SOCIAL CASE WORK AS A PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS: AN INTRODUCTION

Syeda Farhana Sarfaraz*
Sumera Ishrat**

Abstract

Social work emerged as a profession early in the 20th century and today as a profession fulfills social welfare mandate to promote human well-being and the quality of life. The social work encompasses activities directed at improving humans, social condition, alleviating human distress and social problem. Social Case Work in one of the helping methods in social work. As its name implies, its particular focus of attention is not upon social problems themselves but upon "cases" or individuals or families suffering from social problems or clients who unable to cope satisfaction with their social situation or relationships. Social case work modifies either the problem experience in the individual case or the person's modes of coping with it, often both by provision of certain services material resource psychologically therapeutic supports and counselling. The present effort has been highlighted the meaning of social case work, its development and an introduction as a problem solving process.

* Syeda Farhana Sarfaraz, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Karachi
** Sumera Ishrat, Full Time Cooperative Teacher, Department of Social Work University of Karachi

The profession of social work aims to exchanging the effectiveness of social functioning of people in need. In order to deal effectively with problems of people, Social Work has developed the three methods i.e. social case work, social group work and community organization and development respectively. These interventions methods are generally known as primary methods of social work. Social Work is a process of intervention between two or more system, by one or more change agent. This process of intervening on individual basis has been known traditionally as Social Case Work. Social Case Work is a method which helps by counselling the individual client to affect the better social relationship and social adjustment which makes him to lead a useful and satisfactory life.

Definition

The concept and theory of social case work is still keeping its meaning. This appears to be as many definitions as there are writers in this field. Some definitions are given below as example.

Mary Richmond explained,
"Social case work may be defined as the art doing different things for, and with different people by cooperating with them to achieve at one and the same time their own society's betterment."[1]

Fried Lender remarks social case work as,
"A method which helps by counselling the individual client to affect better social relationships and a social adjustment that makes it possible for him to lead a satisfying and useful life."[2]

Professor Gordon Hamilton says,
"Social Case Work is a living event" within there are always economic, physical, mental and social factors in a varying proportion".[3]

Porter Lee highlighted,
"The method of effective understanding of the needs resources and reaction of individuals."[4]

Helen Harris Perlman denotes,
"A process used by certain human welfare agencies to help individual to cope more effectively with their problems in social functioning."[5]

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[1] Hollis, Florence, "Case work A Psycho-Socio therapy. (New York: 6th edition, Random House, 1996), pp 17-20.
[2] W.A Fried Lender, "Concepts and Methods of Social Work" (New York: Prentice Hall, 1957), pp.18.
[3] Hamilton Gordon, "Theory and Practice of Social Case Work" (New York: 2nd edition, Columbia University Press, 1952), p3
[4] Ibid.
[5] Perlman H.H, "Social Case Work: A problem Solving Process," (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1959), p.19-20.

In the field of social work, the main task of social worker is to develop the self-direction and self-dependence of an individual. The process of social case work involves the study of individual problem in its totality. As a method of direct services of social work, it under takes a very careful observation of individual and his problem. The roots of case work are deep and date back hundreds of years to society's effort to help people with relationship problems. The knowledge base of practice includes the scientific work of a wide variety of disciplines, social work's adaptations of this knowledge, and its own theoretical findings. The main fields of practice where case workers are doing several jobs like correctional (juvenile parole), medical (clinical and geriatric care) and educational (school social work counselling) national or international organizations. The process of social case work embraces study, assessment, intervention and termination. The application process is designed to aid the client in the discovery of what dysfunctional and to lead to solutions of personal family social and psychological problems.

