

School Social Work for Deprived Children: Linking Social Work Methods and Educational Methods

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Abstract

The Right to Education Act 2009 provides for compulsory education for every child in the age of 6 to 14 years. But the survey (HRD 2014) shows that there are 3.45 crore children 'out of school' in India. This poses a big challenge in the education sector. To address this challenge there is a need to understand the linkage between social work and education field. Can social work method help in educational progress of children especially those that face socio-economic deprivation? To address this question a study was undertaken to understand the perspectives and methods used by NGOs working in the field of education. The findings clearly show that social work methods can play a positive role in education of deprived children. Based on these findings the paper highlights the need for integrat-

ing social work methods in school system by developing 'school social work' program.

Key words:

Social work methods, deprived children, education, school social work.

Introduction

India faces major problems in educating its huge population. Due to social dimensions of poverty and casteism, this problem cannot be seen only from the point of view of educational methods. These problems are closely associated to socio-political aspects of the marginalized and deprived sections of the society (Kulkarni 2015) and hence they need to be seen from the point of view of social work methods.

The Census of India 2011

show that about 32 million children in India aged between 6-13 years have never attended any educational institution. This is a problem of large number of students remaining out of the schooling system. Another impact is that even if they register the school there are large number of dropouts. According to 2014-15 ACER Report (India) the average dropout rate in primary school is 4.34% primary but the same is 17.86% in secondary schools. To address the challenge of education in India there is a need to develop a social work approach. In this paper a review has been conducted of the linkage between education of deprived children and social work methods. The papers attempts to answer the following research questions: What is the linkage of social work methods with educational methods? What is the relevance of social work methods in ensuring primary education of deprived children in India? To address these questions, the paper first presents a review of literature on education and social work methods. Then the paper provides findings of a short study undertaken to understand the perspective and practices used by NGOs working for education of deprived children. This was done by conducting unstructured interviews with 08 NGOs working in the State of Maharashtra for children from marginalized and deprived sections of society. These include NGOs working for children from urban slums, children of construction work-

ers, street children, tribal children in rural areas. The study emphasizes on the need for mainstreaming social work methods by introducing a program of 'School Social Work' in primary education with focus on supporting the deprived children.

Social Aspects of Education:

Problems of Deprived Children

The literature on problems of education in India show that there are three dimensions of the problem. First is the poverty among people due to which they are not able to think of getting education. Because of poverty children are put to labour and also face problems of migration. Poor families are not able to allow children to get educated. Second is the problem of accessibility to educational facilities. Here the problem is that even if poor families decide to allow their children to get education whether they have easy access to educational facilities like schools. Many times the schools are not running in the nearby place mainly if poor families are located in remote villages. Third problem is about availability of resources to use the education facilities. In this problem, the children may not have resources like books, uniform, or travel facilities. Fourth and important problem is the social deprivation and marginalization of the poor families and children. Because of this the children develop sense of inferiority and insecurity that impacts the process of socialization and networking required for educational perform-

ance. In summary, poverty, accessibility, resources, and marginalization are the four important dimensions of the problem of education in India.

These educational outcomes are linked to social problems in Indian context. The table 1 below provides a short review of the social problems facing education field.

Table 1. Educational Outcomes and Links with Social Problems

| Social problems | Educational outcomes |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Child labour • Family violence/addiction • Migration • Child Marriage • Natural Calamities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of school children • Dropouts • Absenteeism • Learning disability • Social skills • Language barriers |

Social Work and Education Linkage
 Many scholars and educationist have suggested that there is a very strong linkage of education and social work (Pedley 1967). They suggest that the problem of education cannot be solved unless there is a social work approach. In the developed countries like USA, this approach has been used in the development of the profession of 'School Social Worker'(Openshaw 2008; Brandon 1998). In this framework each school has to appoint a social worker who is responsible to use the social work

approach and methods to solve educational problems of the school and children. Such an approach does not exist in the Indian formal schooling system. This is the main problem in the schooling system in India even when the education problems have very close links with social problems like poverty and caste.

Social Work Approach and Methods in Education

The school social work framework has evolved over several years in the developed countries. This has given rise to several methods that are used to address problems in the field of education (Franklin et al. 2006; Walker et al. 2008). For example, 'case work' method of social work is widely used for educational problems like drop-out, absenteeism, development delay problem, class disturbance, behavior problem, hyperactivity, special education, homelessness. Similarly, the 'group work' method of social work is used for educational problems of adolescent stage, addiction, career problems, identity crisis, family crisis. Another popular social work method of 'community organization' is used to address education problems within the setting of families and neighborhoods. This shows how the social work

methods play an important role in educational activities of deprived children. However, there is not enough research done on the role of social work in education in the Indian context and especially in the context of educational problems of deprived children in India.

