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Distinguishing characteristics of social work

Comprehension of social work may be enhanced by considering its distinguishing characteristics that are as follows:

1) **Focus is on the wholeness and totality of the person**—encompassing the person, environmental factors, and behavior. Social work stresses the total person in the total environment.

2) **Emphasis is on the importance of the family in molding and influencing behavior.** Social workers attempt to understand the principles underlying family interaction and to work with the family as the basic unit for improving social functioning, recognizing that most social problems in here in inadequate or imbalanced family relationships. The family is often regarded as the case in social work. Although the modern family is changing and many new forms of marital and family living have appeared, the family is still the basic institution in society and as such is a focal factor in social work.

3) **Utilization of community resources in helping people solve problems is very important.** Social workers have a comprehensive knowledge of community resources and are able to tap them to meet the needs of their clients. They help get “Mr. or Mrs. Jones to the clinic,” to the agency that can help the most in the solution of his or her particular problems. Making referrals is a major service of social workers. They also make significant contributions to the larger community, utilizing their skills in planning and organizing, helping governmental and private organizations and agencies be more effective.

4) **Use of the supervisory process provides for guidance and direction of inexperienced workers and for continuing growth of the experienced.** In academic study and in practice, social work provides supervision by qualified professional personnel to help the worker continue to grow professionally and acquire increased understanding and skill. The supervisor is available regularly to help the worker do a better job and increase his or her understandings and skills in working with people. This process is particularly important because social workers themselves are the tools in helping troubled persons, and they need to grow professionally, keeping abreast of new knowledge and skills. Patterns of supervision have been changing so they are less rigid today than previously. The general trend is toward more self-direction and less formalized supervisor–supervisee relationships. Participatory supervision, self-supervision, and peer supervision are being used extensively.

5) **Social work has a unique educational program involving classwork and practical field work experience, which go hand in hand.** To obtain an MSW degree requires two years of graduate training—or its equivalent—in one of the 168 (2004) Master of Social Work Education programs in the United States. This program includes both academic classes and live field experiences working with clients, which gives an integrated combination of theory and practice. Provision has been made for undergraduate programs in social work and/or social welfare to be accredited by CSWE. Thus, graduates in these programs with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree are recognized as beginning social workers, qualified to start in professional practice.

6) **Traditional social work emphasizes three basic processes: clinical work, group work, and community organization.** Clinical work involves a close, face-to-face relationship—mainly on an individual-to-individual basis—in working with people and their problems. Group work utilizes the group as the tool to bring about desired changes in social functioning with
4) Social Maladjustment and Social Change

- Society is struggling against various social, political, economic and cultural maladjustments. A social worker needs to understand the impact of those maladjustments in the life of individual, group and community. He/she has to create new perspective and dimension for analyzing those myths and practices. At the same time, a social worker has to work for the social change on the basis of his/her empirical understands on the issues.

- Social worker always advocates for social reform for the better life of general public. Social work believes that an evolutionary type of ‘reform’ in social values and system is possible and desirable.

- Social work believes in a need of scientific planning for social change and development. Social planning gives a direction and purpose. Social planning helps to stimulate community or people’s participation and allocation of available resources.
Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7. We are all Equal before the law
• All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8. Your Human Rights are Protected by Law
• Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9. No unfair Detainment
• No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10. The Rights to Trial
• Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11. We are always innocent till proven guilty
• Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
• No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12. The Right to Privacy
• No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13. Freedom to Move
• Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
• Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14. The Right to Seek a Safe Place to Live
• Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
• This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15. Right to Nationality
• Everyone has the right to a nationality.
• No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16. Marriage and Family
• Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
Notes on “Concepts and Principles of Social Work”

1) Behavior modification theories, psychoanalysis techniques like dream analysis, etc.
2) Child development with emphasis on role expectation at every stage.
3) Abnormal psychology and the various classification of mental illness.
4) Counselling psychology

Psychology and social work operate on some common grounds. Both are interested in the behavior of people particularly their interactional patterns, although the psychologists focuses mainly on individual behavior and the social worker on social functioning. They both seek the thinking and feeling processes of people.

