

Social Action in Relation to Other Methods of Social Work

Social Action in Relation to Case Work :

Social Action does utilize other social work methods in the process of attaining its goal of community empowerment. And the social casework is a method of social work to help individuals to cope more effectively with their social problems. The psychosocial problem(s) of the client are dealt mainly in one to-one relationship between the client and the caseworker.

The relation of social action with casework can be understood with the fact that individuals and society are interdependent. Most of the problems, which affect an individual, have connections with or repercussions to his/her inter-personal relations. These inter-personal relations could be within the family and/or with various institutions in the community, say, educational institutions, work place, legal, neighborhood, friends, etc. So, casework process may involve interventions not only at the family level but also at the institutions in the larger community.

The client may be having the same social problem, which the social worker is addressing, the macro level through social action. In such a situation, caseworker needs to build confidence and faith among the client and prepare him/her to be a part of social action process.

Apparently, there appears no connection between the two methods of social work. However, during initial process of credibility building in the community, the social worker makes use of casework in dealing with those members of the clientele group who are facing some adjustment problems and require therapeutic help for harmonious social functioning. To exemplify, if the social worker finds a member showing problematic behavior in the group sessions, which is affecting the working and integrity of the group, he/she takes up separate casework sessions with that member.

After making the social investigation (psycho-social study) adequate social diagnosis is done. Once the member having problematic behavior starts

showing better social functioning, the group also becomes cohesive. *It may be noted that casework is required not only in the initial stages of social action, it may be needed when the community is organized to take appropriate action against the authorities.* At that time also, any member of the core group may start showing deviant behavior and require counselling from the social worker.

Added to this, the skills a social worker uses for social investigation and diagnosis during casework process, learning human behavior, psycho-social problems, using caseworker-client relationship for building confidence and courage in the client for solving his problems becomes quite handy in the process of social action when the social worker has to deal with not only one individual, but many types of personalities simultaneously and keep them integrated for the targeted social goals.

Social Action in Relation to Group Work :

The importance of social group work can be understood with the fact that a man is considered a group animal. Group experiences are the essential needs of human beings. A human turns from a biological being to a social being through group life. Attention may now be paid to social group work, which is a method through which individuals develop the ability of establishing constructive relationships with each other through group activities. Social group work acts as a building block in the process of social action. Group members learn organization, cooperation and coordination.

They learn interdependence and democratic values. In the group work process, while participating in the activities of the group, the group members learn to live and work together to attain some specific goals. Social group work solves adjustment problems and enhances positive interpersonal relations. It prepares the individuals to learn and share responsibility in working together.

All these factors contribute to the success of social action taken up for a social cause influencing a large segment of the population. During the social group work process, the group members learn to respect each other's views and take criticisms positively.

They learn emotional control and tolerance, empathy and sympathy, breaking down of prejudices and enhance problem solving capacity.

It teaches the individuals to keep their personal likes-dislikes, aspirations, perceptions, ego-hassles aside and work towards the goals planned by the group as a whole. Such a learning opportunity prepares the individuals for a social change and chances of failure of a movement due to internal conflicts are substantially minimized. Social group work also explores leadership qualities among its members.

These leaders, in turn, take up the responsibility of mass mobilization and targeted activities in social action process. Added to this, social group work also helps the social worker to refine his/her skills of dealing with different personalities to work for common goals. The social worker resolves various intra-group conflicts and personality clashes. These skills and experiences become handy while dealing with conflicting situations between different groups during the process of social action. The group worker makes use of programme media in social group work. It contributes to programme planning and management in a better way while dealing with many groups during social action process. Experiences of social group work with one group help a lot in managing many groups when the whole community is mobilized for a common social cause.

In addition, the social worker, during initial stage of group formation and during group work process establishes rapport with the community people and gains knowledge about various structural and functional aspects of the community, a precursor to studying a social problem, which is affecting a large section of the community and undertaking mass movement --

and social action for remedies. The social worker gains credibility in the community during the group work process, which is one of the main requirements of social action. So, social group work acts as a stepping stone in the process of social action.

