



“Critical Exploration of Community Organization as a Method of Social Work Practice”

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Abstract:

Social work is a profession and a practice that promotes social change and harmony. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2014) has defined social work as a professional practice with the aim of promoting social change and social cohesion while liberating and empowering people. Community organisation being an important part of social work aims towards empowering various individuals to identify their problems and solve them. (Rosen & Proctor, 1978; Rosen & Proctor, 1981). Communities of India face lots of problem such as problems related to infrastructure, service delivery mechanisms and other governness issues, Community organisation as a central method within professional social work in India for development practiced within the broader framework of the four fundamental functions of social work curative, correctional, preventive, and developmental. The present study focuses on how Community organisation as a method of social work is practiced in various communities of India for this purpose the researcher has used secondary data for conducting study with descriptive research design.

Key Words: Social Work, Community organization method, India.

Introduction:

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Social work has been defined as the “professional activity of helping individuals, groups or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favourable to this goal” (Barker, 1995). This definition emphasizes the role of the professional in understanding the client system within its ecological system to build

on client strengths. This person-in-environment perspective is very much an integral component of the social work practice regardless of the different theoretical models which underpin the practice of social work. (Payne, 2005).

Social work profession addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society. Its mission is to help people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. (Barclay, 1982; Hardley et al., 1987 as cited by Popple,1995) Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve. Social work utilizes a variety of skills, techniques, and activities consistent with its holistic focus on persons and their environments.

Community organising is a promising approach to community-based initiatives (Koutra, n.d).. Initiatives with successful outcomes in recent decades include the widespread shift to a bottom-up approach towards including all community members in organising efforts to address their common needs through active participation in their community. Intervention also aims in, including objective measures of success and long-term sustainability of community organisation method. Community organisation also brings changes by encouraging a more proactive public sector role or by fostering a public- and non-governmental sector partnership to promote community-driven development. Regardless of the approach, ensuring community trust which leads for empowerment of local leaders in communities

Indian Perspective of Community-Based Social Work

Community Based Social work is a multifaceted profession aimed at promoting societal well-being and enhancing the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2014). Rooted in principles of social justice and human rights, social work encompasses various roles such as advocacy, counseling, community organizing, and policy analysis (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). Its scope ranges from micro-level interventions to macro-level.

Embracing global perspectives is imperative in contemporary community based social work practice due to the interconnectedness of social issues across borders (Gray, Coates, & Yellow Bird, 2012). Globalization has intensified the need for social workers in communities to understand diverse cultural contexts, international policies, and transnational challenges such as migration, climate change, and economic disparities (Dominelli, 2013). By adopting a global outlook, social workers can better address the complexities of contemporary social problems and advocate for marginalized populations on a global scale (Hokenstad & Midgley, 2016).initiatives targeting systemic change (Healy, 2018)

From Indigenous Paradigm, these western methods of community practice with their informed knowledge and practice system for countless times have been reported that it has done more harm than strengthening indigenous systems and their way of working. Therefore, practitioners efforts should be made to indigenise the interventions so that, it will be congruent and most suitable to the local needs and condition of the indigenous community (Agnimitra, N.2010). However, indigenisation practices, solutions do not negate

knowledge sharing with other parts of social workers in the world nor stop to collaborate with external experts and partners. Owing to the diversity of India, (Gangrade, K. D. 1971) contemporary academicians and practitioners should realise that, there cannot be one umbrella for indigenous framework and knowledge base.

Community Organisation as a method of social work:

Community Organisation as a method of social work has expanded momentum after its appearance in Social Work Year Book in 1941. Before 1941 community organisation was struggling to identify itself as a profession and as a part of social work. Community Organisation as a method presents itself to be a set of skills and concepts that identify the community itself as behavioural and social system requiring a distinguished knowledge at assessing individuals, groups and their interrelationships (Chatterjee, & Koleski, 1970).

The history of social work has always supported and promoted community practice. In social work community practice presents an extensive set of method and techniques that aim towards creating networks, collaborations, alliances and community resiliency. The Community social work practice directly aims at addressing marginalization and exclusion by working towards empowerment and building individual capacities (Chenoweth, & Stehlik, 2001).

Community organisation is more of a process than a program. As a process it can be used in different capacities while it can be used with different programs. Process of community organisation evokes the need of the population under lens.

According to National Association of Social Workers, Community organization is described as “the orderly application of a relevant body of knowledge, employing practice–wisdom and learned behavior through characteristic, distinctive and describable procedures to help the community to engage in a desirable procedure to achieve planned change towards community improvement”.

Community organization deals with the maximum number of people at the given time. Social work is a profession believes in the social justice for all and at the same time thinks of equity in equality individual approach is not much suitable for community organization but it concentrates in the on the people at large which suits most in the developing countries so that the magnitude of several problems faced by the individual requires immediate response in the larger constituencies, in such case community organization emerges as an effective practice in social work method by focusing on the elimination of economic and social problems faced in such countries

Conclusion:

The article ‘Place of Community Organisation in Social Work’ portrays that community organisation being a primary method of social work differentiates itself from other professional practice, since the concept of communities itself is wide and vivid. Communities range from village to block, urban and sub-urban, sub-urban to urban slums areas having cultural and geographical uniqueness. Programs designed should be able to aid to

this versatile nature of demands. The services should not be streamlined with providing only assistance for upliftment rather it should stand with the necessary to provide help according to the demand of the area in terms of demographic, economic, social, political, physiological and psychological factors in mind. The program providers are required to design a multi-faceted mechanism which is flexible enough to cultivate methods answering to the constantly changing situations and demands, community organisation offers that approach to social workers and service providers (Coulton, 2005).

It is observed that social work is changing rapidly. However, one basic element remains the same, that is social work is located within some of the most complex problems of society and perplexing areas of human experience, so social work is, and has to be, a highly skilled activity. The major role of all social workers is to assist the interactions between the individual and his or her social environment. The objective of the social worker is to facilitate the process of social adjustment of individual through the development and constructive use of social relationships with the society.

