

Fieldwork in CO: Privileging the process of a Political Engagement

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Abstract

This article focuses on fieldwork in community organization and argues that it is distinct in many ways from conventional social work approach of 'problem-solving' where social work students are taught to value objectivity, neutrality and emotional detachment.

Field work is also characterized as unproblematic and the belief that "all social work students do the same thing" through field instruction is reflected in the fact that except for a manual or two, there is scant academic literature on field work instruction in India. When the sites of practice and the nature of tasks performed by students are examined carefully this homogenized understanding is challenged. The pedagogical objectives and the processes followed in selecting sites of practice for educational purposes, the positionality assumed by the academic Department, by the fieldwork supervisor and how these are communicated to the student – all make a significant difference to "the fieldwork" experience of students and the learning thereof. The paper presents the experience of one University (the TISS) where fieldwork in community organisation was consciously re-defined as a process of political engagement over a decade of collective work by faculty members. Social work colleges in developing countries may find this experience useful.

Introduction

Fieldwork constitutes a distinctive component of student engagement within the social work programme. It is based on an assumption that it is only through this engagement that substantive learning takes place in a practice profession. The degree and extent of engagement however could vary.

Although fieldwork in an academic institution is regulated and managed uniformly within a common administrative framework which governs the curriculum, learning through fieldwork process is not homogeneous but highly differentiated and complex. This is because sites of practice are also diverse – in terms of locales, the issues organizations address and strategies they use. Since this heterogeneity does not receive adequate attention in social work education, this paper argues that the site of fieldwork and the ideology and perspective of the organisation and that of faculty supervisor are critical components in organizing field instruction.

Reductionism in fieldwork

Social Work Education in India remains unregulated by social work professionals. As a result, without adequate infrastructural and pedagogical planning social work programmes are proliferating in Universities of many states (such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) within the country.

Fieldwork is characterized as unproblematic and in some social work colleges little attention is paid to how "the field" or sites of practice are construed. In many social work programmes, students are simply sent to any organization that is willing to accept them and task identification and their performance are all left ambiguous. At the most students may be given an orientation of "helping" or "problem-solving" or "enabling social adjustment of clients or special groups" or "improving social functioning", which are grossly inadequate in effecting

meaningful and lasting social change in a country like India. Further in many colleges the teacher supervises as many as 15 to 20 students for fieldwork. Individual conferences are not held for; the teachers argue that there is no time. Field work becomes a mechanical activity with minimal involvement of teachers and/or of student. It is often observed in many social work programmes that “anything goes” in the name of fieldwork as long the student has an organizational or agency attachment.

At the most, some colleges insist that only organizations employing trained social workers can be accepted for field work placements. This has been grossly inadequate because within social work there is hardly any adherence to norms and standards of practice. Little attention is paid to how tasks are identified or how students relate to them. The difficulties encountered by students also receive scant attention. Pragmatic or mechanical suggestions are provided for writing weekly reports and individual and group conferences which may or may not be held. This entire process emphasizes an instrumental role, compromises on quality of education and degenerates into offering a unitary “social work approach” as appropriate to all contexts. As a consequence feedback received from many organizations hiring social workers with University degrees, conclude that students with social work degrees are ill-equipped to deal with social issues.

Social work as a discipline needs to confront the fact that it has “created a set of academicians who often reproduce assumptions and theories based on modernization values of western societies” (Andharia, 2007, p.104). Besides an instrumental approach to social intervention delegitimizes people’s experiences and renders them powerless to create choices and change for themselves (Cox & Hardwick, 2002)

Similarly it is becoming increasingly common for many academic programmes to organize internships for students with the intention of providing “exposure to the world of work”. This has also raised questions in some quarters (within Universities offering diverse programmes) about how ‘field work’ in social work is distinct. It is in this context that this article tries to articulate how fieldwork instruction in community organization is unique. Based on collective debate and discussions over a decade and extensive years of teaching experience of the author, it represents rethinking of fieldwork within the Department of Urban and Rural Community Development (URCD) at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)¹ in India. The paper begins with a perspective on CO in India and the shifts in field instruction. The pedagogical objectives of field instruction in URCD are presented and the paper goes on to demonstrate how they are operationalised highlighting the distinctive positioning, the criteria used for selection of fieldwork agencies. It also discusses the dimensions of field work in community organization.

