

Politics of Social Welfare: A Comparison of Social Work Curriculum and Pedagogy in India and China

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Abstract

This study is the result of 66 qualitative interviews conducted with the social work educators and students at the postgraduate departments in India and China. The first author of the article studies at Shandong University in China for six month and the data required for the study were collected during the visit. The aim of the present article is to understand the growth and development of social work education in a parliamentary democracy and a non-electoral Communist regime, i.e. India and China. The study explores (i) the historical background of

social work education in India and China; (ii) how different political ideologies influence social work education; (iii) how different India and China are in their social work / welfare initiatives; (iv) what the learnings from each other's experiences are. The study is a qualitative exploratory study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted with social work educators and students across India and China.

Keywords: *social work education. social welfare, curriculum, Communist regime*

1. Introduction: History and Development of Social work in India and China

1.1. Development of Social work in India

The origin of the practice of social work in India goes back to decades. The concept of social work originated in the pre-modern society as charitable response of individuals or groups of people to address the problems that were affecting the society. All major religions in the society encourage people to help the poor, and some of these religions that were formed thousands of years ago have attached contributions very close to the origin of social work. Therefore, it can be said that social work originated in the ancient times, when human beings started to perform charity work. Until 1936 there were no professional trainings for the social workers as there were no institutions offering social work as an academic discipline in the country. Moreover, at that time social work was considered a service that anyone could offer anyone and did not need any education, qualification or professional training. In 1905 Gopal Krishna Gokhale initiated the specialized ad hoc or short-term training to social workers to infuse a systematic approach. This idea was

initiated through Servants of Indian Society which was established with an idea that a “missionary” spirit alone was not sufficient for an effective social service for the Indian social condition (Ranade, 1987, cited in Adaikalam, 2014). In 1936 the first school of social work then named as Sri Dorabji Tat School of social work came into existence; this was the first effort to professionalize the social work discipline by academic training. Thereafter the social work education and profession have undergone rigorous changes and development. The origins of social work in India are rooted in the humanitarian and altruistic ideals, which took the shape of voluntary work or religious pursuits to help the poor and needy. While these trends continue to influence social work practice in India, the emergence of professional social work has struck a chord for a more radical and action-oriented social work practice (Palattiyil and Sidhva, 2012).

The introduction of professional social work education and training in India was initiated by American educators in 1936 by establishing the first school of social work in Mumbai, which is known today as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). TISS was a pioneering effort to professionalize social work with the objective of bringing about social welfare through academic excellence (*ibid.*). The establishment of TISS was followed by that of a number of other schools of social work, many of which have been set up on Western approaches to practice and catering to the domestic market. At present there are more than 600 schools of social work all over India affiliated to central universities, state universities and independent autonomous colleges (Bodhi and Tripura, 2013). Social work education has shifted its focus to many different areas in the name of specializations and concentrations. At present according to social work educators there is mushrooming of social work institutions which is driven by the global demand for social workers. But the quality and standards of the education and

professionals are still a question. George Palattiyil and Dina Sidhva (2012) argued that globalization and its overwhelming impact on India's society have led to a more radical and activist type of social work interventions with mass movements, such as efforts to work against the displacement of the rural poor resulting from multi-national hydro-electric projects or movements fostering the equality of Dalits (the untouchables) in the recent years. Looking at the development of the professional social work education in India, Vidya Rao (2012) noted:

The year 1980 was considered as a golden era in the development of professional social work education in India. During this time there were more than 50 new schools of social work established in India and started imparting social work education. Because of the social work academics the concepts like national unity, integrity, democracy, secularism, equality, individual freedom, centralized state, federal system and planned change got a visibility. Further in the year a number of new concepts such as, disaster management, development and environment, social action and social change, rural development were incorporated in to social work curriculum.

In the initial days the social work academia was forced to use the American knowledge and sources in the development and delivery of courses in social work. However following this the efforts had been made by social work educational institution and social work educators to develop an Indian model of social work education and practice. The first effort in these directions was the hosting of the Indian Conference of Social Work (ICSW) in the year 1947. Further in the year 1950 there was the signing of contract with the government of the USA which led to the formation of the Technical Cooperation Mission Programme with the council on social work education and the government of USA. And then

the year 1951 saw the beginning of the Rural Community Development and an incorporation of Tribal Welfare (Bodhi and Tripura, 2013).

