

Is Doing Research too Complex? Some Reflections¹

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ABSTRACT

Today's educational environment is not so conducive either for students or educators. Most of the institutions are taking the students view point of teaching-learning process and framing the institutional policies which may be called 'students friendly education' but teachers are at risk to protect the integrity of personal and professional values, ethics. Research in post-graduate courses believed mandatory to learn the perspective that research is not an 'activity' or 'event' but a way of understanding issues around and develop systematic interventions to address them.

Doing students research is perceived as so complicated. It is the real crux in front of teachers involved in research process of students. This article aims to understand the reflections of two schools of thoughts that teachers have. And try to define what is good for students and profession at post-graduate level. How can social research as auxiliary method of social work be enjoyed with rigour and enthusiasm within odd circumstances. The authors are from social work education so article takes the context of social work research.

Key Words: Research, Perspective, Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Research, a word modern people can't stop themselves to use in their teaching, training and extension activities but may have less experience

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about it. It is said and well accepted that any science which want to grow consistently must believe in objective and rigorous research efforts. If we look at the seventy five years of social work education/profession we found that many social workers are engaged in developmental activities and or social service activities but less in doing research. Why the students of social work are not at par with the minimum standards of research? Is doing research too complex?

Honesty, enthusiasm, passion and many more words have been used by UGC second review committee (1980) for social work in its report and wish to inculcate them in students of social work. But many of us have a question that these qualities or mostly values can be plant in students and if yes, how to check it? We think in such situations research process may be instrumental to find out that whether student have faith in social work education and philosophy of work or not.

The objectives of social work education are; to enable students to integrate social work knowledge (understanding, raising consciousness), attitude (enthusiasm and commitment) and skills (functional competence), through a process of critical inquiry, via student-centred class room teaching and learning, self study, field work practicum and practice-based research, to educate students for developing qualified social work personnel for social work practice, administration, education, training and research (Desai, 2003).

But, research is surrounded by many myths and became an area of social loafing that creates a delusion that research is an ‘activity’ like other activities in fieldwork or as an assignment. Authors of the paper are strongly believe that research is not an activity or event but a perspective to understand the ground realities around us which leads a scientific way of thinking to address such issues with less emotional reactions and wiser professional interventions. Research is the only way to improvise any matter of science and today’s world is mostly convinced by this only.

RESEARCH AND RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK

Research is something like discovering truth, verifying old conclusions, theories and rejecting or modifying them. It may be defined as a careful critical enquiry or examination in seeking facts or principles; diligent investigation in order to ascertain something (Ghosh, 1982).

Research in social work is nothing but applying research knowledge in the fields of social work. Dr. Lal Das (2000) revealed that social work

research may be defined as systematic investigation into the problems in the field of social work. The study of concepts, principles, theories underlying social work methods and skills are the major concern of social work research. Research in social work, in broad sense, concerns with the problems faced by social workers while working with different clientele.

If it is so, then this is an area of concentration that why our most of researches are not based on practice of social work and problems of doing social work. If we could answer this question; we think, we are exploring the new avenues for innovations and interventions. But, it is sad to accept that we are not working for it or we are failed to create a trustworthy, conducive environment for research in social work field.

We have gone through the all student and faculty researches in our library but have not found any project which applied qualitative analysis type of research. What it indicate is that people irrespective of specialization or generic background, years of experience have taken a common stand point '*to stay away*' from research and innovations in research/ experiments in research. This can be proved if we take the account of research publications of social work educators and practitioners.

Two Schools of Thought: Some Reflections

Sometime, it seems that every business, event or realities have two basic sides or everything has a spectrum of at least two ends. We found two schools of thought that social work educators can fit into.

The first perspective, where social work educators believe in capacity of research and it's importance in people's life. The teachers are good enough in doing and supervising research process but they have severe concerns with the students stuff, institutional support and freedom to experiment. It is found that people with this school of thought often advocate different options for research subject like term paper, compilations or other subject. They often concerned with the time limit, language, budget, and student's initiatives; where they found that students are not ready to undergo the process of doing research, and they do so because they know that research is a concentrative work and need extra care and caution. They feel doing research is too complicated. They found difficulties in trusting student's abilities to conduct research and have validated data, for them it is a waste of time, energy and resources. According to them, it also has a problem with evaluation. To make students ease with the social work course they keep on advocating options for research project. It is not the question of

quality of an educator but the value of teaching one gives to it. We can call this school of thought as *'Blaming the Quality'*.