Re-thinking Fieldwork in CO

In India, progressive community organization practice takes as its basis, the inequalities in society manifested through processes of marginalization, discrimination or disempowerment of groups. These processes have also implied loss of control over traditional community resources. Therefore CO in India is seen as a para-political process, aimed towards redistribution of resources and power in favor of the poor and the vulnerable. It is seen as a means as well as an end, where collective processes are sought to be institutionalized in order

¹ This Department (CODP) was established in 1950s and was re-designated as Centre for Community Organization and Development Practice in 2006.

to sustain the community's capacity to bring about change as well as enhance responsiveness of state institutions (legislature, executive and judiciary) to concerns of social justice.

Several faculty members in India rejected a rather simplistic and homogenizing understanding of "professional social work" in the academia. The assumption was that because we are all trained social workers, we are all doing the same thing and understand the notion "fieldwork education" in identical terms. This was in fact, far from the truth.

Many acknowledged the multidisciplinary and the divergent understanding and practice of social work. In addition a basic tension between issues of theory, society and action is experienced in all interventionist and applied professions, including in social work. There is a process of struggle over concepts, meanings, priorities and practices which themselves arise out of competing world views about the process, goals and strategies of development. Many sensitive educators therefore consciously seek to locate practice, teaching and the discipline in a complex world, fraught with competing alignments, positions and commitments (Andharia 2007).

This has been a major strength in India and many firmly believe that this diversity has enabled the growth of CO perspective focusing clearly on marginalization and exclusion and sharper pro-poor positioning. As a consequence, its ability to respond to the structural aspects in a rapidly changing socio-political context has increased, privileging the processual aspects of its intervention strategies. A consciousness that "practice" cannot be devoid of ideology also developed within CO.

As mentioned earlier, at the TISS, within the social work programme field work is one of the most important components of the two year Masters' programme in social work and accordingly, carries a weightage equivalent to six courses (12 credits each)².

The Department of URCD within its curriculum began to redefine fieldwork within the specialization through the 1990s and emphasized ideology, perspective building and the significance of positionality in community practice. It was acknowledged that community work is qualitative and processual in nature. Recognizing that field education in community organization practice is much more than learning 'techniques', developing skills, or technical competencies was important (For details on CO perspective in India see Andharia 2007, p.93-94). CO requires making informed judgments, with a political and social awareness. It subsumes a method of inquiry, conscious strategizing and intervention processes. Recognizing that intervention must be rooted in the public and the political as well as the private and the personal is significant in effective CO practice, which in fact influences the community worker

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Duration of Fieldwork

I Semester : 15 weeks X 15 hours over 2 days per week
(225 hours per semester)

II Semester : 225 hours

Total : 450 hours per year

Students are expected to put in an average of 15 hours per week which includes:

- Actual work with the organization
- Individual conference with field work supervisor
- Group conferences with students and agency personnel
- Report-writing time.
- About 37.5 hours make one field work credit. This is different from course work where 15 hours of contact lectures constitutes one credit.

as much as the community processes. In field work education, students are simultaneously exploring, contextualizing, internalizing and in many ways politicizing their actions. For the student of CO establishing an identity as a facilitator of change and transformation is important. This calls into question personal values and conviction with which tasks are undertaken. Students had to experience and appreciate these processes through field instruction and active involvement with specific issues. Teachers of CO believed that an organization chosen for field work placement (its work and the people running the organization) becomes an important site of learning for social work students and must be selected with great care. The next section offers the pedagogical objectives and the criteria developed in the Department of URCD for identifying field work placements.

Pedagogical objectives

The specific objectives of field work education in the Department of URCD were articulated in 2005 as follows:

1. To develop insights into oneself as belonging to certain communities.
2. To develop the ability to reach out to the poor, the marginalized and excluded to sustain development with dignity.
3. To sensitize students to social issues by developing social and political awareness.
4. To explore diverse ideas and discover what is required to end exploitation and injustice.
5. To develop confidence in dialogue, using a range of strategies, appropriate to specific situations.
6. To develop ethical and moral sensitivity to difficult individual and social circumstances.
7. To develop a sense of obligation to respond to such situations and engage with people, processes and institutions.
8. To develop insights into one's own self and a commitment to transformatory practice.
9. To think creatively and independently on theoretical assumptions contained in intervention strategies.
10. To think critically, contest ideas, assumptions and practices in order to discover meaning in one's actions. This facilitates the sharpening of skills in conceptualization, analysis and practice.
11. To learn to recognize and challenge the false professionalisation and hegemonic tendencies in institutions.
12. To act, fearlessly and assume responsibility for facilitating participatory change.
13. To develop, present and argue out view points / stand points and to act according to convictions.

