

Social Justice and Social Work

BY

Prof. Dr. Medhat M. Abo El Nasr

Ph.D. from Wales University (U.K.)

Head of the Social Work Fieldsُ Department

Faculty of Social Work – Helwan University (Egypt)

Introduction:

Social work is a human and caring profession, which works with the society and its components, and is contingent upon the surrounding circumstances in the environment because it does not exist in a vacuum as a free standing social institution. It is established within a political, social, and economic context, so it is misleading to see social work in isolation from the surrounding climate or environment in which operates.

Social work is a dynamic profession and a life organism. It tries to adapt and interact in two ways with the surrounding societal circumstances (such as : globalization , the information revolution , professionalization and current problems ...) .

Also, it tries to change these circumstances on behalf of its clients. On the other hand, it keeps on change and develop itself according to the needs and problems of the society and clients (such : injustice , poverty , violence , disability...) . Note that these needs and problems are multiple , diverse and variable ...So, social work should provide the proper , appropriate , fresh and quality services and programs in the light of all these changes and developments .

Social work is a practical profession aimed at helping people address their problems and matching them with the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

Beneath this practicality lies a strong value system that can be summarized in two words: social justice. Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need.

Social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts

are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice.

This article will focus on examining the role of the social work profession in achieving social justice. In the beginning of the article the concept of social justice will be clarified .

Definition of Justice :

- the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moralrightness: to uphold the justice of a cause.
- rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness ofground or reason: to complain with justice.
- the moral principle determining just conduct.

The researcher can define justice as an action in harmony with the requirements of some law and that is supposed to ensure that all members of society receive fair treatment.

Types of Justice :

There are many types of justice, such as: social justice, economic justice , political justice , legal justice...In this research we will focus on the social justice .

Social Justice Definition:

The term 'social justice' implies fairness and mutual obligation in society: that we are responsible for one another, and that we should ensure that all have equal chances to succeed in life.

In societies where in life chances are not distributed equally, this implies redistribution of opportunities, although the shape that such redistribution should take remains contested.

Social Justice is a proper administration of laws conforming to the natural law that is the fair and all persons, irrespective of ethnic

origin, gender, possessions, race, religion, etc., are to be treated equally and without prejudice.

Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997) define social justice as both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is to realize full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure.

The Business Dictionary (2015) define social justice as the fair and proper administration of laws conforming to the natural law that all persons, irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, possessions, race, religion, etc., are to be treated equally and without prejudice

Social justice is the ability people have to realize their potential in the society where they live. Classically, social justice referred to ensuring that individuals both fulfilled their societal roles, and received what was due from society. "Social justice" is generally used to refer to a set of institutions which will enable people to lead a fulfilling life and be active contributors to their community.

Social Justice Goal :

The goal of social justice is generally the same as human development, and the relevant institutions are usually taken to include education, health care, social security, labour rights, as well as a broader system of public services, progressive taxation and regulation of markets, to ensure fair distribution of wealth, equality of opportunity, and no gross inequality of outcome.

The Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization :

For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of our global mission to promote development and human dignity. The adoption by the International Labour Organization of the Declaration on

Social Justice for a Fair Globalization is just one recent example of the UN system's commitment to social justice. The Declaration focuses on guaranteeing fair outcomes for all through employment, social protection, social dialogue, and fundamental principles and rights at work.

World Day of Social Justice :

The General Assembly proclaimed 20 February as World Day of Social Justice in 2007, inviting Member States to devote the day to promoting national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Observance of World Day of Social Justice should support efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

The Role of Social Work in Achieving Social Justice :

Social work is a practical profession aimed at helping people address their problems and matching them with the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

Beneath this practicality lies a strong value system that can be summarized in two words: social justice. Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need.

A brief glance at the many roles of social workers shows how this value system underscores everything they do. With homeless clients, for example, social workers make sure their clients have access to food stamps and health care. The same is true for elderly clients: Social workers may work to protect them from financial abuse or to ensure that

they are receiving the health and financial benefits that are rightfully theirs.

Social workers also apply social-justice principles to structural problems in the social service agencies in which they work. Armed with the long-term goal of empowering their clients, they use knowledge of existing legal principles and organizational structure to suggest changes to protect their clients, who are often powerless and underserved.

For example, social workers may learn organizational ethics to ensure that clients are treated respectfully by staff or they may examine the organization's policies on personal client information to make sure it is held in confidence.

Indeed, from the beginning of their profession, social workers have been involved in "connecting the dots" between peace and social justice. According to social work philosophy ... Peace is not possible where there are gross inequalities of money and power, whether between workers and managers, nations and nations or men and women.

Social Work and Social Justice in The International Code of Ethics for Social workers :

In the International Code of Ethics for Social workers , which is first adopted by the International Federation of Social workers (IFSW) in 1976 (last version was in 2004) there are some items related to the role of social work in social justice , as following :

Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. This means:

1. Challenging negative discrimination – Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin color, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs. In some countries the term “discrimination” would be used instead of “negative discrimination”. The word negative is used here because in some countries the term “positive discrimination” is also used. Positive discrimination is also known as “affirmative action”. Positive discrimination or affirmative action means positive steps taken to redress the effects of historical discrimination against some groups.
2. Recognizing diversity – Social workers should recognize and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practice, taking account of individual, family, group and community differences.
3. Distributing resources equitably – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.
4. Challenging unjust policies and practices – Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.

5. Working in solidarity – Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatization or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society.

Social Work and Social Justice in The National Code of Ethics for Social workers in The U.S.A. :

In the Code of Ethics for Social workers in the U.S.A. , which is first adopted by the National Association of Social workers (NASW) in 1960 (last version was in 2008) there are some items related to the role of social work in social justice , as following :

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation.

Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals’ needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the

profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

- service
- social justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence.

Social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice.

These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability.

Social Work and Social Justice in The Code of Ethics for Social work in The U.K. :

In the Code of Ethics for Social work in the U.K. which is first adopted by the British Association of Social workers (BASW) in 1975 (last version in 2010) – there are some items related to the role of social work in social justice , as following :

Value : social justice

Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work.

Principles:

1–Challenging discrimination:

Social workers have a responsibility to challenge discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio–economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation or spiritual beliefs.

2– Recognizing diversity :

Social workers should recognize and respect the diversity of the societies in which they practice, taking into account individual, family, group and community differences.

3– Distributing resources :

Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.

4- Challenging unjust policies and practices:

Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practice are oppressive, unfair, harmful or illegal.

5- Working in solidarity :

Social workers, individually, collectively and with others have a duty to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatization or subjugation, and work towards an inclusive society.

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