

History and Philosophy of Social Work (Mid Term)

Meaning and Concept of Social Work

Social work is a profession primarily concerned with the remedy to psycho-social problems and deficiencies which exists in the relationship between the individual and his social environment. This phenomenon always existed in the society in one form or the other, but achieved its scientific basis in the last decades of 19th century.

People in distress, destitution and deprivation have been helped in the past by individuals joint families, caste communities, religious institutions motivated by religious philosophy that assumed 'charity' as a reward or medium for salvation, humanism, philanthropy, humanitarian feeling, democratic ideology, equality of all citizens; regard for human personality; respect for other's rights including the indigents, the handicapped, the unemployed, emotionally challenged and above all, those in need. The charitable work taken up by individuals and some voluntary organizations came to be termed as social work in the due course of time. The most frequently seen misconception about social work is that people mistake charity, alms giving and voluntary activities as social work, but this in reality is not social work, as it does not provide any permanent solution to the person's problems and does not empower a person to face his problems by himself. Social work aims at making a person self-dependent and self-reliant. It attempts to explore the casual factors behind the problem and tries to solve them scientifically.

Therefore, it is visualized that social work is scientific process for helping to the needy suffering from material deficiencies, physical disabilities, mental disorders, emotional disturbances and so on by using knowledge in human relationship and methods and skills in dealing with them.

Speaking in a nut shell, social work intended to assist individuals, families, social groups and communities in sorting out their personal and social problems and permanently solving those problems through a systematic process.

Definitions of Social Work:

In order to have a better understanding and a broader view of social work, a few selected definitions of some famous social work scientists are given below:

Alice Cheyney (1926), stated, “Social work includes all the voluntary attempts to extend benefits in response to the needs which are concerned with social relationships and which avail themselves of scientific knowledge and methods”.

In this definition Cheyney has included all the attempts which are voluntary in spirit and scientific in nature in social work. But she seems to have ignored the public practice of social work that is voluntary and involuntary in nature.

Arthur Fink (1942), defined social as “The provision of services designed to aid individuals, singly or in groups in coping with the present or future social and psychological obstacles that prevent or are likely to prevent, full or effective participation in the society”. According Fink, social work intervenes on individuals or groups to enable them to effectively participate in the development process of the society.

Anderson (1943) stated, “Social work is a professional service rendered to the people for the purpose of assisting them, as individuals or in groups to attain satisfying relationships and standards of life in accordance with their particular wishes and capacities and in harmony with those of the community”.

This definition viewed that social work as profession is used to improve the standard of living and social relations which are important components for a happy and satisfied life.

Friedlander (1951) defined, “Social work is a professional service, based on scientific knowledge and skill in human relations, which assists individuals, alone or in groups, to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence”.

This definition of Friedlander is considered as one of the most comprehensive definitions of social work. According to him, social work is a profession like other professions, through which a trained social worker with scientific knowledge and outlook in handling human relations, helps individuals and groups to have social and personal satisfaction.

Stroup (1960) defined social work as “an art of bringing various resources bear on individual, group and community needs by the application of a scientific method of helping the people to help themselves”.

In his definition Stroup gave a different look to social work saying it is an art. He said that it is an art of bringing the people into the position where they themselves will be able to solve their problems.

Pincus and Minahan (1978) combinedly gave a definition of social work saying, “Social work is concerned with the interaction between people and their environment which affects the ability of people to accomplish their life tasks, alleviate distress, and realize their aspirations and values”.

Characteristics of Social Work

- i) Social work is a professional practice which critically involves professional knowledge, skills, tools and techniques for dealing with human behaviour
- ii) It mainly emphasizes on the analysis and synthesis of human behaviour for establishing a growth-producing relationship
- iii) It is concerned with individual and social problems which are solved by applying different methods and techniques.
- iv) As a practice giving much emphasis on social adjustment.
- v) Its main objective is to help the individuals to become self-dependent.
- vi) It aims at permanent solution of problems and prevention of their occurring through proactive measures.

vii) It relates the available resources with the needs of individuals, groups and community at large.

viii) It also integrates and coordinates the means and resources of social development.

ix) It believes in democratic values.

x) It is based on humanitarian philosophy

Objectives of social work

Objectives in general are the statements or formulations of what we are trying to do. In social work an objective implies to the statement expressing what social work is trying to do or what we as professionals are trying to do in social work for accomplishing the task of social work.

