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PRACTICING SOCIAL WORK STRATEGIES IN SCHOOL BY SOCIAL WORK TRAINEES

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ABSTRACT

Social Work has a major role to play with regard to school problems of children. This is one of the best places for preventive work, which requires closer cooperation between teachers and social workers. Although the school, as an institution, has assumed increasing responsibility for the total development of the students but there are a number of occasions when maladjustment of children may be seen in schools. Going to school for the first time is the first long separation from the parents. Till now the child's world was home and his parents. The school to him is a different type of world: a new experience to which he is called upon to make an adjustment. Thus going to school is a critical period in the life of every child. In such a situation, the Social Worker helps the child to adjust himself to the school's environment. It is found that condition in the school contribute to the child's problems. Methods of teaching, language difficulty, faulty attitude of teachers like over strictness, are some of the factors, which may cause a behavioral problem. Problems like lack of concentration, day dreaming, mischievousness, and restlessness: backwardness at studies in spite of good intelligence, truancy etc. are often seen in behavior of school going children. A social worker, with the help of teachers and parents, solves these problems. The study is a descriptive one which describes the Social Work intervention practice practiced in schools by the Social Work trainees. The purpose of the research is to study the Social Work intervention methods, tools, values, skills and professional strategies practice by the Social Work trainees in schools and the Issues that they are addressing. Census is practice in the study. The details of the paper will be discussed later.

Key words: Preventive work, Maladjustment, Behavioral problem, Intervention methods

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INTRODUCTION

For over a hundred years, School Social Workers have been providing a critical link between school, home, and community. The School Social Work profession has consistently focused on coordinating the efforts of schools, families, and communities toward helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence by using its unique perspective of viewing the person in his or her environment. School Social Workers seek to ensure equitable education opportunities; ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom; and promote respect and dignity for all students. School Social Work is a complex and specialized field of practice that is affected by changes in education policy, research, and practice models that continue to evolve.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Mastery of Social Work practice involves the integration of the knowledge and value base of the profession and a set of core interviewing skills with the “personal self” of a Social Worker. The behavior of the social worker in the interview represents an individual Social Worker’s unique expression of this combination of factors. Social Work practice is an integration of knowledge, values and skills with a personal-professional self. The Social Workers behavior reflects a set of values and ethical principles, a view of human and social functioning, an ideal about professional relationships, and specific perspectives on helping.

Values reflect the humanistic and altruistic philosophical base of the Social Work profession. Fundamental beliefs in human dignity, the worth of all people, mutual responsibility, self-determination, and empowerment and anti oppression, guide assessment and intervention (Reamer, 1999). Ethical codes of conduct and standards of practice specify how these values should be evident in a professional’s behavior. As the discipline has developed, some fundamental values and beliefs that have been expressed has practiced principles have now received support from new theoretical developments and empirical findings. For example, social work has long valued the notion that a collaborative and strong professional relationship with the client is a crucial factor in bringing about change. Numerous practice models now embrace this concept and considerable empirical evidence also supports this long held practice principle. Social Workers guided by this knowledge, use interviewing skills purposefully to forge and maintain the alliances between themselves and the people with whom they work. The personal and professional self of the worker has long been recognized as an important influence on practice and one that can powerfully affect client outcomes. Practitioners bring all their personal attributes and characteristics in to their work.

THE CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS LEARNING TO PRACTICE

As Social Work students approach the challenging task of mastering knowledge and skill for effective practice it is useful to keep in mind about continuous learning and development. At the end of their first year of social work studies students

often reflect on their initial desire for clear, specific, and orderly guidelines and techniques that would help them directly transfer learning from their academic courses to their practice with client in the field. There is a strong desire to learn skills: what to do and how to do it. Once students begin their field education they report arriving at a new understanding of the links between knowledge and practice, recognizing that connections often are not linear, simple, or direct. Skills and techniques are important, but not enough. Rather practitioners need a variety of theories or models and the opportunity to use them as potential or temporary lens to guide practice. And also they also need to learn how to engage in a reflective process that individualizer the practice the situation and helps them work with the uniqueness presented. They need to learn how to simultaneously think about their practice while they are doing it. Students are faced with an additional challenge. They are developing their knowledge and skill concurrently while attempting to offer a competent intervention.

PROFESSIONAL ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKER

Social Worker plays various types of roles in surviving his clients as a care giver; he counsels and supports people with problems in a therapeutic way to promote change. As a consultant he works with individuals and groups to assist with their problems and programs. As broker, he helps people to reach the services they need and makes the system more useful. As a mobilizer, he tries to bring new resources to the individual and group. He gathers and analyses information for programme planning. As an evaluator, he evaluates the weaknesses and strengths of

individuals and groups, their needs and problems. As an advocate, the worker works for the improvement of politics and laws in order to make system more effective. As a referral agent, he refers the individuals and groups to use the service available in other agencies.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK

The child is the most precious possession of mankind. Most beloved perfect in its innocence and completely vulnerable, the child represents that face of man which is always happy and always new. With every child we are born again and we play in the courtyard of the world in the bright sunshine of love and laughter. "The child", said Wordsworth is the 'father of the man'. What he obviously meant was that the productiveness of an adult depends on the opportunities he has had to grow and develop as a child. From this follows that ultimately the quality of a nation depends on the attention it pays to its children.

