Development of Social Work Education in Nepal: A Historical Review

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Abstract

Social work is not a new discipline in Nepal. However, it is slowly expanding professionally and currently faces various challenges. Including need to rely on modern techniques, cultural distancing from the environment and strategies because there is not a professional social work model in Nepal. In addition, difficulties include a lack of training, guidelines, and instruction at the governmental level; absence of functioning associated social organizations' ethics, and accountability on the part of social workers. This study seeks to address issues impeding professionalism to protect service users. The search engines Google, Google Scholar, Google Book, ProQuest, and Eric, etc. were used in this study. Two primary themes were studied: the challenges and implications of social work education in Nepal. To discuss findings, content analysis of the themes was employed. This study finds that social work practice needs to be properly regulated and accredited. The social worker should promote social work practice and instruction. Social workers ought to be recognized by the government to increase funding in the field. The Nepalese social work model can be developed with the help of practitioners and even service users. The vision for Nepalese social work should be to get the profession recognized and strengthen the association of social work.

Keywords: Challenge, development, practice, social work education

Introduction

Social work education has expanded all over the world since the turn of the 20th century, including in South Asia (O'Kane, 2002). The social work discipline includes a theoretical component imparted in the classroom, as well as field-based practice that combines the theoretical and practical aspects (Woli, 2023). Nepal has a long history of traditional social work activities (Dominelli, 2018). Families, communities, helpers, and volunteers have been engaging in various variations of it for many centuries In the context of Nepal, professional social work practice is still in its infancy, but it is slowly gaining ground abroad (Nikku, 2010). It was first practiced in the West in the middle of the 1990s, particularly in the USA and UK(Yadav, 2019). Social work assessment represents a universal, differentiated, activity across the world (Moren & Blom, 2003). Different assessments are carried out or completed in many forms, with diverse groups of social work service users or clients, and are undertaken
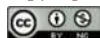
for different purposes.These assessments may be confused with evaluation but they are 'more similar to the fact-finding study which forms the basis for decision-making and action. Social work discipline was developed as a professional activity out of the 19th century's poverty, social inequities or injustices, urbanization, industrialization, and the First (1914-1918) and Second (1939-1945) World Wars (Bowles, Hopps, & Clayton, 2016 p.311). Since the turn of the 20th century, the field of social work has expanded globally, especially in South Asia (Nikku, 2011).The demands of indigenous practice methodologies and research as well as the internationalization of social work education are both demanding and rewarding (Afrouz, 2022).The communication revolution not only made the world into a global village, but it has also resulted in a digital divide. While addressing these global and local challenges, social work today is rightly striving to become an international profession (Gray & Fook, 2004).

Social work education is continuously developing in terms of curriculum development, approval standards, and transferability across countries (Gray, 2005). The development of skilled social work professionals who will then address current social issues and problems in local and global societies is the focus of social work education worldwide.The goal of social work education is to produce qualified social workers (Jani, Osteen, Shipe, Osteen, & Shipe, 2017), who can address current social issues and problems in both local and international societies and achievethe integration of social work knowledge, attitude, and skills among the graduates that are relevant to contemporary social realities. The social work discipline in a worldwide context aims at developing a universal perspective in social work learning and teamwork in instruction and study (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). Social work discipline is facing several challenges such as competence, certification, prospectus, course of content, sharp focus, and field education (Forte, 2014). It providescross-national perceptions of how the challenges faced by social work education are addressed in countries across the world. To bring worldwide social work educators together to learn from each other and to develop some standard ways to address definite social work education challenges. Bell & Anscombe, 2013 state that, "Social work education is continuously growing in terms of curriculum expansion, certification standards, and transferability across countries".

The emphasis of social work education across the sphere is to develop qualified social work professionals who will then address the contemporary social issues and problems in both local and global societies (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2023). Social work education aims at achieving the integration of social work knowledge, attitude, and skills among the graduates that are relevant to contemporary social realities (Abrams & Moio, 2009). However, at present, social work education and practice across the world, especially in developing countries, are facing many challenges, which pose hurdles in the process of modernization, professionalization, and standardization of social work education and practice (Lorenz, 2005). Globalization in the twenty-first century has activatedthe social changes in the world. Many countries across the world are facing issues (Faye, McArthur, Sachs, & Snow, 2004) such as climate change, overpopulation in some countries, anegative growth of population in several others, rapid aging, and issues related to immigration, migration, mental illness, and rising income inequality. In addition, the established world order and global dominance of the west-centric development agenda and modernity and the unequal distribution of the world's resources have created tremendous problems for many people living in both global and local communities in developed and developing countries.

