INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK

XIXth International Congress of Schools of Social Work

14 - 18 August, 1978

A COMMENTARY

on the Section D papers :

The Contribution of Social Work and
Social Work Education to Social Development

by

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I note that this section of the Congress offers three background papers in contrast to the single paper for the other sections. Katherine Kendall has written to me that this is because :

> "... there is no one person who could encompass the many different initiatives which could classify under social development ..."

It may be that our initiatives _are_ many but I believe a critical matter for social work is that so far there is something very loose about our classification. The result is that often we are not clear what we mean, and what we must concern ourselves with, when we discuss "social development". "Social development" has a brave ring about it, but there is a tendency for us to merely rename our usual activities with a flourish, rather than to face up to the full implications of the massive extension and the far reaching changes in our profession which this declared enthusiasm demands. The commitment to social development is not a change of emphasis. If we are not to degenerate into mere talk, it requires a revolutionary shift for social work as a profession and in the practice of most social workers.*

Maxine Ankrah reviews the literature from Africa and more widely, and offers some direction :

> "The process of development is seen as a manifestation of change in the direction of desired and planned goals – social, economic, political. Social work is further concerned specifically with man and _his_ development, in _his_ involvement in defining and solving _his_ problems, and _his_ participation in the development of resources to meet his needs. Social work is also interested in development defined in terms of social and economic equality, improved and new institutions and attitudes, and social policy measures supportive of the betterment of man and society."

She emphasises the political implications and in this regard

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quotes Peter Kuenstler (our Chairman today) on changing the structure of political power. In 1971 in Asia* I extrapolated from the literature and pronouncements five "roles" in relation to social development. Four of these address themselves to 1) Social Policy and Planning; 2) Social Justice; 3) Participation by the People; 4) Institution Building.** These were not, of course, entirely novel aspects of social work, but as I saw it they had to become the mainstream of our focus and activity if our social development aspirations were to be taken seriously.

It will be seen, therefore, that I find myself very much in sympathy with Ms Ankrah's stance. She requires that social work must enable the poor, rural and urban, to become contributors as well as beneficiaries of development in terms of defining objectives and in implementation. She also insists rightly that "new strategies must affect the rural masses."

However, now in 1978 her judgement is that Rigby-Williams' 1969 statement regarding social work and welfare in Africa remains characteristic yet :

> "... they are still mainly concerned with
> picking up the social casualties ..."

I have spent some time on this because included in this section is David Chi's paper, which I find difficult to place, for it seems that Chung-Ang University Social Welfare Centre declares itself as attempting

> "... to project a model of social development ..."

However, I think that this, by the above development criteria, the Centre as it is presently described is unlikely to do.

Let me say at once that I believe the sensitive care and

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* David Drucker. "An 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. ECAFE/UNICEF, 1972.

** Explorations, Ibid, page 16

management of social casualties are important and should not
be denigrated. Social work has a tradition and a responsibility
here. Social casualties are inevitable, and likely to increase
in conditions of rapid social change. It would be quite
legitimate and honourable for social work as a profession to
declare this "stretcher bearer" work as its central focus and
to contribute its findings, insights, and considered opinions
to those involved with the wider concerns.

Responding to this aspect in formulating my fifth
development role, I put the matter thus   :

"Social Work helping methods

... For our purposes we ask you to narrow down
your thinking of what you teach to the emphasis
which you give in imparting that the situations
dealt with by social workers very often illustrate
the malfunctioning of our societies and the gaps
or the inconsistencies in our policy 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 that we
are asking about here ..."

(Explorations, pp. 16-17)

There is need and demand enough in this fifth role alone for
a profession to concentrate upon. But our profession has
insistently claimed for itself a major and wider role in
development, and we must therefore produce the organization
and coherent action where our mouths have led us.