Historical Development of Theory and Practice Social Case Work

The term Social Case Work appeared rarely in the literature before 1920. The Association for improving the conditions of the poor (AICP) founded in America in1843, approached the problem of poverty individually. The aims were to visit poor at their homes, to give them counsel, to assist them practicable employment, to inspire them with self- reliance, to provide such relief as should be suitable to their needs. In other organizations COS the Charity Organizations in 1877 gave the plan that, an investigation of applicants to determine need, central registration, recording, relief giving, and use of volunteer family visitor.[6]

With the development of School of Social Work at the end of century, visitor received in-service training in method of investigation, diagnosis and the treatment developing out of the COS movement the first family welfare association was organized in 1905 pioneered by Mary Richmond. Her publication "Social Diagnosis" in 1917, a mile stone in the development of professional social case work. This book presented the first organization of case work's practice knowledge.[7]

In 1920's brought a great focused on the psycho-social components of problem-solving methods of social case work due to World War 1. Psycho- analytic principles and theory by Sigmund Freud were incorporated into case work practice. The problem solving method and model formulated and made articulate in Social Case Work written by H. H. Perlman in 1957. The behaviour modification model by Pavolovian and Skinner were incorporated in the Social Work literature in the 1960's. Task – centred case work, general service model developed and published in the 1970's at the University of

[6] Cowles L.A.F, "Social Case Work in the health field: A Care perspective", (New York: Howarth Press 2000) pp.3-4

[7] Betty J. Piccard, "An Introduction to social work A Premier". (4th edition, The Dory Press, 1988) , pp.7-9.

Chicago. It was designed to solved specific psycho-social problems of individuals or families; this model was short-term and time-limited time of practice.[8]
Prior to 1970, Social work practice was defined by methodologies or by fields of practice. Social workers were thus variously identified as caseworkers, group workers, community organizers, child welfare workers, psychiatric social workers, school social workers and medical social workers and so on. The term direct practice and clinical practice are relatively new in social work nomenclature.

The efforts of Gordon Hamilton in 1965 and Bartlett in 1970 to formulate a framework (i.e. common box) for social work practice composed of purpose, values, sanctions knowledge and common skills resulted in a broadened perspective of social work, a new generic term was created to describe it: Social Work Practice.

Direct practice includes work with individuals, couples, families and groups. Direct social work practitioners perform many roles besides delivery face to face service; they work in collaboration with other professionals, organizations and institutions.

The term clinical practice is often used interchangeably with direct practice but the terms may have different meaning for different people. Clinical social work practice has been defined as "The provision of mental health services for the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental, behavioral and emotional disorders in individual, families and groups."[9]

Clinical social work emphasized liberating, supporting and enhancing people's adaptive capacities and increasing the responsiveness of physical and social environment to people's need. Similarly, the term suggests a focus on disease and pathology rather than health and strength.

These developments seem to be treatment approaches with an increasingly strong theoretical base. Social Work is a profession of practice, and theory is always subjected to application. Social Case work addresses itself to the solution of problem that minimizes the effectiveness of the individual. Problems within family's social and economical obligations are the basic concern to the case worker. In the major concern of case worker are those problems which militate against the effectiveness of treatment the relationship of parents to their families and their family about treatment and income maintenance.

In facts social case work individual client is treated as a total unit. His internal and external forces are mobilized in such a manner so that he may solve his problems, not make a person entirely free from his disabilities but helps to face the disabilities through social assistance.

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[8] Ibid., p.1
[9] Carter B. "The expended family life cycle: individual, family & social perspectives". (3rd edition, Boston, Allyn and Bacon) p.13

Over many years, social work practitioners and experts evolved a philosophy of practice from a synthesis of principles gained from sources too diverse to acknowledge, including social work's value preferences.