In these contexts, this article presents an inquiry about the development of social work education in the context of Nepal through reforming the teaching-learning process and application to practices. To contextualize the writing, social work's connection with social consciousness about the development of social work education in Nepal will be briefly searched. This study takes a more comprehensive approach and seeks deal with the following questions:

1. What are the practices of social work in education?
2. What are the challenges of social work in education in the context of Nepal?

Methods and Procedures

In this study, a descriptive qualitative research design was used. Secondary sources of data like relevant reports, books, and journal articles were used in the research. Google, Google Scholar, Google book, ProQuest, Eric, and information from various portals were used for searching relevant documents by using different keywords like; challenge, development, practice, and social work education. The major technique to find the result based on the research questions a systematic review have been done after the various articles found in the relevant paper studied and reviewed.

Results and Discussion

Development of Social Work Education in Nepal

Nepal is one of the world's least developed nations (Giri, Bista, Singh, & Pandey, 2021). It has different ethnic, linguistic, and socio-cultural minorities. There are 124 languages, 142 castes, 10 religions, and many ethnic groupings in this country. Out of 77 districts, certain ethnic groups have a relative majority in districts, whereas no particular group has a majority in the remaining districts (CBS Nepal, 2021). Acharya, (2020) states that "the federal system that Nepal has implements rules by its constitution, which has different challenges facing the implementing rules, laws, regulations, and programs". In the context of Nepal, government policies are being implemented across all sectors, and new disciplines like social work are being based in Nepal. To reconstruct lives and communities that have been impacted by several conflicts and natural disasters, social work can be extremely important. The advancement of the profession of social work depends on professional social work education. Social work has its roots in society's struggle to address poverty and the issues that come from it (Schmitz, Matyok, Sloan, & James, 2012). As a result, social work and the idea of charity are closely related. The idea of charity is ancient, and religious traditions have long encouraged helping those in need (Dees, 2012). However, social work as a practice and profession has an actual, recent, and scientific beginning. Social work discipline was practiced in the ancient and medieval periods of Nepal, but it needed to be realized at that time. Among the great veterans, the Late Tulsi Mehar Shrestha was one of the stars who shined and set off Nepal by leaving lots of good deeds, guidance, and messages to the people of Nepal. Numerous types of volunteer work by religious and cultural institutions in Nepal (Yadama & Messerschmidt, 2004). Guthi (clan-based association), dharmashala (free dwellings for the destitute), and patipauwa (public resting place) are just a few of the terms that can be used to trace the history of social services and reforms. This custom has its roots in the idea of dan (charity), which is done to appease the gods and seek betterment in both this life and the next. Bhatta, 2016 carried out "the social work discipline was introduced in Nepal, which was noted by Late Dayabir Singh Kansakar, establishment Paropakar Sanstha,

and social work institutions started". The trend of social work in Nepal has gone through the liberalization, privatization & globalization process (Momen, Baikady, Sheng-Li, & Basavaraj, 2020). Social work discipline is practiced; those who want to become professional social workers must receive schooling (Lyons, 2000). Education is not an independent and autonomous process in any society. The development of society, the overcoming of existing social structures, and society's advancement are all factors that influence education (Castles, 2010). Recognizing the historical backdrop, local and global developments, present-day demands, and emerging needs of a given society can help social work education advance (Frank & Meyer, 2007). The significance of these processes is examined in the history and development of social work education in contemporary Nepalese society.These difficulties influence social work education in a country, as well as the social work institutions and practice norms there, and they are both local and global (Lyons, 2006). In the context of Nepal, social work education is still in its infancy in comparison to other social sciences and is only accessible at colleges which are associated with various universities (Nikku, 2015).

