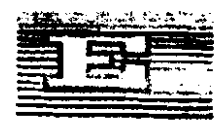


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PERSONNEL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

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PERSONNEL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

Effective implementation of any policy and programme requires qualified personnel and adequate finance. Of these two essential components, personnel would seem to be more important, particularly in social welfare services because: (a) capable personnel can mobilize outside resources both material and human; (b) in spite of inadequate finance, quality of service may be guaranteed as long as there is qualified staff to plan and execute; (c) finance without qualified staff may be wasted and misused. A capable executive staff in social welfare has several avenues to the accomplishment of good jobs even with financial limitations. Voluntary service and students' field work may be utilized; and it is in the nature of the profession of social work to explore latent as well as active resources and use them to the maximum. Mobilizing resources requires not only planning and organization of programmes of public appeal but also maintaining the interest of those who give assistance; and this in itself requires knowledge of and skill in human relationships. It is also in the nature of the profession to prove itself to society, and for this it depends on its qualified personnel to plan, execute and evaluate its services.

The need for qualified social welfare personnel is all the more serious in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, because, while social and economic problems are multiple, and as ambitious plans to meet the problems are launched upon, the carrying out of such plans is often handicapped by the lack of qualified personnel. Moreover, voluntary effort designed to alleviate problems brought about by social and economic transition is invariably frustrated by the shortage of trained personnel to guide it. In some countries there is ample evidence of charitable concern for the needy; but unless charity is channelled in an organized manner it can hardly cope with modern social needs. Accordingly trained personnel is needed to organize

and execute voluntary as well as government social welfare policy.

In the absence of trained local personnel, foreign experts have often been employed in many African countries. However, foreign experts in social welfare, in addition to experts in other fields, are no doubt too expensive for the meagre treasury of developing countries. Even in cases where the experts are paid by technical assistance from an international organization or from another country, they can only produce reports which can hardly be implemented without an adequate number of qualified local personnel. Unlike the expert in economic development, or even the administrative adviser, the social welfare expert is often confronted with the hard task of introducing a new profession which does not promise concrete and tangible results in a five-year plan; and unless he can count on the support of trained social welfare personnel at all levels of the government structure, he becomes frustrated, sometimes to the detriment of the profession.

The need for qualified local social workers can, therefore, hardly be over-emphasized in the African countries. The type of social workers needed will obviously vary with each country; nevertheless, it can safely be assumed that every African country needs social workers of all levels. This need for social workers has arisen from several factors. In several countries the recognition of community development as an important approach to economic and social development has inevitably brought with it the demand for social welfare personnel as well as community development experts. Urbanization has been responsible for numerous social problems and hence the demand for social workers to cope with these problems. In the newly-independent countries the exodus of social welfare personnel together with the rest of colonial public servants is sure to leave vacant posts, and unless arrangements are made for smooth and gradual replacement by local personnel, the services may suffer a great deal of interruption or even extinction.

Given that the need for social workers is as serious and as urgent as described in the foregoing paragraphs, what can be done about it? It should be noted at the outset that needs and priorities of needs are different in different countries of the Continent, approaches to meet the needs will be equally different. It is suggested, however, that training for social welfare remains the basic step to which all African countries should subscribe in their effort to meet the present and future social welfare needs.

What type of social welfare personnel should be trained and where? Allowing for variations that would depend on conditions of every country, it may be suggested that training should aim at preparing social welfare personnel in three categories: professional, administrative, and auxiliary. The question as to which of these categories should receive greatest emphasis will again be determined by the type of job that needs emphasis in every country. This assumes some policy and planning of national social services. On the basis of long-term and short-term plans for social services, it should be possible to forecast the type and number of personnel required at a given time and to organize training programmes accordingly.

I. Professional Social Workers:

For the preparation of professional social workers, it is suggested that the initiation and development of a national school of social work should receive immediate attention. The training institution may be on the graduate or undergraduate level depending on (a) the availability of candidates, (b) the standard and conditions of higher educational facilities, (c) the immediate needs of each country. Whatever the level, a school should be started, however modest its beginning. It is suggested that countries initiate a training programme at a small scale and build upon it. To illustrate that it is feasible and indeed desirable to start a small training project and build upon it, the writer has taken the liberty

to cite the brief history of the Addis Ababa School of Social Work. The choice of this school for illustration has no other reason than familiarity; and it does not exclude the existence of other African schools which may provide equally good, or even better, illustration.

In July 1959 a two-year social work diploma course was started under the auspices of United Nations and the Imperial Ethiopian Government Ministry of Public Health in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and the University College of Addis Ababa. The initial staff consisted of one full time U.N. social welfare expert, one Ethiopian assistant who at the same time followed the training course, and one full-time secretary. These three persons carried out the administrative functions and one of them, namely the expert, undertook teaching as well. National and foreign trained social workers assisted in the training programme. Professionals in other fields, e.g. health, public administration, economics, etc., were also called upon to assist in teaching. Most of these invited lecturers demanded no remuneration.