3) Rural development

Nepal is a developing country. More than 90 percent of Nepal is rural area therefore, government is focusing on rural development in order to improve quality of life in rural areas.

The mission of rural development is to: enhance the ability of rural communities to develop, to grow and to improve their quality of life by targeting financial and technical resources in areas of greatest need through activities of greatest potential (Dhawan, 2005, p.1).

Goal of rural development program is to improve quality of life in rural residents by:

- Establishing and encouraging rural business and cooperative
- Providing access to technical assistance, capital and credit for quality housing and modern essential community facilities
- Community capacity building through providing information, technical assistance, leadership development
- Developing staff, system and infrastructure needed to ensure high quality delivery of its program.

Social work in other hand aims to help people improve their living standard by solving personal to community problem. While dealing with client in rural setting, understanding about rural society, pressing issues and development programs for rural development helps social worker to plan effective treatment strategies. Similarly, knowledge of rural sociology, rural economy, rural environment and natural management helps social worker to mobilize and relate resource systems and services to the client system.

In addition, social work as a profession is equally applicable to rural area and urban area as it helps individual, group and community of any area to enhance its social functioning with the application of social work methods and techniques like case work, group work, community development and locality development. Therefore, social workers can effectively work in different level of society including rural setting to meet the goals of rural development as stated above.

4) Economics

Economics is the study of how societies use scarce resources to produce valuable commodities and distribute them among different people. Economics examines the distribution of income and suggests ways that the poor can be helped without harming the performance of economy. Economies studies the swings in unemployment and production that make up the business cycle and development government policies for improving economic growth (Samuelson, 1998, p.4).

Economics deals with economic aspects of human society. As observed by Prof. Marshall, ‘Economics is a study of man’s actions in the ordinary business of life. It inquires how he gets his income and how he uses it. It is the study of how man satisfies his wants, what problems he faces and what means and resources he possess to solve them.'
Further, economics is the study of how the goods and services we want get produced and how they are distributed among the society. Economics has a number of branches-agricultural economics, development economics, financial economics; industrial economics, etc. Economic policy is how the system of production and distribution work better. No area of society is free from the influence of economic policy. Major issues related to social work like income, poverty, unemployment, migrations are directly related to the economic situation. Social worker has to understand the situation, has to adopt a thorough analysis of the situation which often includes the study of economic factors. Often individual and relationship problems have its root in the economic condition that in turn is created by factors beyond the control of people affected by it. For example: unemployment can increase tendency to divorce and depression.

Many social problems are due to the unstable economic system. In this case, social worker should understand the relation and importance of the economic factors in social functioning in his/her client's life. Knowledge of economic discipline helps social worker to understand how economic factors affect individual, group and community in negative and positive ways.

Example: Kamaiya system – traditional system of bonded labor in western Nepal (specially among Tharus and Dalits). People without land or work could get loans from landowners allowing them to sustain a minimum livelihood. In exchange the whole families were forced to slave labor for years.

5) Political Science
Political science includes government and policies, political parties, leadership dynamics, bureaucracies, legislature, judicial system, kind of political system like democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian (Heineman, 1996).

Social and economic status of society is directly related to political system. Therefore, political science is associated with study of sociology and economics. According to the Haynes and Holmes (1994, p.219), political science is basically focused on structure and function of government. Social worker has to understand model of political systems, its power dynamics within the government and outside the government structures, bureaucracies, and legislature and outside the government structures, bureaucracies, and legislature in order to help client more effectively within the given political system. Knowledge of political systems thus helps a social worker engaged in community intervention or mezzo or macro level intervention to understand how the community is struggling of system change or social reform.

In addition, Bhattacharya (2008, p.23) writes, social work cannot ignore the implication of state’s policy if it wants to understand and remold the society. The very important aspects of social services, social welfare, social security and social legislations enacted by the state have their direct impact on the social problems. In this context, social work plays a key role in providing social work methods and techniques for the solution of the problems. For instance: social worker can lobby or advocate for the rights of equality, if a legal system is discriminatory or in favor to inequalities on the basis of caste, gender or ethnicity.