Chronological Practices Indigenous to Social Work Practice in Nepal

Social work education as a short course or training was first established in 1986 by Nepal Jesuit Social Work, which was later titled Social Work Institute, Lalitpur (Gellner, 2004). The social work practice was originally introduced by the Jesuit society with the initiation of Br. James S. Gates. Three-year Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Social Work program began in 1996 A.D at St. Xavier's College, affiliated toKathmandu University. The Nirmala Niketan anIndian-based college of social work extended its helpin establishing the first time in the context of Nepal (Thomas, Shrestha, & Nikku, 2016). Tribhuvan University (T.U.) in 1997 A.D introduced Social Work as one of the major courses at the B.A. level.The course was offered at the Padamkayna Campus with access available to female students. Tribhuvan University also approved a course of B.A. in Social Work in 2012 and Master of Arts in Social Work in the semester system program started in 2017 A.D and MPhil/PhD program of social work in the center campus in Kritipur.The colleges of T.U. had introduced courses without sufficient professional social workers (TribhuvanUniversity, n.d.). A full-fledged Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program was introduced in 2005 by the Department of Social Work at Kadambari College, which is affiliated with Purbanchal University. Additionally, the Department of Social Work became a member of the Asian and Pacific Association of Social Work Education (APASWE) in 2007 as well as the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in 2009. These entire institutes were located in Kathmandu only whereas a sudden mushrooming growth of affiliated colleges offering this program is evident. The Indira Gandhi National Open University's (IGNOU) partner organization in Kathmandu also offers students the option of taking Social Work courses online (Sharma & Bhatta, 2018). Institutions that can provide social work education and training programs across Nepal are desperately needed to make professional social work services available to the country's many more citizens (Nikku & Pulla, 2014). Furthermore, in 2012, the first Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) programs outside of Kathmandu were introduced by Mid-West University. The Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences Mid-West University Birendranagar, Surkhet Nepal (a central campus) launched a fully accredited 4 years (8 semesters) Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) & 2 years (4 semesters) Master of Social Work (MSW) and Babai Multiple Campus Gulariya

(a constitute campus of Mid-West University) launched a fully accredited 4 years (8 semesters) Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program based on a credit system with a minimum of 120 credits hours. These programs were developed collectively by the faculty members, the paper's author and many other scholars (*Mid-West University*, n.d.). Similarly, in 2021, the first BSW program was launched by the Far-Western University at the Central Campus of Humanities and Social Science Mahendranagar, Kanchanpur, and in 2021 Kailali Multiple Campus Dhangadhi, Kailali (a central and constitute campuses Far-West University) also launched a fully accredited 4 years (8 semesters) Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program based on a credit system with a minimum of 120 credits hours. These programs were also collectively developed by the faculty members, the paper's author and many other scholars (*Far-Western University,* n.d.). Each semester and every program consists of four theory courses, besides one practical component (concurrent fieldwork). Concurrent fieldwork is a practice-based activity that enables learners to effectively adopt theoretical knowledge by carrying out several tasks simultaneously at the field level. Problem-based learning and community-based activities are reflected in it. The theory courses are semester-wise distributed and have an interdisciplinary approach and a research dissertation as core requirement of the program.These measures have improved the access of for Social Work students in Nepal, but not just in Kathmandu, the nation's capital but also outside the capital in the universities like PU, KU, MU, and FWU. Scholars claim that many of the colleges offering this course lack the necessary human resources and field practicum, placements, and a council on social work education as a central coordinating organization.Further, the lack of uniformity in the social work curriculum contents, code of conduct, teaching, and practice standards also other problems seen in the academic scenario. If social demands are not taken into consideration soon, Nepal's social work education will miss its chance.

Figure 1. Chronological practices the indigenous social work practice in Nepal

Year (A.D)	Description
1986	Social work education as a short course or training was first established in Nepal Jesuit Social Work, which was later titled Social Work Institute, Lalitpur. The social work practice was originally introduced by the Jesuit society with the initiation of Br. James S. Gates.
1996	First time formally introduced the three-year Social Work program at St. Xavier's College affiliated to Kathmandu University.
1997	Tribhuvan University introduced social work as one of the major courses at the B.A. level the course was offered at the Padamkayna campus accessible to female students.
2005	Purbanchal Universitystartedand affiliated at the Kadambari Memorial College also starteda Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) in 2008.
2012	Mid-West University started the Master of Social Work (MSW) and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program outside the Kathmandu Valley.
2021	Far-Western Universities also started the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in the Far-Western region.