Within the Department of URCD, the goals and perspective of the organization are crucial factors in determining its inclusion as a field work agency for student learning. In fact students and faculty members go on to consciously contribute in substantial ways to the organization and its work.

Criteria for selection of sites of practice

In community organization practice a distinction was made between the term field work organizations and sites of practice. An organization may articulate broad goals and objectives which could appear progressive in its official documents. However sites of practice reveal how the organisation translates these goals into action; the forms of relationships it enters into with specific constituencies (which could be specific groups of people), and/or constituents of

the state and other organizations. Unpacking these helps to understand the forms of analysis and rationality used to arrive at practices and action strategies as they contain shared assumptions about the nature of society and how it can be changed.³

It was in this context that the curriculum design of the Department of URCD was sharpened and it laid down certain pre-requisites for the selection of an organization for students' field instruction.

- The organization must be engaged in consistent work which enhances quality of life of people, especially those of the marginalized sections.
- The organization must be value-based reflecting democratic functioning and upholding values of equality and social justice.
- The organization must reflect the ability for critical interrogation of the larger context of social, economic and political structures and the need to engage with them to end oppression and domination.
- Field work within an organization should provide opportunities to students to observe, to carry out tasks, and to actively participate in ongoing work of the organizations.
- It should also provide students the scope for planning and implementing innovative programmes and projects.
- Through the above, a site of fieldwork practice must provide opportunities for critical reflection on the one hand and on the other, must offer spaces which foster student creativity and contribute to specific contexts or issues at hand.
- At the same time an interface with the academic Department should provide organizations, the scope to rethink, modify or enrich their own intervention perspectives and strategies.

Exposure to specific community groups and to government systems is generally regarded as crucial components of field work. Students need an experiential basis to develop and practice skills of a community worker such as organizing meetings, negotiating and working through community dynamics, identifying community resources, strategizing collectively and providing leadership when necessary around specific issues or concerns.

In a country like India which has a large voluntary sector, trade unions and people's organization, diverse government departments – all offer a base for student fieldwork. Students are not mere "observers" performing mechanical tasks but are simultaneously engaged in analysis and critical reflection. The nature of work envisaged for the student, the tasks performed and the depth of involvement determines the creation of this identity as a community organization practitioner. The faculty supervisor plays a very significant role in facilitating critical reflection and in demonstrating facets of CO practice. This is to be distinguished from fieldwork where students are merely sent to any organization that is willing to accept them and they may or may not be engaged in active work and are told to merely 'observe' for the entire year and no opportunities are provided to develop practice skills. In fieldwork education related to CO identifying and creating a site of practice for the student must reflect an appreciation of the fact that dimensions of student fieldwork are interrelated rather than discrete. Task performance based on analysis aimed at substantive engagement are

³ Social work educators often initiate projects or place students with organizations that do not have any staff. The project is run only on student strength. In the absence of guidelines of how field work organizations are to be selected, students are at a loss as they are performing tasks mechanically without a larger organizational perspective or guidance. Such placements also pass as "fieldwork" of students in social work. In one city with 6 colleges of social work, students from 3 colleges practice case work on the same set of clients but on different days! This is what 'fieldwork' is reduced to.

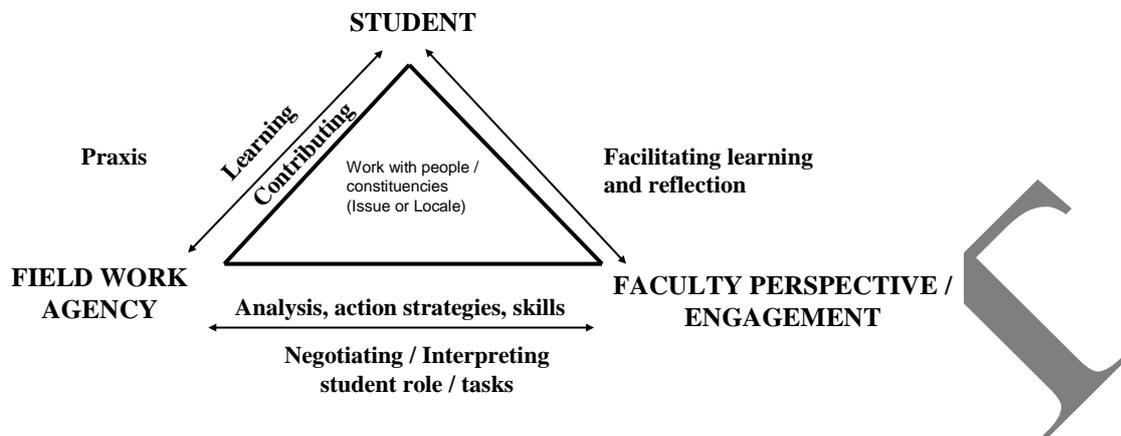
emphasized in CO. Fieldwork therefore is an activity which warrants serious consideration within the curriculum.

