



School and schooling: Understanding the issues of the social work programme

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Abstracts

The present paper is based upon the needs of social work practices to be recognized as a part and parcel of school activities at schools in India. The observations suggest that social work has a tremendous capacity to meet the needs of schools, particularly during a pandemic when social networking, mental well-being, and community connection are found to be essential. It has the ability to reintroduce dropped-out and out-of-school children into the school system.

Keywords: School, Social work, Agency of socialization, Social context of schooling

Introduction:

Training in social service is one of the mandates that a school is supposed to provide for its students. Consequently, schools are expected to improve the social functioning of their students. Thus, social work in schools relates and aspires to bring change to the entire human system, as well as in its day-to-day functioning. The term "school social work" implies that social work strategies, such as its principles, methods, and strategies, are used to achieve the school's goal. It is also supposed that these strategies should not delimit the professionalism attached to the orientation of social work and its commitment.

A school does not work in isolation; rather, it works within the system of any community and society. Therefore, it should not be seen merely in terms of its being a bureaucratic organization, rather as a part of the social system and its sub-system. As a result, the entire school personnel, such as administrators, teachers, students, and parents, as well as professional groups such as counselors, etc., are part of the school system. Within the ambit of this purview, school social work is also regarded as a sub-system of society working with the school. Therefore, the school, as a part of the community system, performs its role of interacting with students for the purpose of their development. This is why, Dewey refers to schools as "miniatures of society."

The role of schools in today's world has expanded considerably. It expects its students as well as its teachers to utilize considerable time in close proximity by engaging students not only in academic activities. Rather, it desires the members of the school community to establish sound social relationships within the community. No doubt, such a development will have a long-lasting impact on the individuality of children. It will prepare a child for competitive mobility and make them learn the dynamics of co-operation. Ultimately, it will contribute to developing the dynamics of school life among children.



School as an agency of socialization and social work:

The development of the school as a community is not merely incidental. In the process of socialization, Parsons (1959), belonging to the functionalist group of schools, believes that the school teaches its students to think, makes them skillful in crossing the narrow boundaries of self and the family, and nurtures them towards universal thinking and behavior. Thus, as an agency of socialization, it prepares its pupils to work with many others. Thus, Parsons (1959; p. 51) suggests role-performance in this context as,

'capacities can be broken down into two components, the first being competence or the skill to perform the task involved in the individual's roles, and the role-responsibility or the capacity to live up to other people's expectations of the interpersonal behavior appropriate to these roles.'

In actuality, the process of socialization includes tasks related to social change, as well as social control. Hence, such roles develop among students an understanding of being a member of a community, dependency on the school community and a sense of the 'role' that is to be performed within the cultural climate of the school in a reciprocal exchange. On the other hand, the functionalist group of people, such as Frere (1985), Kumar (1987), Apple (2000), Pathak (2002), see schools associated with the cultural and political life of the students. They also believe that school represents a place of contestation and struggle, among different cultural and economic groups where different types of power, knowledge and ideology work simultaneously with other forms of activities. Kumar (2005, p.50) says that, *'the hiatus between the curriculum and the learner's social milieu is part of colonial and pre-colonial legacies of our education system'*.

When the above-mentioned analogy is applied to the processes of schooling children, certain difficulties arise, i.e. such difficulties relate to the learning, likes, and desires of millions of children rather than a single child. According to Ahmad (2016), the lack of opportunities for creation and re-creation causes the schooling process to be alienating for children. In fact, the oppressors try to change *'the consciousness of the oppressed and not the situation which oppress them'* (Frere, 1985). Thus, it clearly reflects that the behind it lies in the maintenance and reproduction of power rather than empowerment. This is why Frere (1985) says that *'the more the oppressed adapt to such situations, the more easily they can be dominated.'* To come out of such a situation, Frere, (1985) says that transforming the structure of schooling is necessary as it will liberate the learners. Simply integrating students into the existing system will not yield any positive results as it will continue to oppress the students. This is also because *'the school curriculum has no reference to children's lives outside of school'* (Kumar, 2005). Actually, it is this context Kumar (2005) says that *'the context of the curriculum, colonial perceptions and understanding of Indian society shaped the state's policy on what ought to be taught in school and, due to such a legacy, it does not even challenge the existing curriculum.'* As a result, the processes of schooling often remain disassociated with the child's cultural milieu as well as his/her immediate physical and socio-cultural contexts, which has become one of the major reasons for the improper development of children. In relation to the processes of schooling Giroux, (2005) says that,

'if public education is a crucial sphere for creating citizens equipped to exercise their freedoms and competent to question the basic assumptions that govern democratic political life, teachers in both public schools and higher education will have to assume their responsibility as citizen-scholars by taking critical positions; relating their work to larger social issues; offering students' knowledge, debate and dialogue about pressing social problems; and providing conditions for students to have hope and believe that civic life matters and that they can make a difference in shaping it so as to expand its democratic possibilities for all groups'



These works on schooling suggests, that, the processes of schooling crosses the boundaries of 'developmental' aspects and entails larger role among the pupil.