For the convenience of the readers understanding, the objectives of social work can be classified into the following two groups:

1. Objectives prescribed by the social work scientists

Witmer prescribed two objectives of social work such as i) To give assistance to individuals while removing difficulties which they face in utilizing basic services of the society and ii) To facilitate effective utilization of community resources for their welfare.

Friedlander gave three objectives of social work i.e. i) To change in painful situation of individuals, ii) To develop the constructive forces both within and around the individual and iii) To enhance the democratic and humanistic behaviour of the individual.

Gordon Brown has given four objectives of social work such as: i) to provide physical or material support ii) to help in social adjustment, iii) to help in solving the psychological problems and iv) to make adequate opportunities for the individuals in problems for raising their standard of living which can prevent problems from intruding.

2. Generic objectives of social work:

These are generally and universally accepted objectives of social work which basically try:

- i) To solve psycho-social problems
- ii) To fulfill humanitarian needs like love, affection, care, etc.
- iii) To solve adjustment problems
- iv) To create self-sufficiency
- v) To make and strengthen harmonious social relations
- vi) To make provision of corrective and recreational services
- vii) To develop democratic values among the people
- viii) To provide opportunities for development and social progress
- ix) To conscientize the community
- x) To change the environment in favour of individual's growth and development
- xi) To bring change in the defective social system for social development and
- xii) To provide socio-legal aid to the needy who cannot afford to meet them.

Methods of Social Work

Generally method implies to systematic way of doing something. In social work, method is understood as the systematic and planned way of helping the people. The main concern of social work is to solve psycho-social problems of individuals, groups and communities through the conscious application of knowledge in methods, tools, techniques and skills of social work.

The first three of the methods given above are known as the primary or direct methods. These are direct and primary in the sense that they are directly applied in the field situation among the people to solve their problems. These methods are involved to solve the problems at the grass-root level by the social worker's direct intervention. The latter three are known as secondary or indirect methods, because they are involved indirectly by some specialized agencies or a set of organized people. Unlike the primary methods, these methods generally operate at the secondary levels but not with the people directly.

The methods of social work help the worker to understand ways of helping people. Social work methods are:

Primary methods (Primary methods)

- 1) Social case work
- 2) Social group work.
- 3) Community organisation.

Secondary methods (Secondary methods)

- 4) Social work research.
- 5) Social welfare administration.
- 6) Social Action

These six social work methods are systematic and planned ways of helping people.

1.Social Case Work: Social case work deals with individual problems-individual in the total environment or as a part of it. An individual is involved in the problem as he is unable to deal with it on his own, because of reasons

beyond his control. His anxiety sometimes temporarily makes him incapable of solving it. In any case, his social functioning is disturbed. The case worker gets information regarding the client's total environment, finds out the causes, prepares a treatment plan and with professional relationship tries to bring about a change in the perception and attitudes of the client.

2. Social Group Work: Social group work is a social work service in which a professionally qualified person helps individuals through group experience so as to help them move towards improved relationships and social functioning. In group work individuals are important and they are helped to improve their social relationships, with flexible programmes, giving importance to the personality development of the individual in group functioning and relationships. The group is the medium and through it and in it, individuals are helped to make necessary changes and adjustments.

3. Community Organization and Development: Community Organisation is another method of social work. Being made up of groups, a community means organised systems of relationships but in reality no community is perfectly organised. Community Organisation is a process by which a systematic attempt is made to improve relationships in a community. Identifying the problems, finding out resources for solving community problems, developing social relationships and necessary programmes to realize the objectives of the community are all involved in community organisation. In this way the community can become self reliant and develop a co-operative attitude among its members.

