

“Living Learning Transformation through Social Work Students Forums”

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Abstract

Social Work is an evidence based profession, trainees of Social Work needs to have vibrant theoretical knowledge as well as practicum. Hence, Social Work student forum is an instrumental to provide transformation learning and living learning among Social Work trainees. For this study qualitative method was used the study explorative in nature hence, exploratory research designed was adopted for this study. Case study method was adopted for this study. Case study method was used in those four case studies drawn from various Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work institutions across Karnataka state, India. Analyzed how proposed Social Work student forum helpful to transforming trainees from personal to professionalism. Many of the trainees those underwent in forums activities they felt immense happy for being part of forum and they felt changes happened in their learning, development of professionalism. Primary data was collected from observation and interview with respondents. It was evidence that, best practices occurred through the intervention of forums.

Key Words: Learning transformation, Social Work forums, case study, exploration

Introduction

The International Federation of Social Workers states, "Social work bases its methodology on a systematic body of evidence based knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including local and indigenous knowledge specific to its context. It recognizes the complexity of interactions between human beings and their environment, and the capacity of people both to be affected by and to alter the multiple influences upon them including bio-psycho-social factors. Social work profession draws on theories of human development, social theory and social systems to analyze complex situations and to facilitate individual, organizational, social and cultural changes. Theories are taught in class room and trainees practice those theories in field work. Theory helps to enhance knowledge to a great extent and field work helps to develop skills to a great extent. Social work is a subject which mainly focuses on theoretical and practical aspects equally. It helps to build networking with other professionals and enhance social interaction (Yadav, 2015). Classroom presentation improves and provides alternate method of learning in the classroom besides lectures (Huang, 2008). Social Work students forums complementary to promote theoretical and practice experience among trainees.

Desai (2002), states that the Indian society is structured by families and communities, whereas the Western social work approach is individualistic. The Indian religions emphasize duties whereas the western

liberalism emphasizes freedom as the goal. While the Indian ideologies are holistic and wisdom oriented, the American professional ideologies are analytical and scientific” (Desai, 2002). Fieldwork gives social work students an opportunity to apply academic training to a professional setting. Practicing social work skills in field practicum leads to greater learning outcomes and higher satisfaction for students. Make the most of your internship by applying and practicing your newly learned skills and knowledge (Lee & Fortune, 2013). The Student Social Work Association (SSWA) at Roberts Wesleyan College has been in existence since the beginning of the undergraduate social work program, dating back to the early 1970’s. Each year new officers are elected to carry out the functions of the association which include:

To promote a supportive environment for all social work students and to provide opportunities for students to gather together to discuss strengths, issues, and concerns related to the Social Work Program. To provide a forum for students to have access to faculty regarding BSW Program strengths, issues, concerns and future directions. To encourage interaction among students by meeting on a regular basis and by hosting a variety of social and/or professionally related events. To allow for social work students’ implementation of social work skills through the organization and community activities.

Through the association harnessed Social Work trainees to build better world for encouraging volunteerism, Social Action, advocacy and learning experience from campus to community (College R. W., 2016).

Living learning communities’ model and Transforming Learning Theory

The university of San Diego has developed the model of Living Learning Communities (LLC) are an academic strategy to create an environment in which more intellectual interaction will occur among students, faculty and staff by linking the core curriculum to on-campus living. Although living learning communities can be traced back to the British model of the residential college, the structural and pedagogical roots of today’s LLC are found in the debates over the aims of a strong liberal education in the 1920s. LLC experiments throughout the 20th Century established that an integrated college experience promotes intellectual communication between faculty and students, improves student GPAs, enhances civic engagement, increases retention, eases both the academic and social transition to college and decreases negative student behaviors (Diego, 2015). Social Work students forums provided a platform for the students to think critically about their core assumptions and inferences that they make about different cultures and how their ‘worldly view’ about other cultures is influenced their perceptions biased assumptions. This awareness was achieved while social work students critically examine their worldview when negotiating and acting on their individualized purposes, values, feelings, and meanings when contrasted with those learned in an uncritically assimilated form (Mezirow, 2000). During the experience of forum, decisions were examined from a more critical perspective resulting in students’ constructing revised and new interpretations of the meaning of social realities (Taylor, 2008).