Social Work has a major role to play with regard to school problems of children. This is one of the best places for preventive work, which requires closer cooperation between teachers and social workers. Although the school, as an institution, has assumed increasing responsibility for the total development of the students but there are a number of occasions when maladjustment of children may be seen in schools. After the home, the next most important factor in the environment is the school. The child spends at least eight to ten hours of his formative and most impressive years in the schools. It is found that condition in the school contribute to the child's problems. Methods of teaching, language difficulty, faulty attitude of

teachers like over strictness, are some of the factors, which may cause a behavioral problem. Problems like lack of concentration, day dreaming, mischievousness, and restlessness: backwardness at studies in spite of good intelligence, truancy etc. are often seen in behavior of school going children. A Social Worker, with the help of teachers and parents, solves these problems.

Scholastic backwardness is one of the commonest of problems in children that teachers and parents alike have to face and deal with children differ with very much in their interests in bearing and their ability to apply themselves to their school work. There are some children who show excellent progress in the beginning of their school career, but later on lag behind other children in the class. Criticism, unfavorable comparisons with other siblings or classmates and punishment are the methods practice to set things right. These methods do not pay positively anything to the children.

Backwardness may be due to physical causes, endocrine and neurological diseases. But most important factor is unsuited pupil-teacher relationship. The teacher is identified with the parent and becomes a parent substitute. Hence he or she may be identified with a strict or rejecting father or mother. Thus the teacher comes to be disliked or feared. The child may avoid attending his classes or, out of sheer fear, he is unable to grasp what the teacher is saying. The child will also start disliking the subject, which that particular teacher is teaching. The Social Worker with the methods of casework and group work tries to solve these problems. Social Workers vary in whether they consider it their function to work

directly with children or whether they believe it preferable to concentrate on teachers and parents. But the right method is to take help of every partners of the problem.

VALUES RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL

The welfare of individuals has always been a central value of life; the individual has always been counted. In the impersonal anonymous and competitive culture which dominates our life today, however the individual has been progressively forgotten. Today individually lies in economic prestige and economic prestige are possible for only a fortunate few. He is thus caught in a veritable race a competitive struggle for economic status and social prestige in which both the successful and the failed individuals suffer anxiety and strain. But for the proper development and growth of the society we have to take into account the welfare of the individuals and his individuality as our first girl, whether one thinks of social welfare programmes or of society at large it is clear that ways must be found to balance the needs of organization with integrity of the person. Provisions for the effectiveness of the group must be considered along with measure to give play to the creativity of the individual.

BASIC SKILLS OF SOCIAL WORK

In a general sense, skill means the capacity to perform. The Webster dictionary defines it as "knowledge of, and expertness in, execution and performance". Virginia Robinson refers it as "the capacity to set in motion and control a process of change in specific material in such a way that the change that takes place in the material is effected with the greatest degree of consideration for and

utilization of the quality and capacity of the material". Trecker defines method and skill as "Method means the purposeful use of insights and understandings based upon a body of knowledge and principles. Skills are the capacity to apply knowledge and understanding to a given situation. Method is use of a skills capacity to use it. Skills in a Social Worker are developed through teaching and training. The particular skill of the social worker lies in his ability to use his relationship constructively. Social Worker is skillful in interviewing and counseling, relating himself to individuals, groups and communities, providing effectiveness as a change agent, self scrutinizing, adequate self awareness and an ability to make professional use of self. He is skillful in establishing and maintaining stable useful relationship.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

School Social Workers play a critical role in schools and educational settings. Social Workers working within school systems provide services to students to enhance their emotional well-being and improve their academic performance. School Social Workers are usually employed by the school district or an agency that is contracted with the school district to provide services. School Social Workers are often called on to help students, families, and teachers address problems such as truancy, social withdrawal, overaggressive behaviors, rebelliousness, and the effects of special physical, emotional, or economic problems (Barker, 2003). School Social Workers often also address issues such as substance abuse and sexuality issues in the higher grade levels.

An Analysis of Factors Shaping Interventions Practice by School Social Workers by Michael Kelly and Susan Stone (March 5, 2009) is a secondary analysis of surveys collected from School Social Workers in Illinois. Workers were originally surveyed about the most important student problems they confront in their schools and their preferred targets of intervention (individual, small group, family) to address those problems. Drawing on related conceptual work, the current study tested the utility of a preliminary model of factors that are hypothesized to influence School Social Work practice, taking in characteristics of the practitioner, characteristics of the setting, and socio-cultural context. School Social Work practice was measured in terms of both interventions practice and interventions practice most frequently. Findings revealed that specific factors reflecting characteristics of the practice setting related to School Social Worker reports of their practice. Specifically, caseload size, grade level of students served, and district size were inversely related to frequent use of individual counseling but positively related to use of group counseling.

