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Social Work Practice in Bangladesh: Contextual Issues and Challenges

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Abstract: The paper concentrates on the discussion of some contextual issues along with the challenges that are closely associated with social work practice at *Macro, Mezzo* and *Micro* levels of intervention. Here in the paper, theoretical approaches and techniques that are significantly applicable in social work practice have been presented along with some challenge-related contexts in social work practice in Bangladesh. In addition, emphasis on bio-psycho-social and spiritual aspects of clients' problems within the framework of a holistic paradigm has been highlighted in an abridged form of description in this paper. This paper also highlights the knowledge base of social work practice including the difference between concepts and definitions of indigenous social work and general social work. It also deals with the application of the intervention process at the micro, mezzo and macro level in terms of helping the client systems with varied problems. Furthermore, social work practice challenges have also been presented in the paper which are mainly the lack of state recognition of social work as a profession, insufficient indigenous literature, inactive social work association, and standard social work education and training for the social work students and teachers.

Keywords: *Bangladesh, Intervention Process, Knowledge Base, Social Work Challenges, Social Work Practice.*

INTRODUCTION

Social work is one of the human service professions working for the well-being of people having a wide range of bio-psychosocial, economic, and spiritual problems. Social work is getting more and more expanding not only in capitalistic societies but also in socialistic countries like China, Vietnam, and Russia. It is also continuing to grow in developing countries. Social work is a profession that facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Along with some specific missions, principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity are central to social work. Through the application of theories,

methods, approaches, perspectives of social work, social and human sciences, and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address the challenges of human life and enhance the well-being of the people facing multifaceted psychosomatic and socioeconomic problems. Also, social work which is claimed to be a global profession is struggling for its legitimate identity in South Asia, especially in Bangladesh. South Asia is home to over one-fifth of the total world population which made the region one of the most populous ones in the world. Besides, the region is culturally, economically, socially, politically, and geographically diverse in nature (Nikku, 2014).

However, the emergence of social work as an organized profession was aided by the creation of university-based schools of social work and the introduction of standardized curricula and educational expectations. By the mid-decades of the 20th century, there was general agreement that social work is based on a common set of principles and values and that it has an evolving body of knowledge. And the goals of social work would be realized through different practice methods, including casework, group work, and community organization. Although other practice modalities such as administration, research, and policy practice have also been identified, the three core methods of casework, group work, and community organization form the core modalities of social work practice. It is noted that casework is also known as direct practice or more recently clinical social work and that community organization is also known as community work or community practice. Of these practice modalities, individualized clinical social work is a broadly used form of social work practice. These practice methods are generally applied in agency settings and also in specialized fields such as child welfare, mental health, social assistance, medical social work, gerontological social work, and corrections. These fields of practice emerged in the early 20th century as the original poor relief functions of the charities were gradually superseded by specialized practice in hospitals, correctional facilities, public welfare agencies, mental health clinics, residential facilities, rehabilitation centers, and family and child welfare agencies. Agency-based social work practice is dominated by individualized casework (Midgley, 2010). The micro-social workers are involved in this intervention. They support the client and client system in understanding their innermost emotions or they teach various intervention techniques, such as coping skills to deal with a client's personal experiences (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2022). On the other hand, group work and community work are associated with different areas of welfare activities, such as youth work and the planning of community social services (Midgley, 2010).

However, social work's functions, preferred practice methods, mission, and other issues are of debate. In addition to remedial functions of social work that have a long history in practice, it also has a maintenance function by which the profession provides long-term support and assistance to persons who are in need or problem situations (Midgley, 2010). Many scholars think that individualized social casework or clinical social work is usually associated with the remedial function, whereas residential care and the provision of social assistance are associated with the profession's maintenance function. Group work is often said to promote the integrative function of social work. Community social work practice is believed to be best suited to attaining change or developmental function of social work. The developmental function is also realized through social work advocacy and lobbying as well as through engaging in policy practice (Midgley, 2010). Moreover, according to Pincus & Minahan, (1973), the purpose of social work is "to (1) enhance the problem solving and coping capacities of people, (2) link

people with systems that provide them with resources, services, and opportunities, (3) promote the effective and humane operation of these systems, and (4) contribute to the development and improvement of social policy" (Pincus & Minahan, 1973, p. 8), (Kirst-Ashman & Hull Jr., 2009, p. 5).

