SKILL TRAINING FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

A Manual

Edited By
SUDHA DATAR, RUMA BAWIKAR, GEETA RAO
NAGMANI RAO AND UJWALA MASDEKAR



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Skill Training for Social Workers : A Manual
Edited by Sudha Datar, Ruma Bawikar, Geeta Rao
Nagmani Rao And Ujwala Masdekar

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When I hear, I forget
When I hear and see, I remember
When I hear, see and reflect upon, I understand
When I hear, see, reflect upon and do, I know
When I hear, see, reflect upon and do again and again, I become skilled

To our students whose participation and feedback reinforced our faith in skill training.

To all the directors of our institute who had faith and confidence in our ability as skill trainers and encouraged to document our efforts.

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Foreword

Skill Training for Social Workers: A Manual developed by the Karve Institute of Social Service (KINSS) is an outcome of the detailed documentation of the sessions conducted by the faculty and outside experts during skill lab sessions. The skill laboratory conducted at the institute since the past many years is a unique self-designed module of learning and has become a brand of Karve Institute.

The informal dissemination of this manual is beyond the confines of the institute brought out of its utilities. It is indeed the recognition of this potential that led to the collaboration between the KINSS and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) for publishing this manual by a reputed international publishing house like SAGE.

A skill manual for the trainee social worker is a comprehensive document which includes theoretical inputs, games and exercises on the theme of understanding perception, self-awareness, sensitivity, communication and working with individuals and groups. The Skill Laboratory Modules, which form an integral part of the training, especially during the first year, and the learning, which takes place through these laboratory sessions, is further concretised during the second year. The skill manual includes a variety of topics, role plays, songs, case studies, street plays and exercises on self-awareness, self-development, SWOT analyses, communication, goal setting, time management and stress management. Different types of communication skills are developed in the students which range from interpersonal communication skills to use of media through fieldwork training. The skill training is an academic exercise carried out in a scientific and professional manner. This facilitates a student to inculcate professional and global competencies essential for a social worker.

The skill development modules are designed in such a way that every student gets an opportunity to practically take part in the exercise. They are involved in each step and thus get a hands on experience of 'doing' and understanding the intricacies of the social work approach. This builds the confidence and strengthens knowledge, skills, aptitude and

the attitudinal base of students. This manual will be a value addition to the faculty, professionals and students in strengthening, bringing uniformity and high quality standards in skill laboratory sessions, particularly in social work practice. It will go a long way in meeting the paucity of indigenous textbooks and teaching materials for use by social work educators, scholars and students.

The editorial team of this manual includes Sudha Datar, Ruma Bawikar, Geeta Rao, Nagmani Rao, Ujwala Masdekar and the contributors Anjali Maydeo, Anuradha Patil, faculty members of the Karve Institute, and Anand Pawar, Sameer Datye, Manjusha Doshi and Vidya Ghugari, who were the guest faculty, deserve special appreciation and thanks, for their invaluable contribution to this manual.

Last but not least, I must acknowledge the financial assistance bestowed by The Tata Education Trust and appreciate the continuous support of Rekha Mammen and her team members from TISS, and the SAGE Publications, for their painstaking efforts of editing and publishing this manual.

I am therefore, very much pleased to write this Foreword for such an important manual which would fill vital gap for indigenous material in social work training.

Dr Deepak Walokar
Director, Karve Institute of
Social Service, Pune

Preface

It all began with an invitation to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, to host a conference of the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development (IUCISD) in India in 2003. The enthusiastic committee that was formed decided to build up to the conference with several activities as part of a project titled 'Enhancing the Social Development Perspective in Social Work Education'—one of which was to revisit the social work curriculum.

As with other professions, social work has been constantly evolving and attempting to redefine its mandate as per the changing needs of society. The first curriculum developed by the TISS was based on 15 years of field experience of its founder, Clifford Manshardt, part of which was in India and on the curriculum for social work developed in America and Britain (Desai, 2002). Since then the curriculum has undergone several changes and now represents a combination of planned change at the level of the entire degree programme, and more ad hoc changes brought in through specialisation and individual courses at different points in time.