Social Work Trainees Forum

All committees created by the Student Forum shall be designated as Student Forum committees. The specific purposes, functions, and compositions of all standing Student Forum committees shall be specifically enumerated in the bylaws of the Student Forum. The Student Forum may create, alter, merge, or dissolve all standing Student Forum committees by amending the bylaws of the Student Forum. Any committee created by the Student Forum, which is not a standing committee, shall be designated as an ad hoc Student Forum committee. All ad hoc Student Forum committees shall be specifically charged by the Student Forum and shall automatically be terminated at the end of the academic year during which they were created. A single Student Forum officer may not be appointed a member of more than one standing College, faculty, administrative, or Student Forum committee at any particular time. The standing committees of Student Forum are the Student Affairs Council, the Finance Committee, and the Committee on Committees. Any Student Forum officer may serve on any ad hoc committee regardless of other commitments to standing committees.

The primary responsibilities of the Student Forum Committee on Committees shall be to make all appointment recommendations to the Student Forum for those committees (College, administrative, faculty, and student) on which students have appointive membership; to make recommendations to the Student Forum with respect to the initial recognition and sanctioning, and periodic re-sanctioning of all student clubs and organizations; and to assist the Vice President of Administration of the Student Forum in his/her responsibility for the general administration of student activities, including student committees. In the event of a vacancy, the Vice President of Administration has the power but not requirement to appoint a person to fill the committee student position in a time sensitive situation (College U. , 2017).

Objectives of the study

- To ascertain the challenges and opportunities to formulate students forums
- To explore living learning transformation through Social Work students forum

Method and materials

For this present study Explorative research study was adopted with the use of case study method, four case studies have been conducted in various Social Work institutions and got inferences. Qualitative research approach was used with observation and interview techniques. The inferences drawn from the study evidence, researcher has proposed living learning transformation through Social Work student's forum.

Results and Discussion

Case Study I: Formulated Social Work Forum for bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students at Government First Grade College, Narasimharajapura, Karnataka(India). This particular forum found very useful for creating living learning communities and learning transformation through participating and utilization of forum. Students found way to practice Social Work theory at field even more effectively. Because students forum is a major instrumental for manifesting latent talent of the students. Earlier to start forum trainees were struggling to organize a programme which is required under curriculum but after formulating and giving orientation about forum trainees of BSW (Bachelor of Social Work) used forum extensively for doing outreach programmes at community, professional interaction and develops some sort of professional self among trainees. Trainees found very meticulous in doing all activities which were allotted for them through forum by formulating various committees to explore latent talents and developed learning and living transformation. Even they conducted Social Work Rural camp from the students forum they fully utilized their skills for organizing such a event and managed well in the juncture. The rural camp molded them according to Social Work profession they still remember the memories and they are using the knowledge and skills which they developed in the camp.

Case Study II: Formulated Social Work Forum for Master of Social Work (MSW) trainees at Gurushree College, Tumkur, Karnataka (India), through forum, Social Work trainees have transformed their entire personality according to Social Work profession by using different committees. Before starting the forum faculty supervisors found more group dynamism and gender bias when the forum started working changes happened after joining member of students forum their communication, interpersonal relationship, understanding theories, organizing programmes pertaining to Social Work, in spite of that, group dynamics i.e conflict, sub groups, rivalry, scapegoat, so on turned in to group bond and group affinity. Resource mobilization skills have been improved by undergoing in forum all activities which were meant for trainees.

