UNIT 13: PROFESSIONAL GOALS OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIT STRUCTURE

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The present unit is intended at providing you a comprehensive understanding of professional goals of Social Work which will certainly help you while taking social work as a profession in future. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Conceptualize the meaning and definition of Social Work;
- Develop your understanding of social work as a profession;
- Identify the professional goals of Social Work;
- Describe various role of social worker.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Social work is a profession based on scientific skills and techniques which always aims at rendering social service to those who are in need of proper care, protection and love. The concept and philosophy of Social

work is based on "helping people to help themselves" i.e. to make the client (individual, Group or community) understand their own potentiality and ability that they can best solve their own problems and issues.

Social work is an academic discipline also committed to the pursuit of social welfare and social change to the development of the potential of each individual, group and community of a society. Social workers perform interventions through research, policy, community organizing, direct practice and teaching. Research is often focused on areas such as human development, social policy, public administration, program evaluation and international and community development. Social workers are organized into local, national, continental and international professional bodies. Social Work also is related with other sciences Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Anthropology, Philosophy etc.

13.3 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

The history of professional social work in India is of recent origin and began with the starting of Sir Dorabji Tata School of Social Sciences at Bombay in the year 1936 which offered a two year course in social service administration, with specialization in labour welfare. The interest of social work in rural areas, which is now of a substantial character, was developed later. Social Work unlike an early charity practice, attempts to help the individuals, groups and communities to get a clear insight into the problems that strengthens their ego to face conditions as reality and then try to improve them. To make the concept of social work more clear, some of the important definitions given by various authors are mentioned below:

Definitions of social work:

CHEYNEY, ALICE (1926)

Social work includes all voluntary attempts to extend benefits in response to needs which are concerned with social relationships and which avail themselves of scientific knowledge and methods.

FINK (1942)

Social work is the provision of services designed to aid individuals, singly or in groups in coping with present or future social and psychological obstacles that prevent or are likely to prevent, full or effective participation in society.

FRIEDLANDER (1955)

Social work is a professional service, based on scientific knowledge and skills in human relations, which assists individuals, alone or in groups, to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence.

BOEHM (1959)

Social work seeks to enhance the social functioning of the individuals, singly and in groups, by activities focused upon their social relationships which constitute the interaction between man and his environment. These activities can be grouped into three functions: restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resouerces and prevention of social dysfunctions.

WITMER (1942)

The prime function of social work is to give assistance of individuals in regard to the difficulties they encounter in their use of an organized groups service or in their performance as a member of an organized group.6

STROUP (1960)

Social work is the art of bringing various resources bear on individual, group and community needs by the application of a scientific method of helping people to help themselves.

PINCUS AND MINAHAN (1978)

Social work is concerned with the interaction between people and their social environment which affects the ability of people to accomplish their life tasks, alleviate distress, and realize their aspirations and values.

YOUNGDAHL (1949)

Social work seeks two things for people: economic well and the deeper source of happenings that is self-realization, the stuff of its concern is human behaviour and relationship. Its focus of attention is the individual and his self-adjustment to a recognized reality.

13.4 SOCIAL WORK AS A PROFESSION

Social workers work in various fields of service such as community development; child protection; child and family welfare; youth programmes; disability; health; education; the workplace; and social policy development. Social Workers are sought after in any context related to people and their environments. Because the focus of social work is so broad, from day to day life to highly complex situations. Most social workers develop special expertise in their chosen areas, such as addressing the social needs of employees in large companies, working with the often neglected senior citizens of our country, helping communities find better ways to deal with problems such as crime and abuse of alcohol or drugs, and working with young people who are neglected or abused.



Social workers assist people in 'direct' ways by developing, empowering, indivuduals families, groups and communities.

All social workers assist people in "direct" ways, for instance, by being involved in developing, empowering and changing individuals, families, groups and communities and indirectly through administering people-serving organizations; supervising or providing consultation to other professionals; and conducting research that could help the profession increase its knowledge about the interactions between people and society, and to learn better ways of intervention into difficult circumstances or when these transactions between people and their environments fail to occur.

Typical Careers in Social work

Career	Description
Counselor, in the field of substance abuse	A counselor in the field of substance abuse helps the addict or alcoholic re-establish a constructive life and/ or place in society by providing therapeutic retraining aimed at the individual achieving balance.

