CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The country and the world are undergoing rapid changes. The educational dogmas of the past are no longer adequate to handle the plural challenges and the rapid changes of the present world. These changes often appear to be in conflict with the culture and values of society. The social work educational institutions must face this moral dilemma and equip the students to acquire the necessary skills to operate in the emerging World Human Order. (Krishna Iyer-1998)

In the coming decades we are likely to be confronted with considerable changes in our social institutions. The knowledge base of various disciplines will also change considerably. Social work profession should be equipped to cope with the emerging situations and to harness the new contributions from disciplines which have particular use for social work practice (Cox David 1994). The institutions that educate the practitioners of social work will naturally have to keep the changing circumstances in view and look ahead to the future.

Background of the Study and Problem Forecast

The conviction that social work education should undergo radical changes and find new dimensions to enable the professionals to meet contemporary challenges squarely is gaining much ground. In the Indian social milieu this would essentially
mean equipping the professionals with knowledge and skills to analyse the underlying social issues and problems (Dasgupta-1967). So the development of new forms of activity related to the present day needs and culture based transformation of the techniques of social work are the major directions for change in the present social work education system. For the change to be effective, it has to be multifaceted and should address concerns with respect to the total system in terms of its components like the institutes, the curriculum, field work, the educators, learners and so on.

Kerala state with all its peculiar features is definitely different from other parts of India with its people and ways, culture and practices. Kerala has become a model to the whole of India in literacy programs and Kerala models are gaining momentum. It is in this context, the researcher undertakes this attempt of bringing together the prevailing concerns with respect to social work education in Kerala and suggests some directions to facilitate change in the existing pattern. Factual data on the available literature as well as own experience, as a student, teacher and practitioner for the past nineteen years is also put together here.

The role of professional social work education as projected in literature and as being taught is to make appropriate intervention in society at various levels to tackle its problems (Bhatt-2002). The training methodology is hence designed in such a way as to develop competent professional social workers capable of making such interventions as and when required with appropriate strategies. But it seems that professional social work education doesn't grow along with society as to satisfy its needs. So it appears to be an urgent necessity to identify the gap between the two and to suggest measures to improve the content and process of professional social work education in Kerala.
The curriculum for social work education in India was originally founded on the pattern of the model developed in the United States of America. While primary human needs may not differ from society to society, the emphasis on the tasks or strategies for meeting such needs will differ in relation to the major problems, which are created by the social context in which the tasks must be performed (Sharma-1981). The main concern in the USA was to provide social service to residual groups who were outside the main stream of national life. But in India the major problem is to assist the majority of our population and not a peripheral group (Dasguptha-1967).

The professional social work education system which prepares the practitioners for the profession has to naturally recognize the demands made on it in a development-oriented state, for service through public sector, in addition to its standing preoccupation with the needs of the voluntary sector (Sanjai-2002).

**Professional Social Work Education in Kerala**

The extent of impact by 40 years of professional social education in Kerala on social change is still a very much debated issue in all platforms where professional social work teachers, students and practitioners assemble. Kerala society has drastically changed in its needs and requirements for the last 40 years and whether professional work education has been successful in responding to its changing needs has always been a concern for professional social workers. This concern had very well been reflected in all the papers published and presented during state level and national level professional social work education seminars and discussions conducted in the state of Kerala for the last two decades.
The state level seminar conducted on “Emerging trends in Professional Social Work Education” at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery-1996, the state level workshop on Emerging Trends in Social Work Intervention-2001, Kalamassery, the state level seminar on “Professional Social Work Education in the 21st century” conducted at the Sanskrit University, Kalady- all focused on the urgent need to strengthen the knowledge base and training methodology of professional social work education to bring out successful practitioners. Students, teachers and practitioners have expressed the same concern to tune professional social work education in Kerala with societal needs, incorporating the sociocultural milieu into professional social work education system.