Furthermore, the need for knowledge of law is of paramount importance as it creates a legal framework for the new situations and provides opportunities for change in the desired direction. Social workers need the knowledge of law when they perform their roles as counselors. Secondly, social worker as mentioned earlier performs a number of quasi-judicial functions in the correctional field, childcare, adoption and mental health field. Thirdly, in developing counties like in Nepal, the social worker need the knowledge of law to protect the poor from the misuse of law by the powerful. Hence the social work has to get a basic understanding and knowledge of the following:
2) Professional Relationship
Social worker should have a meaningful and productive helping relationship with the client. With this type of relation, there will be the presence of certain objective and will lead to solving problem and bringing positive change. The relationship works as a medium where the worker influences the outcomes of practice. Moreover, maintaining such type of relationship helps the client to become open to change and actively engage in the change process. There are basically three factors to develop the effective relationship, which are:

  a) Empathy
  b) Warmth
  c) Genuineness

**Empathy**
Empathy, in general, is the capacity to recognize emotions that are being experienced by another. Empathy involves not only being in tune with how a client feels but also conveying to the client that the social worker understand how he/she feels. It does not necessarily mean the social workers think that the client’s feeling are positive or negative, nor does it mean that social worker is having the same feelings by themselves. Empathy is purely acknowledgement that the social worker understands client’s situation. This feeling can also be demonstrated to clients that the social worker is on their side. Clients who feel that social worker has listened to how they feel and that social worker is not against them, are much more likely to be willing to work with social worker towards finding solutions to the problems. If not, the clients will view the social worker as an enemy, someone to fight with or avoid.

**Warmth**
Warmth generally refers to the quality of being warm. It also acts as a vehicle for acceptance by the clients and provides a sense of comfort among them. It is transmitted in many forms of communication, both verbally and non-verbally. Warmth can be displayed through verbal communication by saying statements which reflect that social worker respects the client and are glad he/she is there.

Examples of such statements are:

  Hello! It is good to meet you.
  Please sit down. Can I get you a cup of coffee?
  It is good to see you again.

In case of non-verbal communication, warmth can be exhibited through smile, handshakes or gentle touch.

**Genuineness**
The social worker should always be genuine with the client and show the honest, natural, open expression of oneself. Genuineness conveys a sense of honesty to clients and makes them feel that social worker is someone they can trust.

3) Creativity
The social worker needs to be creative in order to overcome the barriers to change. Also, as each client's situation is unique and constantly changing, creativity is required. It refers to looking outside the box, seeing things from a different perspective. It is directed to understanding, resolving or
affect him directly/indirectly. Social environment means the environment which consists of human being’s actual physical settings such as conditions, circumstances and, human interaction that surround human beings. Intervention denotes the activities to be conducted to achieve the planned change effort.

Also, social work is science as it comprises of:

1. Social Work Principles
2. Social Work Values
3. Social Work tools and techniques
4. Problem Solving Method
5. Professional Social Worker
Observation between what the client says and actually feels. Observation can be generally categorized into:

1) Participant Observation
2) Non-Participant Observation
3) Indirect Observation
4) Systematic Controlled Observation

1) Participant Observation:
In participant observation, the social worker immerses herself in the social setting under study, becomes the member of the team or system, and observes the system in a role which is either covert or overt. In covert observation, the social worker participates fully without informing members of the social group of the reasons of her presence. In case of overt observation, the social worker becomes open about the reason for her presence in the field of study since the social worker is given permission by the group to conduct the study. The aim of participant observation is to experience events in the manner in which the subjects under study also experiences these events; and to record the natural behavior of other participants. The social worker either actively engages or takes passive role.

Advantages:

a) Participating in a group as a new member allows the social worker to learn about the group and its activities in much greater detail than when simply observing and taking notes.
b) The group members often feel more comfortable and act more naturally when a researcher participates in their activities rather than just sitting back and observing silently.
c) As a group member, the researcher spends more time with the participants and gets to observe them in more varied situations.
d) Participating eliminates the formality of scheduled research sessions, in which participants expect to answer questions or demonstrate specific tasks. The researcher is simply with the group all day, observing and participating in whatever happens.