On the other hand, social work practice in child welfare, medical social work, mental health, and other fields of practice is usually associated with remedial social work (Midgley, 2010). The literature on developmental social work frequently differentiates between remedial, or "mainstream," social work on the one hand and developmental social work on the other (Midgley, 2010). Whereas the former is said to rely primarily on individualized casework in specialized fields of practice agencies, the latter is believed to take place through a community organization or "macro-practice," which includes advocacy, lobbying, policy practice, and organizing (Midgley, 2010). Macro social work focuses on the interaction between client systems and other large systems. Macro social workers support the clients more holistically by serving as an advocate for vulnerable populations locally and or globally (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2022). Macro-practice is believed to offer a congenial opportunity for social work to transcend its conventional remedial preoccupation and realize its social change goals (Midgley & Conley, 2010).

Meaning of Social Work

Social work in the 21st century is dynamic and evolving, and therefore no definition should be regarded as exhaustive. Social work simply refers to any organized activity directed towards helping individuals, groups, families and communities to ameliorate the condition of their life by promoting their capacity and skills so that they can resolve their problems by using their strength, efforts and material and nonmaterial resources. Social work is a helping profession which fundamentally and radically aims to assist individuals, groups, and communities to cope with their complex socio-economic and psychological problems by enabling them to solve their problems by themselves.

Many scholars in the field of social work have defined social work in different ways. Social Scientists (Skidmore et al., 1994) defined "Social Work is an art, a science a profession that helps people to solve personal, group and community problems and to attain satisfying personal, group and community relationship through social work practice including casework and community organization, administration and research" (P.8). Social work provides service for the problematic person. W.A. Friedlander said that social work is a professional service based upon scientific knowledge and skill in human relations, which assists individuals alone or in groups to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence (Friedlander, 1963). Potgieter (1998) defined social work as "a professional activity that utilizes values, knowledge, skills and processes to focus on issues, needs and problems that arise from the interaction between individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities and it is a service sanctioned by society to improve the social functioning of people, to empower them and to promote a mutually beneficial interaction between individual and society to improve the quality of life of everyone". According to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Montreal definition (2001) "the Social Work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, Social Work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of Human Rights and social justice are fundamental to Social Work" (The

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2006; Hare, 2016). In 2014, the two bodies representing international social work- the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) - agreed on the present global 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" (The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014). Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for all people are central to social work. But the prime focus of social work is to capture the values, its knowledge base, and practice methodologies and help the people by emphasizing individual rather than collective rights (The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014).

Social Work Practice

Social Work is a practice-based discipline and helping profession committed to the pursuit of social justice, amelioration of the quality of life, and the promotion of the full potential of individuals, groups and organizations and communities. Based on the humanitarian and egalitarian philosophy of social work, it has been providing services in a broad range of activities within multiple settings among people of diverse social classes.

Every profession has its knowledge and practice based on which, the professionals of that profession engage them in human service. In the same way, social workers need to practice social work based on its conceptual, theoretical and pragmatic knowledge along with educational activities. Social work practice consists of the professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques to help people obtain tangible services; providing counseling and psychotherapy to individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services; and participating in legislative processes (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2022). The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; social and economic, and cultural institutions; and the interaction of all these factors (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2017). In social work practice, the social workers employ five practice methods, namely, casework, group work, community work, research, and policy work that cover direct and indirect work at three levels which are termed micro, mezzo and macro level. It is the context in which social work is practiced that determines the methods to be used. The practice methods of social work are different approaches that spring from a set of common core values, knowledge and skills that are guided by a shared goal variously termed as empowerment, human rights, liberation, and personal fulfillment (O'Sullivan, 2013). Social work practice is only a matter of chosen means of social work intervention towards a common purpose (Bolzan, 2007).

