International Seminar on Social Work Education in Ethiopia

Social Work Education in Ethiopia: Global Challenges & Perspectives

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the "pursuit of social justice and SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT"

by

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Abstract

A brief review of
- The emergence of this IASSW commitment (circa 1970)
- Social work's long-standing claim to the interests of the poor and poverty: its urban orientation and the relatively minor impact on rural and fundamental poverty in the non-affluent countries
-What did development mean for reorienting practice and teaching? The early Exploration and its findings: participation, institution building, social policy and planning, social justice, social work methods and traditional practice venues
- Who were to be the teachers for this new focus and how might we create them? The concept of a "See-saw" career for teachers of social developmental work
- The impact (and some incompatibilities) of the West and some of the lessons learned in establishing professional social work teaching and learning in Asia, post-Soviet Eastern Europe and what of Africa?

A vision for the radical role (cause) of professional social work
- An introduction to a social work activist approach to research - the responsibilities of the practitioners, agencies, and services; the professional Association: the School of Social Work and its research teaching sequence: the students as consumers and contributors to research

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Social work, cause and function, and the transfer of skills and knowledge across cultures

Here in Addis, at the establishment of a Master's Degree in Social Work there is a renewed opportunity for clarification of social work's **mission** which will have profound **implications** for how you proceed. In addition it could possibly provide guidance and a model for the profession of social work everywhere, which is clearly in serious difficulties.

The implications encompass:

- What is taught and especially how it is taught;
- The resolving of the incompatibilities between the culture of social work and the culture of academia which must aim at creative communication and an agenda in seeking knowledge for both;
- The relationship between practice in the field and the relevance of a vast and growing range of theory;
- The career patterns and possibilities of social workers and especially the teachers of social work.

These challenges and difficulties have been seen written large wherever social work concepts and experience from the West have been transferred to very contrasting conditions, societies and cultures elsewhere. Such situations I have experienced myself, particularly in Asia and more recently in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Such challenges will certainly emerge as you begin along a similar path.

This paper here in Africa aims to re-introduce a fundamental and long on–going social work debate. The debate relates to the proper emphasis to be given as to whether the profession is to be primarily a **function** serving social casualties or perceives these functions as a very special base from which it has a unique contribution to make as a **cause** for bringing about far-reaching social development.

A cause in its simplest form is frequently stated by students in giving their reason for coming in to social work as wanting to **"change the world".** This is touchingly innocent and naïve but their hearts are in the right place and certainly there is much in our world that needs to

be changed. We also certainly as social workers and educators need to share with them the knowledge and develop their skills so that they can join our profession in searching for what and how to bring about change.[1]

At the other end of the scale were the cogently declared causes of **Sylvia Pankhurst**, a heroic and admired personage here in Ethiopia[2] It was she who early became a vigorous opponent of Mussolini's Fascist Italy and strove to bring to the world's attention the horrors visited upon Abyssinia. (That the world was concerned elsewhere, hardly knew where Abyssinia was, and failed to take action against aggression led to the dissolution of the League of Nations, which along with the civil war in Spain set the stage for World War 2). Some 20 years earlier, when in the British suffragette movement, her cause was that of women and their right to vote she stated that cause in a wider context. In a few lines from 80 years ago we can easily interpret her words in terms of today: "participation of the people", "social justice", "institution building" and in despising the spin doctors who create "catch phrases and buzz words" to replace the need for action. Sylvia Pankhurst declared:

"I wanted to rouse these women of the submerged masses to be, not merely the argument for more fortunate people, but to be fighters on their own account despising mere platitudes and catch cries, revolting against the hideous conditions about them, and demanding for themselves and their families a full share of the benefits of civilization and progress"[3].

[1] This morning Lena Dominelli, the retiring president of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) mentioned a lost cause in her presentation regarding social workers becoming functionaries as "**technocrats"** and **"brokers"** in a developing money management-oriented British social welfare system. She argued that there needed to be a restoration of the original state universalistic system of welfare provision. However, to fight for such a cause social workers must have an appropriately committed organisation. So too they would need to mobilize, or join, a constituency of support. Are they likely to find it from those of the public who may have recognized the value of social workers?

