



THE NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF FIELD PRACTICUM FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

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Abstract:

The Social Work is a professional course builds the students who are socially concerned and competent to meet the social needs and development of human being. The post graduation course tries to promote a sense of social responsibility and commitment towards the needy, vulnerable and the marginalized sections of society. Both theoretical knowledge and practical help students to develop the skills required for professional social work practice. Field practicum is an important component of the MSW course. Field work comprises working with the social welfare agencies, Non government agencies, Government agencies or any organizations where involve in helping individuals, groups or communities to enhance their social functioning or to enable them to cope with problems. The purpose of social work practicum is to prepare students for social work practice by providing them opportunities to integrate knowledge with practice thus the preparation to become professional social workers. The main objective of this paper is to improve the curriculum training in field work for the masters of social work students and to facilitate self-awareness and self-assessment in them and to motivate them to uphold professional social work standards, values and ethics so that they can work better to face challenges in the current society.

Index Terms: Social Work, Field Practicum, Profession & Training

Introduction:

The Social Work course prepares students who are socially concerned and competent to meet the social development based on their interest and specialization work in various sectors like Industry, Hospitals and in community under non government organizations, government sector or under various projects. The Master of social work course tries to promote a sense of social responsibility and commitment so that student can offer specialized professional services to the various sectors they work. The full two years education consists of theoretical leaning, field work and research project. The classroom lectures totally develop them to improve their personality by taking lead in presenting papers, seminars, organizing quiz, group discussions and presentation, learning in pairs and explore the hidden talents by improve skills. Active participation and developing organizing skills in National and State level seminars will make them to face challenges and developing team spirit. For practical knowledge, I MSW students are placed in general setting like open community and in NGO's to work with the people to organize community level groups, children's club, youth and Women's. They do intervention activities to anganwadi, government primanmary and High school, meet women and help in organization like Self help groups. II MSW students as per their specialization - community development (CD), Personal Management and Human Recourse (PM and HR), and medical and psychiatric social work (MPSW) they are placed in institutions, industries and in an organizations. The specialization the community development helps to develop skills required to work with rural, tribal, slum, urban and metro cities were communities organizations involved in social development, advocacy social action with focus on the vulnerable or

marginalized groups. The medical and psychiatric social work Specialization provide skills in the fields of physical and mental health, as well as deals with mal adjusted families. The personal management and human resource combined with human recourse management equips students with skills to develop better organizational climate and handle subject related to human resource management and development. Thus MSW graduates can work as school or family counselors, medical and psychiatric social workers, development officers at the panchayat, block district or state levels.

Specializations:

Social work interventions are required and practiced in various settings like correctional, psychiatric, industrial, school, disability, rehabilitation, hospital or medical, child, family, community, etc. In all settings there is scope for social workers to operate in various fields or areas such as: Child welfare, Youth welfare, Women welfare, Welfare of the aged and the infirm, Welfare of the handicapped, Social defense, Community welfare, Labour welfare, Family welfare etc. Masters of social work has following specializations;

Medical and Psychiatry:

This branch or specialization in professional social work. The role of the medical and psychiatric social worker is to help individuals with social, economic and psychiatric problems that arise because of ill health, disability and economic problems. They help to enable the person to lead a productive and satisfied life to the best of his abilities. The social worker uses his skill in relationship with the client system, and understands the problems faced by the client. In the medical setting, the worker acts as the link between the doctor and the patient. The medical social workers are involved in social evaluation of the individual patients in terms of their ability to participate in the treatment process. Their main task is to do counseling and helping the patient and family to deal with the psychological and social problems arising out of the illness and giving information on the prognosis, treatment process and rehabilitation. They have to organizing with patients, volunteers and other agencies, therapeutic, educational and recreational activities for group of patients and their relatives.

Community Development:

Social work practice in community setting is expected with regard to behavior is to go to the people; Live with them'; Learn from them; Love them, start with what they know. They have wide variety of fields like Child welfare, Youth welfare, Women welfare, Welfare of the aged and the infirm, Welfare of the handicapped, social defense, Community health, Community welfare, Labour welfare, Family welfare, Tribal welfare etc. More people are going to concentrate presently is on women welfare and community health. They are actively involved with various government projects focused on health, education and for the welfare of disables.

