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Social Work Education among Undergraduate (B.S.W.) Students in Colleges Affiliated with Saurashtra University: Field Work Practicum Methods, Regional Issues, Supervisory Challenges, and Future Direction – A Study

Dr. Ravi B. Dhanani

Research Officer, Babasaheb

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Chair – Centre,
Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India

1. Abstract:

Social work is an established professional and practical academic discipline based on human relations, social change, and equality. Its two main pillars are: Theory and Field Work Practicum. Social work education provides students with a practical opportunity to face complex, real-life situations, intervene through scientific methods, and bring qualitative improvements to human conditions, rather than just memorizing definitions. Seven colleges registered under Saurashtra University, Rajkot, run the B.S.W. curriculum. Undergraduate students joining this course after Class 12 are not yet of mature age, and their problem-solving capacity is in its developmental stage. Therefore, keeping the current educational and social perspective in mind, a review of the quality of field work, policies, regulations, and the supervision process at the undergraduate level has become absolutely essential.

Keywords: Social Work Education, Field Work Practicum, Undergraduate (B.S.W.), Supervision Challenges, Saurashtra University, Self-awareness.

2. Review of Related Literature

- **Bist (2015):** When undergraduate students transition from the highly secure and structured environment of schools into the free and unpredictable field environment, they experience severe anxiety. Supervisors should communicate with students with an open mind.
- **Kadushin & Harkness (2002):** Supervision is not merely a process of overseeing a student's work, but a powerful medium to impart professional

knowledge in difficult situations while providing them with emotional and positive support (Emotional Support).

- **Botcha (2012) and U.G.C. Report:** Huge disparities still prevail across the country regarding the social work academic curriculum and minimum standards of field work in India, making uniform guidelines necessary to eliminate them.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Objectives of the Research

- To study the current structure and components of B.S.W. field work in colleges affiliated with Saurashtra University.
- To investigate the ethical and practical anxieties as well as code of conduct violation issues experienced by undergraduate students during field work.
- To analyze the qualifications and challenges of social work educators in the supervision process.
- To evaluate regional risks (Risk Factors) and relationships with field agencies.

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive research method has been used in the present study for the statistical and logical presentation of data.

3.3 Universe and Sample

- **Universe:** All self-financed colleges running B.S.W. courses affiliated with Saurashtra University.
- **Sample:** 70 students (B.S.W. Semesters 1 to 6) selected through random sampling from various colleges and 10 social work supervisors (Total Respondents = 80).

3.4 Tools for Data Collection

For primary data, a self-prepared 'Interview Schedule' containing closed and open-ended questions was used by the researcher, while for secondary data, help was taken from the university syllabus, UGC Curriculum Report, and available literature.

4. Main Components and Modern Methods of Field Work Practicum (With Reference to NEP-2020)

Based on the revised curriculum of Saurashtra University and the model curriculum of the UGC, the following components are implemented to make the structure of field work more organized and impactful:

4.1 Orientation and Observation Visits

This is the first step for students securing admission into the first semester of B.S.W. Through the orientation program, students are informed about the definition of social work, the importance of field work, and institutional expectations.

Thereafter, students are taken for 'Observation Visits' to 5 to 6 different types of institutions. For example:

- Child welfare institutions.
- Women development institutions.
- Health institutions.
- Rural development institutions.
- School for children with special needs.
- Elderly Home etc.

The main objective of these visits is to broaden the students' field perspective and explain the operational methodologies of the organizations.

4.2 Concurrent Field Work and Induction Method

Concurrent field work is an assignment done by going into the field two days a week throughout the academic year. After the completion of orientation and before starting concurrent field work, the supervisor must conduct a detailed 'Induction Meeting' with the students under their supervision. In this meeting, it is necessary to explain in detail the professional behaviour to be maintained in the field, the reporting structure, and evaluation criteria so that no ambiguity remains in the future.