[2] Sylvia Pankhurst was to be instrumental in setting up the Social Service Society in Ethiopia. Her son Richard Pankhurst helped to establish the Ethiopian Studies Institute (in which we are meeting today at this conference) and her grandson Alula Pankhurst teaches here at the Addis Ababa University

[3] E. Syvia Pankhurst, The **Suffragette** Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals , Longmans **... Suffragette** & **Class Fighter** by **Jen Pickard** (1982) **...** The

However, IASSW itself does have a cause and its mission can be found on its present web site home page:

"Members of IASSW are united in their obligation to the continued pursuit of social justice and social development. In carrying out its mission, IASSW fosters cooperation, collegiality and interdependence among its members and with othes"[4].

Social work as a profession, practice seeks theory

Just over a hundred years ago the workers in charitable organisations, mainly serving the "deserving" poor in the growing industrializing cities of Europe and North America, thought that the universities might offer knowledge and theoretical structure, the better to come to grips with the many and chaotic problems they encountered in their daily practice.

It was expected, and correctly, that there was much to learn from a range of other disciplines engaged in the study of, and active in, human affairs, that could be utilised by social workers. Social work would become distinguished by its multifaceted nature of combining and adapting borrowed and contributed knowledge. It would properly seek and take from wherever it might, to clarify and confirm experience, in order to inform its activities and develop skills in identifying, prioritising and attending to what ails people and the societies in which they live. Indeed it is these people-oriented activities and action related to social causes that constitute the fundamental culture of social work.

We know very little of what use was made back then of the experience these pioneer social workers brought to the universities and to the teaching. We do know the profession became open to students coming straight up through the existing educational system. Entrance to social work university teaching demanded no prior experience in social work. Ominously for

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Papers of Sylvia Pankhurst at University of Toronto
www.homemadejam.org/mix/**suffragette**-pankhurst.html -

[4] **IASSW Mission statement**. Web site Home page

practice, early on fieldwork disappeared for many years from the curriculum of the university programmes. (This was the case whether in Chicago or London.[5]).

Diversity of cultures

Increasingly social work seemed (and still continues to be) content to adopt and become an integral part of the culture of universities, its politics, and to earn academic degrees in order to take on the mantle of intellectual respectability in the process of becoming a 'profession'.[6] To my mind the price has been high and led to long-term confusion. It has required an increasing disassociation from the culture of social work, from social service, social conditions and social change, that is far from the perceptions of traditional and privileged Western universities. This diversity of cultures has opened up many problems if, as I certainly do, conceive of social work as a profession whose preparatory and formulating learning and education must derive fundamentally from a problem-solving, practice-based, and value-laden foundation.[7]

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[5] It might be noted that for historical, economic, geographic, philosophical and political reasons the United States firmly located social work within the voluntary sector of its society, while the UK and others began to create the concept of the Welfare State. The USA eagerly adopted individualistic philosophies and theoretical concepts, while the UK strove for politically universalistic services. This resulted in mainly quite different social worker perceptions of their roles in function and cause.

The American experience had been of a whole continent of untapped natural resources and a relatively small and determined population of mainly immigrants and refugees vigorously committed to achieving material well-being. Self-reliance was a necessity. The emergence of a strong culture of individualism welcomed individualistic psychological theory. Social work enthusiastically chose a within-the-individual's-skin medical 'treatment' model for those who were in trouble and needed to "adjust".

However, the developing world does not have this kind of history, nor does it have a cultural tradition of highly prized individualism. Absent too have been the"New World" advantages in resources and technology. Unlike the first industrialising nations, the emerging nations today find that they have to compete with the firmly entrenched and dominant financial and technologically advanced economies.

6"In the main, entrance to universities took place at a time when world-wide those elitist and conservative institutions derived their prestige from the laboratory-based myopic ("pure") static science of the nineteenth century or from the more romantically-inclined abstractions of the humanities formulated in the comfort of learned literary discourse in ivory towers far from the misery and chaos of everyday life. Social work, if it had been less concerned with its status and acceptability and more with the workings of society and social injustice, might even have contributed dynamic concepts well before the fixed state of the physical sciences gave way to the flux, uncertainties and living with the unknown, of atomic and biogenetic research."**Drucker, D. (1993):'The Social Work Profession in Asia: Look Homeward 1969-1993** *The Indian Journal of Social Work. LIV (4)* Bombay India Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

[7] Of which my colleague Harriet Meek will no doubt have something to say.

