Chapter I

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN CRIMINOLOGY IN INDIA

Social work education in India is seventy eight years old. It emerged in order to meet a need for trained personnel to work on social problems that gripped society at that point in time. It was an attempt to organise work within the then emerging philanthropy and charity work. Since social work education had its beginnings with the emergence of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) as the first formal Centre for training in social work, the history of social work education in India is very closely linked to the history of the Institute. The social work program as it evolved at TISS had certain specialisations as a focus area, they were: medical and psychiatric social work, family and child welfare, urban and rural development, social welfare administration and criminology and correctional administration. Each of these fields led to a unique trajectory in the years that followed.

Social Work in Criminology at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences

*Tracing the History.* At the time that the social work program started in TISS, it had a few social science courses that dealt with the understanding of crime and delinquency and some social work courses that dealt with prevention of crime and delinquency and treatment of offenders. In 1952, on an invitation by the Ministry of Home Affairs, two international experts of the United Nations, Walter C Reckless and Edward Galway, designed a program and TISS offered a six months training to nearly fifty (*prison*) officers deputed by different State Governments. This highlighted new techniques necessary for the operation of correctional institutions and agencies and paved the way for setting up of a separate department of Criminology and Corrections in TISS in 1953 (Panakal, 1967). At that point in time, the combination of having the space to anchor this subject and the then existing desire to learn from the international scenario may have been the reason for this development. This was also the time when no training programs had yet been established for these criminal justice system officers. This was an important milestone instrumental in the growth of Criminology within Social Work in India. Historically Criminology in Social Work at TISS was third in evolution after Labour Management and Medical and Psychiatric Social Work.
The program that the department offered was the MA in Social Work, with a specialisation in Corrections. Though the conceptualisation of Social Work was within the Corrections domain, the department was called Criminology and Correctional Administration, indicating that there was still only an emerging clarity of where to locate this discipline and how to define its scope vis a vis practice. This interplay of Criminology, Corrections and Administration refers to; a theoretical framework, a practice component, and the Criminal Justice System (CJS); and has been central to the identity of this specialisation and field of practice. This duality also has certain implications: of Criminology as a discipline anchored with social science being a more theoretical position, and Corrections in social work as a practice function. Their identity and ideological underpinnings itself are different, and the dynamics that exist between the two because of this difference, continue even today contributing to a confusion that subsequently influences its acceptability for all, academicians, field practitioners, the CJS, and society.

The focus of this study is on the specialisation of Criminology and Correctional Administration and is based in a Centre of an Institute offering the MA in Social Work program. The Centre for Criminology and Justice (CCJ), that was set up in the 1950s, as the Department of Criminology and Correctional Administration, came into existence in 2006 after a process of academic re-structuring and expansion in tune with changing realities, that the entire social work program itself went through. The CCJ from its inception has remained focused on the application of social work in the field of criminal justice and correctional administration. Thus a need was felt the need to broaden its focus from corrections to include access to justice, social exclusion and the re-entry of marginalised groups. Towards this goal, it engages in teaching at the Master’s level, training of functionaries in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), undertaking research and field action. The MA curriculum includes intensive classroom inputs with an introduction to theories and concepts, some context about the components and functioning of the criminal justice system itself and an orientation to laws, mainly special Acts and correctional legislations. Field work is a compulsory component of the curriculum whereby students are placed with specific organisations to work on an issue over the course of the year. Field education

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1 Subsequently it was called Criminology and Justice
2 Henceforth throughout the report, Centre would imply the Centre for Criminology and Justice, at a School of Social Work, at a University.
3 It was called the Department of Criminology and Correctional Administration from 1953 to 2005. No specific demarcation is being made about the work done during the time of both these entities and so where the reference is to the focus areas of work, the use of Centre will be done to align with the current identity.
activities during the entire program comprise observation visits, rural practicum for an
exposure to rural living and issues, study tours to other cities to learn about work there and
an internship experience with an organisation as the final month-long block placement.
Doing a research study with primary data collection, writing papers for presentation, and
assignments both theoretical and field based, also form an integral part of course work.