1.2. Development of Social work in China

Social work education in China was introduced much earlier than India. From its starting in 1920s to its abolition in 1949 and re-introduction in 1986, social work in China has seen many ups and downs. Xia and Guo (2002) noted the three stages that social work in China experienced since its introduction in China: introduction, abolishment and reinstatement. Similar to India, social work was first introduced to China by missionaries in 1922. In the initial days various types of social services were developed by religious organizations for disadvantaged people such as the poor, sick and disabled. The Japanese invasion, the Second World War and the civil war had serious impact on social work departments and schools in China. The schools offering social work educations were either forced to close their programmes or move to western or southern villages during a series of wars. However, in 1949 after the Communist Party assumed power, both social work education and missionary activities were prohibited in China. Social work was absent in China for around 40 years. However, since 1986 China has been offering social work programmes in institutes of higher education (Yan and Tsui, 2007). In a very short span of time social work education institutions have developed considerably and to date, there are nearly 200 social work programmes in colleges and universities throughout China (Yao, 1995; Yan and Tsang, 2005; Yuen-Tsang and Wang, 2002). Similar to India, social work education in China faces many problems and challenges. In order to address these issues an effort was made in 1988 to establish an association of social work education; unfortunately the Tiananmen Square incident took place in 1989 and the incident forced the postponement of the establishment of the association.

Social work in present China is very new professional and academic discipline as it was re-introduced to China after a gap of nearly 40 years. However, at present scholars argue that in spite of its drawbacks social work in present Chinese society is developing rapidly (Xiong and Wang, 2007). Similar to India, Chinese social work faces many challenges related to both education and practice. There is still an existing gap between the education and the practical application of the theoretical knowledge within the Chinese society. In 1999 the Chinese government introduced a new higher education policy, and as a result of this new policy implementation of social work is facing challenges of finding a definition of social work between the civil affairs sectors and other related government sectors. In addition social work across the country also faces the challenge related to overall advancement of social work training programmes, and roles of professional social work organizations in providing quality social services and standardizing training programmes in the country.

Iris Chi (2005) examined the professional growth of social work in China and noted that social work in China has not yet been recognized as a profession. Scholars in social work education further recommended that the most urgent need for social work in China is to improve the quality of training and education which in return will lead to professionalization of social work. However the international social work community expects Chinese social work academia to learn from the experiences of social work from the developed countries and as result of these learnings take the initiative to develop the social work that is more appropriate for the developing countries (Yan and Tsang, 2005; Yan and Cheng, 2009). Further, scholars also argued that China could take any direction in developing its own social work theories and practices which are relevant to Chinese society.

Further, a careful analysis of the literature available in the field of social work in China shows that significant amount of literature has been written on social work and social work education in China. However, most studies are limited to theoretical analyses and only a few have empirical bases (e.g. Yan and Tsang, 2005; Yan and Cheng, 2009). There is a need for empirical study which looks into the aspects of social work education, teaching, and learning and the practice aspects, as well as contribution of the civil society organizations and the professional organizations to social work education and practice.

In effort to develop social work education in China there is a need to understand the social work students' and the educators' perception regarding the issues related to social work curriculum, social work teaching and social work practicum and their solution for the problems faced by social work in respective contexts. The present study is important and valid in this line as a significant body of literature has discussed the problems and challenges of current professional education in China, such as the lack of a systematic and standardized curriculum, the insufficient professional training and experience of educators, the separation between university training and field practice, and the shortage of both practice opportunities and qualified supervisors for students (Yuen-Tsang and Wang, 2002; Xiong and Wang, 2007; Yip, 2007; Law and Gu, 2008; Yan and Cheng, 2009). The present study is intended to generate further understanding of the existing knowledge.

Throughout the literature in Chinese social work, one of the major challenges that were frequently discussed is the indigenization of Western social work theories and practice (Yan and Cheng, 2009). Indeed the present study focuses on the indigenization of social work in the respective contexts. The present study holds its importance as the necessity of, and the approaches to, indigenizing Western social work

theories and practice for a local Chinese context have been widely discussed in the Chinese social work academia (Tsang and Yan, 2001; Cheung and Liu, 2004; Yip, 2004; Chan and Chan 2005; Yan and Tsang, 2005; Yan and Cheung 2006; Hutchings and Taylor, 2007; Huang and Zhang, 2008; Hugman, 2009). This study is an attempt to further the understanding of the indigenization.