Today, the processes of globalisation and the ensuing problems have ensured that social work practice not only has to 'indigenise' but also needs to 'internationalise' strategies for practice. In India, one faces a duality of the phenomenon of technological changes and their impact on the one hand and on the other, a traditional feudal society and mindset. One sees newer forms of slavery through the processes of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation and its institutions. The role of civil society in strengthening democracy is increasingly being highlighted and recognised.

From a developmental perspective, it was felt that the dynamics of civil society, state and market forces need to be understood and integrated with development processes and ideologies in the context of social work practice. Therefore ideologies, approaches, methods, systems, clientele and emerging areas were identified for examination in each context of social work education and practice.

Based on a series of consultative workshops and meetings held with social work educators and practitioners including faculty from various schools of social work, we arrived at the following issues that need to be addressed:

1. Meeting the paucity of indigenous textbooks and teaching materials.
2. Need for developing strategies and approaches to suit the new socio-economic reality.
3. Re-organising the curriculum, fieldwork system and methods of teaching and research to integrate social and technical skills with the needs of the field.
4. The responses and experience of professionals/practitioners need to be taken on board.
5. Emphasis should be on development of applied theory.

The dearth of published social work literature relating to the Indian context has been expressed by social work educators and practitioners for more than three decades. There is a large body of unpublished, indigenous literature, student assignments, case studies, reports and the like, which are used as teaching training material for students, but not published formally. One of the reasons is that infrastructure for writing and publishing is not easily available to support knowledge development, even to faculty in the Institutions of Social Work Education(ISWE). Another factor is that social work practitioners are often more comfortable and skilled in the practice area and find it difficult to make time for this kind of writing. The Tata Education Trust kindly agreed to support this project that proposed to bring out four books, which would integrate 'objective' learning and 'subjective' experience:

1. *From the Abstract to the Concrete: Contextualising Practice-related Theories of Social Work*
2. *Skill Training for Social Workers: A Manual*
3. *Innovations through Praxis: The TISS Experience*
4. *Making a Difference with Social Work Education: Narratives from the Field*

These books aim to consolidate field and teaching experience in various sectors and contexts in order to review and build curricular material and plans in the social work curriculum relevant to the current context in India. Two broad areas were prioritised in the area of social work teaching and education:

1. Adaptation of social work theories for the Indian context.
2. Skill development of social work students.

Two broad types of contexts were identified in the arena of social work practice:

1. Field action projects initiated by social work institutions.
2. Social work practice as it has evolved outside the university context.

Three of these four themes were taken up by the faculty in the School of Social Work at TISS, Mumbai. The Karve Institute of Social Service (KINSS), Pune, was invited to work on the publication relating to skill development of social work students. The last two themes are still publications in the making, while the first of the above-listed themes, adaptation of social work theories for the Indian context, has been published in the form of an edited volume of the *Indian Journal of Social Work*.[1]

This publication is an outcome of the collaboration with KINSS. Faculty at the Karve Institute have for many years conducted skill laboratories with their students and had developed a standardised set of exercises that were given to the students every year. We learnt that there was also considerable demand from their alumni and others for copies of these exercise sets. The TISS project team worked with the KINSS editorial team to develop the manual further for publication by providing some research, editing, audio-visual and secretarial assistance. The manual also went through a round of peer review through the TISS Publication Unit before being taken up for publication by SAGE Publications, New Delhi.

The outcomes of this project would hopefully help schools of social work revise and reformulate their curricula and would also develop indigenous field-based theory that would be useful for teaching and practice. These publications are intended to serve as training source books for social work educators, practitioners and students in the context of integrating social development in social work education.

The pillars of this project have been our project team members: Neena Barnes Konnoth, Laxmi D. Jadhav and Ajitha Manjeshwar. We acknowledge with immense gratitude the financial support and encouragement of the Tata Education Trust for this project without which it would not have happened.

Rekha Mammen
Project Director
Assistant Professor (Senior Scale)
School of Social Work,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

[1] LJSW Vol.69, Issue No.2, April 2008.

Acknowledgements

As social work educators, who are also closely associated with the field of practice, many of us have felt the need to develop consciousness in trainees regarding skills and attitudes for professional practice. These thoughts stimulated us to develop our skills training programme. The outcomes and experiences gained through skill training motivated us to prepare this manual. It has emerged out of collective efforts of many persons, over several years. We are indebted to all of them.

