



RESEARCH PAPER

Education of Generalist Social Work and Fieldwork Practice: Review of Contemporary Structures in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

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As a practice-based profession, Social Work emerged in the second half of the 20th century in south Asian countries; Pakistan is one of them. In Pakistan, BS, MA, MPhil and PhD degree programs in Social Work are offered in many universities including University of Punjab, Karachi University, University of Quetta, University of Peshawar, University of Sargodha, Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Kohat University of Science and Technology, University of Sindh and BS degree program is also offered in many affiliated colleges and private sector universities. From beginning, generalist Social Work practice is being continued in Pakistan which encompasses micro, macro and mezzo level practice and struggle for the clinical Social Work practice is in process yet. This article aims at explaining introduction to Generalist Social Work in Pakistan by presenting a review of contemporary structures in Pakistan. By using narrative review, this article is a source of enriching indigenous literature of Social Work in Pakistan. It has presented a knowledge-practice model to explain the theoretical grounds of Social Work and Fieldwork institutional practice.

Introduction

Over 18 years of teaching experience of Social Work, it is always asked by the researchers from the students at the start of a program (BS or MA) that why they have chosen the Social Work as an academic discipline. Some of them response that they got enrolled in this program rather than any other social science, other reply that they do not know and a very few choose the subject by their own choice. Again at the end of the degree program we ask about their knowledge or challenges, one of the challenges are the Social Work indigenous knowledge. Such responses compelled us to select the topic of indigenous literature on introduction to Generalist Social Work Practice in Pakistan. As a discipline, Social Work emerged in the second half of the 20th century in south Asian countries; Pakistan is one of them. Initially it appeared as a diploma course under University of Punjab and over a period of fifty years became a popular social science in various public sector universities. In Pakistan, BA, BS, MA, MPhil and PhD degree programs in Social Work are offered in many universities including University of Punjab, Karachi University, University of Quetta, University

of Peshawar, University of Sargodha, Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Ahmed, Butt & Sajid, 2021), Kohat University of Science and Technology, University of Sindh and BS degree program is also offered in many affiliated colleges and private sector universities. From beginning, generalist Social Work practice is being continued in Pakistan which encompasses micro, macro and mezzo level practice and struggle for the clinical Social Work practice is in process yet. This article aims at explaining introduction to Generalist Social Work Theory and Practice in Pakistan with way forward to indigenous literature.

Literature Review

The generalist Social Work practice has been carried out and continues since many years and has historical roots in its education. It emerged as a profession in 1920's, with the recognition of Mary Richmond who explained intervention approaches related to the practice of Social Work. In the published book of Barlett (1970) social Work methods were brought in discussion and it was pointed out that knowledge of Social Work requires specialized methods and study of individuals, groups and the community in connection with social functioning. At the primary stages, Social Work knowledge needed expansion; Bartlett recognized the need and importance of specialized fields of Social Work and pointed out,

"It is important to describe the full range of professional activity to capture the distinguishing characteristics of a particular field, no matter how uneven the performance".

The Council on Social Work Education (2016) defines

"Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person and environment construct. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities."

Under generalist social work practice, the generalist practitioner applies principles and evolves critical thinking during practice. They integrate diversity; promote human rights and social justice. They promote empowerment through strength and resilience of all human beings. They kept engage in social research and proactively respond to the impact on individuals and generalist practice. Basing on all this there is a bulk of literature found on generalist social work practice, its fields of implementations, values and ethics in social Work and methods used for it.

Zastrow's (2013) book 'Introduction to Social Work' is one of those. He explains that as a council of Social Work requirements, all the students are required to train in generalist Social Work practice on mandatory basis and explains the generalist Social Work practice in family therapy, administration or corrections. He emphasizes on problem-solving approach and change process followed by various roles of a Social Worker in generalist practice. by elaborating Social Work practice at micro, mezzo and macro level, values of Social Work and practice with diverse groups, organizations, families and communities in order to enhance social change and promote well-being.

Kirst-Ashman (2017) is of the view that Social Work can be explained into four major sections as explained in his book as the profession, as Social Work practice, as social welfare policy, and client's world. Further he focuses on personal values and consideration of a Social Work career.

Wilson et al (2008) has explained Social Work introduction in an important and immediately useful way and is considered as text for Social Work practitioners and learners at both pre and post qualifying stages. This book provides clear explanation and illustration of a comprehensive range of Social Work themes and areas of practice and is informed by a wealth of contemporary Social Work research and literature.