2. India: Programmes and Policies for Social Welfare

As a welfare state it is the state's responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of its citizens. Indian constitution provides both rights and duties to its citizens. The state formulates end number of policies and programmes focusing on the development of citizens with special focus on the marginalized and vulnerable. In 1950s Indian government introduced community development programmes with aim to enhance the capacity of the community and village population. The social workers were then closely associated with policy designing, programme planning, and implementation and evaluation of the policy and programmes related to the community development and organizations. In the fifties, sixties and the seventies some social workers were also given opportunity to get involved in the process of formulating policies related to children, women, criminal and custodial justice, habitat planning for the urban poor, rural development, population control, primary health and medical social work. Till about the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s social work educators like Kumarappa, AR Wadia, Bhyram Mehtha, MS Gore, PD Kulkarni, Kaikobad, Panakal, SD Gokhale and AS Desai were the contributors to the policy-making at state, national and international levels. These pioneering social work educators had seen the role of social work as a change agent as influenced by the freedom movement and the social movements (Rao, 2012).

There are many state programmes and policies where social work intervenes for the better implementation and making sure that they reach the neediest in the hierarchy. As an affirmative action, the government of India has provided reservation for the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other backward classes of people in education, jobs and political representation as these are the historically marginalized sections of society. The Constitution has provided these guarantees for India's indigenous peoples (referred to as Scheduled Tribes or STs) and the social group at the bottom of India's caste hierarchy (the Dalits referred to as Scheduled Castes or SCs). Further, the government came up with a second set of policies focusing on supplementing incomes of the rural poor through a variety of job creation programmes. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment scheme (MGNREGA) came into existence in 2005 with the aim to provide employment opportunity to the rural below-poverty-line families.

Interestingly most of the government programmes are concentrated towards rural development as the largest and most vulnerable group in India is in the rural settlements and those are also rural landless labourers. The labourers in the Indian villages are lacking in assets, have little bargaining power and are particularly vulnerable due to too much dependency on agricultural output. The state has deployed large amount of administrative, financial and intellectual resources over the years to guarantee employment to the people by employment guarantee programmes. In 1970 an antipoverty programme called the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was created to combat poverty. In the later part the same programme was reshaped in many other forms including schemes to make entrepreneurs of the poor such as TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment), which provide training and a toolkit, and most recently a self-employment scheme (the Swarnajayanti Grameen Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), or Golden Jubilee

Rural Self Employment Scheme). Transferring the productive asset to the targeted population is the basic idea behind all these programmes.

Another important problem is the lack of social security for the old-age people as well as for the employment sector. The large number of the labour population of India belongs to the unorganized sector and Indian government does not have a very well established social security system for this section of the population. The two important mandatory pension mechanisms are the civil servants' defined benefit pension and the "organized sector" system run by the Employees Provident Fund Organization (EPFO), an arm of the Ministry of Labour. At presently only just 11 percent of Indian labour force is covered under the pension system. To date a vast majority of the population lies in the "unorganized sector" and is outside the formal pension system. Support from the children is the principal means of old-age security for the old-age people falling under this group. Responding to this problem many states in India have now introduced old-age pension schemes, but the benefits under these are limited, typically about USD 5 per month and in many cases the benefits are not reaching the needy.

The other important public welfare programme of the Indian government is the public distribution system. The public distribution system aims at equal opportunity and equal distribution of the food grains to all the citizens and the food grains under this system are provided with subsidy by the government. In spite of many developmental programmes, India continues to do poorly on the public provision of basic services even those such as education which are constitutionally obligated. India's private health expenditure (78%) is one of the highest in the world, reflecting the abysmal provision of public health services. Child mortality and malnutrition are worse than Bangladesh and India's literacy rates are one of the worst in Asia, as is the extremely limited coverage of sanitation services.

India's poor record in providing basic public goods and services, like minimal levels of education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, keeps large number of people marginalized and poor. An unequal society with half-fed population gives enormous space for the social work professionals to intervene with the existing condition.

As Craig (2002) says, radical social work perspective is the one which gives much importance to the political nature of social work where social work professionals engage with political issues that are addressing the underlying causes of oppression. This view of social work clearly indicates that the problem is not one of limited resources, but political priorities and incentives. Further, Burke and Ngonyani (2004), Laird (2004), Mmatli (2008) and Shawky (1972) are of the view that "political" understanding and engagement may be of any kind. It may be raising awareness among the people and the community and struggling against the issues related to politics, economics or geography which are related to social work professional principles. It may also be gaining an understanding of the role of neo-liberal capitalism and its effect on local, national and global relationships between the developed and the developing nations, and the impact of globalization and occupation on democracy, identity and culture.