At the outset, we would like to thank the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), in particular Rekha Mammen and Sudha Ganapati for their persistent encouragement to the editorial team to prepare this manual for publication. Thanks to Mr Sawant for his creative photographs that so aptly brought out the spirit of the lab sessions and to Ms Ajitha for being the multi-purpose liaison between us and the institute. Thanks also to Mr Krishnan for assistance with the maps and Mr Vijendra Singh for assistance in creating tables/figures and in typing Marathi words.

We are deeply indebted to the peer reviewers for their painstaking review of our earlier working manual. Their comprehensive suggestions have helped us to enhance the content and quality of this manual.

We acknowledge the Managing Committee of the Karve Institute of Social Service (KINSS) and our former Director, Dr Cherian Kurien for the encouragement and support extended to us to prepare the manual for publication.

Dr Sunanda Koushik, former Director, KINSS, needs special mention as the source of inspiration behind documenting the skill lab sessions to prepare the manual.

Professor (Retd) Kalindi Muzumdar of Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work trained some of the faculty of the institute for the use of participatory methods in skill training. We are grateful to her for all that we learnt and also for some of the simulation games and poems that we have included in this manual.

We place on record the contribution of our former colleagues: Sumati Godbole, Meghana Marathe and Rashmi Tamuly. They have all contributed to the development of the content of this manual through the workshops they had conducted. Their valuable suggestions helped us in undertaking the task of preparing the manual. Our colleagues Anuradha Patil, Vishal Karuna, Anjali Maydeo and Sharmila Sahadeo have been a great support throughout.

Ms Sunita Pandhe and Mr Avinash Shirke went over the entire earlier version of the manual (both of whom are alumni and currently educators) and gave us several useful suggestions. We thank them for thus helping us enhance its quality.

It is with fond remembrance and gratitude that we acknowledge each batch of students for their enthusiastic participation during the skill labs and the challenges they posed during the sessions. This stimulated us to improvise as we went along, adding value to our experiences. They have been the backbone of our experiments and we learnt as much from them as they did from us.

We are deeply grateful to the following resource persons who conducted various workshops over the years and have added to the richness of our resource material:

1. Theatrical games	Madhav Vaze Vidya Tamboli Manjusha Doshi
2. Street theatre	Vilas Chaphekar Samar Nakhate Ujwala Paranjape Nilima Bale Dr Anant Lagoo Laxmi Narayan Anand Pawar Vilas Londhe Groups which performed street plays: Dropper Group, Pune Group of street children of Pune (Department of Continuing, Adult Education and Extension, SNDT University, Pune project on street children) Andhashradha Nirmulan Samiti, Pune Field workers of Mobile Creche Pune Kagad Kachpatra Kashtakari Panchayat, Pune Akshar Andolan, Pune Municipal Corporation Sahmat, New Delhi
3. Posters making and poster exhibition	Nilima Chitale Vasudha Sardar
4. Use of songs and other interactive visual media	Poornima Chikarmane

5.	Traditional media	Uttam Zagade
6.	Use of films	Jaya Modak Sumedha Lele Madhuri Abhyankar and SOFOSH Team
7.	Puppetery	Manjusha Doshi Vidya Tamboli J. Vaishampayan
8.	Use of songs, storytelling and dramatisation in working with children	Renutai Gavaskar Dr Sunita Kulkarni Late Leela Bhagwat Shobha Bhagwat

We are also grateful to the following who are still associated with our skill lab workshops and have also contributed in writing for this manual:

1. Anuradha Patil—Communication workshop
2. Anjali Maydeo—Photo language
3. Anand Pawar—Street play
4. Manjusha Doshi—Puppets and theatrical games
5. Vidya Tamboli—Puppets
6. Sameer Datye—Use of Internet in social wok practice

As part of using various media forms, we have put together a good collection of songs with social messages, prepared by practitioners using the traditional forms, street play scripts and *kirtan*s with social messages. Since these were drawn from field workers and activists they are in Marathi. Now that the manual is complete, we thought it is appropriate to have these translated into English by a person who not only has a good command over both languages but also possesses an understanding of the media. We are immensely grateful to Ms Vidya Vaidya for fitting this bill perfectly.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences approached us for printing of this manual in 2003. It is being printed in 2009. The present Director of KINSS, Dr Deepak Walokar, supported us whole heartedly in carrying forward the process to a logical end.