The social work profession draws on theories of human development and behavior and social systems to analyze complex situations and facilitate individual, organizational, social and cultural changes (British Association of Social Work (BASW), 2021). In addition, intervention levels of social work practice are followed in providing help or services to the client systems, namely: Macro, Mezzo and Micro levels of intervention. "Intervention is the process of planning and implementing steps to make positive changes and attain goals that solve clients' problems or improve clients' quality of life"(Kirst-Ashman, 2010, p.92). Social work is divided into three broad practice categories: macro, mezzo and

micro (Ebue et al., 2014); Zastrow, 2016). Macro-level social work is interventions provided on a large scale that include entire communities and systems of care. Mezzo social work happens on an intermediate scale, involving neighborhoods, institutions, or other smaller groups (Ebue et al., 2014). Micro social work is the most common practice that happens directly with an individual client or family. Regardless of which level a social worker pursues, social work education strengthens students' knowledge of their practice and broadens their career possibilities. These three levels of social work practice at times overlap and always influence each other, so it is important to understand the distinctions between these social work approaches (Austin et al., 2016). It is observed that integral links exist among micro, mezzo, and macro practice and the generalist social work practitioners' practice skills build and depend on each other in a progression from micro to mezzo to macro levels of interventions (Kirst-Ashman, 2010, P. 93).

Micro Social Work

Micro practice is the most common kind of social work and micro practice is intervention involving an individual client (a microsystem) (Kirst-Ashman, 2010, p.92). According to (Zastrow, 2016) micro practice is "a type of social work that involves working on a one-to-one basis with an individual" (p. 592). In micro social work, the social work professional works with individuals or families to solve their problems. For example, micro social work includes helping individuals to find appropriate housing, health care and social services. Also, family therapy and individual counseling would fall under the auspices of micro practice. This practice is also applicable to an individual or family, and the treatment of people suffering from a mental health condition or substance abuse problem. When necessary, social workers engage in micro and mezzo practice simultaneously.

Mezzo Social Work

Mezzo social work practitioners deal with very small to medium-sized groups and involve work with small groups (mezzo systems) (Kirst-Ashman, 2010, p.92). Mezzo practice is a "type of social work that includes working with families and other small groups" (Zastrow, 2016, p.592). These groups include neighborhoods, schools, prayer houses, and other local organizations. The case of mezzo social work includes community organizing, management of a social work organization, and effort on institutional or cultural change than the individual clients. Those social workers are engaged in mezzo practice, they are also engaged in micro as well as macro social work practice. Macro practice requires mastery of both micro and mezzo skills for relating to and working with individuals and groups in organizational and community (macro) settings (Kirst-Ashman, 2010, p. 92).

Macro Social Work

Macro practice is intervention involving organizations and communities (macro systems) (Kirst-Ashman, 2010) and the practice of macro social work is the effort to help clients by intervening in large systems (van Breda, 2018). Macro social work practice is one of the key discrepancies between the social work profession and other helping professions such as psychiatric treatment and therapy. Macro social work generally deals with issues that are experienced in mezzo and micro social work practice and social work research. Macro social work involves working with organizations and

communities or seeking changes in statutes and social policies (Zastrow, 2016). Macro practice creates the empowerment of clients by concerning them with systemic and continuous changes.