However Amin (2001), Sewpaul (2006) and Smith (2008) argue that issues of human rights, sexual orientation, genocide and violence, and according to Hölscher and Berhane (2008) displacement and the context of political conflict, are a few areas of concern that need to be addressed more by social work in the present society. In the present scenario the existence of social work itself is threatened by the profession's inability to confront the forces which are disempowering the profession (Mmatli, 2008: 300). The evidence is that the African social workers lack the power to change the situation which is fundamentally affected by

politics. This confirms that the social work profession is or must be a political endeavour (Sewpaul and Hölscher, 2008: 294). There are also many international incidences where social work has acted politically in challenging the oppression and the discrimination against the profession itself (Hölscher and Berhane, 2008: 312).

Describing the challenges faced by the social workers and social work education in Eritrea, Hölscher and Berhane (2008: 315) state that the macro-political and repressive ideology does not recognize the rights of the people and describe the challenges facing social workers and social work education in Eritrea, highlighting the stark problems facing social workers when working within a macro-political and repressive ideology which does not recognize the Eritrean government's decision to close down the only university educating social workers due to its belief that it was producing "disobedient nationals". The condition of social work is not very different in other parts of the world as social workers in other countries affected by conflict such as Northern Ireland and the Middle East have also occupied politically distant stances (Duffy, 2012).

Vidya Rao (2012) notes that the absence of the theory in social work research and emphasis on dealing with immediate practical problems have prevented social work from asking fundamental questions about the role and functions of the state. Every decision that is taken by the state has an implication for people and these need to be addressed by social work. Unfortunately, neither academics nor practitioners have questioned the Indian state in a systematic organized manner and the reason for this is that social work and the social work practitioners consider itself/themselves to be apolitical. But being an agent of change social work is very much political in its approach and cannot think of itself being an apolitical entity.

3. China: Social Problems and Social Work

China in the recent days has made tremendous economic achievements. The income per capita of the country has grown considerably and shown progress of fourfold that of previous growth since 2000. The process of economic development has helped China to pull itself out of absolute poverty especially in the urban parts of the country. However, in spite of the development achieved by China at present a high absolute number of poor persist in the western part of the country (Schatz, 2004). At the same time there are heated debates within the intellectual community about redefining the poverty line that is suitable to Chinese economy and development. On the other hand the Chinese government claims that there are 30 million poor people in the country (Li and Yue, 2004). In order to overcome the problem of poverty and achieve social stability the government implemented a ten-year, nationwide, multi-level (state, province, district, county, municipality) poverty alleviation strategy involving subsidized loans, food for work and grant funds. The programme has been overseen by the State Council Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Development (Jackson *et al.*, 2005).

The Communist Party of China is also encouraging both foreign and Chinese NGOs to contribute to rural poverty alleviation, within the framework of five-year plan programme (Schatz, 2004). In addition the NGOs, the civil societies in China are working closely with local governments. The NGO's and civil society interventions are involved in the areas of capacity building, training and service-delivery in microcredit, agriculture, off-farm employment, education, health, water and sanitation, and other activities which are helpful in asset building of the poor and marginalized population (Jackson *et al.*, 2005).

Yip (2007) notes that there are good numbers of studies describing the poverty and analysis that are focusing on social problems in China

but unfortunately the lacking parts in the studies are solutions, interventions and approaches to these social problems. Further, Yuen-Tsang and Wang (2002) examine a complete dearth of scholarly work on social work response to social problems such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, marital dissolution, family violence, drug abuse, mental health, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, etc.

As Leung (2007) observes, social work in China at present is concentrating on clinical social work practice and individualized counseling services. These are evolving to become the dominant form of practice in China, especially in Shanghai. Looking at the Chinese society from the time of the Chinese revolution up to the 1980s, the rural population of China accounted for 80% of the total population (Hewitt, 2008), and 70% among them were peasant farmers (Sachs, 2005). The social and economic inequality between the regions had resulted in the fall of 73% rural population by 1990 (Hewitt, 2008) and to 56% in 2007 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2008). Notwithstanding the reduction in extreme poverty and the rise in income per capita the developmental programmes introduced by the Chinese government are not distributed equality among all the regions. Nevertheless those programmes that are concerned with social development issues had highlighted several problems arising from economic reforms favouring certain special regions, the rapid urbanization of China, and the rural-urban divide, particularly the social and economic inequalities between regions.