Case Study III: Formulated Social Work Forum for Master of Social Work (MSW) trainees at Vidyavahini College, Tumkur. The trainees of Social Work experienced intra and inter group experience, initially there were few group dynamics but the effort made by faculty member to build group bond among them ultimately they succeeded. Faculty member were worked as facilitators by using forum they have conducted innumerable outreach activities intensively at slums of Tumkur. Finally all the Social Work trainees opined that, experience what they got from forum that was very much useful for them. However they are utilizing the knowledge of record keeping, budget making, innovative practices which they initiated during their study in their work life.

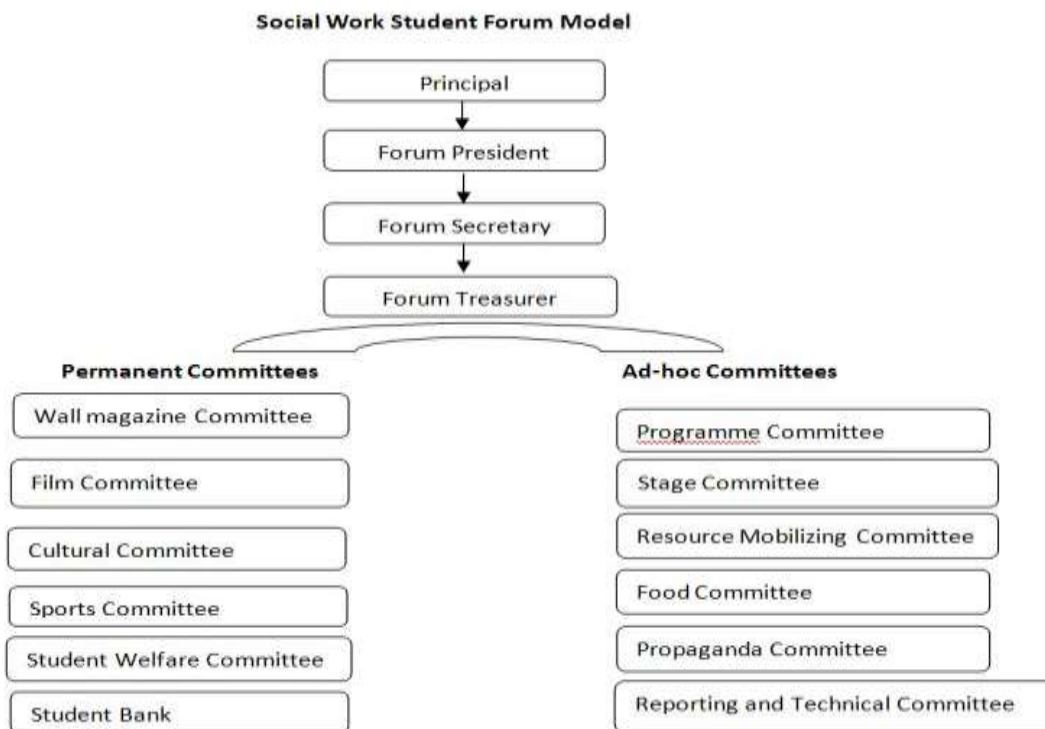
Case Study IV: started Social Work Forum at Hemadri Post Graduation Centre for the purpose to create living learning atmosphere at campus and also learning transformation in their concurrent fieldwork

practicum. On this outset the Social Work Students forum has been established and planned to elect governing committee through governing committee planned to elect President, Secretary and Treasurer. All students put in to different permanent committees these were Wall magazine committee, Film committee, cultural committee, Sports committee, banking committee and so on. Whether the Social Work students forum organize any programmes at the time some ad-hoc committees were made to address, prepare and execute the tasks those ad-hoc committees were Programme committee, Stage committee, Fundraising committee, Food and hospitality committee, Propaganda committee and so on. These committees were initiated by all students. Hence, students have got immense exposure, skills, knowledge as well as total professional attributes which are necessary for professional Social Worker.