The first year's budget, excluding the U.N. expert's salary, amounted to Eth.\$12,000 (U.S.\$4,800). In the second academic year one full-time staff member joined as director of the course, and the budget rose to Eth.\$14,000 plus Eth.\$15,000 of UNICEF assistance which included the cost of a vehicle. In its third academic year the course has been included as a School in the Faculty of Arts of the University College of Addis Ababa and its staff has grown to eight regular University College lecturers and thirteen invited lecturers, many of whom do not demand honoraria.

The aims and objectives of the Addis Ababa School of Social Work are: 1/

1/ School of Social Work Bulletin. 1962-1963

1. To provide a two-year professional training for young men and women who wish to make social work their career;
2. To introduce the concepts of social work - philosophy and practice -- to students and other individuals, groups and communities;
3. To plan and work out the placement of graduates of the School of Social Work;
4. To participate as a School in social research projects with particular reference to the interpretation of the profession;
5. To recommend ways in which social concepts can meet the needs of the country.

The School's method of training emphasizes field work placement because: (a) the School is introducing and developing social work and thus regular service on the part of students is necessary; (b) as the programme of study is on an undergraduate level for two years, students must be trained in a practical manner to be equipped to carry out work in the field upon graduation. Students' experiences are used to test and support theoretical training given in class. In an endeavour to train for independent and resourceful thinking, the discussion method of training under direction is emphasized throughout the two-year course.

The Syllabus of the School includes the methods of social work, some fields of social work particularly applicable to the country, and related and allied subjects.

Regarding admission requirements the School's candidates should hold the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate which is awarded upon successful completion of secondary school or the General Certificate of Education from London or its equivalent. Personality qualifications suited to the profession form an essential criterion in recruitment.

The first graduates of the school who received their diplomas in July 1961 have been employed in medical social work, rehabilitation work, community development, probation work, and housing research.

Initiating a social work training institution with as humble beginnings as that of the Addis Ababa School of Social Work has several points in its favour. It makes it possible for students to be trained in their local social setting with intimate contact with the local problems and community resources that they are expected to handle upon graduation, thereby testing theories in relation to local situations. As has been expressed in the aims and objectives of this School, a local training centre can best fulfil the mission of introducing and interpreting the new profession of social work to the community at large. This is achieved not only through the continuous service that students render during their field-work placement, but also through periodic seminars organized by the School as well as through the day-to-day contact that lecturers and administrative staff of the School have with Government officials and the public in general. Further, a local school of social work can contribute to the initiation and development of social research as it has been well evidenced by the Addis Ababa Social Structure Survey which served as one of the working papers for the ECA Standing Committee on Social Welfare and Community Development in February 1962. Finally, a local school of social work provides, for the few trained social workers in the country, an opportunity to teach and/or supervise students of the school, thereby maintaining a living contact with their profession and improving their professional knowledge.

The foregoing suggestion for the initiation and development of a local training institution like the Addis Ababa School of Social Work does not negate the maximum use of scholarships and fellowships for graduate and post-graduate courses in foreign universities which, as much as possible, make special provisions in courses and field-work placement for students from developing countries. As long as all or at least the greater portion of the expense is borne by technical assistance, and as long as there are at least minimum facilities for

African students to study and do field-work in social settings with some similarity to those at home, one should not shy off the idea of sending students for further studies abroad, keeping in mind that social work principles and techniques are the same whatever country one learns them in, and that it is only the application that varies with different social settings.

In connection with European training centres which attempt to provide special training facilities for foreign students, the paper prepared by the ECA Secretariat on Training for Social Work in Africa (document E/CM/14/SWCD/7) mentions some Universities in the United Kingdom and France. The writer of this paper is pleased to add to the said list of universities the name of McGill University School of Social Work in Montreal, Canada, where a special course entitled International Social Welfare is provided for students from Africa, Asia and Latin America. In this course, discussions are conducted on the basis of reports submitted by the students on social welfare problems in their respective countries, and approaches are suggested by the group in the light of social work principles and techniques. Moreover, foreign students in McGill School of Social Work are assigned to field-work placements which as much as possible relate to fields of practice in their respective countries.

Who should be sent abroad for further professional studies? Here again it is not possible to make a categorical statement applicable to all African countries. Generally, and ideally, speaking it may be suggested that students going abroad for further studies in social work should

- (a) have previously worked in social welfare or related fields in their country;
- (b) have obtained at least a diploma in social work, or a bachelor's degree in general arts with emphasis in the social sciences;
- (c) Aim at obtaining a master's degree or its equivalent in social work;

- (d) be sufficiently familiar with the social, cultural, economic, and political background and conditions of their country;
- (e) preferably know their positions and fields of practice that they will hold upon their return home.

