Social Work Essay, Research Paper

The Crisis in Social Work

There is a crisis in social work which requires a radical analysis of the contradictions within contemporary social work. The confusion about the role of social work and the declining morale and self-confidence of social workers have resulted in the loss of experienced staff and reluctance of young people to consider a career in social work. This analysis inevitably challenges

the present culture of professional training.

Proposals to increase the professionalism among social workers has created a crisis in social work. Increasing professionalism will remove social workers further from the people they serve. Questions are already being asked about the value of academic social work training and whether it adequately prepares people for the realities of the job. The social work task is best learned by students working with people in the community who are committed to social change.

There is more to social work than simply conforming to, and fitting in with organizations that employ social workers. The ability to show a certain independence of thinking is what makes the social worker a ?professional?. Social work has a rich history of this independent thinking. Social work as a profession should assert that the assessment of a client’s ?needs? should not only be driven by the availability of resources but should also be concerned with the reduction of inequality and social injustice. Unfortunately, the social work profession now seems divorced from its roots in socialist ideology and too narrowly concerned with its promoting itself. These elitist pressures are contributing to the current crisis in social work and must be resisted.

Proposals to increase the length of training of social workers and elevate their status are not the answer. Increasing professionalisation will remove social workers further from the people they serve. Questions are already being asked about the value of academic social work training and whether it adequately prepares people for the realities of the job. The social work task is best learned by students working with people in the community who share their expertise and knowledge with each other and are committed to social change.

At present the middle class training establishments are blind to class issues. They claim to be teaching non-oppressive practice but in reality it is a myth. Anti-discriminatory training has failed to put the spotlight on the position of the ‘invisible oppressed’ i.e. the working class. It can only be assumed that social work training takes the view that the situation of the working class is the natural order of things. If social workers genuinely seek to serve all the members of society there must be an overhaul of training and a radical shift in social work practice to ensure it reflects the centrality of class issues.

Social workers today need to draw upon this rich heritage and challenges the increasingly conservative environment within which it operates.

The gulf between the services that social service organizations say they deliver and the services that they actually they deliver.

Departments may claim to provide services for people in need but social workers know that many people who are suffering material and social deprivation do not get essential services.

Many service organizations today have actually become narrower in their focus because of new reforms ? such as welfare reform.

In many instances, social workers? titles have actually been changed to that of ?Case Managers? where their roles have been reduced to that of mediator between the client and services they locate for them with other organizations.

The overall effect of such changes has been to obscure the high level of poverty and deprivation of service users and to seriously undermine social work values.

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