Personal Management and Industrial Relations:

The various job opportunities for the social workers are in HRM and labour welfare. The industry, today, is no longer confined to a small segment of economic activity or is necessarily a place where goods are produced. It has come to include all gainful employments including services under the State as well as the private sector. Many new industries such as hotels, hospitals, travel and tourism, airlines, media, BPO's etc. are newly merged with opportunity for HR. The employment patterns of the social workers appointed in industry presents a diverse and complex picture. The positions are available to social workers in industry and they can work as, Welfare officer, Labour officer, Personnel officer/Personnel manager, Industrial relations officers/manager, Human resource office manager, HRD officer/manager, Training & development

officer/manager, Factory manager, Industrial Counselor etc. The recruiting arenas for professional social workers are Private sector, Public sector, Corporations, Aviation industry, Hospitality industry, BPOs, MNCs, Railways, Mines, Plantations, Oil fields etc.

Field Practicum:

Field practicum preparation the student social workers as a professional by providing practical training and experience. It gives them to practice different methods and principles of social Work. Thus provide them opportunities to inculcate knowledge with practice. In field instruction, students apply what they learn in the classroom to real situations. They are guided and supervised by field supervisor by correcting their timely reports, writing comments, conducting individual and group conferences. This will be great relief for the students to work directly with the different sectors of people, handle their problems, and to practice intervention with the people. So it prepares students in knowledge, attitude and skills in social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

Objectives:

The main objectives of field practicum training are to provide practical opportunity to make use of theoretical frameworks to understand individuals and the social system like families, groups, communities. It provides opportunity through effective use of supervision. The students utilize the knowledge and skills of social work practice along with their coworkers. They are able to assess the needs and problems of individuals, groups and communities to help them to bring change. Students can understand the different personalities and the dynamics existing in groups and communities. The mechanisms like oppression and discrimination in the society based on caste, gender and religion and enable them to apply social work interventions to provide justice. They are motivated to uphold professional social work standards, values and ethics. Along with this the report writing skill will develop and individual and group conferences will help them to communicate effectively with supervisor and to present their work and the progress with other coworkers.

Need of Training:

All students in the field practicum are required to attend the training on field practicum. During the training students share knowledge and experience about social service agencies and discuss issues and topics related to social work. They are encouraged to critically reflect on their experiences from a social work perspective. They are enabled to apply social work theories and understanding to their experiences. They share their feelings about making personal adjustment to professional role. Training plays a crucial role in orienting students toward field practicum. The students must know the purpose and importance of attending the field practicum. They must know in what way they are going to benefit as a budding professional. Such training must have well-planned objectives and training content. The role of field work as an integral part of the training for professional social workers has to be recognized by all concerned so that the best effort is made by the student, the school and the agency to provide such learning opportunities to the student which will have a carryover effect in his professional career field work.

Peacticum in Field Practicum:

Different schools of social work have developed their own programmes of field work depending upon the kind of agencies and opportunities available in the area and the differences in curricula and fields of specialization. But the broad outlines of field work programmes in most schools of social work are on the following lines. The requirement of putting in about 15 hours of field work per week is compulsory in most

schools of social work, during the two year period of training. In some schools the field work is carried on in the afternoon of week days while in some others, three days in the week are exclusively set apart for field work. Orientation classes are generally held prior to the commencement of field work in order to initiate the students into the methods and contents of field work. Group meetings and seminars are later conducted to discuss problems and effect improvements in field work programmes.

Components of Field Practicum Practices:

Orientation: Most of schools of social work organize orientation programme varying from 5 days to 12 days.

Concurrent Field Practice Learning: It is the most widely accepted learning activity as the main tool of learning adopted across the country.

Block Field Work: This learning activity enables learners to integrate learning and generate newer learning by participating in the intervention processed over a period of 4 to 6 weeks continuously, in a specific agency.

Rural Camps: Since majority schools of social work in first forty years came in urban areas, students do not have any exposure to rural life. Hence, schools of social work started organising rural camps to provide opportunities and experiences of rural life so that they may analyze rural dynamics and observe the functioning of local self government and other rural based institutions.

Study Tours: Contrary to rural camp, study tours are more popular learning programme in rural and semi urban based institutions of social work in our country.