The second perspective, here people are still in process to learn research in functional manner. People of this school of thought believed that research is a process and one cannot be perfect in one or two attempts of research. They are of opinion that it is better to expect good results from students but expecting something is different than teaching research process. People of this school have a mindset to experiment with self, environment and knowledge though they are not perfect in research. They search for possibilities of local resources available to students for review and soft-wares. They believed in making students responsive through research process. They believe that if students have given trust and hope they do well in research. They emphasize research as an important social work method to learn because this is the only method that can make social work profession alive, protect its integrity and uniqueness. They believe that research cannot be overlooked. They are not much concerned with the end product of research but the process or approach of looking into the matter from research point of view. Research has a use not only in studying social phenomena but students can use research perspective in their personal and emotional purview also. We can call this school of thought as *'Striving for Quality'*.

It is important here to declare what authors are of opinion. We are more convinced by the second approach of working with students and dealing with student's research projects. We believe that knowledge which fails to create and give wisdom to those who are interested and intended to use it make people confuse and develop the controversies among ideology and application of such knowledge. It becomes mere information which has no or little value in pragmatism that people believe in most. It should not happen with the social work education, training, research and practice.

OUR ATTEMPT

Walchand College is one amongst old social work institutions. Previously, research was for option like (students choice (?)), educators made a point to make it mandatory. Accordingly BOS and other formalities were done and now it is compulsory. We arrange research methodology workshop for second year students where all the faculties take active part is discussions e.g. selection of problem, forming objectives, hypothesis and methodology are facilitated in first semester. Faculties help students to develop questionnaire or semi-structural interview schedule or

standardised psychological scale based on research objectives and do feasibility study for tools and in the month of December students are going for data collection.

In the month of January, students attend research and SPSS workshop in which they come to know about coding, master sheets, electronic master sheets, writing reviews, compilation of report, SPSS package and different statistical tests. Students also visit to different libraries for research review work on fieldwork days officially e.g. Gulbarga University library.

We have annual research presentation of students where they present shortly their research and research findings. This programme is owned by students and faculties are judges for assessing the researches done by students, one of which will be given award of best researcher in the year.

UGC and Knowledge Commission of India (2007) expect teacher must perform the role of knowledge creator, knowledge manager and work with the multidisciplinary team to effective learning. Authors believed that this can only be true if social work educators are continuously engaged in field of research. We should not underestimate the research for any other option; it may be good for individual but harm great for profession as a whole and being an educator we must shoulder the professional standards of social work.

SCOPE FOR INNOVATIONS IN RESEARCH

It is understood that educators are not deriving any kind of pleasure from supervising a research process of students so it is overlooked and not justified, not enjoyed. If we take research in the purview of fieldwork practicum it may be good. Writing good number of articles in renowned journals is an innovation in personal life, it could give us feeling that I am good with several subjects but making someone understand and undergo the process of research can give us a feeling that we have professionally contributed something. Research has many things for educators to experiment into like using qualitative analysis type for research. Doing intervention research on small scale by forming groups in communities, schools and establishing different models and manuals for working in particular circumstances e.g. FAQ's for practicing social work in community setting, practicing counselling and developing indicators.

Now a day's research is used anywhere and everywhere, in market, media, advocacy, law, personal and intra-personal issues, braking values,

individualized life and many more issues are wanted to be studied continuously where educators can go for innovative strategies/ methods of research. Such attempts of research will surely made us more researcher than theorists.

CONCLUSION

It is observed that educators from former perspective are little bit uneasy with research and tend to blame external locus of control for their behaviour; whereas educators who take latter perspective seems enjoying research with students. If we had believed on ‘practice makes man perfect’ we must practice research to make us perfect. To do this we have to leave ‘to stay away’ policy and get ready to confront within and between. As it can only bring change in personal and profession. It is always in favour of profession to chase standards of profession whatsoever the conditions of our working rather to make profession to meet limitations of the individuals and students.

Limitations

Followings are some of the limitations found by authors in respect to present disclosure;

1. Authors are from social work background; it may happen that reflections have limitations for other streams.
2. There may be another school of thought in respect to research but to have comparative underpinnings dominant two were given.
3. Present disclosure is mostly based on the personal experiences of authors and informal discussions with the social work educators and students, so it may invite second thought.
4. Given value for teaching is very much personal and has low professional check.
5. Authors do not claim for replication of experiment.

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