Birkenmaier & Bergweger (2017) explains the practice of Generalist Social Work literature which covers the generalist practice and explains the fundamental and basic knowledge of Social Work. Like other general books, it also presents a detail of generalist practice with diverse individuals, families and communities including the process of Social Work which encompass assessment, intervention, evaluation, and termination and follow-up.

Suppes and Wells (2013) are of the view that there are so many misunderstandings about the profession of Social Work. There is a range of settings in which Social Workers are working including mental health, schools, substance abuse services, social justice, with older adults and developmental disabilities.

In Pakistan, one can find a number of books on Social Work literature by many authors, but in Pakistan Social Work indigenous literature is found at BA and ADA (14 years degree program). Moreover, this literature is printed in Urdu (Pakistan's national language) and one may observe that the meanings of some concepts are not translated in a comprehensive way. Again practical book for the said degree program is in national language and presents the helping material of Social Work in Urdu here, for which our stance is that it changes the original philosophy of the subject. By this discussion we do not mean that literature should not be in regional language, instead the literature of a subject might be presented in author's original book version and translated version be checked on true basis.

Another book of Social Work which is being published in Urdu and English language is Social Work Theory and Practice (Khalid, 2020) having many editions. This is also a general course book comprised of Social Work literature in Pakistan but it does not fulfill the course contents criteria of university degree programs. Further, we find some research articles which explain Social Work course contents.

Contrary to this many foreign author books are consulted as course contents here; and review of those books is presented in this section.

Social Work

Definition of Social Work has gone through many transitional stages in Europe and United States. As in the previous century, the definition of Social Work passed through the concept of "art", "science" and "profession". Bartlett (2003) explains

The first working definition of Social Work in 1958 had roots in Charitable Organizational Societies and Settlement Houses along with a focus on Scientific Philanthropy and Individual Problems. It was followed by the Flexner Conference in 1915 (where Abraham Flexner presented the analysis of the Social Work profession at the National Conference on Charities) and The Milford Conference in 1929 (in Milford conference the importance of balancing generic and specialized areas of practice in Social Work were defined). Eventually The Hollis-Taylor Report in 1951 commissioned by the national Council on Social Work Education defined professional and nonprofessional activities and significantly affected

curriculum development in undergraduate and graduate programs in Canada and the United State.

Social Work as practice based profession got recognition in 2014 by IFSW in the following definition

“Social Work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to Social Work. Underpinned by theories of Social Work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, Social Work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.”

This definition has a three tier concept which explains the concept of Social Work in three dimensions as “What is Social Work”? “How it works”? and “How it enhances wellbeing”?

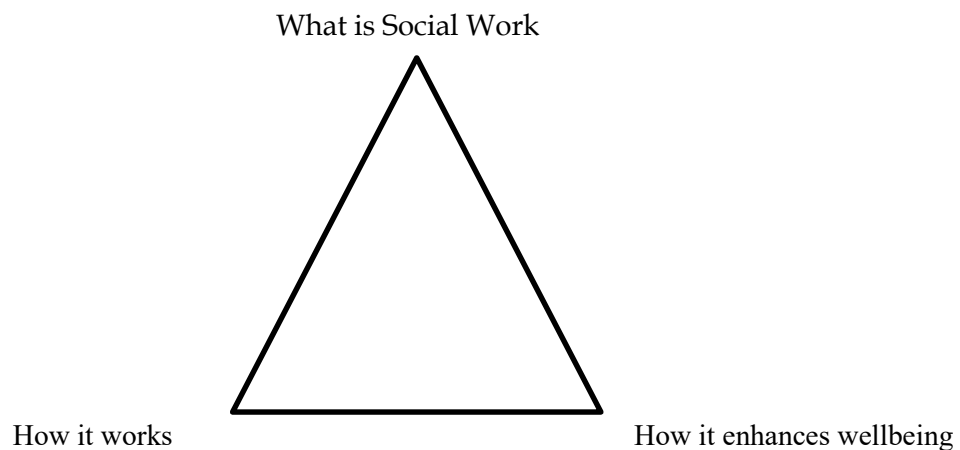


Figure 1: Three tier concept of Social Work

Dimensions of Social Work

The first tier “what Social Work” is can be explained as a practice based profession and as an academic discipline. It was accepted as a profession and academic discipline in 21st century as it fulfills the criteria of a profession including systematic body of knowledge, code of ethics, a culture of professional values and norms and a professional training through academicians in an institutional setup. Further the practice of Social Work is carried out with diverse populations at micro, mezzo and macro level through social welfare institutions. Social Work is taught in different universities across the globe.