4. Social Welfare Administration: Social Welfare Administration is a process through which social work services both private and public, are organised and administered. Developing programmes, mobilising resources, involving selection and recruitment of personnel, proper organisation, coordination,

providing skilful and sympathetic leadership, guidance and supervision of the staff, dealing with financing and budgeting of the programmes and evaluation are, some of the functions of a social worker in administration.

5. Social Work Research: Social work research is a systematic investigation for finding out new facts, test old hypotheses, verify existing theories and discover causal relationships of the problems in which the social worker is interested. In order to scientifically initiate any kind of social work programmes, a systematic study of the given situation is necessary, through social work research and surveys.

6. Social Action: Social action aims at bringing about desirable changes to ensure social progress. Creating awareness about social problems, mobilizing resources, encouraging different 'sections of people to raise their voice against undesirable practices, and also creating pressure to bring about legislation are some of the activities of the social workers using the method of social action. It seeks to achieve a proper balance between community needs and solutions mainly through individual and group initiatives and self-help activities.

Social Work Levels of Practice - Micro, Mezzo, Macro

Typically, social work practice is broken down in to three different scopes of practice - micro, mezzo, and macro. Micro practice involves working directly with individuals or families on removing obstacles, locating resources, and empowering change for the identified client. Clinical practice, such as individual or family therapy or substance abuse counselling is considered micro social work practice. Direct services without the clinical component, such as case management is also considered micro social work practice.

Mezzo social work practice involves working with small groups of people.

Mezzo practice can include facilitating substance abuse treatment groups or

working with a community organization to promote change. Many times social workers will find that their scope of practice is a combination of micro and mezzo social work working towards to goal of empowering change whether it be individual, family, cultural or organizational change.

Macro social work practice entails working on an even broader scale to intervene on behalf of individuals promote communal, societal or cultural change. Research, administration, lobbying are examples of macro social work practice. Macro social work practice often involves advocating or addressing issues present in micro or mezzo social work practice but does so on a scale that is focused beyond the individual level.

Skills Needed for a Social Worker

In dealing with the multitude of problems that social workers address, they must employ a variety of skills depending on the job that needs to get done. While some of these skills may be natural. Below is a list of traits that a well-trained social worker might employ while assisting and guiding clients.

- Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Social Perceptiveness — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
- Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Critical Thinking — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- Service Orientation — Actively looking for ways to help people.

- Writing — Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
- Complex Problem Solving — Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
- Judgment and Decision Making — Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.

Fields of Social Work Practice

Social Workers in Administration, Policy, and Research: These social work professionals manage programs, advocate for social work policies, and research key questions in the field. They hold directorial positions in social service organizations and health agencies.

Child, Family, and School Social Workers: Professionals specializing in children, families, and school social work support young people, parents, and students. They provide resources for families, assist children struggling with bullying or unstable home environments, and provide counseling for children dealing with trauma. Child, family, and school social workers work in private practice, in schools, and for social service agencies.

Community Social Workers: Community social workers manage community programs and help clients obtain resources. They may work for nonprofits, grassroots organizations, or government agencies to provide vital resources for the community development.

Criminal Justice Social Workers: Criminal justice social workers advocate for clients in the criminal justice system. Their clients include inmates, former convicts, and family members of offenders. Criminal justice social workers also

provide rehabilitative services, work with parolees, and act as conflict mediators. They may also serve as victim advocates.

Gerontological Social Workers: Gerontological social workers connect the elderly with social and community services. They advocate for their clients; help elderly individuals apply for housing, healthcare, and other resources; and provide mental health support.

Medical and Hospital Social Workers: Also known as healthcare social workers, these professionals help individuals, families, and groups manage healthcare systems and medical problems. Many work for hospitals or in outpatient clinical settings.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers: These social workers assist clients with mental conditions and substance use disorders. They often act as case managers and help rehabilitation patients with the discharge process. They also support the family members of individuals struggling with mental health or substance abuse problems.