This paper argues that the processes followed in selecting sites of practice for educational purposes, the positionality assumed by the academic Department, by the fieldwork supervisor and how these are communicated to the student – all make a significant difference to “the fieldwork experience” of students and the learning thereof. Such positioning in social work is often overlooked, undermined or neglected, which in turn has contributed to social work being viewed as ineffective in its “neutral” form, slow in internalizing a critical consciousness of its transformatory potential and in mainstreaming issues of marginalization, oppression and exploitation within social work education⁴.

Developing an understanding of contexts, key concerns were identified and within the URCD Department faculty members were encouraged to establish a meaningful association with organizations that focused on engaging with structures of exclusion and marginalization. A process of incisive exploration and planning followed. Gradually the field work agencies included trade unions, women’s organizations, people’s movements and advocacy groups. The agencies worked with diverse constituencies ranging from children of tribals and of the urban poor to unorganized labour, and with citizens' groups of certain wards in the city of Mumbai. These organizations reflected the process of CO, provided political education and enhanced political consciousness of students. Faculty members also developed valuable insights.

Each year fieldwork is planned well in advance, incorporating the experience of the previous year and the feedback of students, faculty supervisors and staff of the organization (which accepted students for field work practice during the academic year). Who do we work with, why and what were we a part of? These were important questions that were discussed in organizing field instruction. Care in the selection of organizations and sites of practice underline the perspective and pro-poor positioning of the department of URCD. Through the 1990s organizations for field instruction expanded to include local community based formations, trade unions and women’s movements as also rights based work on specific issues. The process of explaining CO practice and negotiating student involvement and learning situations, enhanced contributions of the academia to the organizations and to specific issues. It grounded the specialization and its curriculum in the social contexts of the vulnerable. This in turn changed the quality of instruction and also enriched the department in several ways.

⁴ For example few schools of social work teach Case Work and its potential in non-clinical and non-institutional contexts such as child labour or in dealing with everyday struggles of living in slums or pavements, poor wages or denial of access to schools and health care services. In other words the purposes for which case work is employed, the institutional context and practices are rarely interrogated in the way social work is taught using western bio-medical models or those based on Weberian notion of purposive rationalization (Andharia 2007).



Distinctive Dimensions of Fieldwork in Community Organization

Based on the Department faculty members' experience, the elements of organizing fieldwork instruction in CO are summarized below:

1. Conscious Engagement with Issues: Critical pedagogy and Praxis

While acknowledging that information and knowledge about 'reality' can come out of written literature, critical pedagogy attempts 'transformation of reality through active engagement. Critical pedagogy was heavily influenced by the works of [Paulo Freire](#), the educationist who endorsed students' ability to think critically about their education situation; enabling them to "recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded." According to him "conscientization" is a needed first step of "praxis".

In conventional and Greek usage 'praxis' means doing, acting or action. Praxis is a complex activity by which individuals create culture and society, and become critically conscious human beings. Praxis comprises a cycle of action-reflection-action which is central to liberatory education. Characteristics of praxis include self-determination (as opposed to coercion), intentionality (as opposed to reaction), creativity (as opposed to homogeneity) and rationality (as opposed to chance).

The Department has believed that this is critical if development is to be fostered through an emphasis on democratic processes where an awareness of rights is considered a significant strategy. It is this understanding that has guided the Department's choice of field work agencies.⁵ Within the Department of URCD, positionality in fieldwork now is regarded of

⁵ Besides, students are encouraged to visit, interact and join organizations which possess strong developmental and political perspectives. Activists are invited to come in as resource persons to interact with students. Rural camps and study tours offer additional opportunities and many students choose to opt for Block placements or internships with these organizations. As a result, alumni have made their contributions in a variety of fields related to social development, advocacy, grass root mobilization and policy interventions.

extreme significance. It was found that students developed a sharper ideological perspective moving away from a social work orientation of service provision to a critical understanding of structural contexts in which services are provided or access denied to many.