Lo and Jiang (2006) argue that the reason for regional imbalance is the negligence of the government in the economic development of the central and the western regions over the last twenty years. Hewitt (2008) points out that one category of the rural population which is in the attention of the government, media and the academia is migrant workers or the floating population who comprises in millions who basically live in the coastal regions of the country and are migrating in search of the

work and better living condition in the southern part of the country. However, the contribution by these migrant workers to the Chinese society is remarkable. As Farndon (2008) notes the way these migrant workers have contributed to China's economic miracle. The contribution of the migrant workers is by providing the hard labour needed in building factories, offices, apartments, and Olympic stadiums. These workers are involved in the work which are low-paid and the work which urban residents are reluctant to do (Lo and Jiang, 2006).

Xiong and Wang (2007) note that social work has emerged as a new solution to many old and new social problems. Further, the present Chinese society has never given so much importance to social work profession. The emerging of social issues after the introduction of economic reforms in China has made the Chinese central government realize the importance of the social work as a solution to the social problems, and then the government decided to import and rebuild social work. As a result of the government initiation the social work programmes were re-introduced in China in Beijing University and three other universities in 1988. The Ministry of Civil Affairs took the initiative of re-inaugurating the social work education programmes in China. Since then social work is addressing and finding solution to social problems which are affecting the Chinese society.

Yan and Tsang (2005) and Qiao and Chan (2005) argue that social problems, such as child abuse, have not been sufficiently addressed by the Chinese government as the major policy focus of the government has been on economic development. As a result of the less consideration of the issues related to children, Qiao and Chan (2005) note that the very term "child abuse" is seldom used in China, even among healthcare professionals who commonly treat injured children. Liao *et al.* (2011) notes that there are no government interventions for the maltreatment of children as the maltreatment of children in China is still largely

considered as family matter rather than an issue that calls for government attention. It is also interesting to know that child abuse is commonly tolerated in Chinese society, since it is perceived as a means to help children achieve academic success (Liao *et al.*, 2011). Xu *et al.* (2006) notes that social workers in China act as problem solvers to handle the daily needs of community residents, such as providing home care visits to the elderly who are living alone, and assisting low-income or physically disadvantaged people to obtain social assistance.

4. Empirical Study in India and China: Research Method and Analysis

4.1. Theoretical Approach

This study is based on epistemological assumptions. Epistemology is a philosophical belief system about who can be a knower (Guba and Lincoln 1989; Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004). Epistemology is also “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (Crotty, 2003: 3). Epistemology is also “concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Maynard, 1994). Adopting epistemological approach in the present study, we may say that the social work students in India and China are knowers of the facts related to challenges faced by social work education in their respective countries. Through their experience and participation in the teaching, learning and practice they discover the challenges and the constraints for social work education in India and China. Further, documenting and understanding these experiences of the students through an in-depth interaction in Indian and Chinese schools of social work help the researcher to understand the challenges faced by social work academia in India and

China, rather than merely discovering the challenges from a researcher's point of view.

The central aim of the study was to understand the social work students' perceptions of challenges faced by social work education in India and China. In the view of limited knowledge available on this topic and its exploratory nature, the qualitative research method was chosen because it enables researcher to understand the perception of student social workers along with the challenges faced (Creswell, 2008). A grounded theory approach was used to enable researcher to generate concepts to understand the perception and challenges of social work students (Charmaz, 2006).

4.2. Data Collection

The study is the outcome of first author's six-month visit to Shandong University, People's Republic of China. The researcher studied and conducted research at Shandong University as senior visiting scholar during the fall of 2016; the collection of data required for the study was conducted during this visit. The data were collected from the schools of social work spreading across three provinces in China and three metropolitan cities in India. Selection of the regions was guided by the distinct economic, political and administrative reasons. Within these regions the schools of social work were selected based on the following three criteria: (i) the prestigious institutions of social work which are prominently referred to in the respective regions of the country; (ii) institutions having central, state/provincial and university recognition; (iii) the curriculum model of the institution (generic or specialized). Accordingly, five institutions of social work in China and five schools of social work in India that met three or more criteria and added diversity to the data were selected from the Chinese metropolitan cities of Beijing and Shanghai and province of Shandong, and the Indian

metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. Within the schools of social work, the students were selected purposively for the interview. Accordingly a total of 66 in-depth interviews were carried out in order to collect the data required for the study.

4.3. Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded electronically and then transcriptions of the interview were prepared by the researcher. The transcripts of the interviews were read and analyzed first; then line-by-line review of the transcript was conducted and was coded by highlighting the key words. The themes were determined based on the highlighted key words and were established through phrases, sentences and segments of text. Based on the principles of saturation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), data were analyzed for each respondent until no new theme emerged. Quotes representing the themes were selected from the transcripts.