Philosophy of Direct Practice

- The problems experienced by social work clients stem from lack of resources, knowledge and skills (societal, systemic and personal sources), either alone or in combination.
- Because social work clients are often subject to poverty, racism, sexism, heterosexist, discrimination and lack of resources, social workers negotiate systems and advocate for change to ensure that their clients obtain access to their rights, resources and treatment with dignity. They also attempt to modify or develop resource systems to make them more responsive to client needs.
- People are capable of making their own choices and decisions. Although controlled to some extent by their environment, they are able to direct their environment more than they realize. Social workers aim to assist in the empowerment of their clients by helping them gain (1) the ability to make decisions and (2) access to critical resources that affect their lives and increase their ability to change those environmental influences that adversely affect them individually and as members of groups.
- Because social service systems are often funded on the basis of individual dysfunctions, social workers play an educational function in sensitizing service delivery systems to more systematic problem–solving approaches that emphasize health, strengths and natural support systems.
- Frequently, social workers deal with persons who are reluctant to receive through referrals pressured by others or under the threat of legal sanctions. While people have a right to their own values and beliefs, sometimes their behaviours violate the rights of others and the social worker assists these clients in facing these aspects of their difficulties. Because reluctant or involuntary clients are often not seeking a helping relationship but rather wishing to escape one, negotiation is frequently required.
- Some clients apply for services because they wish to experience change through a social worker's assistance. Such clients are often helped by having an accepting relationship, with appropriate self-disclosure, which will allow them to seek greater self-awareness and to live more fully in the reality of the moment.
- All clients, whether voluntary or involuntary, are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity and to have their choices facilitated.
- Client behaviour is good directed, although these goals are often not readily discernible. Clients are, however, capable of learning new skills, knowledge and approaches to resolving their difficulties. Social workers are responsible for

helping clients discover their strengths and affirming their capacity for growth and change.

- While client's current problems are often influenced by past relationships and concerns, and although limited focus on the past is sometimes beneficial, most difficulties can be alleviated by focusing on present choices and by mobilizing strengths and coping patterns.

A Problem Solving Process

As a Social Work searched for its communities in the 1960's problem solving was one of the concepts found in case work group and community organization and development. Helen Harris Perlman, in her book states,

> *"These case work process in a problem solving process in that it employs the orderly systematic any effective thinking and feeling action."*[10]

The problem solving process as used in social work has its source in the classic work of John Dewey. Process used by human beings when confronted with difficult situations. It has been referred to as "logical thinking" the "stage of reflective thinking" and is the base for the "scientific process" problem solving has been defined as finding – by stages over time and in a cyclical and irreversible manner – a way of feeling, some need or remove some obstacle to achieving some goal.

H. H. Perlman also explains case works event is

> *"A person with a problem comes to place where a professional representative helps him by a given process."*[11]

Thus we find the following elements in case work.

1. Person (client) 2. Problems 3. Place (organization)
4. Process (a helping process) 5. Professional representative (case worker)

(i) Person (client): A person having problems, or under stress, or maladjustment, may be frustrated behaviour and his inability to cope with the situation.

(ii) Problem: A person having different types of problems which caseworker deals, may be unmet needs – economic, medical, social educational recreational, psychological or physical. They may be multi faced and dynamic in nature.

(iii) Place (organization): There are five different types of places i.e. public or private, primary or secondary, local, provincial and national or international and closed or open agency. Each institution has their programs. The effectiveness of service namely depends upon the resources of the institution, competence of the staff and community support.

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[10] Perlman.H.H op.cit., p.22
[11] Carter. B, op.cit., p.22

(iv) Problem solving is the process by which caseworker examines the concern and need and identifies blocks to need fulfillment. Casework problem solving process is finding a way through feeling, thinking and acting. It progresses overtime, in a cyclical, irreversible manner that is focused on removing blocks to need fulfillment in social functioning that individuals cannot with their own resources.

(v) Professional representative (case worker): The case worker is employed by agency, the range and nature of his function being defined and limited by the organization.

The Phases of Problem Solving Process:

Beulah Compton briefly explains the phases of problem solving process with the help of self-explaining figure below. 1.1[12]

Figure 1.1

Phase I (Exploration, Assessment, and planning)	Phase II (implementation and Goal Attainment)	Phase III (Termination and Evaluation)
✓ Establishing rapport ✓ Starting where the client is ✓ Exploring the client's problem in depth ✓ Responding to client emotional reactions ✓ Determining if problems match agency's function. ✓ Making referral's when required ✓ Exploring clients expectations ✓ Enhancing deficient motivation ✓ Formulating a multidimensional assessment ✓ Negotiating goals and ranking them by priority ✓ Defining roles ✓ Formulating a contract	✓ Partializing goals into sub goals and tasks ✓ Selecting and implementing interventions ✓ Planning task implementations ✓ Maintaining continuity between sessions ✓ Monitoring progress ✓ Resolving barriers to change:	✓ Effecting positive for termination of professional relationship ✓ Planning strategies to maintain change and continued growth ✓ Evaluation result ✓ Conducting follow-up evaluation.