Some 30 years passed before it was possible to insert in the social work curriculum of universities a required period of field placement and learning to attain academic qualification. Now, field practice, as the foundation for learning and developing social work skills, is constantly cited optimistically in the modern literature as the venue for the application of theoretical concepts and their relation to stark non-academic reality in the outside world. Nevertheless, even today, fieldwork is low on the universities' priorities. Practice is rarely, if demonstrably anywhere, properly financed, sufficiently staffed, awarded an appropriate number of credits, or systematically researched. **Nor can practice be seen to adequately influence and effectively determine selection of what should be taught from the available and growing very wide-range and diffuse branches of knowledge and academic learning.**

Social work: Internationalisation and the poor

It was at the point of this late entry of fieldwork to academic curricula some 75 years ago, in 1928, that the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) was formed. However, for the next 30 years or so **International** was very much American and European. It was not until the early 1960s that Western-educated social workers emerged to help create social work schools in the developing and newly independent countries. The graduates of these schools in the main set up western style agencies and predominately functioned in urban centers although declaring, as social work always has, that the poor were very much their concern.

In 1966, in response to the need for indigenous teaching materials, the IASSW and the United Nations (who have been major sponsors of social work conferences) brought together Asian social work educators and fieldwork supervisors. Invited to bring the case material they were currently using, no one brought even a single item to acknowledge the existence or condition of the poor. The conference report concluded:

"Poverty as an observed cultural phenomenon in most Asian countries is striking because of its pervasive presence in the life of countless people who exist on the brink of starvation. Yet the handling of poverty in professional social work as an observed and cultural phenomenon in Asian case records is more striking in its absence. The question might be raised in what way do professional social workers in Asia come in contact with such poverty,

how does this poverty actually affect the role of the client, as well as the role of the profession itself, not only in its objectives but also in its methods?" [8]

The emergence of "Social Development" and the affirmation of a social work cause

Two years on, in 1968, social work educators, administrators and planners meeting in Bangkok reported:

"..that professional social work and social work education were still (sic) not sufficiently attuned to developmental needs and problems as currently defined in the plans of the countries in the ECAFE region, and that greater efforts should be made to improve that situation" [9]

Later that same year, at the International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare at the United Nations in New York, 89 countries endorsed the recommendation that priority be assigned:

"*..particularly in developing countries, to the developmental tasks of social welfare and therefore, to orienting social welfare training toward preparation for such tasks."*[10]

By 1970 the Asian Ministers meeting in Manila extended this concept more specifically:

"Curricula on social work training should be geared to social development goals and constantly examined, reviewed and evaluated in the light of the countries' changing needs."[11]

In Manila, on the same occasion in 1970, there were (for the first time outside of America and Europe[12]) fellow conferences of the IASSW; the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW); and the International Congress of Social Workers (ICSW). The in-thing there was to exult at the prospect of social work operating effectively "in the corridors of power"[13] as the

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[8] **UN ECAFE (1966)** ***Asian Records for Teaching Social Work. Part Two***..ix Bangkok: (Report of the Regional Centre for Social Work Education and Field Work Supervision).

[9] United Nations, (1968) Report of the Seminar on the Relationship of Social Work Education to Developmental Needs and Problems in the ECAFE Region. Bangkok

[10] **United Nations, 1968a*) Proceedings of the International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare.*** New York

[11] **United Nations (1970) Recommendations of the First Asian Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare**. Manila.

[12] Africa was to wait until 1974 when the conferences were held in Nairobi.

[13] ***Corridors of Power*** **(House of Stratus. Pub) (1964).**

"challenge of the seventies". By 1970, then, at least social work had authoritatively had its attention drawn not only to the nature of the Asian situation, but to the necessary widening of social work priorities and direction everywhere. The foundation of social work was proclaimed as **"Social Development".** Social Development would not be just the cherry on the top of economic development.[14] It had to become a major goal of economic development, probably the prerequisite for the creation of resources and wealth, and certainly for ensuring social justice in distribution.

It was at this time that IASSW adopted this stance as the major goal of its mission. Social work had seemed to declare itself emphatically once more as having a **CAUSE** (the cause of contributing to a just social order). This would clearly require its involvement in areas of practice well beyond the existing activities in which the profession had been engaged.

Social work as development

However, it became only too apparent that, for social work, there was no clear definition of Social Development to guide teachers and practitioners. Most had little direct experience in working in situations with a recognised social policy macro perspective. Quite what did this development perspective demand?