Challenges of Social Work Education in Nepal

In the context of Nepal, the social work practice has a long history; it has been practiced in numerous forms by families, communities, assistants, and volunteers for many centuries. The context of social work education and training is difficult to impart (Lee & Greene, 2004) because of the country's persistent political instability, cultural differences, shortage of social work educators, absence of a professional organization, and lack of official government recognition for the social work field (Fook, 2022). Social work practice is troubled by inadequate infrastructure, equipment, and facilities (Webb, 2001). The difficulties include inadequate training, a lack of rules and regulations, intervention from the government, non-government organizations, or donors, as well as a lack of honesty and responsibility on the part of certain social workers (Lombard, 2008).The religious and cultural institutions offer social services and volunteer work, and they have done so for all of recorded history (Fukuyama, 2001). Numerous forms of volunteer labor by religious and cultural organizations, such as Guthi, Dharmashala, and Patipauwa in Nepal, can be used to track the history of social work in that country (Nikku, 2011). Even in modern times, many people give alms to the needy and disabled. To appease the gods and seek a better life both now and in the next life, this practice is based on the idea of *dan* or charity (Bornstein, 2009). The difficulties in developing social work teaching programs have been addressed by scholars in diverse context; needs more resources in terms of money, time, material, and trained personnel with skills and knowledge (Scharlach, Damron-Rodriguez, Robinson, & Feldman, 2000). Professional social work has only been around for a few years, it includes trained volunteers who collaborate with families, groups, and communities to address social issues in a timely, applicable, and suitable manner. Because there are only a few training institutions in Nepal whose courses are based on Western methods and approaches, the training has been insufficient in that country (Robinson-Pant, 2004). The majority of social science graduates are regarded as social workers, although there are also students from other fields including development education, administration, the natural sciences, and other related fields who hold social work positions. In the field of community development, Nepal, one of the lower middle-income nations, has received millions of dollars in international help and support (Gomez, Perdiguero, & Sanz, 2019). Many charitable and development projects initiated, planned, and implemented by NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs) are unsustainable (Ahmad, 2006). There have been a few small developments, but they are insignificant in light of Nepal's numerous NGOs and "social workers (Bradshaw & Schafer, 2000).

Professional social work requires intensive knowledge and expertise. It is the social worker's foremost priority to maintain integrity and abide by professional ethics which are extremely essential in the context of exercising power and autonomy (Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2016). The number of institutions in Nepal that offer social work education is extremely low. In Nepal, there are more than 51,513 NGOs and 230 INGOs (Social Welfare Council, 2019) but very few have trained social workers, yet they are involved in the assessment and decision-making for the service user (Mohapatra, 2021). In this precarious situation, service user needs are not sufficiently assessed and taken care of. This expresses how urgently Nepal needs to train its social workers. In Nepal, a social worker must work with vulnerable sections that are denied basic rights and are living in poverty in a variety of rural settings (Dhungana, 2006). There is only one problem with this scenario. People with different socio-cultural,

economic, and educational backgrounds, including those in community development, socio-status, attitude, behavior, and occasionally even management disciplines, work in the social work sector alongside service consumers (Babintsev, 2015). Problems and challenges arise as a result of using authority in this way. The needs assessment, ethical norms, and professional rules of social work service customers are often unknown to graduates with backgrounds outside of social work (Weaver, 1999). Since non-social workers have different ideologies and practices than social workers, this is one of the reasons it can be difficult for many social workers to work in these settings in rural areas (Lane, 2013). Likewise, social workers normally face challenging situations because people from rural areas come from diverse cultural, religious, and caste/ethnic backgrounds (Kumar & Srivastava, 2011). It can be challenging to work with a service user who perceives the social worker as being superior because they both identify as members of an upper caste. After all, some members of minority groups see themselves as belonging to a lower caste (Pradhan & Shrestha, 2005). Lack of sufficient support from the local municipality and government offices is one of the main factors affecting their professional power and practice (Frolova, Vinichenko, Kirillov, Rogach, & Kabanova, 2016). The government doesn't support or make any statements about the profession. Social workers are not employed in any government positions (Lee & Miller, 2013). The government needs to go one step further and license the profession of social work. The accredited social workers will be separated as a result, giving them more opportunities to work in the community (Flexner, 2001).

It is challenging for social workers to carry out their desired tasks and provide for service users while also working within political parties (Evans & Harris, 2004). Due to the involvement of local parties and local youth, conflicts of interest occur in various communities. The political and government sectors have implied that there is corruption and other self-interest involved (Pawar, 2014). Similar to this, the organization provides a service user with a single direction that might not always result in meeting the needs of those who are most vulnerable. The managerial behavior of the institution, organization, or even different actors like; as politicians, legislators, government, and mass media, can put the professional domain of social workers at risk of losing the fundamental values and ethical considerations of their profession (Armitage, Marschke, & Plummer, 2008). In our Nepalese society, this occurs, when organizations that they are employed by and donor agencies have control over resources and social workers, these institutions and groups always have a purpose (Malla, 2001). Due to the reality of the situation and the varying problems in the community, social workers will always face challenges (Adhikari, 2011). Since the social worker won't always be able to satisfy the service user due to the power dynamics between donor organizations and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), they are vulnerable (Osei, 2017). Occasionally, social workers and the organizations they work for in Nepal prioritize service over aid. In Nepal, unluckily, the profession that is supposed to solve social problems has changed into a business and means of income (Sunam 2016). People believe social workers use their clients for research and other initiatives only to generate income, and the profession is seen as charitable (Germak & Singh, 2009). Because of this, social work is made difficult because an intervention is impossible without the cooperation and trust of the service user (Brett, Staniszewska, Mockford, Herron-Marx, Hughes, Tysall, & Suleman, 2014). They will not have positive expectations from one another until and unless both parties fully trust