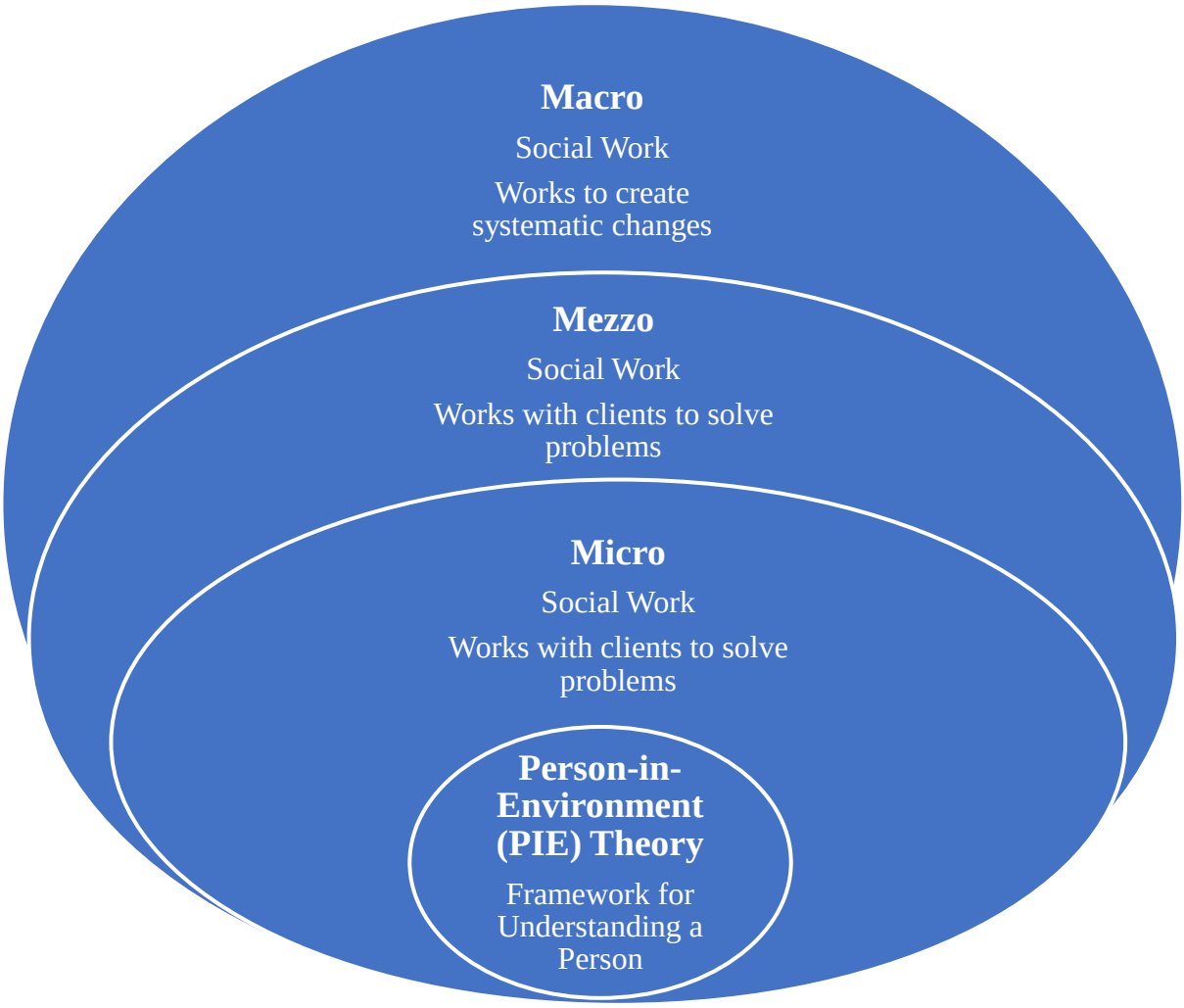

Figure-1: Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Social Work

Source: (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2022)

Generally, social work interventions are taking shape from primary person-focused psycho-social processes to involve in social policies, planning, and development activities. It also includes counseling therapies, clinical social work practice, group work interventions, social educational work, family treatment and other therapeutic works. According to Kirst-Ashman, (2010) interventions should be chosen based on a history of successful application for specific situations, referred to as evidence-based practice (p.92). According to Nayak, (2014) these efforts help people get expected services and resources in community life. Social work interventions also include other agency administration, community organization, fetching in social, and political action to influence social policy, and social and economic development.

However, the holistic focus of social work is universal and the priorities of social work practice and practitioners generally vary from country to country, society to society and from time to time depending on the cultural, historical and socio-economic conditions of the people. Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex problems between people and their environment. A generalist practitioner needs competence in a wide variety of areas instead of being limited to a single track and they target any size system for changing the contexts through client empowerment, working effectively within an organizational structure, creating assumptions of wide ranges of professional roles, concern about the evidence-based practice and critical thinking skills to the planned change process (Kirst-Ashman, 2010, p. 93). Generalist practice aims to enable all people to utilize their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent social dysfunctions. As professional social work focuses on problem-solving and change, social workers are change agents who work in society and the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Moreover, social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice for growth and producing a change in a given society (Nayak, 2014).

In the present world, social work is an indigenous as well as a global context that claims to be considered and practiced within multidimensional perspectives. Today mind-body and spiritual contexts are highly practiced by a huge number of human service professionals such as medical practitioners, psychologists, counseling psychologists, clinical social workers and general social work practitioners and so forth. The basic reason behind these efforts is that the problems of social work clients need to be assessed, diagnosed, and treated within the holistic paradigm, i.e. bio-psycho-social and spiritual contexts. If done so, pragmatic solutions to diverse problems of the client systems can be achieved by professional services of social work.

The Knowledge Base for Social Work Practice

In many developing and undeveloped countries of the world, the departments/schools of social work began under missionary leadership, mainly originating from the influence and patronage of Western countries. As a result, indigenous methods of social service were largely ignored and emphasis was laid upon using Western concepts, theories and techniques. The social work knowledge base is historically neglected and also resulted in the non-inclusion of indigenous materials, case studies, and social action techniques in the social work curricula and training (Midgley & Conley, 2010).