A six-plus country study, 'Exploration'[15] (Thailand, S. Korea, Hong Kong, Pakistan, the Philippines and Burma) sought guidance by taking the repeatedly pronounced key catch phrases to see what they actually represented to the social work educators and professionals in terms of roles to be taught and undertaken. These were distilled as:

(1) ***Social policies and planning in development***

(2) ***Ensuring social justice*** *(with particular reference to more equitable distribution of national wealth)*

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was the title of a celebrated novel by C. P. Snow

[14] Economic theory at the time saw development as following along the lines of the experience of western industrialising countries. The poor would apparently benefit through the economic laws of the current "trickle-down" of wealth theory.

[15] **Drucker, David (1972) A*n Exploration of the Curricula of Social Work in some Countries of Asia, with Special Reference to the Relevance of Social Work Education to Social Development Goals.* Bangkok: UN ECAFE/UNICEF.**

*(3) The essential need for **participation by the people** in policy formulation, planning and implementation*

*(4) Improving the social and cultural infrastructure by **institution building***

Where to place traditional social work methods in this developmental framework was approached as follows:

*(5) **Social work helping methods***

The situations dealt with by social workers very often illustrate the malfunctioning of our societies and the gaps and inconsistencies in our policies and programmes. The social worker role then is to be alert and sensitive to this and to systematically report these matters and so to be contributing decisively to policy and planning in the normal course of their "helping" activities. It is this specific role of identifying such matters and reporting appropriately to policy makers and planners that we are asking about here.[16]

It was concluded that:

"The fact of the matter seems to be that the current machinery linking schools, supervisors, agencies, professional associations, policy makers, planners, etc, is not adequate to the task of producing personnel for the important developmental roles which are currently being canvassed. This lack of coherent (sic institutional) machinery constitutes the major problem confronting the schools and the profession"*[17]*.

In the course of the 'Exploration' study and the 1972 regional workshop that followed, the Asian educators and professionals emphatically endorsed the importance and definitions of these roles as fundamental to developmental social work.

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[16] Very much in line, since discovered with **C. Wright Mills (1959), in *The Sociological Imagination:***

"Know that many personal troubles… must be understood in terms of public issues …and in terms of the problems of history-making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles - and to the problems of the individual life."

Shankar Pathak Social Welfare :An Evolutionary and Development Perspective. Macmillan India (1981) was later to point out that this role, so defined from the current practices of social work, was in fact a version of the first - an essential development role in policy and planning.

[17] Ibid

Nevertheless, on scrutiny it was not found possible at that time to identify coherently what was actually taught and what might be the nature of an overall curriculum to impart these roles.

“Curriculum” and “Curse”

In the course of Explorations I discovered as a revelation that the words “curriculum” and “curse” have the same generic Latin base!

"The word "curse" derives from the Latin cursus, ‘a running' - especially circular running as in a chariot race - and is short for cursus contra solem. Thus Margaret Balfour, accused as a witch in sixteenth-century Scotland, was charged with dancing widdershins nine times around men's houses, stark naked; and my friend A.K. Smith (late of the Indian Civil Service) once accidentally saw a naked Indian witch do the very same thing in Southern India as a ceremony of cursing."

Robert Graves The White Goddess Faber and Faber, p. 443

Widdershins: In a direction opposite to the usual; contrary to the direction of the sun; considered as unlucky or causing disaster.

Curse: an utterance consigning a person or thing to evil; a thing which blights or blasts.

Curriculum: a course of study derived from the Latin source of the word "currere" - to run, as in the running of a course in a chariot race. Roman chariot races were murderously run nine times around the stadium anti-clockwise (against the nature of things, backwards). This image appealed to me as analogous to how I was witnessing the social work profession being taught theory/practice, especially in Asia.

I understood immediately that what we were doing was teaching everything the wrong way round, the idea that much of social work in academia was taught backwards (and at least maybe nine times) against the nature of how and what social workers need to learn, putting a blight and a curse on the students. Teaching them theory which had no recognisable application, and if reality didn't fit in the theory, then it was of no significance or reality didn't exist. Most of our theory, however useful it might be, is culturally permeated and limited, and we do not have much in the way of universalities in human behaviour. Yet this was what we were then imposing on students**. I could see that they had to start out there in reality and draw theory from their experience of reality and not the other way round**.

It became clear that if social work education were to move firmly into the field of development and take up the challenge of poverty, based on its much heralded claim to be serving the poor, the dispossessed and the underprivileged, the teachers would need to discover and/or invent a growing fund of skills from first-hand experience to enable them to know what and how to teach.