one another. In the short decades that social work has been practiced, the profession has lost some of its credibility (Reisch, 2013). In most developing nations, such as Nepal, social workers are still far behind in their efforts to address problems with health, education, transportation, employment, safe drinking water, inclusion, and other social challenges in society (Besthorn, 2013). Social workers ought to have the authority to step in during an emergency or to protect the client when it is required, such as when there is drug abuse, child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, or a threat to safety or security (Parker, Crabtree, Azman, Nikku, & Nguyen 2017). It is not mandated by law in Nepal. Social workers are unable to take direct action in cases of violence, human trafficking, child safety, or sexual abuse (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012). It is subject to legal authority, which the government manages without the help of social workers. In this situation, the laws would move first, followed by the attorney, judge, and pertinent judicial organizations. In many countries, social work organizations are critical because they support social workers in their efforts to advance social justice and the well-being of the public (Bisman, 2004). Nepal needs to strengthen and actively promote its association with social work. The social work association needs to play a key part in the creation of policies and in giving policymakers instructions(Reeves, Lewin, Espin, & Zwarenstein, 2010). Theoretical understanding and practical abilities are required for social workers. A large portion of the literature used is not regional.

Implication of Social Work Education in Nepal

According to the literature many actors desire social workers to have more authority, so they can defend the service user in safeguarding situations. Offering protective services to the most vulnerable individuals and increasing social workers' ability to act with legitimacy, will enhance a variety of delicate situations (Gray, Healy, & Crofts, 2003). Social work requires conducting a lot of studies on user engagement, importance, viewpoints, and position(Jury, 2022).This will support organizational structure and provide NGOs with suitable guidance and guidelines (Lockwood, 2010). Additionally, it would be preferable if regional organizations like the Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education collaborated closely and offered guidance, resources, and expertise to nations like Nepal that are having difficulties with social work education and practice(Das, Mehta, Nikku, Omer, & Granich, 2023).Social workers should be subject to strict regulations and guidelines regarding what they are allowed to do and what they are not allowed to do(Rocha, Poe, & Thomas, 2010).There need to be some major changes, such as limiting employment to social workers with a background in social science.These are some fundamental adjustments that must be made if social workers are to retain their professional authority(Elsana, Paul, & Denov, 2022). Social work in Nepal is necessary to be improved, so it is important to mention:

- The introduction and expansion of social work education opportunities through social work activities.
- Introduce the associations and the government's rules and regulationsin the field of social work practice.
- All social workers should be required to hold social work identifications of the social work discipline.
- The profession should be licensed to give social workers more professional clout.

- Support the creation of social work that is locally relevant, and increase research and publication into social problems in Nepal.
- For social workers and those working in the field that has degrees in development sectors especially rural development, community development, or development studies, there should be more opportunities for professional growth.

Conclusion

The context of Nepal,Social Work is a relatively new field growing gradually. At this time, it is dependent on Western techniques and strategies. It is time for the fieldwork practice to adopt a social work model similar to that in Nepal.Social work education and regulation of the profession are two areas that have lagged. As a result, many people who are not social workers now practice social work. These so-called "social workers" have limited knowledge of social work practices, principles, and ethics. These social workers frequently abuse their authority as professionals. The authority they have as social workers is frequently abused. There are undoubtedly some social workers who are committed to the well-being and welfare of people, but they are in a precarious position because of the government's inadequate support. All the issues that prevent professionalism from being practiced should be fixed to safeguard service users. The step of social work education must be enhanced. The practice of social work needs to be duly authorized and regulated. A social worker should promote improved social work training, education, and methodologies. Social workers ought to be recognized by the government to increase funding for the field. It is important to develop local approaches and social work practices rather than relying on western perspectives and concepts. The Nepalese social work model can be developed collaboratively by academics, practitioners, and even service users. One of the ideas for Nepalese social work should be to get the profession recognized, publish suitable literature, and strengthen theformation of the association of social work.

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