David Chi might reasonably argue directly that the
University needed field work experiences for its student which
apparently could not be met by existing agencies and a solution
was successfully found in a physical facility drawing a number
of functions together - a University (in the possessive sense?)
Social Welfare Centre. David Chi uses a familiar social work

jargon and might assist us if he would clarify what in operational terms he means by such shorthand as '<u>systematic wholistic approach</u>', '<u>multi-disciplinary</u>', and '<u>inter-disciplinary</u>'. Physical close proximity*does not of itself constitute an interdisciplinary contribution "to social development through the direct application of theories and professional skills" which David Chi rightly desires.

The paper comes nearest to a social development orientation when he lists :

"... the ranking of problems according to the most pressing ..."

Problems A, "Environment", are curiously distinguished from B by the heading "<u>Activity Related Problems</u>". Problems A (non-activity?) we are told :

"... will require government intervention. Thus workers in the area will have to make representations to authorities to remedy the situation ..."

Thereafter the paper does not mention these problems again. Perhaps David Chi will enlarge upon what he thinks "representations to authorities" etc., require from the profession and in terms of the social work education trinity – knowledge, attitude, and skills?

What too were/are the processes and mechanisms for involving the community in defining its problems for itself, for selecting priorities, and forging action programmes and projects? Did it have a say in deciding upon a Centre?

It might be salutary to ask in this context, as Ms Ankrah does in another

"... whose purposes are being served ...?"

in this Centre.

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The examples given include having a medical clinic in the welfare centre, and students preparing applicants in terms of their capacity to pay for an education programme.

I hope David Chi will not take these comments amiss
and I am sure we all join him in his feeling "that the
practice of social work should always be action-oriented"
and not a theoretical indulgence. This concerns Ms Ankrah
too, for she spends much of her paper arguing the cause of
intermediate levels of education in social work and their
practical contribution, and the discontinuities of this,
with what takes place at the universities. Yet I detect
that she is admiringly resentful of the status-conferring
status-quo supporting and supported Universities which
receive such attention from governments, and she adds
"the international organizations".

Underlying all this seems to me to be fundamental
questions regarding the nature and tensions of social work
practice : the necessary contribution towards the institution
building required for new and appropriate social change
oriented educational institutions : and the significance of
social work practice and its emerging developmental theory
within them.

My opinion is that social work has generally paid too
high a price for the respectability of being University-based,
for the fact is that

> "The universities...are still very much moving
> to the rhythm of their past, that is they
> were set up to 'study, enrich and glorify'
> traditional culture." *

They are still much concerned with fixed and eternal
truths, with knowledge located so to speak within the exalted
person of the teacher (as "guru"), who certifies his disciples.
Science and the philosophy of science demand critical questioning,
challenge to shibboleths and to authority within the world of
observable and confirmable phenomena, and requires a democratic
fellowship of students and teachers which is not hierarchical.

Explanations, ibid, p. 169

interpret; present; pass opinion; explain; question; discuss
and compile. This is aimed at creating the capacity for
education as a life long pursuit for self instruction and
self growth and not just "taking in" courses.

However, the complex "developmental social science
content" must of course be defined, selected and translated
for specific social work purposes and the skills for doing
so practiced and demonstrated by the teachers before we can
place the responsibility fully on the students themselves.

Social science is as yet limited in scope and based
largely on observations of western behaviour. We have grasped
too readily the false security of the numbers-games and limited
research methodologies. I find an incredible unwillingness for
researchers to establish the raw material of analysis, concepts,
and theory by amassing detailed descriptions of behaviour or
of what social workers actually do. The developing world has
yet to make its contribution to the social sciences by redressing
the imbalance in which western findings have been accepted as
more or less universal and applicable to those with very
different thought patterns and societies. We ourselves clamour
for 'image' and 'status' in tradition bound hierarchies without
recognising the contradictions and realising our potential
contribution for change. Our students perhaps need to be
made aware of the 'minority' position that the profession holds
in store for them. Image and status must be earned and not
conferred, and our authority can come only from that which we
can contribute and achieve, and not because we have somehow
joined other status holders.