What needed to be taught and how might we learn to teach it?

Three areas emerged of particular relevance to how and what needed to be taught in a development orientation:

- The preparation and role of the educators in practice and theory
- The matter of research
- Ways of learning.

Among far-reaching suggestions was a way in which it might be attempted to ensure that the realities of the development, practice, field supervision, teaching, the accumulation of knowledge and the growth of the profession be brought together. This was designated as:

The see-saw approach

It was seen that if social workers were really going to operate in the development arena, they would need to locate themselves in new and unfamiliar settings.

It was proposed that staff members of the schools themselves be assigned to try out possibilities of the envisioned developmental social work activities and locations. This would entail an exploration of the dimensions of the tasks and identify realistic assignments which might be set up for students eventually. The staff member would explore and practice the social work role and from **first-hand experience** draw up as detailed a job description as possible, based on an analysis of the tasks involved. Objectives and goals of the service or agency and the learning objectives and goals that students might be expected to achieve would be spelled out. In the course of the practice the staff member would keep a detailed record of happenings, to be developed into case-material.

In **identifying the theory, knowledge and skills** required to function in this position, the staff member would check whether and where such matter appeared in the school curriculum and would prepare to supplement the teaching, together with teaching materials, either to reinforce what was already being taught or to introduce new content. After perhaps a year the staff member would have paved the way for the introduction of students into the practice role, having prepared the setting and the agency staff to receive them.

The second phase of the school staff member's activity, having fulfilled the role himself, would consist of **supervising the students' practice and learning**. The staff member being familiar with the service requirements and the knowledge and teaching base, could then concentrate on the educational diagnosis of the student and the student's needs.

The staff member would eventually introduce a worker designated to take over the established **supervisory role** in subsequent years. As the staff member's fieldwork and supervisory role diminished, he/she would prepare to move back into the teaching role in the school.

Ideally it might be arranged for two members of staff to address the same areas of work. One would be **moving through from practice, on to supervision and back to classroom teaching,** while the other was moving in the opposite direction - thus the idea of a see-saw.

Research

Primarily social workers should be eager **consumers** of research in order to examine, discover and extrapolate what it can tell us regarding what we should do, do better, or avoid doing. We have a responsibility to identify from our practice and convey to appropriate resources what needs to be researched[18].

At its simplest, as a profession which in practice recognises it needs to act frequently, albeit with limited information, research from whatever source (anything better than guess-work) is to be welcomed. Social workers themselves need not be researchers in the formal academic sense, unless this is to become their professional specialty.

'Exploration' in 1972 stated the integral unity of practice and research:

".. ***Associations of social workers*** *would need to become professional institutions for gathering together the experience and opinions of their membership to feed and support social workers on policy and decision-making bodies*[19].

[18] I was told recently quite bluntly at one distinguished American school of social work that what gets researched is determined by the funding source. Market forces permeating academia?

[19] At that time only one Asian association had a full time professional social worker as organiser. Establishment-connected social workers who sat on committees drew on their own respected but limited perspectives and usually were uninformed, unprepared and unsupported by the profession

"..the primary responsibility for identifying research topics belongs to the profession in general and practitioners in particular*. It is the practitioners in their daily work who are faced with questions that require answers...".*

"These answers are required not as fundamental truths but for ***practical application".***

"...the Association of Schools *and individual schools should be responsible for* ***collecting from the professional practitioners lists of...subjects for research****, clearly stating the problem and indicating the practical implications which are likely to flow from an investigation.... It would be* ***the responsibility of a research group to examine these subjects*** *and sketch in the broad lines of method best fitted to the matter under consideration and judge whether it is appropriate for a student to undertake".*

"...The range of topics thus identified is likely to ***give a student a much broader and practical view of social work and its priority professional concerns*** *than can be expected from those with limited experience in the field as is the case with most students".*

"There are important implications here for the profession and for ***organising practitioners*** *in such a way that appropriate dialogue takes place with...the schools, in order to produce this professional agenda for research****. The need for relatedness of the research to the profession's progress, and the relatedness to the teaching to professional practice cannot be over-emphasised."***[20]

A detailed research teaching sequence

Students should be seen as needing to be **taught to become professional "consumers" of research**. (Few will want to go on to become full-time researchers.) Within the limited time in the curriculum available to **students they would not be expected to initiate and complete their "own" research**. As "consumers" they would need to be familiar with the range and the limitations of **social research methods**. They would need to understand all the stages of

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as a whole. The suggestion that a student as a research thesis might observe and describe the social workers' role and contribution to such bodies to make a start on identifying the nature of the activity for teaching purposes was met with disbelief.