Disadvantages:

a) It can be very time-consuming.
b) Active involvement in the group can cause the social worker to lose objectivity and may lead to bias.
c) It can take a long time for the group to accept the social worker as a member and become comfortable with him or her.
d) The researcher may be at risk.
e) The researcher may not be able to ask the questions they would like to ask, as they may risk uncovering who they actually are immerse themselves in.

2) Non-Participant Observation:
Nonparticipant observation is an information gathering tools in which the social worker directly observes the behavior, functioning, events, activities, and interactions with the aim of gaining a direct understanding of a phenomenon in its natural context. As a nonparticipant, the observer does not participate directly in the activities being observed.

Nonparticipant observation has a long history in the social and behavioral sciences. It is distinguished from participant observation by the observer's level and kind of involvement in the research setting, the nonparticipant observer adopting a more distant and separate role. At its most extreme, the nonparticipant observer has no contact whatsoever with the researched, but watches and records
Chapter 11 Recording

Recording simply means systematic collection of data or information of client, case, issue and event; arrangement and storage for future references. Recording is also a tool in social work and is widely used. It is also an important skill that is necessary for social worker to store information in organized way. It is impossible to remember all the details of clients or events; therefore social worker has to record relevant information so that he/she can interpret the client's problem and make treatment plan on the basis of recording. Therefore, recording is the documentation of a sequence of events of a case. They reflect attitude and behavior of both client and worker which helps in analysis and interpretation.

Types of Recording
1) Process Recording:
   In process recording, the social worker records each step of the helping process. The social worker records about:
   (i) Reaction of both client and social worker
   (ii) Feeling of social worker
   (iii) Observation and analysis

   Process recording helps social worker to learn to:
   (i) Pay attention
   (ii) Be aware of own experience
   (iii) Describe behavior, affection, content, and recognize its significance
   (iv) Analyze own responses and those of clients
   (v) Recognize the consequences of an intervention
   (vi) Develop the ability to intervene purposefully

   Process recording is based on interaction with client by:
   (i) A face to face session with an individual client
   (ii) A telephone contact with a client
   (iii) A brief interaction in a waiting room, hall, community room, etc. with a client
   (iv) A group session
   (v) A contact with a family member or a family meeting
   (vi) A contact with a service provider

2) Summary recording:
   Summary recording refers to writing the brief or gist of events, cases, etc. On the basis of the objective of the recording, summary recording can be categorized as:
   (i) Periodic Summary: It is a summary or review of all the assessment and activities conducted within a specific period. For eg: BSW or MSW field work summary recording.
   (ii) Transfer Summary: It is used while case is going to be referred to another department or organization, like police station, hospital, clinic, doctor, lawyer, etc. It contains information about client and his problem including the reason behind the transfer.
   (iii) Closing Summary: This kind of summary is written when case is over and is generally limited to one paragraph to one page.
3) Social work practice with Families

Family is a special kind of group with which social worker works. It is often defined as a group of two or more person related by blood, marriage, adoption and residing together, who help each other socially, emotionally and economically. It is universal unit of society. Everyone deserves to live better and develop adequately in the family life where care and protection are ensured. Family plays vital role in the development of society as well as in the life of individual. Therefore, many problems found today in the society are due to the inadequacy of family life or due to malfunction in family role. In this context, family becomes an intervention unit for social work practice.

A social worker has to understand various aspect of family before treatment planning and intervention. Some major areas that must be considered are: family functions, characteristics, role of family, family problems.

Types of Family

According to Zastrow (2000), despite variation in family systems, all family can be classified into two primary forms: the extended family and the nuclear family. Due to the industrial revolution and development, the number of nuclear family is increasing significantly against extended family. In addition, the single parent family is now emerging in some countries as a third type of family system.

Function and Importance of Family

According to Bhattacharya (2008), the family performs three major functions:

a) Provision of a home:
Family provides love, affection, mutual cooperation, protection and psychological support which are essential for all human beings.
b) Satisfaction of sexual needs:
Family regulates the sexual behavior of people through institution like marriage.
c) Production and rearing of children:
Family serves as a primary institution to care and nurture the children. Family also provides the social sanction for procreation.