Both covertly and overtly, it is clearly observable the way the basic relationships in school are conceptualized and ordered. It can be easily observed whether the relationships within schools meet social needs and requirements or reproduce domination. As a result, school shapes children's identities, and children encounter and respond to the challenges that come their way during the course of their education.

Mead (1934, p. 135-226) shows that the social experiences of students and the activities in which they are involved play a considerable role in their identity formation. The entire social process taken up as an activity in schools, in fact, influences the behavior of students. Therefore, identity is basically a social construct. This is why, every day sociocultural practice shapes the identity of an individual. Erickson (1950, 1968), on the other hand, understood the development of the self in terms of eight stages of life. These eight stages of life range from infancy to old age. In order to understand the development of self, Erickson utilized 'ego conflict' as the core concept. He believed ego conflict develops itself, flows from developmental tasks and remains in conflict during the entire eight stages of life. No doubt, he also believed that 'the conflict' could be positively or negatively resolved. In fact, his ideas revolved around the formation of identity in the context of the meaning of one's social and material existence.

Marcia (1980) tried to understand identity formation in the context of the period of adolescence. This is a period of volatility where identity at times remains illusive due to role change as a result of vast interaction with the environment in which adolescents are exposed to. However, she came to the conclusion that 'identity', in reality, functions as a driving force and, as such, it relates to various commitments to one's life, such as values, aspirations, career and life prospects, sexuality and body image, autonomy, and so on. Thus, we may say that schools work towards identity formation more in a social context and relate to the psycho-social dimensions of an individual. This is one of the reasons why a person does not have a single identity, but rather multiple identities, because an individual is associated with various social institutions at all times within the complex social structure.

Pathak (2006) believes that identity must be understood contextually in terms of personal and social variables, but in relation to 'others,' where the 'otherness' may be in the context of identified or differentiated groups., there may be a chance that such identification or differentiation may develop conflict between an individual in terms of religious identity, racism, casteism and so on. This is why having multiple identities limits an individual's ability to think in a broader context. This happens because of the fact that the consciousness of an individual often situates itself in social relationships.

Social work and work relations of school:

One of the most important aspects, according to social workers and educators, is the intertwining of work relationships between schools and social work. In fact, school social workers help and supplement the efforts of the key functionaries of the schools. It is often observed that the activities of school social workers are placed at the periphery of the educational process. The school's social workers are considered to be one of the school's subsidiary staff members. They are considered to be at the center of the entire educational activity, whereby they supplement the activities of teachers as well as other school personnel.

The activities and status of social workers differ due to the goals of social work and the purpose of the school. However, to achieve the goals of the school, school social workers can be one of the pivots of the entire schooling system. This is why some of the educational institutions in India, such as Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai and College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai, have recognized school social workers in schools for field



training. This has also paved the path for social workers to be recognized for achieving their educational goals. The social workers also, with their convictions, bring in their progressive ideas and help the school achieve its goal. Thus, slowly and gradually, school social work programmes have begun to be utilized in schools as part of their curriculum.

Conclusive remarks:

At the global level, there are laws to regulate school social work practices. It was found that in the United States of America, approximately 33 jurisdictions license and certify school social workers. However, in India, such recognition at school level still needs to be made a part of the core school curriculum. Several schools have come forward to appoint social workers to their schools to assist in the areas of policy, planning, administration, child and family services, health, education, mental health, and so on, no doubt because social work education is embedded in the liberal discipline of the arts. However, Indian schools still have a long way to go in terms of evenly distributing social workers for school activities. As of now, the growth of school social work is far less than the number of schools and is unevenly distributed in our country. This is because social work practice has yet to become an essential and core component of schools in India. Social work practices have a tremendous capacity to meet the needs of schools, particularly during a pandemic, when social networking, mental well-being, and community connection are found to be essential. There is a need for the government to recognize its necessity and to make it a part and parcel of school activities.

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