
UNIT 6 TEACHERSHIP AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Analyze the concept of teachership;
- Explain teachership as a value of social work;
- Discuss the relationship of academicians and practitioners and the value of teachership;
- Highlight the standards for developing the quality of teachership among social workers.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Every profession has its own value system which gives the professionals the direction to attain the goals of the profession by accomplishing its purpose and tasks in an effective and fruitful manner. The profession of social work is significant to the well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities. Social workers are grounded by certain prescribed values which enable them to perform their professional responsibility while addressing the issues and needs of the people.

Teachership is a value of social work profession which has great significance in determining the effectiveness and shaping the skills of the social workers in their practice. It is this value of teachership which enables the social workers to vigorously make efforts towards attaining excellence in social work education and practice.

6.2 TEACHERSHIP: CONCEPT

A teacher is a highly valued personality in the society and teachership is considered to be the most sacred and distinctive profession. Teachers are considered as our nation builders- the strength of every profession grows out of the knowledge and skills that teachers help to instil in the individuals of the society. The profession of teachership

carries an incredible amount of responsibility. It is the most difficult job that anyone can have and the most rewarding because they mould the achievements of individuals and the prosperity of our nation. It is in the profession of teachership that specialized application of knowledge, skills and attributes are designed to provide unique service to meet the educational needs of the individuals and of the society. The knowledge which is transmitted by the teachers to their students enables them to develop themselves as responsible individuals who are sensitive to the needs and well-being of the society.

Teachership is not just about teaching or delivering the lessons to the students, rather it is a process that facilitates learning. In addition to providing students with learning opportunities to meet the curriculum outcomes, teachership emphasizes on the development of values and guides students in their social relationships. Teachers and educators employ practices that develop positive self-concept in students. Although the work of teachers typically takes place in a classroom setting, the direct interaction between teachers and students is the single most important element in the teaching-learning process, which grooms the students with the right knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Thus, teachership is not merely about the syllabus or the curriculum, but it covers a wider area which includes the moulding of the students to become responsible and competent members of the society.

Teachership as a value occupies a significant place in the profession of social work. In social work profession, teachership has two aspects: one in facilitating the learning process as educators to social work trainees and the other in empowering and enabling the clients to face the realities of their situations. It is a significant value of the profession and every social worker performs the roles and responsibilities of a teacher, whether they are academicians or practitioners. That is, teachership in social work profession has an important role to play in enhancing the quality of social work education being delivered by the social work educators and also in enhancing the effectiveness of our interventions which we use as practitioners, while dealing with the problems of our clients. Teachership can be understood as an important mechanism through which the effectiveness and improvement in the quality of social work profession can be achieved.

6.3 TEACHERSHIP: A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

With the challenges that social workers have to face in their professional front, they need to imbibe themselves with the value of teachership. In our rapidly changing society which is characterized by contingency and ambiguity, the need for social workers and their effective problems solving strategies are increasingly being felt, and thus, the construction and development of knowledge and expertise among the social workers to bring positive changes in our society is being reflected. It is essential for social workers to be guided by the value of teachership, whether they are academicians or practitioners. Both these groups have to imbibe the value of teachership in enhancing the effectiveness of the social work profession, as well as, in catering to the need for the creation of reflective knowledge and learning among the social work trainees, and in addressing to the needs and issues of the clients. Through different ways, social work academicians and social work practitioners instil the value of teachership, which constitutes the foundational structure of social work practice.

6.4 ACADEMICIANS AND THE VALUE OF TEACHERSHIP

Social work educators have the prime responsibility of familiarising students with the theories of social work. It is the responsibility of the teachers to deliver appropriate

knowledge of the theoretical base of social work and the related subjects, thus, developing the knowledge of the social work trainees. Students should be made able to develop linkage between the theories of social work and its practice. It is important that students understand the need of social work and critically analyze the place of social work in our society. The social work educators should facilitate students in understanding the social, economic and political context of social work in the world today.