The conscious effort to engage with issues is reflected in the nature of tasks performed by the students and faculty members involvement in each of the agencies. The demand from the agency for student and faculty support is also a positive indication of their contributions. (See Appendix I for some illustrations). The kind of involvement, the depth and the support provided by faculty members to these organizations has been of mutual value to the organization as well as to students.

The faculty supervisor has a crucial role to play in negotiating student fieldwork based on a students experience and interest. Carving out appropriate tasks for students in close consultation with the agency staff and making the necessary linkages between the theoretical inputs provided in the classroom and the work of the organization are significant tasks performed by the faculty supervisor. Fieldwork thus constitutes a distinctive site of engagement for students and faculty supervisor

All this has also been influenced by developments in the domain of culture, its study and construction of meaning and a critical analysis of the modernist impulse to intervene based on ethnocentric ideas of 'ideal' society. Since the mid eighties within the Department of URCD, there has been awareness of the fact that culture is composed of contested meanings, that language and politics are inseparable and the construction of 'the other' often implies relations of domination. Acceptance of this critical perspective amongst social work educators has been slow.

The way in which the student (and often the supervisor) connects, relates and engages with an issue is significant. The situatedness of the student (and the supervisor to some extent) and the organization and people he/she work with is important for the interactions and the nature of relations established. The formation and maintenance of relationships in the field and how the CO-practitioner negotiates these relationships to address specific developmental issues are regarded as fundamental to the community organizations process within the Department of URCD. It is these relationships that form the vehicle through which much of the work on specific issues is carried out.

The supervisor's social and political analysis orientation to the organization, the issues it seeks to address and the students interest and background – all inform the content as well as substance of field work. Here the student and the supervisors are not content with observing, understanding and interpreting, but the effort is to actively work towards changing the reality of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion through select strategies. The depth of knowledge and insights gained from engagement is to be appreciated.

2. Privileging the Process Approach

CO as a process encompasses all efforts that seek to redefine power relations which contribute to the experience of discrimination and marginalization. Therefore, CO entails efforts not just at the level of communities but with social structures and with democratic institutions of governance. In their practice, community workers are responding to specific issues and

engaging in politics of change and resistance with a focus on social justice, equality and access to entitlements.

A framework of relations between power and structure based on the notion of human agency and identity (which is multiple, shifting and sometimes contradictory) is critical in the analysis of experiences. Totalizing frameworks including those of social work curriculum flowing from western universities which often undermined cultural specificities and contexts are interrogated.

Much of CO practice is creating greater room for maneuver (Clay & Schaffer, 1984) for the voiceless, enabling the articulation of their priorities, building on their generalizable interests of livelihood security with dignity and respect. However the unity of the marginalized or vulnerable on specific issues is never a given. Such a unity has to be generated in the mobilization process for change. Forging linkages through commonalities of experience (of marginalization, exploitation or of vulnerabilities experienced), developing people's confidence to negotiate with social and political institutions and practices is fundamental to CO practice. The need to synthesize structural perspectives with individual experiences is reiterated in community organization in India.⁶

The preparedness to question the basic 'tools' and methodologies, bringing alternate discourse and practices in the academia closer to the daily lives and struggles of people is always a challenge. A deliberate interaction and dialogue is sought with struggle-based organizations working with the marginalized. These organizations reflect the process of CO, provide political education and enhance political consciousness of students. The CO perspective is refined in exploring the ideology, orientation and approach of these organizations where use of democratic processes and an awareness of rights are considered a significant strategy.

3. Reflective Reporting and learning through supervisory relationship

One cannot completely plan transmission of knowledge through field work. In pedagogical terms therefore, the field work supervisor's capacity to accept indeterminance, to deal with contemporary issues can only come from experience and the willingness to engage with social situations and issues that the fieldwork organizations (or students) are trying to address. Each student learns differently and the same situation has diverse potential for student learning. The action of providing "structured" situations to students and giving them discreet set of tasks to perform is antithetical to this idea of community organization and the academia's active engagement and contributions to social transformation.

Fieldwork provides a positive opportunity to explore multiple relationships and also engages student and supervisor in identity work which can be both productive and problematic.

As mentioned earlier in fieldwork related to community organization, the student is simultaneously observing, interpreting, analyzing and engaging. The supervisor utilizes the personal experience of the student presented in the report as a source of insightful analysis.

⁶ Most community workers concerned with development in India would validate this approach on the basis of their experiences. This is not to be confused with the integrated approach to social work of Pincus and Minahan (1975) which has been criticized for its traditionalist and depoliticizing assumptions (see Roberts 1990) and continues to be taught in many social work programmes in India.