The main concern of the profession is to bring about social change rather than individual’s adjustment to the societal process. It is now increasingly recognized that professional social work education should transcend its present limited concern to a wider spectrum to meet the emerging social issues in a deeper way. The professional social work education should discover new areas and fields of social work (Kuppusamy- 1972). The changing trends ought to be taken into consideration when evolving the design and content of an educational curriculum for social work practice in Kerala.

This study is launched with the intention of making a critical opinion survey of the teachers, students, and practitioners of social work in Kerala to suggest measures to make professional social work education in Kerala more relevant to the present social milieu by

1) By identifying social realities and goals to be achieved
2) By relating these goals to the tasks and functions of social work education and thus to achieve

3) Behavioral outcomes in performance and practice of professional social work in Kerala.

Statement of the Problem

Consultations and discussions held with professional social work teachers, students, practitioners and employers brought out the fact that today's professional social work education in Kerala lags behind in knowledge base, development of practical skills and building proper attitude in the aspirants of the profession. It is all the individual experiences, perceptions and opinions of the people consulted and discussed. Even papers presented and published on professional social work education in recent years are projections of these perceptions and experiences rather than the result of any research conducted. So the researcher wanted to make a study on professional social work education in Kerala to find out the truth of what is being often heard on the incompetence of professional social workers to deal with the current social problems in Kerala. Out dated syllabus and irrelevant specializations together with outmoded training methodology are the often heard complaints on professional social work education system.
The Scope of the Study

This research aims at providing useful insights to the present day challenges posed by the society to professional social workers and professional social work educational institutions to equip the coming generation of professional social workers with knowledge, skill and attitude appropriate to deal with emerging social problems. The findings of the study throw lights into the need to revamp training methodology of professional social work institutions to produce more militant change agents and suggest measures to make professional social work education in Kerala more responsive to societal needs.

The most important advantage of this research work is that it helps one to get a birds eye view of professional social work education in Kerala and to get insights into the real problems of professional social work education in the state.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

This research aims at finding out the nature of professional social work education as it is given in different part of Kerala and to find out the main problems with the intention of improving the quality of professional social work education in Kerala by suggesting measures in the light of the findings. It also examines the contemporary socio-economic-political realities in its local, national and international context and identify the goals of social work profession, relevant to this realities;
based on the above, the methodologies of curriculum development, teaching and assessment, social work extension, and social work knowledge development and dissemination; and management of teaching and student related matters may be planned

**METHODOLOGY**

**General Objective**

To study the problems and prospects of Professional Social Work Education in Kerala.

**Specific Objectives**

1) To understand the perceptions and experiences of Professional Social Work Students, Teachers and Practitioners on

   a) The role of professional social work education in the present day society.

   b) Whether professional social work education respond to societal needs as it should respond

2) To critically review professional social work education as offered in different parts of Kerala

3) To gather opinion on the competence of professional social workers to deal with societal issues

4) To suggest measures to make professional social work education in Kerala more responsive to societal needs
Conceptual framework of the study

The Knowledge base, skill development and attitudinal formation in professional social work education system ought to be relevant to the needs of the changing society. There must be appropriate individual, institutional and professional body involvement with societal issues to make professional social work education more responsive to societal needs. The number and type of specializations offered in professional social work education and training methodology need to be in tune with the current social needs.

HYPOTHESIS - NO.1

Professional social work education does not meet the needs of the changing society.

HYPOTHESIS - NO.2

Professional social work education is not responding to societal needs as it should respond.

HYPOTHESIS - NO.3

The specializations and the training methodology of professional social work education does not match with societal needs.
Definition of Major Concepts

Role :

The term role has been used in a number of ways in social sciences; the most common usages are role as a unit in society – as a patterned sequence of learnt actions performed by a person in an interaction situation (A dictionary of the social sciences edited by Julius Gould & William L Kolb). In this study this term is used to mean the role of professional social work as projected in literature and as perceived by professional social work teachers, students and practitioners who are the respondents of this study. It is used to indicate the pattern of professional social workers’ interactions and their vested duties/tasks as professionals in dealing with social problems.