5. Research Findings

The results of the study are presented in the following two themes: (1) curriculum; (2) pedagogy. Emerging themes that were developed from the transcripts of the interview of 66 participants are presented under these two main categories. These themes and data within them describe a number of challenges that are faced by social work education in India and China.

5.1. Curriculum

Social work is offered as a teaching and research programme in more than six hundred departments in India. Most of these programmes are offered in different settings, i.e. schools of social work, departments of social work within the State Universities, departments of social

work within the Central Universities, departments within Deemed Universities, departments within Institutes of National Importance and affiliated and constituent colleges of the university systems. In India social work teaching programmes are largely offered by the independent social work departments within university system or as a teaching programme under the schools of social sciences. The University Grant Commission (UGC) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) are the two national-level bodies which take care of educational standards and the programme delivery within the country. The approval and the accreditation of UGC is a mandatory requirement for all the courses within the country.

Social work as an academic programme in India is well established at the postgraduate level whereas in China social work is offered more at the undergraduate level. In India almost all the social work programmes be they at undergraduate or postgraduate level are affiliated to independent social work departments within the schools of social sciences, where as in China majority of the social work programmes are offered in the departments of sociology or other social sciences departments largely affiliated with technological courses. Perhaps it is because of this reason social work in China is less developed in terms of content development, development of independent theories and field work models. Majority of the social work educators, students and heads of the department interviewed for the study felt the strong need of detaching from sociology and philosophy and establishing an independent department of social work.

Both in Indian and Chinese schools of social work, social work programmes are offered under credit-based semester system. The Master's level social works' objective is to prepare the graduates for advanced practice in the areas concerned and to develop expertise in the optional fields. All the five schools of social work studied had a credit-

based social work programme. However, the total credit requirement and the credit distribution among different courses differ from institution to institution within the country.

A comparative analysis of the results shows that the social work curriculum in both India and China has many drawbacks and shortcomings. Even though Indian social work education is 80 years old, the curriculum and contents of the curriculum vary across the schools and there is a complete lack of uniformity in the contents of curriculum. Further, all five university departments in India covered under the present study have diverse curriculum. As respondents reported, maintaining the diversity and some commonality in the social work education throughout the country is the major challenge in the recent past. However, this issue has already been addressed by the Indian social work academia. Many academic conferences and academic meetings have addressed the issue related to widening disparity in the curriculum and pedagogy across the country and its association with the professionalization of social work education, but the condition at present remains the same. Respondent #S2I reported as follows:

It begins from the history and philosophy of social work and there students learn the values, principles and the ethical dilemmas and also philosophy of existence of human beings and that enables them to understand various issues, various problems and solutions keeping in mind human values, and at the same time it supports subjects like working with individuals, groups and communities which actually gives them the applied knowledge in identifying problems and making action plans and also exploring the problem with scientific manner; they have little bit of research subjects and social sciences.

Further analysis shows that in India social work curriculum is largely influenced by the principles of social justice and equality. The base for the curriculum is largely the societal issues and the conditions that are experienced by the people and community. The method courses were borrowed from the West whereas the elective courses and specialization courses were largely dependent on the social problems that are faced by contemporary Indian society. Similar to India, China's social work academia has social problems in its core curriculum, but by and large the curriculum is based on the Communist ideology. The basic courses taught both at undergraduate and postgraduate level are provided by the Ministry of Education and elective courses are prepared by the educators. While preparing the elective course curriculum the experience of the teacher and interests of the teachers play a major role and based on this the elective courses are provided in the schools of social work. For example, if one school has an educator experienced and interested in offering disability study then that school offers disability studies as an elective or special course in addition to the core courses given by the MOE.

Further, in India the development of social work was influenced by the social issues and the problems that emerged as the result of urbanization and industrialization in the late 1940s. The primary aim of social work as a service profession is to address the social issues that are problematic for the development of the society. The issues such as poverty, unemployment, exploitation of the weaker section, and the problems related to caste, gender, religion and region are always addressed by the social work academia and practice. Four out of five schools studied have extensive contents related to empowerment of the weaker section within the core courses of social work curriculum. The concepts like gender, social justice and social equality, economic and political rights and the entitlements of the people are also included in the

elective and the special courses in majority of the schools of social work. Respondent #S4 said:

The curriculum under study is a good combination of the concepts related to Indian society and the aspects related to lives of the people. In addition, the curriculum also gives overall information about the global social work and social development. The concepts such as poverty, unemployment, gender justice, social justice, equality, economic equality and political injustice are included in the core curriculum as well as elective papers within social work programme. In general the two-year Master of Social Work course curriculum provides an in-depth understanding of social problems and an overall interventional knowledge.