Main objectives of Social Work student forums

- To manifest latent talent of Social Work student
- To develop skills by giving all exposure to students
- To develop leadership skills among Social Work students
- To promote living learning communities among budding Social Workers
- To promote learning transformation through forum exposure
- To bridge gap between market required skills and Social Work education
- To ensure an opportunity to all students through students forums
- To inculcate professional attributes through forum's fruitful experience

Figur-1 Proposed Social Work student’s forum structure



The above table depicts proposed Social Work student’s forum structure. This is how the entire structure of student’s forum goes on.

Principal: Principal of the institution shall act as a honorable advisor in all situation. He or she should guide the students whenever they go wrong along with that in all time he/she shall facilitate and motivate them to do more innovative works.

Forum President: President of the forum has delegation power he/she will be selected through democratic way. With the help of secretary he/she shall work and periodical conduct meeting by setting agendas and facilitating discussion and taking decision according to quorum. President is the first person, by taking all members confidence he/she take decision about the forum innovative activities. He/she shall speak with management regarding students welfare.

Forum Secretary: he/she shall look after all billings/vouchers, shall support to the work of president, maintaining documents pertaining to the forum and preparing budget with the help of president, making audit of entire year, keeping meeting minutes.

Forum Treasurer: Treasurer shall look after financial aspects of the forum.

Permanent Committees

Once the forum starts to work from the time to till the end of the forum permanent committees shall work. The committees framed because to devoid routine work among members of the forum.

Wall Magazine Committee: as discussed earlier the forum for the benefit of students. It shall provide all opportunity to grow and manifest latent talent therefore, Facilitates the display of new, views, articles, diagrams, photographs, pictures by the students of the departments on the College Bulletin Board. It looks into the orderly functioning of the Bulletin to allow all the students to an opportunity to use the Bulletin and had recently conducted an exhibition of all the displayed materials which were put up by the students throughout the year on the Bulletin (College S. M., 2018). Editorial committee shall be made under forum. The wall magazine committee can motivate young writers and collect some writings from them and that shall be showcased through wall magazine periodically. This endeavor creates an opportunity for budding writers to write an article, essay, stories, collages, painting and so on. Twice in a year newsletter is published for the students of MIT Art, Design and Technology University. Information about various events and conferences, as well as the achievements of their talented students are published in this newsletter so that students from different fields can share their ideas thoughts and personal views. Interested candidates are requested to submit their write-up as well as articles. Selection committee will be liable to take the final decision (University, 2015).

Film Committee: Mere hearing will not give more effect if we show awareness film that is more effective long-lasting in nature. Every weekend, award winning films can showcase. Discussion forums as well as special talk on shows shall organize, where personal experiences of the students can be shared (University, 2015). Hence film committee can be formulated and utilized effectively to disseminate knowledge as well as awareness about an issue. Periodically film can be shown discussion and feedbacks can take from the students.

Cultural Committee: Cultural events shall be organized in a college or motivate students to participate in cultural competition organized by different colleges and departments.

Sports Committee: sports even shall be organized for students and training shall be provided by trainer to sportsman/woman to participate in sports organized somewhere else.

Student Welfare Committee: Some fund may be collected from students and keep it for students emergency. Whenever students unable to pay fee, whether anybody in financial crunch at that time assistant shall be provided.

Students Bank: being a student forum it shall bring financial empowerment of students by introducing saving from their pocket for their future. The student banking concept creates saving attitude among students as well as creates financial literacy.

Ad-hoc Committees

The committees formulated for accomplishing the tasks of organizing a programme these committees are called as ad-hoc committees. When the programme or event end the committees also dissolve from there position.

Programme committee: The Program Committee is responsible for organizing and scheduling programs for the event. Responsibilities lies with programme committee are reminding the guests and resource persons in previous day, dais planning shall be made, master of ceremony, invocation, welcome and vote of thanks shall be prepared, programme planning shall be prepared. Learning and transformation out of programme committee are strategies making skill shall be enhanced, stage fear shall be removed, opportunities to all trainees to use stage, stage decorum shall be learnt, and in addition to that some other transformations happen among trainees.