The second tier “How it works” can be described in two dimensions. Firstly Social Worker plays a vital role in formulation, analysis and implementation of social policy to empower the marginalized groups of society; though this role is merely seen in different South Asian countries. On the flip side of this role, Social Worker is also the policy practitioner of certain social services. Secondly under the umbrella of Social Work literature (Social Work theories, knowledge, skills & values) Social Worker works with clients at micro, macro and mezzo level practice. The practice of Social

Work has two distinctions as generalist Social Work practice and clinical Social Work practice.

The third tier “How it enhances well-being” is described as Social Work enhances wellbeing of individuals through social welfare system. Social welfare; as a nation’s system of social programs and social services which are developed from residual perspective, institutional perspective, developmental perspective. Residual perspective provides social welfare benefits and services only when normal resources of family and market break down and they need outside help, institutional perspective provides social welfare benefits as a part of social structure and normal functioning of society (Segal, 2009) while developmental perspective seeks to identify social interventions that have a positive impact on economic development (Midgley & Livermore, 1997). Economic development can occur in three dimensions in a developmental context (Midgley & Livermore, 1997). Firstly, investments in social services like education and health care, secondly investment the creation of economic and social infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, water, thirdly, developing projects helping people in getting engaged in employment (Kirst-Ashman, 2017).

Generalist Social Work Practice

From beginning, generalist Social Work practice is being continued in Pakistan which encompasses micro, macro and mezzo level practice and struggle for the clinical Social Work practice is in process yet.

While discussing generalist practice, Kirst-Ashman (2017) defines it as,

Generalist practice is the application of an eclectic knowledge base, professional values, and a wide range of skills to target individual, family, group, organizational, or community systems for change within the context of five primary processes. First, generalist practice emphasizes client empowerment. Second, it involves working effectively within an organizational structure and doing so under supervision. Third, it requires the assumption of a wide range of professional roles. Fourth, it concerns following the principles of evidence-based practice (choosing intervention plans based on evidence of past effectiveness and evaluating the outcomes of intervention to improve future service provision). Fifth, it involves the application of critical thinking skills to the planned-change process.

Social Work as profession has a long history of struggle to reach the destination of generalist practice. As it travelled through the stereotypes of Social Work in different countries. Zastrow (2010) explains

“There was a stereotype of a Social Worker as a moralistic upper-middle-class older woman who carried a basket of food and had little understanding of the people she tried to help”.

In Pakistan, Social Work profession is always confused between the philanthropy, volunteerism and informal social services. Here any person who is helping neighbors, giving charity or donating blood is considered as Social Work while the generalist practice is entirely different than this.