Counselor, marriage and divorce	A marriage and divorce counselor helps couples experiencing marital problems or undergoing divorce by providing an honest and objective perspective on the difficulties being experienced. Individual, couple and group therapy may be used.
Lecturer	A lecturer teaches and develops courses for a specialized field of study to students attending university or other tertiary institutions. He or she devises courses, sets and marks coursework and examinations and supervises the research of postgraduate students. A lecturer at a university also conducts research into specific academic questions, and presents the results at conferences and in academic journals. It is possible to be a lecturer by studying any discipline at university. Aspirant lecturers would usually be expected to complete a master degree in their field of interest.
Manager, personnel	A personnel manager is responsible for the welfare of the employees in an organisation. He or she is responsible for the recruitment and selection of employees, improving productivity and job performance, negotiating pay packages, employee training, and maintaining good relationships between managers and employees
Manager, social welfare	A social welfare manager organizes and runs programmes designed to improve the wellbeing of individuals, to alleviate suffering in communities and to improve the fabric of society.
Probation officer	A probation officer is appointed to supervise and report on a convicted offender who is free on probation. A probation officer provides support and counseling to help the offender lead a crime-free life.

Social worker, child and family welfare	A child and family social worker helps children and families modify their behavior or circumstances to promote a healthy family life. Social workers use individual, group work and community work to achieve this goal. The responsibilities of the social worker include research, administration and training of social auxiliary workers.
Social worker, community	A community social worker identifies the social and economic pressures people experience that may cause social problems. She or he is concerned with housing, child-care, the rehabilitation of persons dependent on drugs and alcohol, facilities for the aged and the disabled, and the counselling of offenders against the law and uses individual, group work and community work to achieve this goal. The responsibilities of the social worker include research, administration and training of social auxiliary workers.
Social worker, geriatric	A geriatric social worker works with the older person. Geriatric social workers engage in counseling, group work, research into the welfare of the older persons, and administer institutions for the older persons.
Social worker, occupational	An occupational social worker takes care of the social welfare of a group of employees in a workplace. He or she educates, counsels and administers welfare programmes for the benefit of employees. An occupational social worker works closely with the Human Resources Department, and is involved in Employee Assistance Programmes.

Social worker, medical	A medical social worker works with clients in hospital and in psychiatric care. Medical social workers use individual and group work to assist their patients, and conduct research into psychiatric and other disorders. Medical social workers also have administrative duties.
Social worker, school	A school social worker takes care of the welfare of the children in a school by providing education and information on life skills, and group and individual counseling. He or she may involve the parents, and/or teachers and other family members in the programme.

13.5 PROFESSIONAL GOALS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a helping profession which fundamentally and radically aims to assist the individuals, groups and community to cope with their complex socio-economic and psychological problems through enabling themselves so that they can solve their problem by helping themselves. Certain goals of Social Work are highlighted below:

1) To promote effective and client delivery system,
2) To enhance problem solving, coping and development capacities,
3) To link people with resources, services and opportunities,
4) To develop and improve social policy,
5) Caring, curing and changing the society.

13.5.1 Empowerment of Client

The empowerment perspective in social work is when the intervention applied to help a client is one that is believed to be able to provide them with certain skills and/or resources that will enable them to be independent or stand on their own. Words such as autonomy and self-determination are often used to define empowerment. The problematic thing about the empowerment perspective is who determines what is empowering? There is an inherent power relationship between the social worker and client and

when the social worker decides what a client needs to feel empowered it seems as if the social worker has more power over the life of the client; which should not be the case. Here comes an example of working with disabled clients, what a non-disabled social worker may deem to be appropriate intervention to empower the disabled client may not be what they deem to be empowering. If one has never been disabled himself/herself can never claim to know what a disabled person needs to feel empowered. That is one example. So empowerment is a very tricky notion and one needs to tread carefully. What makes the practitioner able to determine what it is an individual needs to feel empowered? It is very subjective. The United Nations Human Development Report 1995, stresses that empowerment is about participation in which actions and decisions "must be by people, not only for them; People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. (UN, 1995 b). Within this context, Thomas and Pierson, (1995, p. 134) define empowerment theory as concerned with how people can be enabled to "gain collective control over their lives, so as to achieve their interest as a group and a method by which social workers seek to enhance the power of people who lack it." However in basic and general terms, the empowerment approach suggests that the client is being helped, in some ways, to develop their autonomy and independence. An individual can be empowered to make decisions and taking action.



In empowering individuals, the client is helped to develop their autonomy and independence in decision making and taking action.

Empowerment of client is achieved through synchronized efforts that work with-people, their relationships, strengthen the goals and the promotion of their life. Social work empowerment in these contexts involves, the practitioner "locating and coordinating the appropriate resources and working alongside or enabling thesevulnerable and disempowered clients to regenerate their inert potentials andresilience to take control of their lives and circumstances." Thompson, (2007, p. 21-24).

