

Curriculum for Rural Social Work Course



Rural Resilience Indian Excellence

National Council of Rural Institutes

Department of Higher Education

Ministry of Human Resource Development

Government of India

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Introduction

Higher Education is nestled in a pivotal position to transform society (McNall, Barnes-Najor, Brown, Doberneck & Fitzgerald, 2015; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Community-University collaborative initiatives should intertwine research, teaching and service to address community-defined issues as such initiatives have the potential to improve the quality of life for those in greatest need (Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

Hence "students and faculty become the agents of social change by creating, learning, and by scholarly processes that explicitly address such problems with the intent of fixing them" (Marullo & Edwards, 2000).

The proposed Curriculum for Rural Social Work has been developed as part of a group discussion held by a group of Social Work Educators and Public Administration faculty from across nine Telangana State Universities. The objective calls for the development of students and the community through Community Service through the medium of social work.

Social work is an intense medium for community engagement and makes it a viable and apt form of engagement. Hence, development of Rural Community Engagement Curriculum on Social Work it is the need of the hour. The curriculum can be offered as a compulsory course to all the students. It has been discussed that in order to bridge the gap between the expectations and actual practices, there is a need to integrate the two important aspects viz., Living and Learning.

Characteristics

The following core characteristics form the basic frame work of the community based learning model which are prime factors that are considered while developing the Curriculum for Rural Social Work.

1. Flexibility
2. Creativity
3. Passion
4. Empathy
5. Trustworthiness
6. Competence
7. Sense of Humor

Curriculum Design

- Objectives
- Module Development
- Methodology
- Assessment
- Outcomes

Objectives

To instill interest and concern among the students about the dynamics of rural society, to develop community based learning, to help the students to identify and respond to community needs, to give students insights of broader social issues and its impact on rural communities, to inculcate values and multiple perspectives of problem solving and foster students' intellectual capabilities and development as citizens, the following objectives have been framed for the Curriculum for Rural Social Work:

1. Make use of effective communication to employ a planned change approach which supports client interventions for engagement
2. With diverse populations, use both ethnic- sensitive and socially-sensitive, generalist practical approaches for rural participation
3. Apply critical thinking skills in problem solving with social work values and ethics, on diverse human issues for rural solution engineering
4. Distinguish professional social work ethics, especially the values of self-determination, empowerment, and regard for diversity that enables community engagement
5. Conduct social research to evaluate the social work interventions, as well as to evaluate agency and community practice

Rationale

Community engagement can be a big game changer for rural communities. Though traditional extension and outreach programs are desperately trying to bring in the desired outcomes are just not sufficient to heal the rift between higher education and community engagement. The existing curriculum covers major aspects of community engagement, yet there still exists a vacuum in the learning methodologies and field work practices.

Social work is a profession with components of practice learning opportunities. As against the conventional learning practices, the thrust is on training through guest lectures and workshops from civic society experts. Exposure to varied interesting forms of community engagement techniques like role play, folk lore, theatre etc. should be part of the Curriculum for Rural Social Work. Inadequate communication and interpersonal skills hinder the progress in community engagement, which requires consistent training sessions to address the same. Audio-visual method is an effective form of teaching-learning process which is possible only with adequate infrastructure to facilitate the same.

Interaction with community engagement experts and practitioners is essential for the capacity building of students. Periodic engagement with the prominent community engagement members will ensure the varied dimensions of community living and engagement. Brainstorming sessions, Group Discussions, Assignments and Case Studies will ensure the students to get an empathetic view of the rural scenario and its consistent concerns. This calls for the conduction of systematic and periodic faculty development programmes in collaboration with the civic society experts and field practitioners.

There is a void created by the NGO sectors through unqualified social workers and lack of mentorship mechanism which needs intervention for effective community engagement. Lack of commitment from students with indifferent attitude has been a major cause for the decline of NGO support and guidance. In Social Work, there is a mandatory requirement for the awareness of interdisciplinary tools and techniques for community engagement. Further, the Social Work students need the motivation and guidance through workshops which

will throw light on the available career prospects in this arena.