Unlike some developed countries such as the USA and UK, there are no significant efforts from official associations of professional social workers to promote their image in many developing countries like India and Bangladesh (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). As a result, it has become difficult for social workers to correct the concepts of social work and social workers. This is a challenge for social workers to deal with the problems of client systems during their interventional work.

However, in most developing countries, the knowledge base of social work was developed by the combination of foreign knowledge (mostly developed in the USA) and indigenous knowledge. In countries where cultural and economic conditions are different from those prevailing in the USA and UK, a struggle between foreign and indigenous knowledge is markedly observed. This is also a fact in the countries like Chile, Mexico, India, South Africa and Hungary (Weiss-gal and Welbourne, 2008). In addition, there is a big shortage of indigenous social work literature in the Indian subcontinent

(Siddiqui, 2001). In the beginning stage, social work education was influenced by British and American schools of social work and based on Judeo-Christian ideas of professional social work practices (Bodhi, 2011). Consequently, a significant gap was found between the theory and practices of social work in the countries like India, Bangladesh and other South Asian countries. Although there have been attempts to modify and develop contextual literature and efforts for knowledge development have been done, the activities related to publications and research is taking place at a slow pace. However, the global standards for education and training of the Social Work Profession" jointly adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work in 2004 are the basis for standards in social work education. These standards elaborate guidelines for 1) The Social Work school's core purpose or mission statement; 2) Program objectives and outcomes; 3) Program curricula, including fieldwork; 4) Core curricula.

In social work practice, many theories, methods, models and perspectives are being practiced by professional social workers. Among them, systems theory (client system, action system, target system), strength-based and empowerment perspectives, and ecological perspectives, person-in-environment approach, solution-focused perspective, participatory approach, cognitive behavioral approach, problem-solving approach are widely practiced across the countries of the world. In present days, social work had focused increasingly on using an ecological approach. This approach integrates both treatment and reform by conceptualizing and emphasizing the dysfunctional transactions between people and their physical and social environments (Zastrow, 2017, p.47).

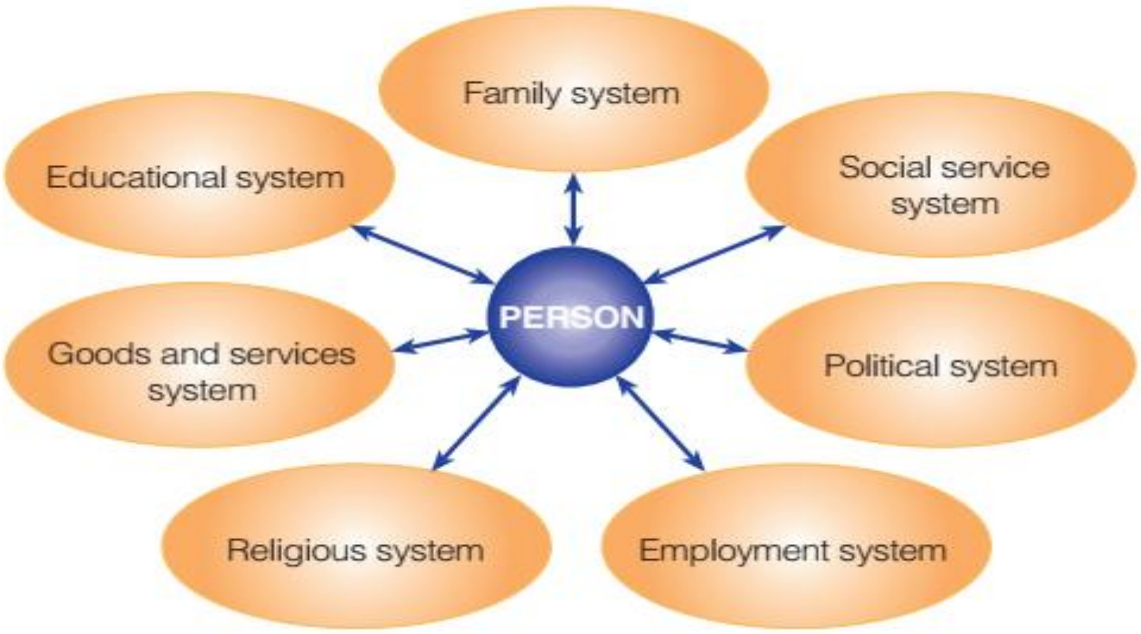

Figure-2: Person in Environment Conceptualization **Source:** (Zastrow, 2017, p.47).