In recruiting students for training in social work both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, emphasis should be laid on personality-qualification suitable to the profession. Academic ability and background in general, and possession of a certificate, a diploma or a degree, in particular, should obviously be a requirement. Work experience as well as maturity in age is desirable but not always possible and, therefore, not necessary.

What proportion of the professional personnel should be prepared for what position of employment? The majority should be prepared for field-work. These may largely be drawn from the locally trained undergraduates with a few from the graduate social workers who are not needed for administrative and supervisory posts. The second largest group should consist of those prepared as field supervisors, heads of small institutions, and assistant directors of departments of social welfare and of small voluntary agencies. These must be undergraduates with diploma, and persons with B.A. degrees in both cases with several years of supervised field experience. A few well selected graduate social workers preferably with experience in the field should be employed, as planning officers, research workers, deputy directors and directors of departments of social welfare as well as of big voluntary social welfare agencies and institutions.

II. Administrators of Social Welfare Services:

Preferably the administration of social welfare services should be entrusted to professional social workers of the highest level with some

years of experience in the field and with an orientation in public administration. It is often said that administration should be left to non-professional social workers, and that professional social workers should concentrate on field work practice and supervision. This view may be acceptable only as a matter of expediency; but certainly not tenable as an effective approach. In his roles of policy-making, programme development and control, planning and evaluation as well as in his responsibility of leadership, supervision, and coordination, the administrator of social welfare services needs skill in and understanding of human relationships. It is no exaggeration to say that skill in and understanding of human relationships can best be obtained through social work training. Accordingly for effective administration of social welfare services, professional social workers of the highest calibre should be placed in key administrative posts as high as political and administrative practices permit in each country. In addition to the basic question of human relationships, several reasons can be advanced in favour of entrusting administrative posts to professional social workers. First, as a professional social worker, the administrator will have insight and sensitivity to social needs and community resources. Secondly, the social worker with some orientation in administration can effectively help in creating healthy interpersonal, inter-agency, and inter-community relationships which are directed to the delivery of social welfare services. Thirdly, as a professional social worker, he will be sympathetic and promote suggestions and recommendations submitted by professional social workers in the various levels of social welfare structure, an administrator without profound understanding of the philosophy and practice of social work is often an obstacle to the progress of the professional services. Finally, the knowledge that capable professional social workers can climb high in the administrative echelon, is in itself an incentive for social workers in the field; and social workers are also human beings with normal desires for promotion and prestige!

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- "3. Untrained persons who, for lack of trained personnel, fill a social work post.
- "4. Secretaries and administrative personnel in social welfare agencies who need orientation to social welfare procedures and practices so that they can carry their responsibilities more efficiently."

The definitions given in (1) and (3) above seem to be the only justifiable expressions of the function that auxiliary personnel do in social welfare. Persons such as those referred to in the second definition are by no means auxiliary but team-work participants or co-professionals. With the exclusion of the term "administrative" the definition given in (4) has no justifiable place in the context, for as long as they perform their secretarial jobs efficiently, secretaries, typists, janitors and office boys will always maintain their identity whether in social welfare agencies, legal departments or army camps; there is no need to include them in social welfare personnel and hardly any need to give them additional training in social welfare.

The term "auxiliary personnel" is, therefore, used in this paper with reference to "Assistants to professional social workers", and persons who have no training in social work and who, for lack of trained social workers, fill social work posts.

In view of the fact that there is shortage of trained social workers in the African countries, the social services have a need for untrained persons to serve as assistants and in many cases to substitute professional personnel. It is for this reason that auxiliaries should be recruited and oriented to social welfare. The type of auxiliary personnel required by each country will depend on the type of programme. Similarly the extent and kind of orientation training to be given to auxiliaries should be determined in reference to the background of the auxiliaries and the job awaiting them. Selection of auxiliaries may

preferably be made from related fields such as health, education, home economics, housing, and agricultural extension. However, two reservations should be made in this connection. First, in the selection of personnel from these allied fields the motivation for change from the other fields to social welfare should be carefully examined, because persons who are tired of teaching or nursing will be no good for social work; and admitting to social welfare people who failed in their original professions puts a stigma on the profession of social work which should strive to raise and maintain its prestige. Secondly, as long as they indicate sound motivation and have adequate capacity to adjust to a new profession, persons from unrelated fields should not be debarred from joining social welfare services.

The training to be given to auxiliaries should be directly and practically related to their jobs. It should be on a local level and for short but intensive periods. Follow up of the progress of personnel and evaluation of the training programme is advisable. The members of a trainee group should as far as possible be of the same status.

It must be borne in mind that however carefully planned inservice programmes for auxiliaries might be, it cannot make professional social workers out of them. The aim should, therefore, be to replace auxiliaries by professionally trained persons even if the latter do not have adequate experience. Meanwhile intensive supervision of auxiliaries is necessary. Top social workers in departments and agencies should be relieved of some routine functions so that they can supervise field workers.