To work with individual clients, social workers need to know about individual, interpersonal, family, and group dynamics as well as human development, social psychology, and the individual effects of environmental influences. Work with individuals requires facility with clinical techniques such as crises intervention and counselling. In working with individuals, groups, families and communities a social worker is also expected to be knowledgeable and skillful in using a variety of role models.

[12] Compton, Beulah Roberts and Galway Bart, "Social Work Process," 3rd Edit. (Home wood, IL: Press, 1984) pp. 171-173.

Broker:
As a broker social workers must have a through knowledge of community resources so that they can make appropriate referrals. They also have responsibilities in developing simple and effective referral mechanisms and ways of monitoring.

Case Manager:
A case worker as a case manager assessing the needs of a client, arranging and coordinating the delivery of essential goods, and services provided by other resources. Case Manager must maintain close contact with clients. Their central objectives are:

- Helping people to obtain resources.
- Facilitating interactions between individuals and others in their environment and
- Making organizations and society as a whole responsive to people clearly.

The case manager role is in harmony with the spirit of social work. The case management always includes the following characteristics:

- Screening
- Multi-dimensional assessment
- Care planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring the progress & adequacy of services
- Outcome evaluation / termination.

Mediator
"Mediation is a process that provides a neutral forum in which disputants are encouraged to find a mutually satisfactory resolution to their problems."[13]

Caseworker must carefully listen to and draw out facts and feeling from both parties to determine the cause of the breakdown in family welfare services. He collects, correct and accurate and complete information, and then determined the nature of breakdown. At this stage the caseworker can give an appropriate remedial actions plan aimed at removing barriers, clarifying possible misunderstandings. The communication skill is widely used in this process.

Client Advocate:
Social workers have assumed the role of advocate for a client or group of clients since the inception of the profession with respect to linking clients with resources; advocacy is the process of working with and / or on behalf of clients to obtain services and resources.

Team Member:

[13] Dean. H. Hepworth, Ronald H Rooney, Glenda Dewberry Rooney, Kimberly Strom Gottfried and Joann Larsen, "Direct Social Work Practice". (USA: 6th edition, Thompson Brooks/Cole, 2006) p.29.

In many institutional setting like psychiatric hospitals, general hospitals, rehabilitating and educational institutions. Caseworker function as a members of professional teams that collaborate in assessing client's problems and delivering services like psychiatrist, physician psychologist, a nurse, therapist, educational or recreational therapist depending on the setting. As team member, caseworkers contribute knowledge related to family dynamics and engage in therapeutic work with family.

Consultant:
Social workers serve as consultants to members of other professions and to other social workers in need of their special expertise, e.g. they may provide consultation to school personnel who need assistance in understanding and copying with problem students to health care providers who seek assistance in understanding a patient's family or ethnic and cultural factors, to court staff regarding matters that bear on child custody decisions and decisions about parole and probation and in many other similar situations.

Researcher:
Social worker face responsibilities in both public and private setting to select interventions that can be evaluated, to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions, and to systematically monitor the progress of the clients. Implementing these processes requires practitioners to conduct and make use of research.

Case Worker Relationship:
In social work, caseworker has to establish professional relationship with his client which is referred to a "rapport". Unless rapport is established, casework problem solving process will remain ineffective. On the other hand trust of the client on the problem solving process will be established only if the relationship principles and values are distinctive aspects of client – worker interaction. Historically professional caseworkers have been committed to the following principles.

Self-Determination:
The caseworker respects the client's right to make choices and decisions that affect their lives. Casework practitioner creates working relationship in which clients exercise choice. Social work is based on a democratic process, in which self-determination is a fundamental part.