Societal needs: -

Societal needs may be defined as the requirements or the wants of society. It also has the meaning of problems, issues, necessities or wants of individuals, groups, communities or society in general. In social sciences the term need is used to mean the issues, problems or objectives of a society at which it works or it wants to deal with, issues or problems confronting a society that requires attention of the government and the public for finding a solution. In the present study this term represents the current issues / problem in society and or the expectations and demands of society from professional social workers as perceived by the professional social work teachers, students and practitioners who are the respondents in the study.
Response: -

Response in its most general usage denotes any behavior or act of an organism that result from a stimulus. It is used to denote the instinct of love and shows itself in the tendency to seek and give signs of appreciation in connection with other individuals. It also means one's way of answering to a particular situation, demands or needs of other individuals. The term response in this research work means the perceptions of professional social workers towards societal issues / professional answers if any to social issues as being taught and taken by professional social workers to tackle social issues / the professional social workers stand towards social needs / the extent to which professional social work education and professional social workers are concerned with and deal with social needs.

Provisions: -

Provision in the most general sense means conditions, directions or guidelines given in a document, enactment or legislation. It can also mean the general guidelines given in a document to achieve the purpose to which that document or law has been formulated. Here the term provision means the scope and room provided in the curriculum of professional social work education, the extent of freedom, facilities, steps given and taken by institutions, the type of social work education climate and training methodology maintained and followed by the social work institutions to train professional social workers and also the policies and procedures followed at institutional level;
Competence:

Competence according to Encyclopedia Britannica means adequately qualified, skillful, able, sufficiently capable, efficient, or suitable for a job, profession or a task. In social sciences competence is defined as having the knowledge, skill and attitude to accomplish an objective, task or professional assignment. By the term competence the investigator means the knowledge level efficiency of professional social workers to deal with social issues, the skills of professional social workers to tackle social problems and the attitude of professional social workers towards societal needs.

 Appropriately:

Appropriate in the ordinary sense of the term means the most suitable or apt action, measure, stand taken to deal with a situation. Encyclopedia Britannica explains the term as acts, measure or stand taken at a particular event or situation in the accepted conventional way or as per conventions. Appropriate in social sciences means responding in such a way as it should respond, taking the most suitable action or measure due to a situation. Here it means the response, action, measure or taken by professional social work education and professional social workers towards social issues.

UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY

The universe of this study included respondents from three groups
Group-1

Group-1 included all postgraduate professional social work students in Kerala from social work departments of all colleges having professional social work education during the time of this study.

Group-2

Group-2 included all professional social work teachers in Kerala from social work departments of all colleges having professional social work education during the time of this research.

Group-3

Group-3 included all voluntary social work organizations in Kerala.

Unit No.1

All postgraduate professional social work students in Kerala from social work departments of all Colleges having professional social work education during the time of this study form the first unit of this study. Professional social work students are those in the department of social work from all schools of social work in Kerala. Thus a total of 345 social work students from all over Kerala (75 from Rajagiri college of Social Sciences, Kalamasery; 75 from Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum; 45 from the department of social work Vimala College, Trichur; 75 from department of social work Sanskrit university, Kalady; and 75 from department of social work, Payyannur center of Sanskrit university form the first unit of the study.
Unit No.2

All professional social work teachers (retired and working) from social work
departments of all colleges in Kerala having professional social work education during
the time of this study form the second unit of study. Thus a total of 30 teachers from
all over Kerala 7 from Rajagiri college of Social Sciences, Kalamasery; 5 from Loyola
College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum; 3 from the department of social work Vimala
College, Trichur; 5 from department of social work Sanskrit university, Kalady form
the second unit of the universe.