Social Work Perspective and Methods by NGOs in India

The formal schooling system in India lacks social work perspective and methods. But there are some experience emerging from NGO-sector in use of social work perspectives and methods in field of education. This is done by NGOs working with children from deprived sections like migrants, laborers, slum-dwelling, tribals and others. The author of this paper herself has been engaged in the past with such NGOs and conducted social work methods in the field of education.

Unstructured interviews were conducted with 10 such NGOs working in Mumbai and Pune region. The findings of the interviews in form of their perspective and methods are presented in subsequent paras.

Pratham Education Foundation

The particular NGO reaches to urban slum children to develop the reading and writing capacity with the help of case work and group work methods. It also undertakes community organization work to develop volunteers at community level. Social workers are

appointed for undertaking various activities for motivation and encouragement towards participation of slum children. They also undertake community work to mobilize resources like space and volunteers.

Khelghar (Palakniti)

Khelghar is working for the slum dwelling children in Pune. The young social workers in the NGO undertake various activities for enhancing slum children's confidence. This is done primarily by using group work method. They undertake planned group formation with specific objective to evolve conducive group relationship on the basis of democratic decision making. It also runs discussion group among children. This is facilitated by trained social workers.

Door Step School (NGO)

Door step runs community based educational programs like Balwadi, study classes and non-formal education (NFE). The NFE class addresses the educational need of the out of school children in the age group of 7-18 years. Social work methods play important role in this. Trained social workers undertake community organization work using the principle of people's participation. Case work method is used to actively engage and support children by providing emotional support.

Grammangal

Grammangal aims at providing holistic education to the rural and tribal children. It runs and promotes the idea of free learning and open schooling. They develop the teaching and learning material specifically for the tribal student. In all these efforts there is a big role for social work methods. For example, they extensively use psycho-analytical approach involving case work with students to understand the strength and weakness of a child and to evolve mechanisms to deal with them.

Quest (Quality Education Support Trust)

This NGO works for enhancing the quality of education for children in tribal areas of Maharashtra. Along with children it also works with teachers. Social work methods are used in different projects. For example, community organization is done for mobilizing resources and also for advocacy towards ensuring the Right to Education.

Vidhayak Sansad

This NGO works on several developmental activities for rural and marginalized communities. In the education sector the NGO runs campaign towards ensuring the Right to Education. It has undertaken work with children from migrants families working on brick kiln. Social work methods are extensively used by the trained social workers in the NGO. For example, community organiza-

tion, case work, and counseling is extensively used. The work involves mobilization of children, parents, and other stakeholders.

Mobile Crèches

This NGO has pioneered the concept of mobile creches and child care for children from migrant families like construction labourers. It works for education of children from such marginalized families. It employs social workers to undertake various social work methods. It makes use of case work and community work among migrants families and children. This helps in providing encouragement, motivation and guidance for the parents and children to enroll in schools. at the

Prerana

This NGO works in the red-light area in Mumbai to protect children from sexual exploitation and trafficking. Promoting education of such children is important work by the NGO. It runs a children's home to provide long term residential care and protection to female children, given education support and institutional placement. Social work methods plays an important role. For example, case work method is extensively used for understand the problems faced by children and provide them motivation. The principle of confidentiality and controlled emotional involvement is applied by the social workers while using various social work methods.

Findings and Conclusion

The findings based on the perspective and methods of various NGOs working for deprived children clearly show that the social work methods play an important role in facilitative educational progress of these children. It not only helps these children to understand the relevance of education but also helps in overcoming socio-cultural deprivation of these children when they attend school with children from other backgrounds. The conventional schooling system does not provide special attention this problem of socio-cultural deprivation of children. This affects the educational continuity and performance of deprived children. Here the work done by NGOs show that through social work perspective and methods these deprived children can be supported in their education progress.

This brings the relevance and importance of 'School Social Work' in the Indian context. This concept emerged in USA but is highly relevant in India due to the socio-economic inequity and deprivation faced by children from poor and deprived families. The idea of school social work is more relevant in light of the implementation of Right to Education program where students from poor backgrounds are studying alongside children from non-poor backgrounds. This creates a sense of deprivation among poor children. This needs to be addressed by mainstreaming of social

work approach and methods in the school setting. This can be done by developing and implementation of school social work program by making it mandatory for every school to appoint a social worker. This school social worker can undertake various social work interventions in form of case work, family work, group work, community organization to ensure that the children from all classes can co-learn in a friendly, fearless, and equitable environment.

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