Confidentiality:
Casework practitioner assured that the client's feelings altitudes and the statements will not be misused. It is essential for developing trust, a key ingredient of any effective relationship. The client's information uses only for professional purposes in working with the client.

Individualization and Acceptance:
It means casework practitioner accept the client regardless the nature of the problems, every client has the right to be treated as an individual with needs, desires, strengths and different from those of all other human beings.

Non-Judgmental Attitude:
It means casework practitioner recognize that all human beings have strength and weaknesses, experience difficult problems, make improper choices become angry and frustrated and sometimes act inappropriately.

Freedom of Expression:
The casework practitioner encouraged the client's need to express feeling and emotions, within the safety of the worker – client relationship.

As in other applied professions, skill as an "art" that is enriched through controlled and thoughtful interaction with clients. In this regard casework practitioner requires three most significant skills for the effective social work practice with individual.

Conceptual Skills:
It is the ability to understand the interrelationship of different aspects of the client's life, his experiences and behaviours and to place them in an appropriate manner which provides comprehensive framework to get positive intervention goals. Without conceptual skills, social study data have little measuring and assessment may become less accurate.
Interviewing Skills:
Interviewing is one of the major sources of information used in social diagnosis is secured from the client. It is more than just a conversation with the client. Communication skills are essential in assuring that the interview will be productive. Zastrow identifies three types of interview that are used to facilitate the helping process in casework.

(a) Information interviews are used to obtain client history that relates to the needs and problems currently experienced and social functioning.
(b) The diagnostic interviews have more clinical focus that clarifies the client's reactions and to make initial judgment about events that affect clients behaviours.
(c) Therapeutic Interviews: These are designed to help clients make changes in their life situations that will help them function more effectively.[14]

Case Work Recording: It provides insightful information into the client's background judgment about the nature of needs and problems and client – activity. It helps in maintaining the focus on ongoing activities with the client. Case records enable the caseworker to review the nature of the situation, objectives and progress in each case.

Counselling: It is the process of helping people to explore and understand personal problems and develop their potentialities. Most counselling is based on discussion between client and trained counsellor in a confidential setting. Counsellor with a better understanding of emotional reactions, human psychology and behaviour is more effective in selecting the right intervention techniques.

[14] Zastrow, Charles and Karen K Kirst Ashman "Understanding Human Behaviour and the social environment, (Chicago: 3rd edition, Nelson – Hall 1994) pp 134-135

Social Treatment:

The main objective of the social treatment in casework practice is to, with the help consent of the client; adjust him only emotionally, socially psychologically but economically as well. The success in treatment only depends upon the willing participation of both the client and the caseworker. According to Prof. Gordon Hamilton three types of Social treatments are:

(a) Administration of Practical Services: There are specific services or material assistance offered to the client to enable him to function effectively.
(b) Environmental Manipulation: These are remedial services to reduce the stress and strain through environmental changes at the end a client may experience a normal and healthy growth.
(c) Direct Treatment**:** It focuses on client because the root cause of the problem may be found in the person himself. This type of treatment is mainly psychological in nature. In this practice caseworker attempts to improve or create self-confidence in the client and help him to use his own potentialities and capacities so as to function in a whole some manner.[15]

There are many treatment techniques have been used by caseworkers for many years, but some prominent specific are:

(a) Milieu Therapy which involves the creation of a learning living environment that systematically the went that occur in day to day living as formats for treating emotional and behavioural problem like juvenile delinquents, psychological problems, special people, emotionally disturbed in correctional services and drug abusers.
(b) Psychodrama: The main objective of psychodrama is to assist client or client group to overcome personal problems through the use of role playing, drama or action therapy.
(c) Play Therapy: It is used with young children for self-expression for ventilation, relationship formation, working through unwanted emotions, teaching positive and providing a format for constructive behaviour.
(d) Parental Education: It helps the parents to understand child behaviour and to develop child rearing skills. Most popular program is Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) which helps children of all ages and learns to become more responsible as we as parents concerns it leads to warmer and more harmonious relationship between parents and children.
(e) Crisis Interventions: It postulates that underlying emotional difficulties are ingredients of all personalities as being the result of the stressful situation and underlying emotional disposition which only came to the surface in crisis situation.