Military and Veterans Social Work: Military and veterans social workers help former military members transition to civilian life, connect veterans with resources, and support military families during deployment.

Psychiatric Social Workers: Psychiatric social workers specialize in mental health services, including psychotherapy and diagnosing mental illnesses. They may provide psychosocial assessments, provide therapy, and coordinate with family members and the patient's medical team. Psychiatric social workers often work at hospitals, outpatient centers, and in private practices.

School Social Workers: School social workers provide support services for students, helping them reach their academic and social potential. They work with young learners struggling with bullying, truancy, or family problems.

Social Work: Core Values and Ethics

Every day, social workers stand up for human rights and justice and give voice to unheard and marginalized populations. They contribute to bettering individuals' lives, and by doing so, they improve society as a whole. Social workers are employed by non-profits, the government, and private practices.

Social Work Values

Service

Addressing social ills and helping others is a primary goal of all social workers. Service is the value from which all other social work values stem. Social workers regularly elevate the needs of others above their own personal interests and use their skills and knowledge (from education and experience) to help people. Social workers often volunteer their time — in addition to their paid services — with no expectation for financial reward.

Social Justice

Social workers advocate on behalf of the oppressed, the voiceless, and others who are unable to advocate for themselves. They often focus on issues such as poverty, homelessness, discrimination, harassment, and other forms of injustice. Social workers provide information, help, and other resources to people seeking equality, and they educate people who may not directly experience discrimination about the struggles of the less fortunate.

Dignity and Worth of the Person

Every person is different, with different cultural and social values. Social workers are mindful of those differences, treating each person with dignity and respect and promoting their clients' capacity and opportunity to address their

own needs and improve their personal situations. Social workers must be cognizant of their duties to both individual clients and to society as a whole, and seek solutions for their clients that also support society's broader interests.

Importance of Human Relationships

Social workers connect people who need assistance with organizations and individuals who can provide the appropriate help. Social workers recognize that facilitating human relationships can be a useful vehicle for creating change, and they excel at engaging potential partners who can create, maintain, and enhance the well-being of families, neighborhoods, and whole communities.

Integrity

In order to facilitate these relationships and improve others' lives, social workers must exhibit trustworthiness at all times. Each social worker must be continually aware of the profession's mission, values, and ethical principles and standards, and set a good example of these components for their clients. By behaving honestly and responsibly, social workers can promote the organizations with which they're affiliated while also creating the most value for the populations they serve.

Competence

Professional social workers often hold undergraduate or Master's degree in Social Work, but a fair amount of their knowledge comes from gaining on-the-job experience. As part of the social work values outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics, each social worker must practice within his or her scope of competence and avoid misrepresenting his or her skills or experience to potential clients.

Social workers must continually strive to expand their knowledge base and competence in order to make meaningful contributions to the profession.

The importance of ethics and values in social work is more than just compliance with regulations and requirements. In a profession in which the clients are often vulnerable and unable to advocate for themselves, it's necessary that those advocating for them be passionate about empowering those who are vulnerable, oppressed, or poverty-stricken.

If you're interested in upholding and supporting these values in your future career, a bachelor's degree in social work can open up many professional opportunities, and an advanced degree can help professional social workers to pursue leadership or administrative positions within an ever-expanding field.

Social Work Principles

Dictionary meaning of the word "principle" is "the basic way in which something works". A principle is a kind of rule, belief, or idea that guides you. You can also say a good, ethical person has a lot of principles.

Thus, in simple words, principles are "the basic ways in which something works." e.g. when we say, "Principles of Population" we mean, the basic way in which population works. Likewise, when we say "Principles of Sociology" we mean, the basic way in which sociology works. Similarly, when we say "Principles of Social Work" we mean, the basic ways in which social work works.

Social Work Principles

There have been a variety of principles of social work put forward by various authors. However, the following are the most common to all authors:

1. Principle of Acceptance;

2. Principle of Individualization;
3. Principle of Self-Determination
4. Principle of Non-judgmental Attitude; and
5. Principle of Confidentiality.