Social Action in Relation to Community Organization :

Social action shares many similarities with community organization. Sometimes there is a debate whether social action is a part of community organization or is completely a different entity. Some believe that it is a part of community organization. The Social Action as a problem of confusing social action with community organization arises mainly on account of lack of agreement as to what the term community stands for in social work.

While community organization is meant for a limited geographical area – the ‘community’, social action has larger context. It signifies the society, say, nation-state. Social action definitely has a larger scope and impact. Some of the techniques used by both the methods (social action and community organization) may be common but they differ in their approach.

Community organization is a process of effective coordination of different agencies within a particular area and involves cooperative planning and implementation of social policy relating to the area. However, social action as a process is used for tackling issues, which are of a much wider nature than issues affecting a particular area. Community organization is an integral part of social action. It is the precursor or pre-requirement to social action. In fact, many of the social work professionals consider social action as an extension of community organization.

Community organization, as defined by Ross (1955), is a process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives, orders or ranks these needs or objectives, develops the confidence and will to work at those needs or objectives, finds the resources (internal and/or external) to deal with these needs or

objectives, takes action in respect of them, and in doing so extends and develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community.

Social action is a conflictual process of varying intensity to bring about or prevent changes in the social system through the process of making people aware of the socio-political and economic realities conditioning their lives and by mobilizing them to organize themselves for bringing about the desired change, or to prevent the change that adversely affects them, through the use of whatever strategies they may find workable, with the exception of violence.

Thus we see that ‘organizing people or community or target population’ is the common thread between community organization and social change. In both the methods of social work, people are helped to realize their needs or problems and in finding out the solution of their felt needs. People organize themselves, collaborate and cooperate and work together for a commonly accepted goal. *In both the processes, that is, community organization and social action, need or problem identification is the first step. It is followed by making the people aware of their pressing need or problem, that is, prioritizing the problems.* An environment is created in which the community people feel confidence and gain faith that together they would be able to solve their pressing problems or meet their needs. Emotional impulse to meet the need and to take required action quickly is inherent in both the processes.

However, in social action, change of authority and power structure is involved which invariably requires some degree of conflictual process. It is the redistribution of resources and power. So, we see that social action is community organization with the aim of bringing about or preventing long lasting social change where confrontation with the existing authority is involved.

The strategies and tactics involved in social action like, propaganda, picketing, strike, boycott, sit-in, fast, etc. make social action different from community organization. When just by integrating the community to work together and

mobilizing the available resources the development is not sufficient for achieving the set goals, because of accumulation of power and resources is in the hands of a few people who are not ready to work for the community development, social action comes into play.

The goal of social action is redistribution of power and resources so that all the sections of the community get equitable share and opportunity for optimum growth and development. Once this objective is achieved, people's participation is used for constructive activities in the community. People's participation is the key term common in both, community organization and social action. Social action is, thus, one step further to community organization.

Social Action in Relation to Social Welfare Administration :

Social Welfare Administration is the process by which we apply professional approach to certain goals and transform social policy into social action. It is a process of planning, implementing, directing, monitoring, organizing, coordinating and evaluation of services rendered for the welfare and development of the people. Social welfare administration is mainly concerned with providing social welfare services like activities related to child care, women's development, etc., in an organizational set-up and thus translating the social mandates into operational policies. The organization delivering these social services does have a definite set of goals, staffing pattern and adequate administrative and managerial skills.

An example in order to understand the social action in relation to social welfare administration. An NGO working with children in a slum area provides night shelter, mid-day meal, non-formal education and other developmental and recreational activities. Soon, the social workers realize that just providing these services is not providing any relief to the working children.

Parents want their children to work and earn rather than participating in the activities of NGOs. The employers of these children not only pay very less for

their hours of tedious work, but also abuse them physically, emotionally and even sexually. Many children are lured by drug peddlers and they are used for illegal work. Added to this, apathetic attitude of police towards the whole situation worsens the situation. In such circumstances, the NGO realizes it cannot play a substantive role for the well-being of the children just by adhering to its already set policies and programmes. No matter how well the NGO is performing its services, it cannot improve the living conditions of the children unless and until it decides to take up firm steps for bringing about structural changes in the social system. It needs to take up interventions like shaking up the conscience of the family members, police, government administration, general public, school authorities and the most important the employers, change in government policies which are pro-child welfare and development and effective implementation of the same at the ground level.