[20] **Drucker, D. (1977a) 'The Scapegoating of Students and Professional/Academic Failure', Bangalore India: National Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Sciences, (NIMHANS).**

research, from statement of problem and formulation of a researchable subject to implementation of recommendations and evaluation carried out with the initiating agency. Each stage would be taught as a sub-course in its own right.

These courses would be:

Appreciation of the **objectives of the proposed research** on the list compiled by the professionals:

Identifying the appropriate **research method** for the selected topic and devising **work plans and schedules**;

The **collecting of data** on a research topic for which the method and work plan had been devised by a previous group/intake of students; (devising the method and schedules takes up much time and most student theses seemed to have rushed through the collecting stage because there was so little time left to them as their courses proceeded);

Analysis of the data collected by the earlier students;

Social Policy and Programming Planning seminars;

(This would determine what had been learned from the research and its implication for social work's role in the macro field.):

Implementation seminars to devise strategies and specific work plans to follow upon what emerged from the research;

(As in the normal course of events the research topic had been proposed by a practitioner, the relevant agency (agencies) would of course have a role in working through this phase with the students;

Practice in research

Selected research projects would be provided as **work in progress** which had proceeded in each of the above stages. Succeeding groups/intakes of students would be required to complete **a succeeding stage in different pieces of research**. That is, they would be actively contributing something to the complete range of stages covering a number of research topics.

Fieldwork. Research implementation.

If appropriate for a student worker, the work plans for implementation undertaken above would become the subject of a student's subsequent year's **fieldwork assignment.**

This fieldwork assignment could lead to a final stage of learning the skills in **evaluating** such research projects from topic proposal to completed action.

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In this way it was anticipated that the professional practitioners and the Schools would be drawn together in identifying need, pursuing research, creating and contributing knowledge, enhancing professional skills, and translating it into action. From the students' perspective, they would have experienced how questions from the field are taken through all the stages to action and final evaluation. The students themselves have had a role to play, having been taken through each stage with its specific focus. Although they would not have had to take responsibility for any one topic from start to finish, they would have begun to appreciate the practical pay-off of research, savour the excitement of having contributed to knowledge and change and precipitated organised action. They would understand the importance of providing research topics from the field when they become practitioners and where they belong in contributing to an overall professional identity

The implications of all this are that in becoming professional **practitioners they would have a very strong life-long commitment to initiating research** and the schools a responsibility for constructing a curriculum which will constantly relate to, and involve the students in, the cutting edge concerns of the profession.

"Of course it was realised that there were dozens of problems inherent in these wide-ranging sets of proposals career-wise and within university and agency structures. Clearly, here again the profession would need to do a lot of "institution building." However, if we were to take seriously the roles of institution-building, social justice, participation, social policy and planning (which had been identified as fundamental elements of the development and social work role), like the adage "charity begins at home", we would need to build effective institutions for professional social work. Before we could speak with some authority about what society should be doing to bring about change we would need to demonstrate our ability to manage/change ourselves, particularly within and between our own professional organisations and those academic and social service institutions and structures of which the profession has some measure of control and already, to some degree, participates in decision-making."[21]

[21] Drucker, D. (1993): Ibid.

A final note: Ways of learning

In Asia there is a tradition of learning by sitting at the feet of the Guru. Here in Ethiopia, I understand that learning by rote from the elders is time honoured. In the West, despite the concept of a university as a band of scholars (some junior, others senior, to be sure) and the scientific idea of building upon existing knowledge (and mistakes), it is only too common for students to sit receiving wisdom out of the professor's mouth, into his ear, and down through the arm and hand onto paper which is returned to the professor. This is absolutely antithetical to the processes of the kind of learning and the professional stance of the social work practioner. Social work requires learning from and with the clientele (individual or community) and sharing objectives, planning, and implementation (**participation**). [22]

The pressures and demands upon the student within the academic culture are compelling (grades, exams, etc.). Confusion is apparent when they are placed and find themselves in the culture of their field work agencies. Some resolve the difficulty perhaps by sliding into research and opting for academic careers and advancement. Social work departments themselves characteristically seem to be the Cinderellas of universities and the students tolerated as a sub-culture, with the accent on sub, which they often feel keenly.