A Qualitative Study of School Social Workers' Clinical and Professional Relationships when Reporting Child Maltreatment by Amy Chanmugam (February 26, 2009) is a qualitative study explored School Social Workers' relationships during instances of abuse and neglect reporting, focusing on reports made for children and adolescents already receiving school social work services. Although school social workers frequently file abuse and neglect reports, little is known about how they manage clinical and

professional relationships in the complex school environment when reporting. This study obtained rich descriptions of their reporting experiences. In-depth interviews and a focus group were conducted with 10 participants from Texas, Florida, and Colorado, representing all school levels. Findings describe complex clinical and professional relationship networks involved in reporting and school social workers' perspectives on case management during disclosure and reporting. Thematic analysis of interviews identified several themes pertaining, for example, to communications with caregivers and children about Child Protective Services reports inter professional collaboration, and management of dilemmas regarding trust and confidentiality with families and professionals. Participants sought to mitigate harm through their practices, yet practices varied. Further research on the effects of practices such as involving children in reporting is warranted. The author recommends that discussions of legal and ethical aspects of reporting be augmented with discussion of interpersonal dynamics that come into play.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive one which describes the Social Work intervention practiced in schools by the Social Work trainees. The purpose of the research is to study the Social Work intervention methods, tools, values, skills and professional strategies practice by the Social Work trainees in schools and the Issues that they are addressing with the school students. The universe of the study is the Social Work trainees who are placed in the school for Social Work practice in the

department of Social Work; Bharathiar University, Census is practiced in the study to collect the data. Questionnaire is used as a tool for the data collection.

FINDINGS

1. About 57.6% of the respondents are male and the remaining 42.4% of them are female.
2. Almost all the respondents are placed in government schools for the School Social Work.
3. Almost all the respondents (97.0) practice social case work and about 84.8% of the respondents practice three case works.
4. Almost all the respondents (93.6) practice social group work and about 63.6% of the respondents practice two group works.
5. Almost all the respondents (93.6) practice community organization and about 84.8% of the respondents practice one community organization.
6. Majority 66.7% of the respondents practice social work research in the schools and about 51.5% of the respondents practice one social work research and 18.2% of the respondents practice two Social Work researches in the school.
7. Almost all the respondents practice observing skills and, 97% of them practice explaining skills, 93.9% of the respondents practice listening skills,

questioning skills, counseling skills and advising skills, 90.9% practice interviewing skills, 81.8% of them practice supporting and informing skills, 75.8% of them practice reviewing skills.

8. All the respondents practice the foremost value, every individual has his worth, the value right of self determination is practice by 97% of the respondents, the value everyone has the right to get respect is practice by 90.9% of the respondents, the value individual reacts in totality is practice by 87.9% of the respondents.
9. Almost all the respondents practice the skill of analyzing the group situation(97%), skill of establishing purposeful relationship(90.9%), skill of participation with group(90.9%), skill of dealing with group feeling(84.8%), skill of program development(81.8%), evaluating skills (87.9%) in Social Work intervention.
10. Professional strategies like Advocacy for students and families (97.0%) are practiced by almost all the respondents, (87.9%) of the respondents have given consultation to teachers, administrators and other school staff, (93.9%)of the individual have given Individual student counseling, Referral and information were given by (81.8%) of the respondents, Casework and management were given by (93.9%) of the respondents, Home visit and liaison were

done by (75.8%) of the respondents, Assessment of students practice by (87.9%), (63.6%) of the respondents have conducted Parent conferences.

11. Issues that the social workers are addressing most often are Lack of concentration (90.9%), Attendance and dropouts (87.9%), Behavior management (87.9%), Parent-child relationships(81.8%), Discipline(78.8%), Conflict resolution and anger management(72.7%), Basic human needs, i.e., food, shelter, clothing, etc (66.7%), Family trauma and change and Child abuse and neglect (60.6%).

SUGGESTIONS

1. Since Social Work trainees practice Social Case Work, Social Group Work, Community Organization and Social Work Research in the schools with the children in an effective way the school social work can be recommended to all the schools.
2. School Social Work practitioners shall be given training on practicing the skills, values and tools used for Social Work Intervention.
3. Since Lack of concentration is the prominent problem among the school students that are addressed by the Social Work trainees, the trainees shall be trained in therapies which improves their knowledge on therapies which could enhance their profession.

4. Social workers can practice psychodrama and sociodrama with the students while working in groups through which the problems can be identified and remedy can be given.

CONCLUSION

School Social Work is a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. School Social Workers bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and the student support services team. They are instrumental in furthering the purpose of the schools - to provide a setting for teaching, learning, and for the attainment of competence and confidence. School Social Workers are expected to apply their professional training in schools in order to support student success.

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