The prime concern of social work is to help the people who are in need so that they develop the capacity to deal with their problems by themselves. It is both science and art. Social work is science in

the sense that the knowledge taken from different disciplines forms the body of knowledge for a social worker. This knowledge has developed a theoretical and methodological base for practice to help people in need. Professional social work with selected knowledge and the set of social work values has to be transformed into a professional service.

Professional Status of Social Work in Bangladesh

The general objective of social work education is to provide students with the value system and ethical standards of the profession. It also provides basic knowledge, develops skills and competencies to perform the social worker role and has remained across all the countries with some modifications to suit a particular country's religion and other requirements (Nikku, 2014). However, social work education got into the academic domain of Bangladesh when it attained independence from Pakistan. The advent of academic social work in Bangladesh has arisen from the recommendations made by UN experts on welfare for the establishment of a program of professional welfare practice. The recommendation highlighted the need for scientific knowledge in the solution of acute and large-scale social problems (Watts et al., 1996). In response to the proposal for the establishment of a school of social work, the government established the College of Social Welfare and Research Center in 1958, and it commenced its educational program in the academic year 1958–59 with 15 students registered for an MA degree in social welfare at the University of Dhaka (Ahmadullah, 1986); (Taher & Rahman, 1993). The College of Social Welfare and Research Center, the first social work school in Bangladesh, was merged with the University of Dhaka as the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (ISWR) in 1973 (University of Dhaka (DU), 2022).

Currently, the Institute of Social Welfare and Research at Dhaka University is offering a one-year MSS degree and a four-year BSS Honors degree in social welfare (University of Dhaka (DU), 2022). The Department of Social Work under Rajshahi University also runs a four-year Honors degree and a one-year MSS degree program in social work. In recent years, several more universities have started social work programs. To produce local knowledge and develop indigenous materials, the Bangladesh Social Work Teachers Association has been set up. Efforts are also being made to translate the standard foreign textbooks to make learners familiar with basic social work concepts and theoretical approaches, and perspectives in the Bengali language.

Speaking that social work is still at the stage of immaturity and is not recognized nationally as a profession. Although there is advancement in terms of the institutional base for social work education and its practice in Bangladesh, it has not been able to attain professional status with public and state recognition. At present, a good number of public and private universities and colleges are offering social work education programs at bachelor's and Master's degree levels in Bangladesh. Here social work education is categorized into five areas such as 1) academic and training level, 2) practical or field level, 3) administrative level, and 4) organizational level and publications. In the academic field, a bit significant development is found, but other areas are not supposed to attain satisfactory development. At the administration level, the use of social work knowledge and services being provided by social workers for public well-being is poorly practiced. Social organizations regarded as the promoting force of social work are still in a latent condition, and the publications in terms of social work literature have not reached their optimum level of demand from the students, educators and

practitioners and the readers as a whole. Apart from that, social work knowledge in terms of local socio-cultural contexts and social need-based curriculum are not updated getting compatible with the international standard. So social work education needs to incorporate indigenous and global issues and also recent materials on social work knowledge development across the globe through international collaboration and scholar exchange programs. Because social work practice has international relevance and there are some commonalities in an extremely diverse example of practice across most countries of the world. However, the social work academia and social workers in Bangladesh should develop a very functional professional organization and work together with the government, ministries and other service departments. These need to be done to introduce social work knowledge and techniques in different service delivery systems. If needed, the government and NGOs for recruiting professional social workers in social service sectors should be pursued so that social work methods, principles and values can be practiced well, and social work can be recognized as a human service profession in Bangladesh.

The Challenges of Social Work Practice in Bangladesh

The recognition of professional social work and the need for quality social work education in Asian countries including Bangladesh has been moving at a slow pace (Nadkarni, 2010; (Nikku, 2014). Social work, claiming to be a global profession, is struggling for its legitimate identity in south Asia. Across the whole region, there exists a key difference in the growth, establishment, nature, and practice of social work education which is dynamic, diverse but also disjointed. Imparting social work education in countries of South Asia is a challenging task due to political instabilities, multicultural issues, and low professional recognition (Nikku, 2014). However, the challenges of social work practice in Bangladesh can be categorized into four mainstreams such as social work education, social work literature, social work associations, and social work practice (Hossain & Mathbor, 2014).