Balancing one's understanding and one's work is important to gain insights into social issues and an understanding of when, where and how one can intervene. Space needs to be provided for this and there is no single objective way of 'doing'. What is central to fieldwork experience is a combination of familiarity, strangeness, distance, intimacy, ignorance and knowledge. This is unique for each learner and facilitation skills of the supervisor are called into play.

The field education process, the fieldwork experience itself is expected to interrogate, change and affect the self, as the process must become personal and self-conscious to foster learning. Field work must be viewed as an adventure, must be engaging and the process of writing reports and discussing them in individual conferences with the supervisor often includes discovery and surprise. Experiencing personal growth is also important through the fieldwork process.

Therefore field work process is highly challenging – as it requires role-juggling, negotiating at multiple levels and a student could become over-familiar or refuse to engage at all. Both can be difficult situations and need to be dealt or addressed.

4. Critical reflection on 'self'

Fieldwork is the microcosm of the arena where identity of the student in terms of purpose of engagement, work styles, frames of reference and one's subjectivity often require questioning, revisiting and reformulation. The experience of issues through field work therefore is necessarily emotional, where the exploration of the self is often necessitated in order to engage effectively. It can cause multiple pressures and emotional stress, deception and fear of disclosure, desire to withdraw. Some may have difficulty in combining identities in and out of the field.

Fieldwork assignments require that they influence the conceptualization of self-hood beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of fieldwork. It may entail a process of realignment and redefinition of 'self'. The crafting of self in the context of fieldwork is not about presenting oneself to be accepted as a means to an end, but the process is expected to influence oneself around specific issues and sustain beyond the immediate fieldwork context. This process is interactional and negotiated – the outcome of relationships that one works through, with others.

The quality of interaction, the language used and nature of tasks, the process followed during field education characterizes the practice and experiences of fieldwork. Skills of self-presentation are important. In several ways it also subsumes positionality. How do we introduce ourselves? What impressions do we create? Is a student conscious of these? How does the student negotiate these? The identity of the field worker is constructed, reproduced, established, mediated, changed or challenged through fieldwork process in CO and continues to be influenced in subsequent work, beyond social work education.

Conclusion

The knowledge and skills required for CO practice are distinct from those required for counseling, work with disabled children, adult, aged or those marital stress (clinical practice) or work with women in distress or experiencing domestic violence or work with under-trial prisoners⁷. This distinctiveness is evident from the table in Appendix 1 which offers an

⁷ The potential for using the perspective of CO in addressing many of the concerns of these constituencies is immense, but not explored adequately, because typically constituencies have been appropriated within social work by what are known as medical and psychiatric social workers, family therapists, or those engaged with criminal justice systems and so on.

illustrative list of fieldwork agencies (of the erstwhile Department of URCD) and student tasks in field work.

Social workers have traditionally valued their objectivity, neutrality, emotional detachment and non-partisan approach. CO on the other hand emphasized that being apolitical ignored the political nature of interventions which necessarily must aim at influencing the balance of power in favour of the poor and vulnerable sections of society.

The teaching learning of CO by virtue of being embedded within social work education had a shared and historically inherited system of meaning and significance. However, the contextually determined differences in practice, in strategies and the assumptions in diverse cultural forms of organizing need greater attention.

In the selection of field work agencies, and the content of courses, faculty members and practitioners have reassessed, recast or modified the traditional (read western) social work moorings. Through field work and through field action support scope for CO practice and therefore of Social Work has been redefined, expanding the base of the professional practice, especially within the academic programme. Further it has worked towards fostering and demonstrating change process. The horizons of social work or CO in particular have thus widened.

The tendency to subsume CO within social work has always produced several contradictions, especially at the practice and ideological levels when dealing with issues of oppression, marginalization and exclusion within the framework of human rights and social justice. The body of knowledge of social work has been structurally biased towards western society. It appears that this tension and contradiction requires fundamental shifts in the curriculum and this was achieved in the last decade in the Department of URCD (now CODP) in rethinking its approach to fieldwork.

The politics of the professional practice, the evolution of a distinct identity and the diverse ideological and disciplinary underpinnings contained in the practice of professional social work – raised many questions about the hegemonic tendencies within the profession itself. The outcome of a substantive review process initiated in 2002 (at TISS) is a transformed curriculum and a move to offer a Masters' in Community Organization and Development Practice, which in principle has been approved by the University Grants Commission, the nodal regulatory body for higher education in India.