I have indicated just the surface of what we must do
in institution building for our own educational purposes.
Implied too is the need for institution building for a truly
professional organization of social work to systematically
address itself to social development. It is not enough for

individual social workers to join 'think tanks'. In
Explorations I have commented that often such persons go
into highly erudite technical circles on a personal basis
only, without the full weight of the professional experience
distilled and mobilised behind them.* One result is that
Social Policy seems to remain inspirational statements rather
than operational realities. Ms Ankrah tells us that Tesfaye
in Africa points to the fact (as does my work in Asia) that
there is little Schools of Social Work can go on in trying
to trace stated Social Policy through the various operational
stages to Manpower requirements for social service. Organized
social work has a massive task to perform here. We will need
to produce social workers who have been trained in the
intellectual skills of being able to clarify the nature and
implications of choice open to the community. In my 1971
study I found that almost no related field placements existed
for exercising such skills, and Ms Ankrah gives the impression
that the same is true for Africa.** She says that field work
is very weak in the Region.

A vital area everywhere for institution building is
the necessity for developing two way processes in planning
and policy formulation from the community-up with support-
down. Social work has surely a contribution to make here.
Ms Ankrah emphasises the importance of community work and
talks sweepingly "of placing social development workers
throughout the structure". She sees progress

"if social workers really know what to do
with communities." !

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* In Asia until recently there was no professional who worked
full time in the organization of the profession per se.
** Practical suggestions have been made in UNITED NATIONS
ST/SOA/97 "Report of the Interregional Meeting of Experts
on the Training of Social Welfare Personnel for Participation
in Development Planning," Geneva, 1969. Explorations, page 151,
"The See-Saw Approach"; and Virginia A Paraiso, "Social Service
in Latin America: Functions and Relationships to Development",
Economic Bulletin for Latin America, Vol XI No 1, April 1966.

On the same page she laments that "the literature is
relatively silent on specific curriculum content." She -
concludes :

> "... not many **practical** models for social work
> practice in rural areas are available ..."

Clearly Ms Ankrah has placed much on the social work
agenda. I would emphatically support her plea

> "... that there is a need for more details as
> well as analyses of the functions and roles of
> social workers ..."

in the projects which have been reported.

I have been struck with the change in magnitude, content
and style of Ms Ankrah's contribution in the last page, when
she enumerates the issues of importance which we are asked to
consider. Is she saying in her paper : "Look, this is what
the pundits have said? 'Fine! but now, excuse me, this is
what really worries me ..."?? If so, then she is surely right,
for the questions lead to fundamental and largely unanswered
matters on which we have been intellectually ambivalent and
operationally obscure.

> "... Do social workers really want to opt out of
> the establishment - into which they are just
> gaining membership - in the cause of the poor
> and rural masses ..?"

Does she suggest that the establishment is antithetical to
the cause of social work: If so, what are the full
implications of opting out and what should be the nature of
what we might opt into? Latin American social work addresses
some of these issues in its cry for liberation. It complicates
matters but can it tell us how organized social work education
can operate with frankly anti-establishment objectives?

Quite rightly Ms Ankrah requires of us to begin to
answer from our professional experience and value base whether
we dare take risks, and mentions something which we have politely

avoided at these international congresses. How could (should?)
our social worker colleagues practice their social development
roles under the conditions of minimal and sometimes cynical
participation which are common to elitist regimes, and often
synonymous with military ones? Conflict strategies can rarely
be practiced within the protection of the law, and bloodshed
is only too frequent. Her question, how do you make a
relationship of 'unequals' productive for social development?
goes further than her context of university and intermediate
level education. Ms Ankrah leaves the real cry from the heart
to the very last line :

"Can social work education educate in
commitment and caring?"

Commitment and caring seem to me highly personal matters.
Educators and experienced social workers must husband what
exists of this precious _moral_ quality in students, encourage
it and help graft on to it competence, skills and stimulate
and applaud any expression of what has been called the
sociological imagination.