The need of the hour, is an approach that extends beyond service and outreach to actual 'engagement'. Hence, higher education, which is generally organized into highly specialized disciplines, requires a paradigm shift towards a more systemic perspective, emphasizing collaboration, cooperation and partnership. This is a humble approach towards the long journey of community engagement through social work. The various forms of community engagement are: (PRIA, 2014):

1. *Linking 'formal' learning and the local community*
2. *Researching with the community*
3. *Sharing knowledge with the community*
4. *Designing new curriculum and courses*
5. *Involving local practitioners as teachers*
6. *Social Innovation by students*

Proposed Model of Curriculum

The curriculum is for four consequent semesters. It is interdisciplinary in nature and more practical oriented with one common paper for both the core and the elective course and one specialization paper with 2 credits for theory and 2 credits for practicum and carries a maximum of 100 marks.

Sr. No.	Module Title	Module Content		Teaching / Learning Methodology	Number of Classes
		Theories and Concepts	Practice and field work (Participatory Methods will be used for practice throughout the course)		
1.	Understanding The Rural Issues	Understanding and studying Rural Development Issues: Land, water, Sustainable Agriculture, Health and Sanitation, education, micro-finance, Cooperatives, Disaster Risk management, issues concerning to weaker sections, Understanding Rural Governance etc.	Visiting field to understand the issues through the action-research tools understand and participatory methodology e.g. PRA and PLA, basically to understand the rural issues from people's perspective(s)	Lecture and discussion and field investigation	20 hours (10 hours theory and, 10 hours field work)
2.	Intervention Strategies in Rural Area	Development Discourse: What is development; What are rural development Five Year Plans, Inclusive Growth, Convergence Models, Issues for Interventions	Action Research mode will continue - Students will discuss and document the development projects and its failures and success, Students should also practice the monitoring	Lecture /Discussion /Field work with community	20 hours (10 hours theory and, 10 hours field work)

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		Theories and Concepts	Practice and field work (Participatory Methods will be used for practice throughout the course)		
			and evaluation of Government Programmes, students will learn to organize and mobilize community and groups, Identification of needs etc.		
3.	Rural Social Work Skills and Techniques	Understanding Rural Community: Concept of Community and Rural Community – Caste, Class and Gender; Power structure, Control and Conflict.	Preparation of community profile and understand the specific issues of marginalized sections, issues related women, farmers, landless labors and possible intervention strategies	Field Visit/Group Discussion/Field work	20 hours (10 hours theory and, 10 hours field work)
4.	Community Resilience	Community Resilience in disaster situation, how to deal with day to day issues e.g. Health, Hunger, Education, Disaster Management: Relief and Rehabilitation, Community Resilience: pre, post and during disaster, Vulnerabilities etc. Studying DFID livelihood models (5 capitals)	Formation of youth groups, women's groups and farmers groups etc. Take up the village development projects through Gram Panchayat, here the community initiatives are important aspects during the field work, identify the strengths and weakness of the community, Vulnerability and Risk Mapping and Plan for Resilience	Field Visit/Group Discussion/Field work	20 hours (10 hours theory and, 10 hours field work)
5.	Finances and Planning	Gram Panchayat Development Plan (Village micro planning), social audit and social accountability, skills in group formation, formation of Producer Groups, Participatory Research Tools.	At the end their course they will complete the Gram Panchayat Village Development Plans which will be the end product of the field work (on the basis of community resilience GPDG will be developed). Capacity Building : Documentation, Report writing Linkages with Govt. offices and Depts.	Field visit/ Discussion/ Exercise	20 hours