Social Work Education

A holistic understanding of the complex nature of social problems and intervention strategies is required to effectively address social problem issues. Inadequate access to social work education is a major hurdle for social work practice in Bangladesh. Only eight public universities and a few private universities in Bangladesh offer bachelor's and Master’s degrees in social work. Moreover, almost 300 colleges under the National University offer undergraduate and graduate level courses related to social work education. The course contents in academic syllabi can contribute to preparing qualified and skilled social workers. Though fifty years have passed since the first introduction of social work courses in Bangladesh, the social work curriculum is still at its infant stage in terms of international standards. Apprentice social workers must take field training to get effective integration of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge that should be gained under the supervision of professional social workers. Today, many social organizations/ institutions are being run by non-professional social workers who have no academic degree and knowledge in social work, the students taking field training there are not getting capable of relating theoretical knowledge to field practice. It is worth mentioning that several academics follow the Western-centric concepts, theories and methods of social work; although some academicians have obtained high-level academic degrees (Masters, Ph.D.) from the

higher education institutions of developed countries where social work is a publicly recognized profession.

Social Work Literature

Social work practice is a skill-based human activity that requires an extensive knowledge base and substantial intellectual ability. The knowledge base of social work has three interweaving features—theoretical knowledge, factual knowledge, and practice/personal knowledge—which demonstrates the extreme necessity for collaborative activity between academics and practitioners (Trevithick, 2008). Just because most of the literature on social work needs to be written by academics, there is very little collaboration between academics and practitioners. In addition, there is a scarcity of generating social work knowledge that can be adapted to different sociocultural contexts and the needs of people. Social work practitioners in Bangladesh still have not managed to play a pivotal role in carrying out high-quality social work research that can generate more pragmatic knowledge in human service. Much of the leading research in the field of social work has been conducted by graduates in disciplines other than social work. Although social work/development activities started in Bangladesh with successful research work carried out by the College of Social Welfare established in 1957 with the initiative of the United Nations, significant initiatives in knowledge-building in social work are still not up to the mark. One of the shortcomings in this respect is that efforts and achievements made by social workers have remained unknown to most people due to a lack of professional journals and publications. Students and practitioners face a range of difficulties in getting reference books and articles related to social work education and practice in Bangladesh.

Social Work Association

The professional organization works as a driving force for the development of a human service profession. In Bangladesh, although an organization of social work teaching professionals was formed during the 1980s (Social Work Teachers Association), it is no longer actively functional (Islam, 2011). Over the past few years, two professional organizations in this field began to emerge: the Bangladesh Council of Social Work Education and the Bangladesh Clinical Social Workers Professional Organization. But their activities are not supposed to be vividly extensive (Prodhan & Faruque, 2012). Unfortunately, these two bodies are not free of criticism because they fail to uphold democratic norms and values in the case of recruiting membership and selecting leadership as well.

Social Work Practice

Generally, professional social workers need to interact with a wide variety of people (clients), and they must have adequate knowledge about the behavioral and psychosocial aspects of clients. Knowledge required for social work practice is derived from several social science disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, economics, biology, history, law, education, and philosophy. And Knowledge gained from these disciplines can help social workers to assess clients' problems and find their solutions. But the reality is that social welfare activities in Bangladesh, both government and non-government, are being run and delivered mostly by non-professionals and paraprofessionals instead of social work professionals. At present, a large number of non-governmental and voluntary organizations engaged in development or welfare activities are being run by social scientists such as

economists, sociologists, anthropologists and so on. The non-professional and paraprofessionals, who are employed in development work, are not well-equipped with the knowledge of social work intervention. Due to a lack of adequate academic knowledge in social work, they are not found to be competent to apply social work knowledge, values and skills necessary for dealing with the problems of client systems.