But these are areas which are nurtured by example.
As individuals and as a profession our commitment and caring
must be continuously exercised and observable, with any
weariness, rat race behaviour, and occasional cynicism kept
very much in check. When we, the culture-carriers of social
work, become effective, human, daily models for our students
and earn respect from our colleagues in allied professions,
when we can demonstrably forge our complaints, sense of
failure, and the seeming chaos and confusion about us into
some kind of order, and devise systematic courses of action,
perhaps our students will not take into their own professional
personae a feeling of the second rate and of impotence, but
will find pride in their minorityness and their being forever
front line, and of necessity battle weary.

The Mobile* Training Scheme (MTS) has attempted a
radical approach towards establishing the foundations for
a variety of training programmes, starting from fundamental
premises, many of which have been raised in discussion by
the other two papers.

The MTS enunciated its philosophy, attempted a
diagnosis of the failures and shortcomings of training
and social work education as its impact could be discerned
in Asia, and invented a methodology. One of the outstanding
ideas, behind the MTS was to set up a process and an
organization through which training in the social development
arena would belong inside development activities rather than
an adjunct to it (i.e. inside line administration and not
stuck out on a separate training arm on the chart or in
separate institutions). It was to have an indigenous base
which would nourish creativity and innovation and would
produce an expanding corps of expertise. It was to attempt
to link up many things in which rural communities could
become their own researchers and determiners of their own
priorities in local development planning and implementation,
in genuine partnership with those who could display what might
be possible from sources outside. In addition MTS would be
able to take some steps in developing an increasingly
effective practice of what I have called cross-cultural
consultation, which would become a specific international
contribution to social development.**

The outline of all this can be found in the Project

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* Mobile in the sense that the original design was to
  orchestrate the members of the team, international and
  national, through several of the least developed countries
  in Asia in an on going manner over several years.

** The need for this was expressed long ago and a meeting
   chaired by Lydia Rappaport at the Manila Congress in 1970
   actually addressed itself to this — but as far as I know
   nothing further has transpired.

Development Mission Report,* which described itself as a "professional technical document."

Beginning with the problems and situations in which "front line", "supervisory staff" and trainers find themselves, the MTS strive to take educators and administrators

> "... through the detailed step-by-step-exercises
> of experiencing and collecting material which
> will begin with an examination of the problems
> in the community which are to be tackled leading
> to a detailed and realistic job analysis broken
> down into skills, knowledge and attitude required
> and systematically link each element of the
> analysis to a unit of educational objectives,
> practice, content and method. ..."

Curriculum development was to be linked and derived from stimulating grassroot participation in planning and in influencing policy formulation, all the while keeping the specific social, cultural and political context to the fore. This was to be a version of the Explorations recommended "see-saw approach", in which education would swing from practice through several interim stages into teaching and back again.

In practice the team of internationals and nationals were organized in eight basic groups, with their functions spelled out and interrelated : 1) Steering Group; 2) Role performing groups; 3) Role analysis group; 4) Action research group; 5) Teaching methods group; 6) Teaching materials group; 7) Projects and technical collaboration groups; 8) Policy development groups.**

Actual examples of all these functions now exist and we should be able to ask the MTS to detail all aspects of the

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* Yasas, Drucker and Basnyat. Report to the Office of Technical
Cooperation on a Mobile Training Scheme for the Training of
Front Line and Supervisory Developmental Personnel in Land-
Locked and Least Developed Countries of the ECAFE Region. 1973.

** Ibid, Appendix 4. A Methodological Approach for the Mobile
Training Programme.

methodology and give us a full account of itself - shortcomings and all - as was originally intended. Without this, the MTS will not have done itself full credit (enough material already exists for dozens of stimulating papers') and until it does so its considerable contribution to social work, social work education and social development must remain an unrealised potential, not reproducible and unavailable to be improved upon elsewhere.

I think that judgement might declare the MTS beginnings as crude. However, all innovations are bound to be crude; that should not obscure the richness of its possibilities, and its implications for social development where it is needed most.

I fear that in the space available to me I have not done full justice to the three papers and our subject matter, but trust your discussion will take us all many steps forward.

D Drucker
August 1978

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