Unit No3

All voluntary social work organizations in Kerala form the third unit of the
study. The researcher used the following five criteria to select voluntary social work
organizations. Organizations satisfying any one or more of this criteria were selected
and the top official of that organization was interviewed

1) Agencies which are listed in the directory of voluntary social work agencies
in Kerala (prepared by community aid and sponsorship i.e. CASP, Rajagiri
college in 1996)

2) Agencies that have been accepting social work students for field work practice
during the period of this study.

3) Agencies, which have been employing professional social workers.

4) Agencies working in the field of community development / medical and
psychiatric settings / family and child welfare / youth welfare / with offenders
social work administration.

60 such organizations were found and 20 top officials either the director or the head of those organizations form the third unit of the study.

**SAMPLING**

**SAMPLING FRAME**

**STAGE-I**

In the first stage of sampling the researcher collected the separate lists of all postgraduate professional social work students and teachers of all the four professional social work educational institutions in Kerala. In the same way the names of field work agencies from all schools of social work were collected and prepared the list of voluntary social work organizations satisfying the required criteria.

**STAGE-II**

From the prepared lists of students, teachers, and voluntary social work organizations 160 students, 20 teachers and 20 heads of voluntary organizations were selected used the *lottery method* of random sampling.
**SAMPLE SIZE**

Sample size of students: 185

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<th>Total Number of Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Layola College of Social Sciences</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sanskrit University</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Vimala College</td>
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Sample size of Teachers: 20

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<td>07</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sanskrit University</td>
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<td>05</td>
</tr>
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Sample size of heads of Voluntary organizations: 20

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<td>3</td>
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<td>Trichur</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>20</td>
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Total Sample Size

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<tbody>
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<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
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Tools of Data Collection

Questionnaire, focus group discussions and indepth interviews were the tools of data collection used in the study.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire comprising of 135 questions covering the following 10 aspects of professional social work education was administered to 185 students, 20 teachers and 20 voluntary organisation heads. The 10 aspects covered in the questionnaire are,

1) Societal needs
2) Social work intervention
3) Professional competency of social workers
4) Social work curriculum
5) Social work education, training methodology
6) Specializations
7) Commitment of professional social workers
8) Professional social work institutions
9) General complaints
10) Suggestions
Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were also conducted by the researcher to get additional information as he thought questionnaire alone would not give full details regarding the variable of the study. It helped to gather the missing informations from the questionnaire. Focus group discussions were done with student groups and teachers while in-depth interviews were done with teachers and voluntary organization heads.

Pre-Test

The questionnaire was pre-tested at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery administering it to 10 social work students selected at random. Pre-testing was also done with faculty members, practitioners and employers assembled at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences for a national seminar on “Emerging Trends of Social Work Interventions”. All open end questions were converted to closed ended questions in the questionnaire on the light of the pre-test.

Data collection

Data collection started on June 15th 2002 and completed by December 20th 2002. The researcher visited all the schools of social work and met students and teachers individually and in groups to elicit information. Selected voluntary social work agencies were also visited for collecting data from practitioners and employers. Personal interviews and focus group discussions enabled the researcher to elicit the exactly required type of information and to clarify each point then and there.
Coding, editing and treatment of the data

The collected data was then scrutinized for errors, edited, coded and put in a master chart. Then the data was tabulated using statistical software. The statistical treatment of the data was done through computer application by the investigator with the help of supportive staff in the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The statistically treated data was then analyzed and then interpreted by the researcher, Objective wise and hypothesis wise. Parametric and nonparametric hypothesis testing were also resorted in the analysis. The enter result of the analysis is given in the following order.

Chapter-I, II - Literature Review
Chapter-III - Methodology
Chapter-IV, V, VI - Analysis and Interpretation
Chapter-VII - Major Findings & Suggestions
Annexure -
1. Tools of Data Collection
2. List of Agencies
3. List of Consultants
4. Curriculum
5. Bibliography