For professional practice, practitioners need to qualify for getting certification from the respective professional body through an entrance examination. For example, lawyers, medical doctors, professional counselors and even social workers in the USA and UK, Australia and Canada need to sit for an entrance examination, but such kind of body for social workers is absent in Bangladesh. Furthermore, a lot of academic professionals are unskilled and even unable to develop new theories, approaches, or models that could be well-suited to understanding the local pattern of social problems and meet the needs of the people. However, professional social workers have failed to introduce social work as a practice-oriented discipline. As a result, a large number of people including administrators and policymakers are not well-known about the effective practice and operation of professional social work. In addition, some bureaucrats and policymakers consider social work to be merely charity work for which higher level professional education is not essential. Apart from the aforesaid issues, social work has historically been regarded as non-professional in Bangladesh. For instance, the Department of Social Service (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare recruited social work graduates for various social welfare programs up to 1973. Since 1974, the government of Bangladesh has changed its recruitment policies to make these fields of services open for those who have graduation and master's degree in any academic discipline. There is no active professional institution like the accreditation body for social work education such as the Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Social Workers or a licensing board. In recent years, changes and adjustments in the curriculum have been made to some extent; the current curriculum is still not up to an international standard and is not well compatible with the changing nature of social needs and problems of the people. In addition, standard textbooks in the mother language (Bangla) and indigenous reading materials are not available according to the students, educators and practitioners need to use. It reflects that reading, practicing, and teaching social work is as acceptable as social work could be as a profession. No aptitude and attitude tests are undertaken in selecting the students for admission who desire to pursue social work study at university or college levels. In addition, on the grounds of financial and some relevant resource constraints, optimum progressive development of social work education in Bangladesh is not profoundly observed.

However, social work as an academic program is facing multiple challenges. The major challenges may be: 1) Although some changes and adjustments in the curriculum have been made, the current curriculum is still supposed not to be up to an international standard and also not compatible with the local culture, values and changing needs of societies; 2) Indigenous reading materials and standard textbooks in mother languages are not still available for the students, educators and the readers as they need; 3)The resource constraints are the most crucial factor in case of development of social work education because it has not yet recognized as a profession in Bangladesh; 4.) Inadequate theoretical course on field practicum, lack of adequate fieldwork setting or placement agency, faulty placement

procedure, unskilled supervision, improper evaluation, poor job security, absence of partnership and less active professional association; 5) Lack of active and effective professional organization that may contribute a lot to make social work as a stately recognized profession. These limitations are the outcome of the inadequacy of knowledge about the social work profession and its significance at the societal level among state policymakers, voluntary actors, academicians, and others concerned with welfare activities. But, we need to see social work as a profession here if we want to handle, minimize and/or resolve the problems of clients beset with a wide range of bio-psycho-social, economic and spiritual problems.

Conclusions

Today, greater interaction among the world's people, economies, cultures, and religions is creating a whole new set of advancements, along with new problems, social tensions and conflicts across the globe. Bangladesh is not exceptional in this regard. In recent years, unprecedented access to information technology, and a shift to information-based economies resulting from economic and technological globalization are contributing to the emergence of economic and social strains across the country along with rising inequality in society. The environmental change caused by global cultural and natural forces greatly threatens social environmental stability and human life as well. All insidiously or even overtly has led to the generation of huge problems and challenges in the lives of people at all levels of society.

Today, the challenges in social work as a striking context of practice focus on diverse social issues in high-speed changing societies of the globe. Speaking that social work in the coming years has to understand major conditions and challenges of the global people that need to be handled within multidimensional contexts and perspectives. Since the scope of social work as a practice-oriented discipline as well as a profession has been wider and its pragmatic approach and practice in terms of dealing with a myriad of problems of human beings need to be applied at a comprehensive level. In addition, social work educators and practitioners should be more committed to social justice, social work values and ethics, skills and competencies. Therefore, social workers should try to indigenize social work literature (concepts, theories, models, and practice) by focusing on indigenous culture, norms, values and practice. And encouraging the use of indigenous social work practice to train social work graduates with appropriate skills and attitudes should be accelerated on a large scale. However, social work education and practice in Bangladesh should be restructured by different forces such as religion, political, cultural and social situation, and the availability of a trained social work human force. Furthermore, social work knowledge and practice skills need to be socially constructed and an indigenous base of social work knowledge will be brought to high practice level. It is noteworthy that social work should be brought into practice having captured a maximum level of understanding of local and global events, contexts, influences and problems; recognizing the international and cross-cultural dimensions of local issues; and utilizing comparative or internationally derived knowledge to fruitfully apply the strategies for social work intervention. If all are done effectively, problem situations and needs of the people of all social levels may be minimized and the people can be able to restore their living conditions and enjoy a better life with dignity, honor and democratic values, human rights and satisfaction of many fundamental needs.

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