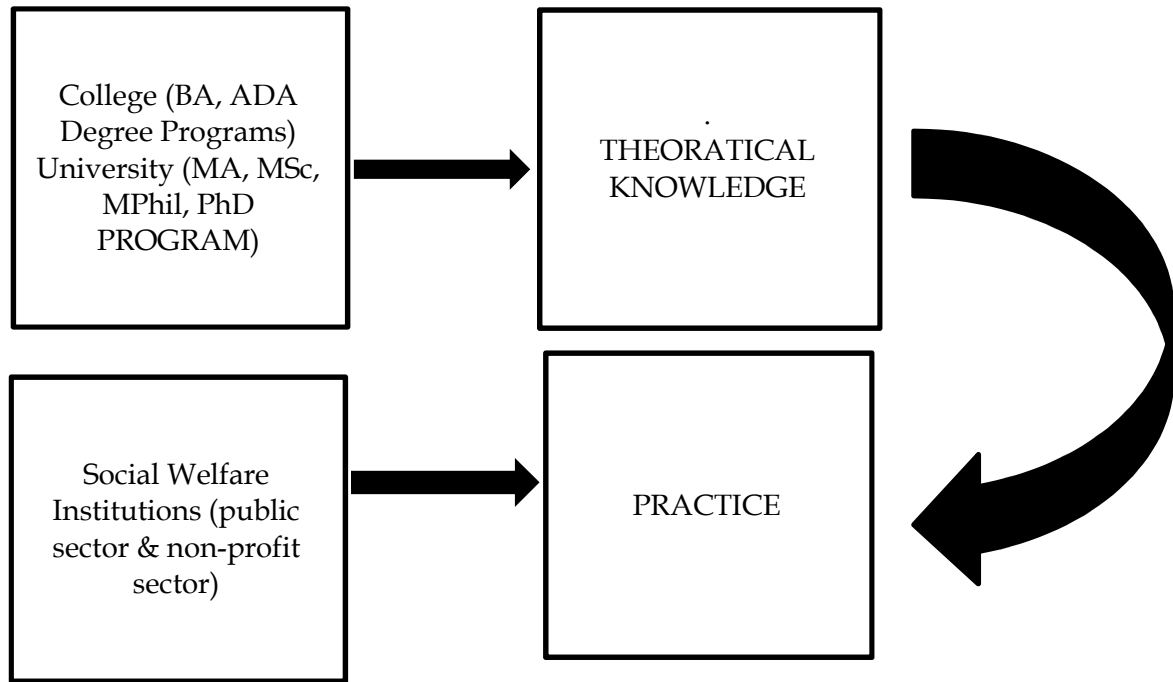


Fig 2: Institutional Structure of Social Work Knowledge- Practice Model

Generalist Social Work practice can be well explained through a Knowledge-Practice Model encompassing the Social Work education and Fieldwork practice. This knowledge-practice model has two clear distinctions and needs separate explanations.

Knowledge and Practice of Social Work

One must remember that this knowledge gaining makes Social Work a profession under the different degree programs at university level. Different degrees of Social Work offered in Pakistan are BA (2 years program), ADA (2 years program), BS (4 years program), MA (2 years program), MPhil (2- 4 years program) , PhD (5-7 years program) and Fieldwork practice is an integral part of BS (4 years program), MA (2 years program) degrees.

While talking about basic knowledge of Social Work as a social science, it comprises of concept of Social Work, Social Work ethics, values and skills, generic principles of Social Work and process of Social Work (involving steps of assessment, planning, intervention and review & evaluation). While discussing values and ethics, Kirst-Ashman (2017) is of the view that Social Worker's ethical responsibilities has five dimension as with colleagues, during practice, as professionals towards the Social Work Profession and towards the Broader Society.

The process of generalist Social Work practice at micro, mezzo and macro level is taught with its philosophy and implication strategies in diverse social welfare fields. Micro, mezzo and macro level practice involves the categories of social casework, case management, group work, group counselling, family counselling, community organization and administration (Zastrow, 2013).

These diverse social welfare fields encompass the practice of generalist Social Work in hospitals, mental health, schools, substance abuse services, social justice with

marginalized groups (children, women, older adults) and developmental disabilities. Along with this, social research, social policy & administration, social action courses are also accredited requirement of Social Work degree programs. Here Social Worker plays variety of roles in diverse practice settings (Zastrow, 2013 & Kirst-Ashman, 2017).

In the role of counselor, he/she provides guidance to clients and assists them with a planned change or problem-solving process, as the educator teaches a variety of skills, such as empowerment, an enabler helps individuals or groups to articulate their needs, identify and identify problems, evaluate strategies, select and implement strategies, and develop coping skills. and their problems effectively, as the broker coordinates client programs with the necessary resources, as the case manager (or case coordinator) coordinates the required services provided by any number of agencies, as the mediator acts as a mediator to resolve disputes; on the other hand, as the facilitator directs the group information, as the spokesperson speaks for others, as the manager assumes a certain level of administrative responsibility for the social services agency or other organizational program, as the advocate speaks for clients to promote fair treatment and equity or access to necessary resources, as a initiator calling for public attention to public affairs, as a researcher, conducts research on Social Work literature, as a team facilitator serves as a team work leader.

Fieldwork Practicum

Along with this, Fieldwork Practicum in Social Work is an integral part of its various degree programs. Contrary to other social sciences, Social Work provides practice base experience to its students during its generalist degree. This practice requires Social Work theoretical knowledge which is provided during class learning. The practice of generalist Social Work addresses diversified population groups in multiple settings. All the fields of Social Wok address the human needs fulfillment, elimination of social problems and provision of quality of life. Fields of Social Work in Pakistan includes women empowerment, child protection, welfare of differently abled, welfare of senior citizens, youth well-being, welfare of prisoners, patients' welfare and urban & rural community development. Students of BS and MA degree program are trained in these Social Work fields under supervision where they apply Social Work theoretical knowledge in order to ensure the well-being of their client.