Generally, families have affection, economic, recreation, protective, religious and educational functions. When any or more of these functions are not fulfilled, then problem arises and the need for social work intervention is felt. A worker providing services to the family is referred as a family worker. Since, family is a special group, a group worker also provides services to the family. It is important for the social worker to be careful in dealing with the various phases of a group.

Social work practice with families generally involves family counseling, family therapy and problem solving approach. A social worker needs to know various types of families and its determining aspects in order to practice family social work effectively.

4) Social work practice with communities

A community can be defined as a group of people that have certain degree of “we” feeling, mutual understanding and co-operation for achieving common goal. Communities could be based on geography or location or could also be based on interest. Mutual help and co-operation are essential factors of any community.

The method used by social worker while working with communities or engaging the communities are called community organization. Community organization is defined as a process by which a
1) Social Worker’s Ethical Responsibilities to Clients
It involves social worker's commitment and loyalty to the client. He/she has to work for the best interest of the client by providing better services on the basis of relevant professional experience where he/she has to respect self-determination and cultural aspect of client. While working with the client, social worker has to maintain principle of confidentiality and exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps to protect clients from harm. Social work should understand the conflicts of interest and has to take consent from the client especially, while documenting client’s information.

Social workers have to respect the client’s rights to access records. Social workers have to be very sensitive towards sexual relationship and physical contact. They should not engage in sexual harassment and use abusive language to the clients.

Social workers’ charge or fee should be fair and reasonable with the services performed. Social workers should avoid accepting goods or services from clients as payment for professional services. Social workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, disability or death. Social workers should terminate services to clients and profession relationships with them when such services and relationship are no longer required. Social workers should not abandon clients who are still in need of services. In this context, social workers have to assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services.

2) Social Worker’s Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues
Social workers have to respect colleagues, through respecting confidentiality, interdisciplinary collaboration and conflict management. They have to maintain healthy communication, attitude of cooperation and consultation. Social workers have to avoid sexual relationship and have to be sensitive to sexual harassment. Social workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues. In the case of impairment of colleagues due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties that interferes with practice effectiveness, social workers should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action. If required social workers can take action against colleague’s through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

3) Social Worker’s Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings
This involves supervision, consultation, education and training, billing, client transfer, administration, arrangement of opportunities of staff development. Social workers should have the necessary knowledge and skills to supervise or consult appropriately. In addition, social workers should provide instruction only within their areas of knowledge and competence and should provide instruction based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession.

Social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet client’s needs. He/she must be committed to employers and employing organizations. Social workers have to ensure accurate documentation including delivery of services, continuity of services and the termination of services. Records should be maintained for the number of years required by state statutes or relevant contracts.
4) Social Worker’s Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals

Competence is a major professional ethical responsibility for social workers. They should be up-to-date with current and emerging knowledge relevant to social work. Social workers should not practice any form of discrimination on the basis for race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

Social workers should not participate or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception. In addition, social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance.

Social workers should not take unethical advantage out of clients. They should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others.

5) Social Worker’s Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession

It involves integrity of the profession and evaluation and research. Social workers should be honest towards their profession by maintaining and promoting standards of practice. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession. Social workers should maintain and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs, and practice interventions. In addition, social workers should promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge.

6) Social Worker’s Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

Social workers have a social responsibility to the broader society which includes promotion of social welfare and public participation. Social workers have to promote and advocate general welfare program/services and policies for fulfilling the basic human needs for development. They have to promote social, economic, political and cultural values and institutions for realizing social justice.

Social workers should engage in social and political action to ensure that all people have equal access to the resource, employment, services, and opportunities with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.

Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status or mental or physical disability.

4) Ethical Dilemmas

Ethical Dilemmas occur when the social workers see themselves faced with a choice between two equally unwelcome alternatives which may involve a conflict of moral principle, and it is not clear which choice will be the right one.