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Editorial

A council for Social Work in India

A regulatory body is an essential requirement for every profession. Social Work, wherever recognized as a profession in many other countries have a regulatory body in the form of a council. A council ensures professional nature of social work and the quality of professionals in it. It also ensures the quality of social work education by ensuring adequate standard for the institution and the educators. Social work profession in India has made significant progress towards indigenisation in the Indian social, economic, and cultural context. These achievements of the profession are reflected in the following critical milestones:

- The First as well as the Second Review Committees on Social Work Education, sponsored by the University Grants Commission (UGC), had recommended that a National Council for Professional Social Work Education be established in order to upgrade social work education and to maintain standards (in 1965 and 1980). Since the 1980 review report, social work education has emphasised the focus on developmental social work to meet the developmental needs of India.
- The UGC also sponsored the preparations of model curricula (in 1990 and 2001), and Refresher Courses for Social Work Educators (from 1989 to 2005).
- The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) sponsored development of standards for social work education (in 2005).
- Social work educators have produced three editions of the social work encyclopaedia in India (1968, 1987 and 2012) and are

publishing 15 social work journals, and a large number of books.

- Five national and more than ten state level or specialisation-based/field specific social work professional associations are functioning in India. (National Working Group for Social Work Council)
- A national Network has been formed (India Network of Professional Social Workers Associations-INPSWA) by bringing all professional social work associations together. INPSWA has been affiliated to IFSW thus making India a member in IFSW.

The socialwork profession in India is struggling to get its professional legitimacy even after more than eight decades of social work practice. Social workers in various professional social work associations have been demanding since long for the establishment of social work council. There has been many efforts in the past in India for forming a council at National as well as state levels. Quality enhancement and sustenance in social work profession in India require a sustainable structure, like a council for social work.

An initiative was undertaken by the Ministry of Welfare in 1993 to prepare a draft Bill for the establishment of the Council, but failed to achieve a positive result. In 2007 also ‘National Council for Professional Social Work in India Bill ‘ was proposed. Bill for Maharashtra council of Professional Social work was proposed in 2015. In 2018, due to voluntary efforts of few NGOs and social work educators “The National Council of Professional Social Work Practitioners Bill” came into picture as a private bill, which also was not successful. In 2019 the social workers in Tamil Nadu has initiated effort for ‘ Tamil Nadu council for Professional social work’ .

On July 14, 2020, a meeting of social work educators was called by Dr Muniraju, Deputy Advisor of the social sector division of NITI Ayog, where the need for a National Council for Professional Social Work was discussed. As a follow up to the NITI Ayog meeting, an informal voluntary Working Group was formed of eminent social work educators most of whom were invited to the above meeting and others who had contributed to the

earlier initiatives. This Working Group prepared a preliminary Background Note and a draft Bill on a National Council for Social Work (Education and Practice), 2020, based on the earlier national as well as state level initiatives.

While preparing this draft bill, the Working Group has followed the social work principles of transparency, participation, flexibility, and respect of diverse viewpoints. It widely circulated the preliminary Background Note and the Bill to social work professional associations, institutions of social work education, and social work practitioners in India, and feedbacks were collected. As a result, 15 professional social work associations, 15 institutions of social work education and one non-government organisation partnered with the Working Group in organising consultation webinars for educators as well as practitioners, at their institutional, state, or regional levels, covering large parts of India. Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPS) has organised districtwise webinars to discuss the draft bill.

The bill was later proposed as ‘National Council for Social Work Education Bill (2021)’ that aims to “enhance quality and ensure standards in social work education, including its linkages with practice, knowledge, and ethical conduct; and to create national registers of accredited social work education institutions and programmes”. As proposed in the bill, it will operate from New Delhi with its six zonal councils i.e. for North, West, Central, East, Northeast and South. The council will lay down the procedure of registration of social work professionals.

The main aim of the bill is to bring constructive changes in the social work education and practice and maintain a standardized social work syllabi and its practice across the country. It aims to strengthen the quality of education from local level to national level. The council also aims to streamline the syllabi, field work practice and evaluations, minimum requirement of teaching faculty and infrastructure for the institute. There are lots of variations in regard to social work curriculum, field work training across the schools of social work in India. This Council shall enhance quality in social work education, including its linkages with practice, knowledge, and ethical conduct; create national

registers of accredited social work education institutions and programmes; and shall raise social work as a profession. The request to establish NCSWE is aptly in tune with the National Educational Policy of 2020. The draft bill has already been submitted to Govt. of India.

A national level campaign committee is functioning which put efforts to spread awareness and campaigning for the council across India. More than 150 webinars have been organized at state, zonal and national level towards this. This author also is a part of the committee as Convener for South India zone. Dr. Sonny Jose and Dr. Joseph Sebastian are the coordinators for Kerala state. It is the responsibility of all social workers in India to join the campaign and make the Social Work Council in India a reality. All social workers need to be concerned about the future of social work in India and need for having a council for regulating the social work education and practice in our country.

The present issue of 'educere journal' comprises of six articles. Most of the articles are related to child and related issues.

The first article by Sagar P Rajput studies the contemporary social work perspective in child rights, care and protection of children in India. The article specially emphasizes on the need for involvement of social work professionals to work with foster care families.

The second article is by Neenumol Babu and Lekha D Bhatt studying the impact of COVID 19 on adolescent health. The article brings out a clear picture of adolescent life based on the pandemic. The study has used a cross-sectional quantitative approach.

The third article is by Feby Anna Kuriakose and Paul Samuel deals with Juvenile offences and social work intervention with special concentration on the influence of mass media on children in committing crimes. The study also deals with the social work interventions on children in conflict with law.

The fourth article is based on a descriptive study by Jojo Jose and Irin Jiji on the different psychosocial problems faced by the children between 13 to 18 years old during the COVID 19 pandemic period

. The fifth article by Jaimon Varughese covers the field work intervention with children whose education was affected with COVID 19 situation. The article covers different intervention strategies implemented among the children.

The sixth article analyses and present the issues of slum dwellers in the Human Rights-Based Framework of development, considering “Right to Adequate Housing” as a human right and eviction as a violation of it. It discusses the relationship between social work and human rights, explaining why it is important for a social worker to stand with the vulnerable community. It outlines the role of a social worker in preventing eviction and working with slum dwellers, on their social, economic, and psychological aspects of rehabilitation. The author also put forward the concept of ‘right to city.

The articles deals with child related issues, COVID 19 issues and issues of slum dwellers etc. A special appreciation to all authors for their contribution that will be highly useful in social work practice.

Dr.Ipe Varughese

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