13.5.2 Communication

According to D.E. McFarland "Communication may be broadly defined as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings." Louis A

Allen defines communication as "the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." It is much more than sending and receiving messages, it is directed to generate some action. In case of Social Work this action is the change that social workers intend to bring. The term communication, not just implies that verbal communication is needed to spread the word across but non verbal communication is equally crucial. It is correctly said that 90% of communication is non verbal in nature. Social Workers play many roles at micro, mezzo and macro levels of intervention, but whatever they do; communication is the most essentially required skill. Social workers work with a variety of clients, some, who may not be in a position to communicate, like, victims of atrocities, children, weak and disabled etc., and it is a challenge to understand such clients. While communicating with the vulnerable sections, it is not just important to understand their words, but even their underlying emotions and feelings, something that they do not speak but express. Social Work as the art of helping people can be truly of worth with proper communication. Right from the beginning, with the intake of client where the social worker must empathize and understand the client, to building rapport and strong relations, to intervention, to successful follow up, communication skills are of utmost importance. Communication skills are indispensable for establishing effective and respectful relationships not just with the service users but also with service providers, and other stakeholders. These are also necessary for assessments, decision making and joint working with colleagues and other professionals. It is rightly said by Tony Robbins, "To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others." Social workers need to be conscious and sensitive to tone, posture and gestures, behavior, facial expressions, clothes and appearances. Silence and stillness are also potent forms of communication.

Effective communication skills are one of the most crucial components

of a professional social worker's job. Every day, social workers must communicate with clients to gain information, convey critical information and make important decisions. Without effective communication skills, a social worker may not be able to obtain or convey that information, thereby causing detrimental effects to clients. Social Work is fundamentally dependent on good communication. Communication is, of necessity, a two-way process, involving a minimum of two people. A social worker needs, therefore, to be able to communicate clearly, but also to be able to enable others to communicate with her/himself. We need to have the skills



Silence and stillness are also potent forms of communication that the social worker has to identify.

- To support other people in overcoming any blocks they bring to communicating with us.
- To ensure that our own behaviour, words, or tone are not in themselves a block.

Communication is a whole-body activity. We communicate through words, but also, and in fact more so (Mehrabian A Silent messages (1971) Wadsworth, New York, quoted in Burton G and Dimbleby R Between Ourselves(1995 second ed) Arnold, London), through tone, posture and gesture, behaviour, facial gestures, clothes and appearance. Silence and stillness are powerful forms of communication. Developing good communication skills depends on becoming aware of all of these aspects, in ourselves and in those with whom we communicate. Because we have been communicating all our lives, and for the most part without thinking about it, developing such awareness can at first feel awkward and inhibiting, but over time becomes integrated into our practice.

Communication is also deeply affected by our emotional state, and social work is an emotionally charged activity. High negative emotional arousal can interfere with our ability to clarify our thoughts, choose the right words, and hear and understand what is being said to us (Griffin J and Tyrell I Human Givens (2003) Chapter 9, HG Publishing, UK). This can affect our ability to communicate in social work in various ways. If both service user and social worker are in a highly aroused state, effective and useful communications can become impossible. On the other hand, a

situation which seems routine to a social worker may be highly arousing for a service user, who may, therefore, present as more aggressive, anxious, confused or compliant than they normally are, a fact that can distort assessments if it is not recognized. Our emotional state may not always be directly related to the current situation - a social worker may, for instance, have come direct from a stressful meeting- but can still distort our ability to make good judgments and communicate effectively.

However, our goal is not communication devoid of emotion, but one based on warmth and respect, and a deep awareness of what the subject of our communication may mean to the other person. True empathy depends on a genuine acceptance of and response to the emotions of another person, and is the bedrock of good communication. It can be demonstrated through such skills as rapport- building and active listening, but ultimately it is more than a technical exercise, and must come from the heart.

13.6 Role of Social Worker

Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put into the action that we do." -Mother Teresa

"…most of us have a pretty good idea of what we what we expect from a doctor or a teacher. For social work, the role expectations are not quite as clearly understood by the general public. Perhaps this is because there are so many professional roles in social work. The number and diversity of social work roles provide opportunity for a great deal of creativity in practice."

-Suppes, M., Cressey Wells, C. (2003).

A professional social worker plays many vital roles while practicing social work. These roles may be marked as Enabler, Guide, Communicator, Resource Mobilizer and Dealing with Stress and Burnout. A brief explanation of each of the roles has been given herewith:

Enabler: An enabler assists clients with coping with difficult circumstances and engages clients in becoming active participants the problem solving process. Enablers also work with individuals, families and

groups to modify behaviors that can serve as obstacles to them achieving their goals. A social work enabler serves as a helper in a group. The group may be a family therapy group, a task group, a sensitivity group, an educational group, a self-help group, or a group with some other focus. The enabler role may also apply to community practice - in this capacity, an enabler brings together people and lines of communication, channeling their activities and resources towards the resolution of a shared goal. By the role of enabler the social worker would create independency among the people by which avoid the dependency syndrome. The enabler is present with the people and encourages and gives different directions so that the people are able to decide what they would like to do and how they would like to do. The enabler only initiates the process and people have to follow and at the time of difficulties they refer back to the social worker. Therefore the role of the enabler is to make the people to understand the process and to stand on their own. The enabler role is the responsibility to help the client become capable of coping with situation of transitional stress. Specific skills used in achieving this objective include conveying hope, reducing resistance and ambivalence, recognizing and managing feelings, identifying and supporting personal strengths and breaking down problems into parts that can be solved more readily, and maintaining a focus on goals and the means of achieving them.