There are other schools where social problems and developmental issues are dealt with separately and the students are taught both social problems and issues related to development. Respondent #E15 said:

We have a separate paper for developmental issues and we have a separate paper for social problems within our social work curriculum. The reason for allocation of two separate issues with difference is because these are the two different things that need different approaches to understand them clearly.

60 out of 66 respondents agreed with the argument that the developmental issues and the social problems need separate and specialized concentrations and interventions in social work programme. Respondent #S4I said:

Within the social work curriculum we see developmental and social issues as two different concepts. The curriculum provides a clear

understanding of how social problems emerge and how they have effected development of the society. In addition, the curriculum equips the students to work with the vulnerable populations such as the elderly, victims of child sexual abuse, transgender population and displaced population. The training in the course also helps them to understand the issues related to unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and migration.

However, schools of social work in China majorly teach courses such as introduction to sociology, social work, social statistics, research methods, social investigation and case work, group work, community work, social work administration, social work practice, human behavior and environment, and social psychology in their social work majors. Further, some other schools also include subjects such as introduction to social security, history of social thought, Chinese psychological counseling, organizational sociology, youth social work, social work for the elderly, social work for women, social work for the disabled, family social work, and medical social work. Respondent #S34C reported:

The country has more than 300 colleges and universities in the professional education of social work, more than 60 colleges and universities running social work professional Master's education and training each year of social work graduates about 10000 people but actually only 10%-30% of the students choose social work; a considerable part of the others go into the organizations, enterprises and other units engaged in "counterparts".

Whereas respondent #S34C said:

The practice components in Chinese social work are missing greatly, but there must be a combination of adequate theoretical and practical

knowledge. The classroom teaching in social work does not prepare social workers to address the practical issues that are faced by the contemporary Chinese society. Educators, especially those with the practice of case work background, not only in the field of professionals in conducting out social concept classes and teaching students to use the concepts of social work, do not feel free to express a judgment, respect everyone's ideas and combine with the practical cases.

In India the social work curriculum is largely influenced by the people's movement, civil society movements, movements related to equality, right and entailment of the people in a democracy. As a result the concepts related to social justice, right-based perspective and social movements are found in both teaching and learning practices. Further, social advocacy and social movement are the integral part of the Indian social work curriculum, whereas in China the social work curriculum is largely influenced by the Communist ideology and government programmes. The social work curriculum in China mainly focuses on social problems, while the right-based approach or the social justice approach is missing in the core curriculum as well as practice.

In sum, the curriculum at the Master's level among the schools of social work in India and China varies to a great extent. Every school is unique and different in its curriculum structure and content. Some handfuls of institutions have made an attempt to incorporate the indigenous, regional, local context-specific contents into their curriculum. Nevertheless, majority of the schools include the method courses such as case work, group work and community work in the course curriculum spreading across two years of Master's programme. Through discussion with students it is clear that in both India and China the social work curriculum is highly influenced by the concepts and

theories of the West. Unfortunately, the majority of educators in China are educated and trained in Western countries and bring the same understanding to China and develop Western-influenced curriculum and contents there.

5.2. Pedagogy

Some 29 respondents in India felt that in general the teaching process in the schools is predominantly teacher-centric. Majority of the teachers when coming to class and delivering lecture consider themselves in this process as the subject experts and the students as the learners. In this type of teaching, the students hardly have time to express their views and debate on the issues that need further clarifications. Respondent #S25 said:

The faculties teach from the books written by many authors but the point is that we are in our postgraduate degree programme and we are not given an opportunity to reflect on our knowledge. As postgraduate students we expect our educators to give us some time to discuss and clarify the doubts which we encounter during our learning.

It is also observed that the teaching method changes from teacher to teacher. No schools of social work have a single teaching method defined by the schools and that has to be followed by all the teachers. The curriculum of the schools defines the objectives of the course and it is up to the teachers to adopt any teaching methods that they find suitable for the concepts. Interestingly respondent #S2 reported:

We have some teachers who use different innovative methods of teaching. Some of the teachers make us read books related to the subject and write a review as a part of some evaluation. Some other

teachers show us interesting movies and ask us to write reviews. We find these methods contemporary and relevant to the subjects.

Whereas in China teaching is very much student-friendly and teachers provide an opportunity for the students to discuss and interact with them. Respondent #S40C said:

The educators mainly adopt the way of classroom discussion, group presentation, and the combination of teaching and practice. Through these ways, students can improve their learning initiative, and through the practice, the theory of knowledge for practice, to promote the professional growth of students.