Stage Committee: The Stage Committee is open to trainees for involved in setting and designing the stage for the event. Responsibilities of the committee are preparation of stage, procuring materials for decorating stage, maintaining electronic gadget which are used for programme and so on. Learning and transformation through stage committee are creativity shall be improved; resource utilization skill shall be improved, division of labour attitude increased among trainees and other transformation happens.

Food Committee: providing food and beverages to guests and students is main motto behind this committee. Responsibilities of the food committee are planning of menu, mobilizing food stuffs from community if required, preparation of food and beverages, serving of food to all, rendering hospitality to guests. Learning and transformation from the committee are coordination ability will be developed, resource mobilization skill shall be developed, life skills shall be improved and other improvement can take place.

Resource mobilization Committee : resources are backbone for organizing an event hence, all kinds of resources may be in terms of cash and kind (Man, Machine, Material, and Money) should be mobilized within the institution, forum and outside the campus. Responsibilities of resource mobilization committee are identifying with in and outside the campus resources, consulting CBOs and NGOs working in that community, identifying material and nonmaterial resources, linking between needs and resources, effective utilization of existing resources and so on. Learning and transformation from resource mobilization committee are communication skill will be developed, rapport skill will be improved, convincing strategies

will be developed, liaising skill will be improved and other transformation can happen through this committee.

Propaganda Committee: making invitation with protocol wise and arranging stage, propagating event through using all media i.e. print, electronic and social media. Responsibilities of the committee are preparation of invitation with protocol, inviting all delegates, inviting all student delegates, inviting all staff members. Learning and transformation can be trace out based on the committee experience as guest designation wise protocol preparing, communication skill shall be improved, networking shall be enlarged and other transformation can take place.

Reporting and Technical Committee: Social Work is considered as evidence based practice, reporting is core to evidence for doing all activities without reporting the entire programme will not be considered by none. Thus photography, video graph, invitation, feedback book, newspaper cuttings and all miscellaneous documents shall be furnished for recording minutes of the event. By being member of reporting and technical committee trainees will learn reporting skill, analyzing, keeping all documents pertaining to the event. In addition to that they learn computing skill.

Limitation of the study

- The study was confined to Karnataka hence; inferences drawn from the study may not be generalized.
- The study was confined to Social Work trainees (Social Work departments of different institutions in Karnataka).

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to first provide a model for a better living learning and learning transformation through Social Work student's forum, through the forum it was evident that competency of students will be improved. Social Work students forums gives an opportunity for all students especially those who are perceiving Social Work training, they are more benefitted out of it, because learning transformation will take place through undergoing in Social Work students forum, versatile tasks shall be given. Through student's forum experience, students would learn how to constitute an organization and deliberate all process of an organization. After completion of their educational career they will be in the position that they can establish their own organization or else they can work effectively as an administrator in an organization. Living learning communities happen through students forum nurture and inculcate such a skill they develop professional quality among students in effective manner. Forums can be utilized as a study circle and especially to promoting living learning communities that means boosting professional interaction among students to create learning transformation to future profession. Student's forums are way to establish

professional network with alumni, professional organizations and funding agencies. Indeed students forums are boon for the full-fledged development of professionalism and learning transformation among Social Work trainees.

The implications of these findings are wide-ranging. For students enrolled in Methods of Social Work Practice, dimensions of transformation produced varying levels of personal and professional growth, interpersonal and moral development, and commitment to serving the community. For social work education, incorporating the three dimensions of transformational learning used in this study can provide a format for exploring the impact of other service-learning, volunteer, and field experiences students experience during their education. It also provides a framework for discussing these experiences with students and helping them to see the ways they are impacted by their learning, increasing their self-awareness and appreciation for the processes involved in their education.

However along with all positive things through Social Work forums the positive outcome would be possible when trainees utilize and actively participate in all activities of the forums.

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