4.3 'Community Fieldwork' in Rural Perspective

Organizing a Rural Fieldwork in the first and second year of B.S.W. is a mandatory and exciting part of the curriculum.

- **Innovative Approach:** According to author Swati Bist, during this fieldwork, instead of keeping students in luxurious institutional accommodations, they should be kept in open camps within the normal village environment with public participation.
- **Benefits:** Through this, students can directly experience the harsh realities of rural life, water-electricity problems, and alternative sustainable lifestyles. They can map village problems using methods like 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' (PRA) together with the village folk. Additionally, they can learn community organization skills through street plays, de-addiction rallies, and health camps.

4.4 Block Placement and Skill Development Workshop

In the final phase of the curriculum, students are given a 'Block Placement' (a training job-like environment) by staying continuously for 4 to 6 weeks in a reputable organization. Apart from this, organizing periodic 'Skill Development Workshops' to improve students' soft skills, communication, documentation, and computer applications has become imperative in the university's current structure.

5. Characteristics and Field Problems of Undergraduate (B.S.W.) Students

5.1 Transition from Pre-University Environment to a Professional Course

Students entering B.S.W. come after completing their 10+2 (Class 12) school education. The school environment is highly protected, structured, and

predictable, where students are completely dependent on teachers. Furthermore, rural girls and youths of Saurashtra often come from over-protective family environments. When they suddenly enter the social work 'field'—which is highly open, unpredictable, and sometimes stressful—they initially experience great confusion, nervousness, and anxiety. Undergraduate students are shaken emotionally upon seeing a client's poverty, illness, or domestic violence, as their decision-making capacity is still developing. During this transition phase, the careful role of the supervisor becomes critical.

5.2 Discipline, Punctuality, and Professional Code of Conduct

The lack of professional seriousness among undergraduate students emerges as a major problem. In line with this, the concerning issues observed in the colleges of Saurashtra are as follows:

- **Lack of Punctuality:** Arriving late to the field or organization becomes a common occurrence, which spoils relations between the college and the field agency.
- **Breach of Confidentiality:** Sharing sensitive information or photos of clients on social media (without prior permission), which goes against professional ethics.
- **Misuse of Resources:** Using agency vehicles, computers, or other materials for personal benefit.
- **Flaws in Documentation:** Representing false information or details in field reports or agency records.
- **Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour:** Giving less respect to lower-level employees (ground staff) of the organization, or entering into non-professional, over-emotional relationships or physical conflicts with clients.

5.3 Group Dynamics and Peer Support

Considering the geographical conditions of rural areas of Saurashtra, keeping a group of 2 to 3 students (Group Placement) at one field site at the undergraduate level has proven to be highly beneficial.

Group Placement Benefits DOC	Individual Placement Challenges DOC
1. Confidence increases by having each other's support.	1. Fear is felt due to loneliness and an unfamiliar environment.
2. Qualities of teamwork, leadership, and adjustment develop.	2. Confusion occurs in making instant decisions in difficult situations.

Group Placement Benefits DOC	Individual Placement Challenges DOC
3. Continuity of enthusiasm and activities is maintained.	3. Probability of boredom or despair arises from monotonous work.

However, a negative tendency observed during group conferences is that students who are more talkative or good speakers come forward as presenters or chairpersons, while intelligent but shy students are left behind. Supervisors must provide equal opportunities to every student.

6. Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the following main findings were obtained:

6.1 Status of Field Work Components

The study revealed that most colleges conduct components like orientation, observation visits, concurrent field work, rural camp, and block placement according to the UGC (2001) model. However, the practice of holding an 'Induction Meeting' regarding professional expectations with students before starting concurrent field work was observed in only 20% of the colleges, which becomes a primary cause of indiscipline.