Social work is a practice based profession and thus, merely transmitting knowledge is not sufficient in social work education. Education and training in social work is not complete unless the trainees are enabled to acquire sufficient skills which are necessary for the effective execution and performance of various activities in the field. Social work teachers engage students in several activities and tasks, both inside the classroom, as well as, outside the classroom in the field, which allows the students to apply the theoretical knowledge and gain understanding of the situation. Engagement of students in different tasks such as, reflective discussions, role plays and workshop sessions, etc., enable them to acquire social work skills and enhance their competence.

Social work is understood as the professional activity of helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning. The process of improving the social functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities involves study, assessment, intervention and evaluation. Thus, social work educators hold the responsibility for guiding and supervising the students in conducting research in various fields of social work practice. It is necessary that the teachers teach the students the appropriate methods and ways of conducting research and also the ethical concerns regarding research in social work, in the classroom. The students should be consistently given guidance, with timely feedbacks, so that, they are able to conduct good quality research which will add to their competence and learning. Also, it is very important that the social work academicians themselves are continuously engaged in conducting research in the various fields of social work, which will add to their knowledge and the guidance they provide to the students.

One very essential core of social work education is fieldwork. And social work educators play many roles in providing proper/suitable and effective fieldwork experience to the trainees. The social work academicians hold the responsibility of networking and collaborating with social work agencies and organizations to give the exposure of the field reality to the trainees for the practice based learning. It is the teachers who facilitate in developing coherent practice among students that assists the clients and promote social change. Through the guidance and supervision provided by the educators, the students learn the practical application of the theoretical knowledge and skills of social work, learn to practice the different methods of social work, and learn to apply the different techniques of social work to improve the social functioning of the clients and promote their well-being. The teachers enable the students to reflect on their field experience and learning from the practical experiences.

All these are incomplete without mentioning that the overall implication of the value of teachership among the academicians is providing professional support to the students, to facilitate them develop a professional identity. The teachers have the responsibility for the overall growth and development of the students as professionals. It is necessary that the students develop sensitivity towards the needs and problems of people, harness positive attitude while dealing with people and the present situation, and govern themselves by the ethics and values of the social work profession. It is necessary to develop among the students the ability of analytical and reflective thinking, and maintain the professional standard.

The responsibility of the social work academician towards a client is to prepare and mould the future social workers to engage themselves in helping activities that will benefit those who are needy, by promoting the well-being of the client and ensuring the protection of their rights. The social work educators have a unique responsibility of mentoring the future social workers, and their effective mentoring of the students is their biggest contribution towards promoting development and bringing social change through the students who are their reflection in the entire process of teaching and learning social work.

6.5 PRACTITIONERS AND THE VALUE OF TEACHERSHIP

Social work practitioners also play the role of a teacher in various ways and this value of teachership is of high significance in their professional practice. The social work practitioners have the professional responsibility to educate the clients on various issues and take active part in the mentoring process of social work trainees.

Social work practitioners have the primary responsibility of working with the clients, by engaging them in the helping process. Social workers study the clients and their needs, arrive at assessment or psycho-social diagnosis of their problems and give appropriate intervention to the clients to deal with their problems. Social workers identify the knowledge base of the clients and provide them with necessary information and knowledge to cope with their situations. Social workers educate the individuals, families, groups and communities about various resources available, schemes, laws and policies. They practice the various methods of social work to deal with different client systems and intervene with them with the use of various techniques such as, enhancing resources, enhancing information, advocacy, public interest litigation, resource mobilization, organizing awareness campaigns, networking and referral services, etc. For providing these necessary services to the clients, they also network and collaborate with government agencies and various other organizations, so that the clients can be provided with their needed information and resources.

The educational role of social work practitioners can be applied at a variety of levels. It can be done on a one-to-one level where a social worker deals directly with an individual in terms of helping him/her to promote his or her learning and understanding about the situation he or she is facing. For example, while working with a client who is infected with tuberculosis, the social worker can educate him or her with information regarding the causes, symptoms, treatment and cure of T.B. The educational role can also be applied in terms of working with a few people at the same time whether a family or any other small group of people who have come for developing their understanding towards a particular issue or problem. For example, a social worker can give adequate information and knowledge to the family members on how to take care of the child having cerebral palsy. Another example could be where a social worker can give education to the members of a Self Help Group on the benefits of saving money. The educational role can even be applied while working with the meso level practice, such as, while working with a community, where for example, the social worker can impart knowledge to the people on advantages of using organic farming in place of using chemical fertilizers.