Content of Concurrent Field Work

1. Studying the Community set up in detail and developing an in-depth understanding of the field and documenting their study in the form of a special report.
2. Practicing social case works with a minimum of 2 individuals; identify the problem, study, assess and develop intervention strategies for all the cases and execute the plan of intervention.
3. Practicing social group work with a minimum of two groups (Children, Women, Youth, Adults, or Occupational groups, etc.) involving its steps and principles.
4. Working with the community by involving them on one or two issues/problems by confronting the concerned community.
5. Making a minor research study on any specific problem and submitting the report as part of field work.
6. Organizing a minimum of 3 special programmes (action programmes) by the team of students with clear division of work among themselves to meet the felt needs of the community or commemorating some International / National Days.
7. Visiting the agencies having relevance to their placement and act as resources for their clientele in promoting interaction between the agency and the community – such as MCH/NGO's, other such Government departments (with the prior permission of the Faculty Supervisor).
8. Taking part in the programmes, seminars, workshops, etc. related to community work for the enrichment of knowledge. (With the prior permission of the Faculty supervisor)

Rural Community Development Set-up

During this intensive field work training programme the students are expected to:

1. Study and report about the organization – history, aims, objectives and goals, administrative structure, operational area, target group, programmes, findings and problems of the organization
2. Study the magnitude of unemployment in the community and prepare a report on its migration pattern
3. Analyze the situation and problems of rural industries and suggest the plan for man power utilization.
4. Study, work and report on the functioning, models, monitoring of SHGs and Bank linkages.
5. Work for sustainable livelihood promotion of a family or group by using livelihood strategies.
6. Involve in the micro planning of any project with the target group and report the process.
7. Study the present status of any of the development programme implemented by the Government in the rural development arena.
8. Work on meeting the community needs by using the process of community development.
9. Involve in the micro planning of any project with the target group and report the process.
10. Engage in public relations and social advocacy activities in the organization/community.
11. Formulate pressure groups and take necessary action on particular issues in the communities.
12. Study the programmes of RCD covered in the communities and analyze the role of panchayats in Rural Community Development
13. Select any programme/service/of agency and evaluate it.
14. Plan and organize one/two day programmes to create awareness among the target population on any specific social issue.
15. Assist the agency in fund raising and publicity campaigns.
16. Study and report the steps in community based planning, management and monitoring of water shed management

17. Study and report on different types, functioning activities, role and problems of cooperative societies in the community.
18. Attend the staff/target group meeting and record the minutes.
19. Prepare the case study of any successful / failure case/group.
20. Involve in networking, lobbying and advocacy of the concerned project.
21. Use audio-visual and theatre communication methods in the field.
22. Involve in participatory evaluation by using the criteria.

Methodology of Field Work

The following are some important methods/modes of learning in field work:

1. Observation
2. Informal interactions with community, SHGs and Governmental Organizations
3. Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Learning Appraisal Methods
4. Case Discussions/Conferences
5. Sharing of experiences both among the team members and the teams
6. Additional field work, if necessary

Practicum details

Twice a week, students are engaged in the rural community to take up the following Field Work:

1. Rural Development Skills: Health, Education, Agriculture, Water and Sanitation
2. Facilitating and promoting activities relating to Village Adoption
3. Creation of model of Rural Community Organization
4. Documentation of Model Village Case Studies, Cooperative Societies

Assessment

This is a ten credit course, five for theory and five for practicum. The emphasis is to be more on the practical orientation of the student.

Outcomes

After completion of the course the student will be able to

1. Develop skills to understand the social, economic, political and cultural framework of the rural society
2. Develop skills to address the challenges with suitable responses for the identified rural issues
3. Develop skills to engage in the management of the rural community

Career Options

1. Career in the Rural Community Organization and Development Activity
2. Career in the Not-for-Profit Organization/Community Service Organizations and Corporate Social Responsibility Activities
3. Career as a Rural Nodal Officer for supporting rural community organization/development and facilitation of rural reconstruction programmes.
4. Career in the facilitation of Rural Governance and Development.