So, It's clear that unless strict and firm steps like confrontation, negotiation, demonstration, etc. are done, which is social action, the services rendered by a social welfare agency remain superficial. It clearly shows the relation of social welfare administration and social action. Social welfare agency, working in the community, provides a working ground to take up social cause at the macro level with people's participation.

All the preliminary works needed for social action, say, rapport building, in-depth knowledge about the community and its social problems, credibility building and the like are done by social welfare administration. And then The social worker does planning of social goals and policies for the agency.

Planning is an intellectual and crucial activity requiring adequate knowledge and vision about the social causes. A good planning is a pre-requisite of a successful service delivery. This skill is of key importance during carrying out social action for a social cause. Secondly, organizing skills has been referred to as the administrator's raw material.

Needless to mention how crucial this skill is for mobilizing people for taking up social action against authorities. The social worker also requires skills in staffing. Staffing means recruitment, training, orientation and supervision. During social action, though these skills are not applied apparently and directly but experiences of working with people, training them, dealing with their aspirations, different working patterns, conflicts, etc. help the social worker to manage the people participating in mass mobilization and collective action taken during social action. In the same way, skills acquired and refined by a social worker in social welfare administration like budgeting, evaluating, reporting, directing, all become handy during social action.

Social Action in Relation to Social Work Research :

Social work research is the systematic and scientific study of social problems, and its objective is to produce knowledge that can be used in planning and carrying out social work programmes and (if the need arises) social action. Social work research is a very powerful tool in social action. It helps in 'knowing' the social problem, its intensity and extensiveness, its causal factors, its impact on the target population and its repercussions on social life of the people. It also gives the understanding of the factual ground realities (and not mere perceptions) of the social situations, which in turn helps in conceptualizing the pros and cons of various possible social interventions. So, a systematic study of a social problem, and looking for remedies through social work intervention, is a must for the attainment of goals through social action.

It is social work research, which helps the social activists to gain in-depth knowledge about the social problem, factors contributing to it and its impact on the socio-cultural and economic aspects of life. The findings of the research help in formulating the goals for social change, design the intervention and plan their strategies and tactics accordingly. Research on the problems which affect the disadvantaged, and then conscientizing them (the public as well as the policy

makers), can have considerable effects. Social work needs to highlight such research to a great extent than the ordinary surveys of “social problems” which tend to neglect the interplay of powerful social forces causing these problems.

Social work research is a careful, critical, scientific and objective way of investigation of the social need or problem. It is free from biases and prejudices. It gives clarity to the social issue. The social worker needs the base of social work research to carry out social action as its absence may lead to wrong and inadequate perception of the problem. The planning of interventions based on such inadequate data and findings would obviously be faulty. As a result, social action may fail to adhere to its basic philosophy of the goal of community well-being. Social planning and social action would be ineffective without proper research.

Social work research enables social workers to satisfactorily assess the needs of the community and make their interventions and programmes very effective, useful and worthwhile. The social worker shares the findings of social work Social Action as a research with the community people through groups and then with people’s participation; careful and meticulous interventions are chalked out for social action. It helps the social worker to observe and record the relationship of individuals and groups in actual operating situations.

Through social work research, the social worker or social actionist gets the right perspective or picture of the social problem, which is essential for the success of social action in attaining its goal.

Conclusion :

Social action is a method of professional social work aimed at solving social problems through redistribution of power and resources. Its objective is to achieve social justice and empowerment of the community. Social action mobilizes the general population to bring about structural changes in the social system.

Social action depends upon other methods of social work during its process. The role of social action is visible when people's problems remain unsolved through other methods of social work. Social casework and group work can be taken as the base to social action where people are mobilized to confront authorities. Social action is considered to be a step forward to community organization. Social work research helps in identifying objective and developing critical perception of the social problem. Social welfare administration provides the ground to social workers to prepare the community for social action. Social workers utilize skills of other methods of social work in the process of social action.