By performing the educational role, social workers empower people with knowledge and information. People gain strength with the information they obtain. They get empowered through the learning, which allows them to reflect on their situation and enhances their problem-solving abilities.

Social work practitioners are responsible not only to their clients but also to social work trainees. They also have the responsibility to provide education and training to the budding social work trainees. They perform the role of field supervisors or agency supervisors in assisting the learning process of the future social workers. They design the plan for giving the learning exposure of the field reality to the students. They supervise their application of theoretical knowledge and learning into practice, allowing students to enhance their skills and develop the attitude of working with people. The students are given opportunities to practice the various methods of social work while dealing with the different problems of the different client groups, thereby enhancing their skills and practical application of the helping techniques.

Social work practitioners supervise the students through field education, which acts as a bridge between their learning from the classroom and the reality of social work practice. It is the responsibility of the social workers to enable the students to develop professional skills and attitude and enable them to apply the abstract learning from the classroom while dealing with the reality of the situation of the clients. Supervision provided by social work practitioners to trainee social workers has been recognized as an integral part of social work education and training. The role of the supervisors is both educative and supportive. Through their supervision, they enable the budding social workers to develop a professional identity and competence to work with the problems of the people. They are the ones who enable the future social workers to groom themselves as independent practitioners of the future, by inculcating in them the values and ethics of social work, and empowering them to provide effective services to the people.

6.6 STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPING THE QUALITY OF TEACHERSHIP AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS

Having a professional qualification in social work does not necessarily qualify social workers to become effective teachers either as academicians or as practitioners. In order to inculcate the value of teachership among the budding social workers, the practitioners/social workers need to develop themselves towards attaining certain skills and abilities, which include:

1. Adequate Intellectual Knowledge

It is necessary that professional social workers have adequate intellectual knowledge to impart education to the social work trainees and clients. They need to have clarity of the content which is to be delivered. Also the content needs to be well organized and presented in a clear language. The specific concepts in the content need to be interconnected with one another and applicable to the demand of the situation. The content also needs to be presented in an engaging way, with high energy.

The social workers also need to have knowledge about the available community resources and their operation and how to access them, so that such information can be delivered properly to the trainees and clients.

2. Rapport and Relationship Building

Social work professionals need to develop good rapport with the students, colleagues and clients. Rapport and relationship is the medium through which social work professionals can influence the students and clients for behavioural and attitudinal change. Social work professionals need to get themselves involved with the students and clients.

Relationship is the channel through which the professional social worker mobilizes the capacity of the trainees and clients for appropriate change. It is essential to develop healthy relationship with the trainees and clients to encourage them towards the process of learning and development. Cordial and healthy relationship will help in better acceptance of the professional by the trainee as well as by the client, which will add more value to the process of helping and learning.

3. Critical Thinking

Professional social workers should have the ability for critical thinking. They need to have the ability to recognize the need of the trainees and the clients, and analyze their potentials and environment. Critical thinking is essential for finding solutions to the issues and problems of the trainees and clients. The professional through his or her practical experience, also guides the trainees and clients to develop the skill of critical thinking about the reality of the situation and strategies which can be applied to solve their problems, as well as that of clients.

4. Communication

It is necessary that professional social workers should have strong communication skills. Good communication skills on the part of the professionals will enable them to initiate a positive relationship with the trainees and the clients. Though relationship is an involvement depending on two persons, it is incumbent on the part of the professional to use his or her expertise in communication in order to develop a positive relationship with the trainees and the clients. Communication involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. It involves talking (a skill which implies using voice, speech, tone, language and body language effectively) and listening (involving hearing, observing, encouraging and remembering).

Through their tone of voice, speech and language, professionals can convey their genuine concern and interest. Through active listening, professionals can attain better understanding of the need of the trainees and clients, which can be followed up by needed clarification and explanations.