There are other principles as well like purposeful expression of feelings, controlled emotional involvement, objectivity, accountability, self-awareness, and principle of access to resources. However, we are discussing the most common five principles of social work.

1. Principle of Acceptance

Acceptance is a fundamental social work principle that implies a sincere understanding of clients. This principle holds that the professional social worker accepts the client as it is. Social workers who accept clients treat them humanely and considerately and afford them dignity and worth. Social Workers convey acceptance by taking genuine concern, listening receptively, acknowledging others' points of view, and creating a climate of mutual respect. Acceptance implies that social workers understand clients' perspectives and welcome their views.

To "accept" also mean to "say yes to [an] invitation". In social work situation, a client invites a worker into his life, into his problem, into his emotional stressful state, and into his personal affairs. The principle of acceptance says that the worker shows his/her acceptance by taking genuine concern, listening receptively, etc.

2. Principle of Individualization

The client of a social agency is like all the other persons we have ever known, but he is different too. In broad ways, he is like all other human beings; in a somewhat more limited way, he is like all other human beings of his age or time

or culture. But, as we move from understanding him simply as a human being to understanding him as *this particular human being*, we find that, with all his general likeness to others, he is as unique as his thumbprint.

The principle of Individualization means that every client is unique for the worker. As we know that the client is a person, with a problem in his / her life. He / she is a person with a particular religious beliefs, economic position, social status, and a particular cast. The worker has to accept the client with all his/her strengths and weaknesses. Every client is not just *an* individual but *the* individual. All people are unique and possess distinctive capabilities. When social workers affirm clients' individuality, they recognize and appreciate their unique qualities and individual differences. They treat clients as persons with rights and needs rather than as "objects" or "cases" or "yet another appointment". Social workers who individualize clients free themselves from bias and prejudice, avoid labelling and stereotyping, and recognize the potential of diversity. They demonstrate that clients have a right "to be individual and to be treated not just as *a* human being but as *this* human being with personal differences."

3. Principle of Self-Determination

Determination is a noun derived from the word "determine." "To determine" mean "to decide something." Dictionary meaning of determination is "the process of deciding on or establishing a course of action." From these we can infer that self-determination refer to the process of deciding on or establishing a course of action by a person, or a group, or a state by itself, without any kind of foreign compulsion or coercion etc. Simply, the decisions which comes from oneself, which are the results of one's own wishes and desires.

In social work literature, Self-determination is defined as "a condition in which a person's behavior (i.e. his actions and thoughts) comes from his or her own

wishes, desires and decisions.” The principle of self-determination is based on the recognition of the “right and need of clients to freedom in making their own choices and decisions.” Social workers have a responsibility to create a working relationship in which choice can be exercised.

Stated one way, self-determination means not being coerced or manipulated. State another way, self-determination means having the freedom or liberty to make choices.

In more simple words, this principle means that the worker will not impose his decisions on the client. The social worker only provides a range of alternative while it is the client who has to make the final choice of choosing an appropriate alternative. It is the way social work works—providing alternatives.

4. Principle of Non-Judgmental Attitude

All human beings have dignity and worth. It is intrinsic. It is by nature. The principle of nonjudgmental attitude means that Social workers do not judge others as good or bad, worthy or unworthy, dignified or undignified, etc.

However, it does not imply that social workers do not make decisions; rather it implies a non-blaming attitude and behavior.

Social workers do not blame the client for being incapable of solving his problems, neither the worker blames him/her for being the cause of a particular problem. The worker remains non-judgmental. It is the way social work works—being nonjudgmental.

5. Principle of Confidentiality

Confidentiality, or the right to privacy, social worker must not disclose the clients information, such as their identity, their discussion with professionals, professional opinions about clients, or records. Since clients often share sensitive, personal material with social workers, preserving confidentiality or

privacy is essential for developing trust, a key ingredient of any effective working relationship.