The role of the enabler is to make the people understand the process to stand on their own.

Guide: The social worker instead of doing anything on his own guides his clients (individuals, groups and communities). The guide has to make the people to respond for which he/she provides the various avenues and shows different roots while dealing with their problems. As a guide the social worker provides the needed information. He has to be a person with lots of information and ideas. For instance in a community there are many educated unemployed youth and their presence in the community is considered to be more of nuisance than as a human resource. In such a situation the social worker should be able to provide information about the various employment opportunities, and different ways to become self employed, the terms and conditions for availing credit from the credit institutions etc. Once the worker is able to provide information which is useful to the people

the youth from the neighboring youth may also approach in getting some guidance from the guide.

Communicator: Social Worker as a professional intervenes at different levels and can use different methods of social work, as per the need of the problem. Using primary methods-social case work, social group work and community organization, social worker directly intervenes into the problems of client at micro, mezzo and macro level. While working with the client, social worker initially needs to develop a preliminary understanding of the problem and the client. Jada Pinkett Smith identifies communication as the best way to create strong relationships. As the client develops the sense of empathy and warmth and gets motivated to share the problem, social worker gets the opportunity to explore client's problem in depth as well as to know the expectations of client attached with the agency. At the same time social worker clarifies the type of services offered by the agency. Thus, the core problem and associated problems are diagnosed. The actual treatment then begins. Here also, the social worker needs to be patient, active listener and effective communicator to guide the client so that the future course of action be planned and executed. Time and again obstacles may arise when client needs to be motivated and encouraged so as to generate a feeling of hope. Even after treatment, social worker needs to follow up the treatment to check the progress in client. In every stage, communication plays a key role and enables the social worker to play certain roles. While using Secondary Methods of Social Work Communication is not just necessary while using primary methods but equally relevant while using secondary methods-Social Welfare Administration, Social Work Research and Social Action. Secondary methods facilitate primary methods at the same time; they are based on primary methods. It is rightly said by Tony Robbins, "To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."



The social worker needs to be patient and good listener for effective communication to take place.

Resource Mobilizer: The mobilizer role is the responsibility to help people and organizations combine their resources to achieve goals of mutual

importance. This is accomplished by bringing clients together, enhancing lines of communication, clarifying goals and steps to achieve them and devising plans for gaining greater support.

Dealing with Stress and Burnout: Stress can be defined as the emotional and physiological reactions to stressors (Maslach et al., 1996; Zastrow, 1984). A Stressor is a demand, situation or circumstances that disrupts a person's equilibrium and initiates the stress response of increased autonomic arousal. The very core of social work lies in relationships with clients. Even when social workers are engaged with clients who have clearly unrealistic or inappropriate demands or expectations, there is potential for internal conflict. Much emphasis is placed during training on the relationship between client and social worker (Rushton, 1987). Rushton (1987) suggested that because social workers are taught to be non-judgemental in their relationships with clients, they might find it hard to admit that the personalities and attitudes of clients make effective service response difficult or impossible.



Activity

Select a community having various social issues or problems. Do communicate with the community people. Visit the community and apply the primary methods of social work whichever applicable while dealing with their problems. Try to find out the various roles of social worker applicable in the community.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Fill in the Blanks-

1. Communication is a _____of Social work. (skill/method)

2. Social Work aims at _____.

State True or False

3. Social work is a profession.

4. Empowering client is a professional goal of social work.



13.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have understood the meaning and definition of social work as well as the professional goals of social work i.e. empowerment of client and communication. We have also received a fair idea on social work as a profession. Social worker plays various types of roles in catering the needs of his clients. These are enabler, guide, communicator, resource mobilizer, dealing with stress and burnout etc. This unit has provided a concept regarding all these roles played by a professional social worker.



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13.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. Skill

Answer 2. Empowerment

Answer 3. True

Answer 4. True

13.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1: What do you mean Social Work?

Q.2: What is communication?

Q.3: What are the professional goals of social work? Explain briefly.

Q.4: Why effective communication is important for a professional social worker?

Q.5: Describe the various roles of a social worker.