No	2	14.3
<b>Availability of sufficient number of staff rooms</b>	Yes	8	57.1
	No	6	42.9
<b>Availability of meeting hall/seminar hall</b>	Yes	13	92.9
	No	1	7.1
<b>Number of rooms meant for administration</b>	One	5	35.7
	Two	4	28.6
	Three	1	7.1
	Four	2	14.3
<b>Have adequate furniture</b>	Yes	13	92.9
	No	1	7.1
<b>Availability of sufficient number of toilets</b>	Yes	13	92.9
	No	1	7.1
<b>Provision of potable water</b>	Yes	12	85.7
	No	2	14.3
<b>Availability of restrooms for students</b>	Yes	9	64.3
	No	5	35.7

Physical infrastructure has a bearing on the quality of education. Out of 14 departments, more than one-fourth institutions have their own building. It is to be noted that of a majority of social work institutions, more than seven-tenth does not own a building. The number of classrooms available in the departments of social work are three (35.7%); one (21.3%); four and five each (14.3%); and two (7.1%)

classrooms. A significant proportion, more than one-fourth institutions, reported that the existing classrooms are not sufficient. It is also reported by more than one-tenth institutions that availability of space in the classroom is not satisfactory. The same proportions of institutions do not have properly ventilated classrooms.



A majority of the institutions, more than half, have sufficient number of staff rooms. A significant proportion, more than two-fifth faculty members of social work do not have sufficient staff rooms. Except for one, all the other institutions have meeting hall/seminar hall and adequate furniture. There are one (35.7%); two (28.6%); four (14.3%); and three (7.1%) rooms for administrative purposes in the institution.

Except one, all the institutions have ~~got~~ sufficient toilets. A majority of the institutions, more than four-fifth have got potable water facility. A significant proportion, more than one-tenth institutions do not have the provision of potable water. A good proportion, more than three-fifth institutions have got restrooms for the students. A significant proportion, more than three-tenth institutions do not have restrooms for the students. It is true that a considerable number of institutions lack in basic infrastructure. Lack of classrooms, toilets, and drinking water is likely to affect the teaching-learning process and quality of education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF SECOND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Second review committee report, 1980 it was noted that the intake of students in professional institutions should depend on the manpower planning keeping in view the associated needs, goals that are to be achieved, and the tasks accomplishing these goals. The selection procedure should focus on the aptitude and interest of candidates in social work. The selection criteria and procedure for admission to schools of social work should be examined and a study should be conducted to understand the problem relating to the selection with a view to standardizing the method as such. Schools of social work should limit the intake of candidates to ensure the quality of social work education.

The committee also found that newer institutions tended to enrol more number of students than their actual capacity. This will lead to inadequate training input for the students.

The Library is a vital aspect for education at institutions, especially, which teaches the profession of social work. Social work training institutions should have this own separate library. The committee mentions that the holding of books by the institution are very meager and there is a need for the institutions to have their own specialized collection because books are very expensive and most students cannot afford them. Journals pertaining to the subject also play an important role in the educational process. The committee recommended that a new institution should have a minimum of 1500 volumes and 20 journals in the library, which are vital to the interest of meaningful studies at the post graduation level and research work.

According to **Yasas (1971)**, the systematic development of indigenous teaching material, not only for the method courses, but also for every course in the curriculum, is urgent.

There have been a number of arguments for and against offering generic courses or specialization in the recent past.

The committee found that out of 27 programmes at the post graduate level, only 06 were fully generic and 16 programmes had specialization in the final year. This pattern of curriculum based on different fields of social work was traditionally conceived in the twenties and thirties in the USA. Though USA has given up the organization of curriculum according to fields, long ago, we still follow the same review of social work education in India second review committee report (1980).

## CONCLUSION

The study has made an attempt to examine the functioning of social work education with reference to the issues and challenges in Karnataka state. It is found from empirical evidences that majority of the social work institutions lack human and physical infrastructure. The human resource is lacking in both university departments as well as in private colleges. However, private colleges also lack physical infrastructure. There has been a mushrooming of social work institutions in the recent past. No proper measures are in place to regulate the quality of teaching learning and examinations. This will have a bearing on the declining quality of social work education. Hence, UGC needs to review the social work education in India and take immediate steps to enhance its quality.

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