

SOCIAL WORK AS A PROFESSION

In recent years, there has been fact that tackling social problems and helping individuals in the present society demand special knowledge and skills in addition to personal qualities of sympathy, understanding and self sacrifice. The necessary knowledge and skills can be obtained through training. Also, it is considered that since the work of helping people is an essential social function and social workers should be paid for their services.

Generally medicine, law and technology are known professions and in these categories social work also has established its relevance and has all the features required for a profession. But there is a debate about calling social work as a profession. It seems, therefore, essential to define and explain 'profession'.

Meaning of profession:

A profession is an occupation which requires a higher educational qualification, degree, diploma or certificate. Sometimes, it is taken as an occupation involving some ethics for working. A profession keeps a body of knowledge and skills, an area of operation, a code of ethics, and a certain degree of organization among the members of the profession.

Millerson discussed following traits in a profession which he has found from other twenty one (21) writers:

1. Skills based on theoretical knowledge.
2. Provision of training and occupation.
3. Tests of the competence of members
4. Organization
5. Devotion to professional code of conduct
6. Altruistic Service.

Professional Traits in Social Work

There are some necessary and common characteristics derived from definitions and practice of social work by many social scientists:

Systematic and Scientific Knowledge:

Social work is based on scientific knowledge. It views man as a biological, social and psychological entity. Behavior of man can be explained in terms of certain needs, natural

or acquired, which originate in social and psychic aspects of his personality. The role of social worker is mainly to set a process of interaction. His methodology relates to ways by which individuals and groups/societies can be made self-reliant and self dependent. The area of knowledge covered in social work can be grouped as follows:

1. ***Human behavior and social environment:*** personality factors, theories, social aspects, psychiatric aspects, human relations, groups, social institutions, socialization, social control, environment, etc.
2. ***Methods and techniques of social work:*** case work, group work, community organization, social administration, social action and research.
3. ***Fields of social work:*** medical, psychiatric, child guidance, health, correctional, family, youth, labor, rural development, etc.
4. ***Social problems:*** crimes, delinquency, drug addiction, beggary, unemployment, corruption, etc.

Social work has developed certain well defined principles which guide its practice. Social work believes in individual's worth and dignity.

Skills, Techniques and Tools:

Skill is the worker's capacity to apply knowledge and understanding to a given situation. Skills in social workers are developed through teaching and training. Social worker through the skill of programming arrives at satisfactory and fruitful relationships. He is skillful in analyzing the social situation, individual groups' feelings, using agency and community resources serving the client. The social worker applies three important tools, i.e. the use of himself, the program planning and his relationship with the client.

Social Work Education:

Social work has a separate identity in the area of education. In most of the countries there are provisions for graduate and post graduate level of education in the universities and other teaching institutions. In Pakistan, ten social work departments produce professional social workers including The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Students are directed to implement their classroom knowledge into the field work agencies.

Professional Organizations:

There are a number of professional organizations on international and national level. The most important organizations are American Association of Social Workers, British Association of Social Workers, National Association of Social Workers, Association of American Schools of Social Workers, International School of Social Workers, National Association of Social Workers (Karachi) etc.

Social Approval:

Social work as a profession has been accepted by the governments. Both governmental and nongovernmental organizations employ trained social worker on various posts.

Code of Ethics:

A social worker follows some code of ethics during his practice which include respect and dignity of each human being, matching resources with needs and serving as a 'change agent' from behind the scene so that the individual or group of the community may emotionally feel that the change was not imposed from the outside. He has full faith in the client's freedom of expression and self-judgment. He always operates on the democratic principles and values. He does not believe in any type of discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion etc. Thus, it can be said that social work is a profession because all the essential characteristics are founded in it.