Professor Andharia has over 26 years of experience in the field of community organization and social development. Her areas of work focus on gender issues, environmental concerns, social planning and participatory development, addressing diverse forms of marginalization and vulnerability. She has been involved in policy work and has had a long association with grassroots organizations. She has been teaching at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) for over two decades and was Head, Department of Urban and Rural Community Development before moving on as Chairperson of the newly created Centre for Disaster Management

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Appendix I

NATURE OF FIELD WORK AGENCIES AND NATURE OF STUDENT/FACULTY CONTRIBUTIONS IN DEPT OF URCD/CODP

This is not an exhaustive list but only an illustrative one-

1. Addressing Communal Tensions
2. Trade Union
3. Women's Movement
4. Housing Rights
5. Developmental NGOs
6. Affordable Rural Health

Name of Fieldwork Agency:

Mohalla Committees In Mumbai City: Addressing Communal Tensions

The involvement of the Department in the area of communal harmony dates back to 1980's when faculty members from the Department were involved in the riot-relief work in Shivaji Nagar and Bainganwadi near Deonar. However, intensive and sustained involvement in the area has begun more recently in the year 2000. Realising that various fundamental forces pose an increasing threat to the secular fabric of this country, the department began associating with Mohalla Committees in Mumbai through student fieldwork placements.

Mohalla Committees were started after the Bombay Riots of 1992-93 as a citizen's initiative to enhance Police-Public relationship and to foster harmonious co-existence of people of different faiths in their locality. Over the years Mohalla committees are found to be a very effective tool in checking the spread of communal hatred. The roles played by these committees were more preventive in nature fostering inter-community dialogue. At times of communal tensions elsewhere in the country as well as outside, the local Mohalla committees get activated and continue dialogue with people of different communities to ensure peace especially in volatile localities. The focus of TISS intervention was mainly to broaden the scope of Mohalla Committees from a preventive to a more of proactive developmental role. The Department's involvement is based on the understanding that the communalism has its strong linkages with underdevelopment and deprivation. Its socio-political underpinning are taken into consideration while planning and operationalising intervention.

The department has been involved in direct intervention in some sensitive localities such as Meghwadi, Wadala and Dharavi through student field work placements and active faculty participation. Activities undertaken could be classified under three major categories, viz., Community level, City level and Networking.

Community Level

- Mobilizing local community on various civic issues such as garbage disposal and cleanliness, which impinge upon their lives. The effort is to bring people under a common platform and culture of working together is created.
- Mobilising and strengthening local groups especially youth
- Building capacities among community groups to work on specific developmental issues of their concern.
- Sensitizing school children about issues of communalism, promoting secular thinking by organizing different programmes such as career guidance sessions with school children and

felicitation programmes for toppers of SSC exams from the locality and thereby. This helps spread the message of communal harmony in young minds. Different media such as street plays, stage plays and movies with theme of Communal harmony are used to create public awareness.

City Level

In the year 2002, a large-scale mass sensitization programme to generate public opinion and awareness about the need to bring people of all walks of life was conceived and operationalized as a week long event called "Communal Harmony Week 2002" as a joint initiative of Mohalla Committees, Mumbai Police and Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The idea was well received by the Trustees and later accepted with great enthusiasm by Mumbai Police. The programme involved:

- Seminars for media, NGO workers, school teachers and the public
- Human Chain involving school children
- Run for Harmony and Peace
- Inter religious meet
- Screening of movies, Kavi Sammelan and Mushaira
- Street play performances at different sensitive localities
- Stage drama by Sahmat etc.

The programme received widespread acceptance and response from all sections of the people within the city as well as outside.

The success of this programme could be gauged by the snowballing effect it had in other places. Finding the relevance and importance of such a programme, Navi Mumbai Police has organized some similar programmes in their area of operation. TISS and Mohalla Committees supported a similar initiative in Malegaon where a week long campaign to mobilise people to make the city of Malegaon free from communal divide. Also after the communal violence that engulfed the whole of Gujarat following the Godhra train massacre, the students of TISS in association with Mohalla Committees and other fieldwork organizations in Mumbai organized a series of dance drama and street play performances in various parts of the city aiming at fostering communal amity amidst all the turbulence in the neighbouring state. It is acknowledged that the role of Mohalla committees was critical in ensuring that the city does not go up in flames.

CARE in Gujarat had specifically requested the Department's support to help replicate the Mohalla Committee model there. The National Foundation for Communal Harmony had approached us for a concept paper, which we could not undertake due to time constraints.

