Methods of Social Work – An Overview

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Human being is the basic unit of the society and the society is made alive through the interaction system of individuals. Central to everyday life is social interaction: the process by which people act and react in relation to others (Macionis, 2012). This is a give and take process. This give and take process creates the life pattern. This life pattern is sometimes smooth living and sometimes there comes hurdles. These hurdles can be drug addiction, delinquency, mental illness or so many other social problems.

Social problem is a situation, which may exist anywhere, at any time and affect any person. Problem is a difficult situation. This situation creates hurdles in the life of a person. When these hurdles are there the people became conscious of it and try to find out the solution. Sometimes the problem is solved by their own effort but sometimes they need external help. This external help is given to them by a professional social worker[[1]](#footnote-1).

There was a time when life was simple and moved with a set pattern. But now we live in a challenging world. We have learned how to travel to the moon and projected a satellite around mars, yet we often have difficulties reaching someone in the same room. We live in a fast-moving, push-button space age, yet we find the people are still the centre of the world and its values. As people live together, the problem of relationship and interaction emerge. Personal problems, family problems and community problems appear on the horizon of everyday living. Drug abuse, homelessness, crime, delinquency, mental illness, suicide, school dropouts, aids and numerous other social problems abound at every day turn. Due to a lot of social problems, the need for a professional approach of solving these problems has been realized. This gave birth to the Profession of Social Work.

# Definition of Social Work

Social work is defined differently by different peoples and authors. Some of its definitions are given below;

1. Social work is a professional activity based upon scientific knowledge and skills in human relations which helps individuals, groups or communities to obtain social or personal satisfaction and independence (Dr. ZariRafique).
2. Social work is a process of helping people to cope more effectively with their problems in social functioning (Dr. Sarah Safdar).
3. Social work is a process of enabling people to help themselves (Dr. Ameer ZadaAsad)
4. According to Werner (Council on Social Work Education, New York, 1959)“Social work is a scientific based profession that seeks to enhance the social functioning of the individual, singly or in groups, by activities focused upon their social relationships which constitute the interaction between man and his environment, these activities can be grouped into three functions
5. restoration of impaired capacity;
6. provision of individual and social resources; and
7. prevention of social dysfunction.”
8. A new and the international definition of social work is given by the International Association of Schools of Social workers (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in a conference held in Montreal Canada in Jun 2001: “Social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social system, social work intervene at the point where the people interact with their environment. Principle of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.”

# Methods of social work

The dictionary meaning of the word “Method” is a “way of doing something, especially according to a plan.” Put somewhat more broadly, it is a particular procedure for accomplishing or approaching something, esp. a systematic or established one.” The Free Dictionary defines it as “A means or manner of procedure, especially a regular and systematic way of accomplishing something; e.g. mediation is a method of solving disputes.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Social Work Methods are systematic ways of problem solving in people’s lives. These are systematic ways of empowering people individually, in groups and as communities. The purpose of these methods is to enhance well-being for all. The methods of social work has been divided into primary methods and secondary methods.

## Primary Methods

Primary means basic to something, or before all others. The primary methods of social work are the methods in which social worker directly deal with individuals at the individual, group and community level. These three methods are

* 1. Social Case Work
  2. Social Group Work
  3. Community Organization

### 1. Social Casework

Casework is the method of dealing with the individual problems. It is the method of helping people about their personal problems. According to **Friedlander**, [social casework is a method] “which helps by counseling the individual clients to effect better social relationships and a social adjustment that makes it possible for him to lead a satisfying and useful life.” **Helen Harris Perlman**, on the other hand, defines it as “a process and a method used by certain human welfare agencies to help the individual to cope more effectively with their problems in social functioning.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

### 2. Social Group Work

Social group work is the method of dealing with groups’ problems and socialization**. H. B. Trecker** defines it as “a process and a method through which individual groups in social agency settings are helped by a worker to relate themselves to other people and to experience growth opportunities in accordance with their needs and capacities.” Individuals who have common problems and interests and who are of the same age group, are brought together in the overall interest of the group itself. The common interest of the individuals in the group is the binding factor. [[4]](#footnote-4)

### 3. Community Organization

Community Organization refers to the adjustment between the needs and resources of a community. According to **McNeil,** “Community Organization is a process by which people of communities as individual citizens or as representative of groups join together to determine social welfare needs, plan ways of meeting them and mobilize the necessary resources.” Khalid concludes that community organizations is a process through which welfare needs of a community are met. It brings a harmonious combination between the community needs and its resources. In this process, the entire community is treated as a unit. Therefore, emphasis is given on the community rather than on individual or group. [[5]](#footnote-5)

## Secondary Methods

The dictionary meaning of the word secondary is “something not primary or major; or subordinate to something else.” The Secondary Methods of Social Work are those systematic ways of enhancing well-being which do not involve working directly with individuals at individual, group and/or community level. There are at least three secondary methods of social work, which are

1. Social Welfare Administration
2. Social Research
3. Social Policy and Action

### 1. Social Welfare Administration

Administration is a process of defining and attaining objectives of an organization through a system of coordinated (organized and orderly) and cooperative (مشترکہ) effort. Social Welfare Administration is the process of efficiently providing resources and services to meet the needs of the individuals, families, groups and communities; to facilitate social relationship and adjustment necessary to social functioning.[[6]](#footnote-6)

### 2. Social Research

Social Research is an organized effort to acquire new knowledge about various aspects of society and social phenomena. According to Friedlander, “Social Work research is the systematic, critical investigation of questions in the social welfare field with the purpose of yielding answers to problems of social work, and of extending and generalizing social work knowledge and concepts.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

### 3. Social Action

Social Action, as put by H.L. Witmer, refers to organized and legally permitted activities designed to mobilize public opinion, legislation and public administration in favour of objectives believed to be socially desirable.[[8]](#footnote-8)

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1. Dr. Sara Safdar. (Dec 2006). Classroom Lecture. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Method”. The Free Dictionary Retrieved Dec 9, 2012 from http://www.thefreedictionary.com/method [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Helen Haris Perlman. (1957). Social Casework: A Problem Solving Process. Chicago: Chicago University Press. p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. M. Khalid. (2003). Social Work Theory and Practice. Karachi: Kifayat Academy. P. 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. M. Khalid. (2003). Social Work Theory and Practice. Karachi: Kifayat Academy. pp.106-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. S.Rengasamy. (n.d). Social Welfare Administration. P.5. Retrieved Dec 9, 2012 from <http://de.scribd.com/document_downloads/direct/15017715?extension=pdf&ft=1355025227&lt=1355028837&uahk=xV61mzsIfkQkoBSAs2S8vHnjge8> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. M. Khalid. (2003). Social Work Theory and Practice. Karachi: Kifayat Academy. P. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. M. Khalid. (2003). Social Work Theory and Practice. Karachi: Kifayat Academy. P. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)