The library and administrative support at KINSS and TISS helped us in ways both big and small. We thank all the concerned for this.

Last but not the least, we thank Ms Laxmi M. Vora (TISS) and Shri Arun Wasankar (KINSS) for the systematic and neat preparation of the draft of the manual.

Editors

Introduction

Social work is a profession with specialised know-how of working with people. Its practice involves the combined use of knowledge, attitudes and skills that are defined by the value base of social work. According to Dr Abraham Flexner, 'One of the important criteria of professionals is, they possess a technique capable of communication through a highly specialized educational discipline.' In the profession of social work, the skills essential for professional performance can be communicated. These skills may then be in a continuous state of being tested and refined.

If one refers to any English dictionary, we find the definition of skill. Most dictionaries define skill as expertness, ability to perform effectively due to repeated practice. According to Johnson (1995) skill is 'the practice component that brings knowledge and values together and converts them into action as a response to concern and need'. This implies that skills involve a complex organisation of behaviour directed towards a particular goal or activity. Through the use of skills a social worker displays her/his capacity to use interventions towards a goal-directed purpose. Skill is, therefore, the expression of a specific behaviour under the precise conditions which designate its use.

While the use of skill may often seem instinctive, commonsensical acts, the truth is that skills are developed and refined through exposure and experience. This also involves conscious, disciplined use of one's own self and one's abilities. The disciplined experience of social work training which exposes trainees to a supervised fieldwork experience helps to develop their skills to a certain extent. But while working in real-life situations, the focus has to be on the 'person in need' and the development of self as a worker may go into the background.

Students may also gain a limited knowledge of skills in the classroom through the theory they learn. But when we say that skill is an expertise and practice ability, then both the aforementioned training situations may have the following limitations:

- Since the human element is involved in the fieldwork situation, trainees cannot use trial and error method or repeated practice for development of specific skills.
- In the classroom, conceptual learning may reduce trainee participation because the focus is more on knowledge and information as a base for developing understanding.

The theory of social work emphasises understanding of human behaviour in the context of society at large. It also gives perspectives and insights into the analysis of problem situations and remedies or strategies to achieve the goals of development. The theory of social work is based on the philosophy of social work, out of which have emerged the principles of practice. The skill laboratory is a platform on which these principles are translated into practice skills, that is, 'learning by doing'. Through the experiential learning in the lab, insights are acquired to develop the personal self and the professional self. The trainees gain insight as to how appropriate social work skills are essential for the fulfilment of social work goals. We choose to use the laboratory approach because trainees are taken through each stage of skill development in the use of the methods of social work. Besides, the lab gives ample scope for experimenting till the trainees develop conviction. Demonstration can also be used to illustrate use of skills.

The lab also helps to reduce the element of unpredictability in the field situations. It endeavours to help trainee social workers (TSWs) to learn through simulated situations and reflections carried out in a relatively safe environment. With inputs from the facilitators, TSWs learn to bring likely field situations to enact in the lab. The process of observation, identification of lacunae in the way in which situations are tackled through immediate feedback and opportunity provided for relearning help trainees to prepare themselves for the field situation. They also learn to introspect. Group learning and peer support are important characteristics of the lab, which facilitate the process of introspection. Peer support not only helps in accepting the limitations in oneself but also helps strengthen the existing qualities in oneself because of the recognition and appreciation received.

The lab sessions thus help to stimulate imagination, enable critical reflection on implications of word and action and through this process the TSWs develop sensitivity, empathy and an ability to identify their own strengths and limitations. It also helps them to overcome fears and anxieties since they are better equipped to consciously face the real situations in the field. The lab also helps the trainees to translate theories of social work into practice.

This manual is an outcome of several years of experience and collective critical reflection of skill training through lab sessions, which were systematically documented, refined, used and developed to suit the training goals.

The manual thus concentrates on the following:

1. Development of self-awareness, that is, enabling the trainees to understand, develop and modify, if necessary, their own values, attitudes, abilities and talents.
2. Development of sensitivity to human problems.
3. Enhancement of abilities required to establish effective helping relationships.