Networking

- The Department organized a one day workshop in the march 2001, with groups and individuals working on the issue of communalism and promoting secularism, such as Ekta, Rashtriya Ekta Samity, Communalism Combat, Salokha, and Centre for Study of Society and Secularism. This workshop gave an opportunity to share the concerns of different groups and a framework for future collaboration was worked out.
- A Faculty member is working in close collaboration with different groups including trade unions and other secular bodies in the city to promote communal harmony.

Faculty members from the Department are directly involved in initiatives towards fostering communal harmony and peace in the city through an active association with various groups

and organizations such as Mohalla Committees, Mumbai Police and Community Based Organizations. Continuous inputs to the Mohalla Committees are extended through field placement of students and direct faculty involvement with the organizations' functioning.

Name of Field work Agency:

Kachra Vahatuk Shramik Sangh (since 1997): Trade Union in the Informal Sector

Areas of Intervention of agency

- Trade Union organising workers in the informal sector- contract workers who transport garbage to dumping grounds. Asserting rights of labour, writ petition against BMC's illegal practices of hiring contract labour without following due process of law.

Nature of student Tasks/Department Involvement/Contribution

- Taking up specific worker problems and issues. mobilizing members
- Communicating with workers about progress of the case
- Organize meetings of ward committee (representatives from wards where *kamgars* or workers live who are to attend all meetings; communicate matters discussed; and identify problems that need to be addressed)
- Spade work done to match workers place of stay and their garbage collection area. This was done with a view to reduce travel costs and worker fatigue.
- Health related concerns of workers were addressed.
- Strengthen links with the community
- Individual support to workers on health issues:
- Individual meetings and planned group sessions with alcoholic workers and their families to assist them to kick the habit.
- Linking them up to local resources such as hospitals, de-addiction centers, and alcoholics anonymous groups.
- Other workers who had T.B were linked to BMC DOT schemes so that regular medication and follow up was ensured..
- A worker who needed Rs 40,000 for a heart operation was helped done. The student looking after his case collected the money from various sources.
- Co-operative Credit Societies were set up in the communities so that indebtedness among workers was reduced.

Name of Field work Agency:

Stree Mukti Sanghatana (since 1993): Women's Movement In Maharashtra

• An organization working since 1975 with a socialist, feminist ideology. Aims at creating awareness in society about oppressive social structures that perpetuate gender discrimination against women. It consciously aligns itself with other movements: labour, dalit and with forces promoting communal harmony and peace.

Areas of Intervention of agency

- Conscious use of folk media to interrogate social and economic status of women.
- Provide support to women who face harassment in families and at work place through counselling centres.
- Initiating affordable / subsidised creches and day-care centres especially for working women in slum communities.
- Providing legal aid / assistance to women.
- Mobilising women at local community levels to take up issues that affect their everyday lives.

Nature of student Tasks/Department Involvement/Contribution

- Organising women living in slums / pavements and forming collectives.
- Using services such as balwadis / study classes for formation of youth groups as entry points in the community.

- Generating awareness about discrimination and identifying with women, ways of dealing with oppressive structures.
- Taking up specific issues of wife-beating and alcoholism through cases in the community.
- Networking with citizens' group and other service agencies - both government and non-governmental.
- Improving police community relations by organising visits to police station and lectures by police officers in the community.
- Understanding community power dynamics and vested interests in liquor dens, money lending, etc.

Name of Field work Agency:

Committee for Right to Housing (CRH)

Areas of Intervention of agency

- Networking among organisations on the issue of land and housing for the poor in Mumbai.
- Imparting training to various groups on above issue.
- Rights-based organising of local communities on housing and related issues

Nature of student Tasks/Department Involvement/Contribution (Since 1998)

- Assisting in the ongoing work of the organization
- Supporting the organisation by bringing resources and specialist inputs
- Documentation of work.
- Initiating work in 4 communities.
- Training of housing activists.
- Generating a data base on eviction

Name of Field work Agency:

M.L.Dhawale Trust - Rural Homeopathic Health Programme (since 1999): Affordable Rural Health care

Areas of Intervention of agency

- Health services in various forms - mobile, dispensary, hospital in rural areas in Palghar.
- Community health programme.

Nature of student Tasks/Department Involvement/Contribution

- Attempting to make outreach to villages more effective.
- Operationalising community health at field level.
- Capacity building of CHVs through interaction and demonstration.
- Interfacing with the medical wing to make interventions more participatory.