Social work students as a sub-culture

Where the social work students spend, relative to other students, much time outside the hallowed halls among what ails our societies and have to handle the emotional impact of the great variety and turmoil of lives in a very troubled world, they become actively aware of the difference between themselves and their student contemporaries in other departments. As a sub-culture within the university, they are reminded constantly of the pull of the usual internal culture of student life. This being the case, it would be constructive to consider seriously the value and the creation of a reality in which students are taught and function in a social work culture and planning for it positively. In so doing they would be preparing to comfortably accept their life-

[22] Very much in the perspective of Singer and Burgin (1978): "Every life is strange. …….This visitor …. is, after all, part of the big universe, ….. I'd like to hear what he has to say. I am sure in his telling it, I will hear something which is completely new as far as my knowledge of human beings is concerned. …..The more you see what other people do, the more you learn about yourself. …. I say to myself, why don't they look into the human ocean which surrounds them where stories and novelties flow by the millions? It's there where my experiments take place – in the laboratory of humanity not on a piece of paper."(pp 1+2). **Singer, Isaac Beshevis and Richard Burgin, (1978) Conversations with Isaac Beshevis Singer. NY: Doubleday**.

long minority place in society. It could be welcomed as a creative condition reflecting the role that the profession will hold in challenging the pernicious aspects and injustices of contemporary society and proudly holding to its own professional intellectual and moral integrity.

We would be setting out consciously to familiarise the student with a self-awareness of the new role of social work student (which will differentiate him from many of his fellow students in other departments), commensurate with his potential role of professional social worker (which will differentiate him from the more generally held values and familiar responses of his fellow citizens.) In a sense we would be setting out to deliberately begin to define, teach and set up a coherent sub-culture for the student and in preparation for the profession.

Curriculum

In social work we hold to such important premises as the notion of growth from within, self-determination, participation, along with the growing understanding that learning is far from a neutral intellectual activity, but is intimately connected with relationships, emotional involvement, social climate, and – specifically when teaching knowledge applied in human situations – requires learning by doing. When considering the nature of the curriculum and the selection of content, the learning patterns of students as well as the methods of teaching are therefore of primary importance. It is not just a matter of covering content and improving techniques, much is caught rather than taught, and involves the whole student and the institutions in which he or she moves and is experiencing.

It follows that social work requires a curriculum, which must be examined as the "total learning experience" of the student to the extent to which it was determined by the intent, **behaviour** and **organisation** of those responsible for the education or training, which must include what is done with the student's exposure to direct human problems and his response to them. Curricula should be broadly conceived as being the product of all that goes into the teacher-learning situation (**not just content, but climate: the sub-culture, the living social institutional context in which the learning is specifically to take place**).

This approach is far from the static snapshot way of looking at curricula embodied in university time tables. [23] It opens up fundamental inherent differences between the expectations and the very culture of universities and that of those who practice and aim to practice in effective people-oriented agencies and institutions of social work. In working out a creative social work style education relationship with academia, we might even be able to contribute something of great value to the vital matter of the traditions of learning itself (institution building). A profession must profess beyond the narrow confines of its current practice and continuously accumulate a body of knowledge of its own as well as seek to provide new perspectives for others.

Our graduates leave schools, I trust, properly knowing that they face a lifetime of continuing to discover and learn about the human condition and what ails it. They should also know that they are joining a profession likely always to be a minority in terms of its particular idealism and social concerns, and that they will not receive too much public acclaim or financial rewards. Perhaps also they may too often have the sense of falling short of their highest hopes and aspirations in a job that will by its nature present them daily with so much of society's sorrows. Can we provide a sense of belonging to an organised fellowship of professionals that provide an on-going solid foundation of support and assurance? Can we instill in students a sense of pride and security in understanding and contributing to a maturing recognisable professional agenda, albeit diverse and consisting of many strands?

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[23] See "**Council on Social Work Education, "Building the Social Work Curriculum". #61-18-55**

"The climate or atmosphere of the school influences the student without conscious planning by the faculty." p 19

"…if the total range of the educational programme is considered, these influences are more than the curriculum itself, but these powerful influences are not usually taken into account in considering the curriculum."p 20

"…the purpose of curriculum organisation is the maximise the cumulative effect of all the learning experiences."p51

"…to consider the curriculum in terms of the learning experiences that individual students are having in contrast to viewing the curriculum as a total collection of course offerings."p54

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