6.2 Challenges of Students' Code of Conduct

Based on the student survey and supervisors' opinions, the following main problems were identified during field work:

Main Challenges of Students:

1. Lack of punctuality → Conflict with agency staff.
 2. Breach of confidentiality → Sharing client information on social media.
 3. Misrepresentation of academic documents → Alterations in diaries or reports.
 4. Negative interpersonal relationships → non-professional behaviour with ground staff or clients.
- **Punctuality:** 65% of supervisors admitted that the habit of undergraduate students not reaching the field or organization on time is a matter of great concern. Due to lateness, the outreach staff of the organization departs for community work, leaving the students directionless.
 - **Unauthorized Decisions:** Many students sign client documents or take unilateral decisions without prior approval from the supervisor or organization, which violates organizational policies.

6.3 Qualification Challenge of Social Work Educators (Supervisors)

According to UGC regulations (2010), it is mandatory for a supervisor to hold a professional Master's degree in Social Work. However, findings show that in 20% of self-financed colleges in semi-urban areas, teachers of other subjects (such as

Sociology or Economics) conduct social work field supervision. Because of this, students fail to receive professional guidance on the practical methods of social case work, social group work, and community organization.

6.4 Regional Risk Management

Organizations working on HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, or severe de-addiction projects operate in the coastal or backward areas of Saurashtra. The research revealed that 18% of colleges send undergraduate students to sensitive areas without clear risk management guidelines. According to Swati Bist (2015), during a Targeted Intervention project, for instance, female or young students should not be sent directly inside a brothel; instead, they should work from the agency office or a secure location.

6.5 Expectations of Field Agencies and Parents

- **Attitude of Agencies:** 85% of students complained that instead of teaching social work, organizations make them do purely administrative and desk jobs like computer data entry or arranging files, which reduces the learning scope.
- **Concerns of Parents:** Parents of 70% of first-year students (especially parents of daughters) harbour continuous fear and ignorance regarding the open nature of field work, visits to remote areas, and child safety.

7. Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the findings of the present research, the following professional recommendations are presented for B.S.W. colleges affiliated with Saurashtra University:

1. **Mandatory Induction and Rules:** Organize an induction meeting immediately after orientation. Adopt a 'Zero Tolerance' policy regarding punctuality, respect towards clients, maintenance of confidentiality, and accuracy of documentation.
2. **Strict Disciplinary Actions:** If a student remains repeatedly irregular or violates professional conduct, a system of issuing an official 'Memo' should be started to maintain the reputation of the institution and university, so that the student takes field work seriously.
3. **Peer Support and Group Placement:** To increase confidence and teach teamwork among undergraduate (B.S.W.) students, it is advisable to place students in groups of 2 to 3 at a single site. Supervisors must ensure that shy students get equal opportunities and that only talkative students do not dominate group conferences.
4. **Parent Dialogue in Orientation:** Hold formal meetings with parents of first-semester students to inform them about course requirements, safety arrangements, and bright career prospects so that hearty cooperation from parents is received.

5. **Self-Awareness and Mental Well-being:** To ensure that the negative problems of clients do not impact students' minds, yoga and meditation sessions should be made mandatory in skill development workshops. Inspirational books by spiritual and social thinkers should be added to the reading list so that students can control their emotions and thoughts.
6. **Field Work Manual and Agency Visits:** The university must share its official Field Work Manual with all agencies so that they assign practical work to students instead of desk jobs. Supervisors must conduct physical agency visits at least three times a semester.

8. Conclusion

Field work practicum is not merely a medium to pass two days a week, but it is a vital process to enhance a student's self-development, building of professional skills, and conflict resolution capacity. For students transitioning suddenly from the protective school environment into the uncertain conditions of the field at the undergraduate level, the supervisor is like a strong educational and emotional link. If the university and colleges adopt a model of 'Self-awareness' through strict rules of discipline, systematic risk management, active dialogue with parents, and yoga-meditation keeping the specific socio-geographical situation of the Saurashtra region in mind, the academic standard of social work will rise further and students will earn renown in the country as skilled professional social workers in the future.

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