25 out of 33 respondents in Chinese schools of social work reported that the teaching method is student-friendly, but students felt the practice teaching in social work is completely missing and students were unable to link the classroom learning to practical job.

6. Conclusion: Implications for Pedagogy, Practice and Research

In brief, in Indian schools of social work educator integrate their field experience in the teaching. It was observed during the data collection that every educator more or less had experience of working in the field either directly prior to joining the academia or in the research-based activities conducted parallel to teaching. In any case the educators are rich in their practical, field knowledge; hence they could guide students in different field interventions and field-related projects and programmes. In China the major issue related to teaching method is predominantly theoretical and the reason behind this domination of theory is the educators' lack of field exposure and experience. In many departments of social work the educators who teach social work courses

are not educated in social work or they have gained their degrees from Western countries, probably a large number of them from United States. The lack of field experience for the educators is badly affecting the students learning as they are hardly getting the chance to listen to a teacher who speaks out of his/her experience.

Yuegen Xiong and Sibin Wang (2007) argue that the social work profession in the present China is important as after two decades of rapid economic growth China is facing many social issues like social inequality and social conflict. As reported then by the State Bureau of Statistics, the annual growth rate of the Chinese economy in 2006 remained high at 9.6% (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2007). Meanwhile, a shift has occurred in the Chinese government policy in the recent years. As per the new policy considerable importance is given to balancing the economic development and social development. Hence the social work as a profession responding to the social problems gains its importance in this context. However, the new policy initiatives by the government of China aim at professionalizing social work education and practice in China.

The new policy is expected to encourage social work schools to strengthen their training programmes by developing curriculum design, empowering faculty members in teaching and research, and standardizing field practice. In the second five-year plan the China Association for Social Work Education set its main objective of enhancing the quality of social work education in the country. Perhaps the focus was then given to social work teaching, enhancing scientific research based on evidence of social work practice in China and strengthening the quality of regulation of field practice. Yuegen Xiong and Sibin Wang (2007) argue both the social development and social welfare institutions in the country will get the benefit of social work development and professionalization.

Zhong (2006) argues that in spite of impressive progress of social work education in China during the past years social work education in China is still in the process of institutionalization. There is much development that needs to be done in the coming years with respect to quality of faculties, the values, knowledge base and skills of the profession, and the disciplinary status of social work. Miu Chung Yan (2013) in a discussion paper notes that the Chinese social work academia should think of indigenization of the social work education in line with learning from the West.

The indigenization of the teaching and the curriculum is important in the context of international social work; through “indigenization” the imported values, knowledge and skills need to be filtered, through a cultural lens, to adapt to the local context. Chinese social work should think of developing the education which is more responsive to the Chinese culture and people. Anything and everything borrowed from the West may not be suited to the Chinese social political and economic condition.

Another serious problem social work education is facing in China presently is the lack of autonomy for the department of social work. As mentioned earlier in this article many social work programmes in China are offered as a major in the department of social policy or department of sociology. In some university departments social work is just a major subject and there is no department of social work. Majority of the social work programmes are associated with the department of sociology; in some cases the department of social work does exist but it is not independent in any respect and it is under the broad umbrella of the sociology department. As students and educators reported, this type of arrangement of the academic affairs is really creating problem for the social work department.

As reflected by majority of the social work students, social work in China needs to be segregated from the other disciplines and social work should be established as a separate department within the school of social sciences. Social work is a practice-oriented course and the needs and demands of a course like social work are different from those of the theory-oriented courses. Hence merging the social work departments along with the strong theory-oriented departments or a school is hindering the actual development of social work in China. But the present situation of social work is not favouring the autonomy of the social work departments as there are very limited number of educators who are educated in the social work education. Hence the social work field in China is currently facing the problem related to experienced educators for restructuring and advocating the autonomy of the social work departments.

Introduction of a new profession needs to experience three stages: introduction, localization and rooted stage. Social work as a profession is at its introduction stage in China at present, and the education and training mainly aims to enlarge its professionals group, raise its social reputation, and then move to the stage of localization. Presently in China everyone, scholar or student, is pushing hard for the development of social work. But social work is alien, and to make the Chinese society completely accept it will require a certain amount of time and space, which is why many social work practitioners feel very tired now, and to be close to exploring the road of social work in China is difficult. In general social work education in China is still expected to provide more theory courses along with some lessons on crisis intervention, knowledge on psychology and psychological problems by using the teachers and their expertise across the departments within the university and across the country.

Notes

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