Structure of Fieldwork Practicum in Pakistan

As Fieldwork practicum is an integral part of BS (4 years program), MA (2 years program) degrees like other countries in Pakistan, it is 12 credit hours course carried through the institutional setups at regional level. It is accomplished through the department administrative structure designed for it. This structure involves

- Orientation sessions for students before entering the field
- Responsibilities of Social Work Department
- Responsibilities of Social Work Coordinator
- Responsibilities of Agency
- Responsibilities of Students
- Responsibilities of field supervisor
- Responsibilities of faculty supervisor

- Social Work learning instructions and assessment policies

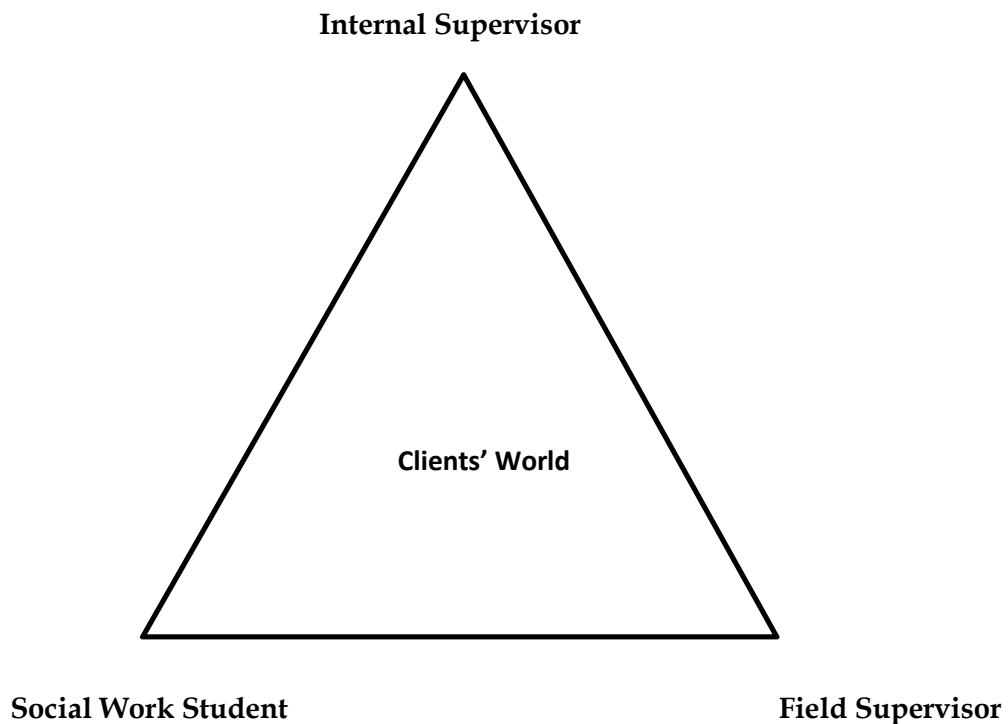


Fig 3 Fieldwork Training under Social Welfare Agency

The department of Social Work delivers an orientation session for students before entering the field by explaining the social welfare agencies setup in their region. Public social welfare agencies and non-profit social welfare agencies are selected for students' Fieldwork instructions. Responsibilities of Social Work Department are decided and explained during this orientation session.

Within the department structure, fieldwork practicum involves head of the department, faculty supervisor, Fieldwork coordinator and students' groups. Head of the department constitutes policies for fieldwork practicum while Fieldwork coordinator constitutes the students' groups with the involvement of students, coordinates with agencies and supervises throughout the semester.

Faculty supervisor teaches the generic Social Work process for implementing Social Work interventions at individual, family, group, organization, and community levels during two semesters in BS and MA degree programs.

Overall Fieldwork training involves the supervisors, students and Fieldwork agency. The figure 1.3 illustrates that during Fieldwork practice, an internal Fieldwork supervisor, a faculty supervisor, social welfare agency, student and client's world is involved. Here faculty supervisor is a teaching faculty member of Social Work department, external supervisor is the head of social welfare agency, student means the student of Social Work department and client's world means the needs and problems of the client and its consequences which encompasses his/her whole life.

Conclusion

A glimpse of Social Work literature is being presented in this article. It will help the students to understand the basic knowledge of Social Work. This knowledge is useful not only for Social Work degree programs but also for its practitioners. By the depiction of Social Work Knowledge- Practice Model, they can better understand and use this model in theory and intervention.

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