Termination:

[15] Hamilton, Gordon, "Theory & Practice of social casework". (New York: 2nd edition, Columbia University Press, 1952) pp 313-317

Termination refers to the process of formally ending the individual worker – client relationship. There are the following significances of termination.

(a) Evaluating the services provided and the extent to which goals were accomplished.
(b) Determining when to implement termination.
(c) Mutually resolving emotional reactions experienced during the process of ending.
(d) Planning to maintain gains achieved and to achieve continued growth.

Follow – up Sessions:

Post – termination follow – up sessions are another important technique in ensuring successful termination and change maintenance. In the follow-up sessions, the case worker generally relates more informally than during the period of interventions.

Effective evaluation and termination have both the practitioner and the client with a shared sense of accomplishments achieved in their work together. It equips the client with the skill and knowledge necessary to sustain gains or to seek further help as needed in future.

Conclusion:

Case work theory and practice, as known in some western countries, has evolved from indigenous, economic and cultural factors, and for its present effective functioning is dependent on the financial resources technical developments and social responses of a western economy. UN report states that:

In most Asian countries neither the cultural milieu nor the adequacy of current resources make possible an adoption of professional social case work practice as is familiar to social workers in west. It remains determine what type of contributions modern case work may make to social working training development in Asia and similar Countries.[16]

It was an activity which anyone could perform, requiring no special training or understanding of the dynamics of the society in which people lived, or of human behaviour. Many charitable

Institutions had existed even before the partition of the sub-continent. UN assistance was most generous to Pakistan particularly their cooperation with social welfare experts was very significant. They reported technical expertise in–service training in order to establish new institutions and personals.

The term "Social Workers" meaning and scope extends from pure religion based charity, to sophisticated, modern development oriented work. In Pakistan during the early years the term

"Social Worker" was given to anyone who cared for human needs outside their families. Social Policies cannot be prepared in Isolation. Political upheaval that followed from

[16] United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, New York, Training for Social Work in Pakistan, Reported by Dr. J.R Dumpson Nov, 1955, p.4.

1955–56 onwards had an inverse impact on social welfare passed into the hands of non-professional bureaucrats whose foremost concern was to maintain the status.

There are some areas where case work practices are being working in Pakistan. The major services, single services rather multi professional approaches are correctional, educational, and medical or at hospital services are available. Correctional services for juvenile delinquents and adults offenders at remand home. Caseworker helps them to adjust in prison life, give education and change their criminal mentality. After release they can start living as a useful and respectable member of the society. Caseworker also tries to give them a socio-economic rehabilitation for the convict.

In every government hospital, caseworker works with the patient (client) to help them to understand treatment and speed up their recovery process. The psychological diagnosis also helps the physician to have better understanding of the patient, diagnosing and treatment. They also supervised the Zakat Fund of the hospital and utilized community resources for public health awareness programs.

Casework successfully used in educational institution where caseworker helps the students having emotional and behavioural issues or any problem in studies. Caseworker helps that students through one to one counselling, teachers and parents may also involves as to bring them in touch with each other. All special Educational School also have a large number of Caseworkers working for the adjustment of handicapped children in the society.

The policy trends during the past decades indicate that policy makers had locked clear direction. "Social Welfare" programs drifted towards charity and welfare oriented activities instead of becoming a dynamic movement that involved people at the ground roots levels and organize them so that they become self-reliant and self-sufficient. Social welfare has treated a long distance during the past fifty years and achieved much progress but our basic problems have it gone away. Problems created by rapid urbanization need to be urgently addressed. The social workers must recognize the effects of all these positive and negative global influences and national changes that are taking place in the society. To achieve the social functioning and social justice mandates of the profession, social workers today must assert professional "ownership" of service delivery in public services. The contemporary challenge is for professional social workers themselves to be the connecting link at both the police level and level of direct implementation.