5. Problem Solving Skills

Social work professionals either as academicians or practitioners face many problems and challenges. It is necessary on their part to have the skills in finding solutions to the problems and demand of the situations. Sometimes the problem may be huge and thus, prioritization may be required so that the aspect which demands immediate attention is focussed first. Also, for effective problem solving, professionals need to be resourceful. Social work professionals also need to inculcate in the trainees and clients the skill of problem solving so that they can face the challenges of their own situations and engage themselves meaningfully.

6. Positive regard

Social work professionals should treat the trainees and clients as individuals with inherent worth and dignity. They must be respected for who they are, regardless of their behaviour, problem, life circumstances and affiliations. They need to be understood and respected by the professional for their strengths, abilities and potentials. However, their weaknesses and limitations should not be ignored, but rather it is the duty of the professional to encourage and motivate the trainees and clients to enhance their capacity to change and improve.

7. Warmth

Social work professionals should respond to the need of the trainees and clients in such ways that make them feel wanted, safe and accepted. It is necessary for the trainees and clients to feel welcomed. The professionals need to show their concern, goodwill, courtesy and cordiality towards the trainees and clients. The feeling of warmth felt by them is essential to develop healthy relationship among them and the professional. Professionals need to show warmth through facial expressions, smiles, body language, softness in the tone of the voice and speech, maintaining eye contact and gestures which will convey acceptance and openness.

8. Motivation

Motivation is persuading a person to undergo the advice which is good for him or her. Professional social workers also need to have the skill of motivating the trainees and clients to take up the appropriate course of action which is considered to be good for them and which is necessary for bringing the desired change in their present state.

9. Support

Professional social workers need to provide psychological support to the trainees and clients. The trainees need psychological support from the educators especially in the initial days of the social work education and training, so that, they can cope with the challenges and expectations of the course and enhance their performance. Support is also necessary for clients to enable them to cope with the stress and anxiety brought to them by their problem or situational reality. The support provided by the social workers will provide comfort to the trainees and clients, and also make them feel that someone is there for them.

10. Justice

Social work academicians and practitioners need to recognize every trainee and client as equal, irrespective of their differences. Equal treatment and opportunities need to be provided to the trainees and clients. Also, it is on the part of the social workers to safeguard and protect their rights. Social workers should also have the skill to enable the trainees and clients to fight for social justice.

11. Facilitating Behaviour Change

Social work professionals need to have the skill to use different strategies and approaches to facilitate the appropriate behaviour and attitude among the trainees and clients. Social workers should be able to effectively guide the trainees and clients to bring necessary modifications in their behaviour and attitude.

Check your Progress II

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) Define the concept of teachership.

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- 2) List out standards for developing the quality of teachership among social workers.

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6.7 LET US SUM UP

The value of teachership is an integral part of the profession of social work. Social workers play the role of a teacher, either as an academician to the trainees or as a practitioner to the clients. Social work professionals have the responsibility to provide information and knowledge to the trainees and clients, to provide them strength for bringing change and empowering/enabling them to improve their situation. Teachership helps the profession of social work to maintain continuity by providing opportunity to future social workers to learn, practice and enhance their skills to become efficient and effective social work professionals. The value of teachership ensures the clients with their dignity and self-respect, through the information and knowledge which they receive from the social workers, which enlighten them and empower them to fight against the challenges brought to them by their situation. The value of teachership needs to be inculcated by social workers and reflect in their approach towards dealing with the trainees and clients.

6.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

- 1)
 - Teachership is not just about teaching or delivering the lessons to the students, rather it is process that facilitates learning. In addition to providing students with learning opportunities to meet the curriculum outcomes, teachership emphasizes on development of values and guides students in their social relationships.
- 2)
 - Adequate intellectual knowledge.
 - Rapport and relationship building.
 - Critical thinking.
 - Communication.
 - Problem solving skills.
 - Positive regard.
 - Warmth.
 - Motivation.
 - Support.
 - Justice.
 - Facilitating behavior change.

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