Skills in Field Practicum:

The Skills like helping and communication can be inculcated in students while working with them. And they are *Empathy*- It refers to the ability of entering into another person's mental state and to feel the latter's feelings. Empathizing with a person in a predicament involves the imaginative viewing of the situation as he/she sees it, understanding his/her feelings and transferring to oneself those particular feelings. *Positive regard*- The client must be treated by a worker, as a person of inherent worth and capable of positive change. He/ she must be given respect, regardless of appearance, behaviour, life circumstances, or reason for becoming a client. *Warmthness*- In personal warmth, a social worker responds to clients in such ways that make them feel safe and accepted. It is mostly a non-verbal communication which is expressed in the form of smile, a soft and soothing voice, appropriate eye contact, and gestures that convey acceptance and openness. *Genuineness*- It refers to a worker being himself/herself or being real. Whatever he/she says matches what he/she does. *Verbal Communication Skills*-The ability to speak clearly and concisely, and to convey information or articulate an opinion is very essential.

The non verbal communication skills conveyed by means of facial expressions, eye movements, gestures and voice qualities such as tone, pitch and resonance comes in the circle of non-verbal communication that mainly occurs during a face-to face exchange. Observing nonverbal behaviour may also tell the worker what the client is saying in words truly reflects his/her thoughts and feelings. *Eye-contacts*- Eyes reveal much about our emotional state and our sensitivity to and understanding of the immediate situation. *Gestures of Greeting*- The social worker must be alert to cultural differences while using gestures of greeting. *Body Positioning* - It conveys various attitudes and intentions. Facing a client at a 90 degree angle suggests safety and openness while facing directly may communicate aggressiveness. Leaning slightly towards the client shows interests and acceptance. *Facial Expressions and other Movements*- It is often facial expressions that reveal a worker's disapproval of a client,

even when the worker is trying hard to be nonjudgmental. Smiling, frowning, nodding and shaking the head and lip quivering convey our thoughts and emotions. Crossed legs, arms folded across the chest, and body rigidity usually shows defensiveness, while arms and hands at the body's side or in an outreached position suggest openness to others. *Tone of Voice, Dress and Appearance* - A loud, forceful tone suggests aggressiveness, control and strength while a monotonous or flat voice suggests lack of interest. Similarly, dressing is also one of the important forms of non-verbal communication. A social worker must give careful thought to his/her choice of clothing and hairstyle. He should wear the dress according to the situation.

Supervision in Field Practicum:

Field Practicum plays an important part in social work education by providing an opportunity to the student to put his theoretical knowledge into practice during the period of training. It is a significant part of the educational process to facilitate integrative and experimental learning. Supervision of field work is regarded as a method of teaching social work - a method significantly used in the area of helping the student to put into practice the knowledge gathered by him through classroom instruction. From the very beginning of social work education, students of social work were placed in social service agencies for practical training. Their work was supervised by supervisors either from the schools of social work themselves or from the agency in which they were placed. Field supervision is an integral part of field work training given to a student. The personnel can do it from the school of social work where the student is studying or by the agency social worker where the student is placed for field work. The student is given group and individual supervision.

Suggestions in Training:

- ✓ All students in the field practicum are required to attend the training on field practicum. During the training students share knowledge and experience about social service agencies and discuss issues and topics related to social work. They are encouraged to critically reflect on their experiences from a social work perspective. They are enabled to apply social work theories and understanding to their experiences. They share their feelings about making personal adjustment to professional role.
- ✓ Field practicum should be given equal importance with theory and class room teaching. There is a need for supervision of the students based on the specialization by the subject expert who can guide clearly to the students.
- ✓ Training plays a crucial role in orienting students toward field practicum. The students must know the purpose and importance of attending the field practicum. They must know in what way they are going to benefit as a budding professional. Such training must have well-planned objectives and training content.
- ✓ Most of the Social Work Colleges start the new academic year with an orientation to students about the importance of field work. They also organize a series of visits to social welfare agencies in the area. This is particularly useful to those students who never had an opportunity to visit similar agencies.
- ✓ Educational tours cater to visiting the agencies to study the working of these agencies. They should be able to learn by listening to people and observing closely. But remember that their job is not that of inspectors, critics or advisors.
- ✓ Placement for the students after their semester involves the students in a detailed study of the structural and functional set up of the agency and learning experience wherever practicable in the administration of the agency

programmes. They should give chance to actively participate as part of the agency

- ✓ Rural camp, industry and hospital visits will be very useful experience for those who had never participated in such group activities. This will provides an opportunity to practice group work principles among themselves.

Conclusion:

The supervisor's timely visit to their field work agency will help in tracking the performance of the students in the field. Student should have inclination to know the new things in the field and the interest in social work profession. They should also develop some values and principles of treating all information regarding clients confidential, responding positively to faculty supervisors and field instructors, relationship with agency personal and client system and to development of an identity with social work profession.

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