The scope of the Centre’s work has been to engage at the interface between the citizenry and
the Criminal Justice Administration. It aims at interweaving a socio-legal dimension in the
delivery of justice. Over the past many years, it has been involved in imparting training to
functionaries at all levels in the justice system with a focus on socio-legal, human rights and
correctional aspects. Some of the studies undertaken in the recent past have been on the
Juvenile Justice System in Maharashtra (2008), Probation System in Maharashtra (2008),
Rehabilitation needs of Muslims in prisons in Maharashtra (2011), scoping study of
homeless population in M East Ward, Mumbai (2011), handbook for Prison Officers:
facilitating reintegration through welfare schemes (2012) and a mapping of Street children
in Mumbai City (2013). The Centre offers intensive specialized classroom instruction and
practical training in all phases of correctional work, both within and outside institutions. The
objective is to impart to its students, a comprehensive understanding of the justice system
both adult and juvenile, and correctional work.

One important aspect closely aligned to the Centre has been the setting up of field action
projects (FAPs). These have and continue to play a significant role in field education. FAPs
are demonstration projects set up as a response to a key issue in the field for which either
there exists no intervention, or it is a new issue and work in that area needs to be done. FAPs
become a way to make inroads into the sector, especially where there is not much work by
NGOs, individuals or other established work. The first FAP of the Centre was set up in 1990.
It started through students exploring work in two sections of a Central Prison beginning from
1985 to 1989 with a focus on under trial prisoners who are ignored by the system because
technically they are not yet fully their responsibility (Raghavan, 2013 cited in Singh 2013: 280).

‘Under trial prisoners face social stigma, getting habituated to a non-productive lifestyle with no
responsibility for maintaining themselves or the family, not being prepared for the post custodial
period and not being provided any support for reintegration following release. Thus the FAP
started its journey in the field of corrections with service delivery towards the protection of legal rights and rehabilitation of those in custody. The aim behind this service delivery was a long term goal of reintegrating persons who have become socially excluded as a consequence of criminal justice processing and other psychosocial reasons. The aim of the intervention was to prevent further criminalization and victimization after their exposure to an environment that was conducive to such processes’ (pp 280-281).

In 1989, it also started work at Matunga Police station, then Deonar police station and in the metropolitan courts (ibid.). It works with women and male youth in prisons or protective custody, trafficked women or women forced into prostitution, families of criminal justice system-affected population, including children of prisoners, persons released from custody, vulnerable to crime, prostitution, victimization, or sexual exploitation. The FAP has tried to go beyond human rights and custodial justice into seeing them as persons in need of psychosocial and rehabilitative interventions.

Another FAP started work in 2007, with direct intervention and capacity building in the Observation Home in Thane district with a focus on children in conflict with the law. Two other FAPs were started in 2006 with a focus on the issue of beggary and homelessness and in 2011 with a focus on de-notified tribes (Institute Annual Report 2012-2013).

Through these projects of the Centre, the understanding of the field has grown and a need for a cadre of trained social workers in the criminal justice system, that is, police station, prison, court and institutions for women and children, was felt. In a democracy governed by the rule of law, social workers can act as informed citizens to help access rights and to reach out to those in need within criminal justice. It is imperative that these services are not provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) alone, but that they are a part of the statutory services funded by the state because it is vital that the criminal justice system allows and facilitates an access to justice equally for all citizens. As a philosophy that is the foundation of the ethos of the CJS itself. Therefore it is important that it is ingrained in the system and not have to be provided for as an additional and external service.

There is a need to revive some of these CJS institutions that are already existing and to set up new systems to support related issues of those who are CJS processed. Although social workers work in complex systems, the ultimate goal is to bring about healing not only at the individual and family level but also at the community level, thus facilitating a more just society.
Over a period of sixty years, as a specialized field of practice in social work this Centre continues to demonstrate the value of the specialization through field action, research, teaching, training, and student field work, which has been an entry point into an otherwise ‘closed’ setting. Most criminal justice systems are governed under legislations and bureaucracy so access is restricted especially to ‘outsiders’ of the system. The institutions have custodial populations and operate in a closed door manner.

**Field Work in Criminology and Social Work in India**

This section examines how field work emerged in Criminology within Social Work. In 1978, the Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSI) had its National faculty development workshop on field work (Mehta 1981). This, established field work as an important aspect of the social work curriculum. It also interestingly apart from other aspects of supervision, pedagogy, and evaluation, documented the two existing models of field work; mainly that of field work in social service agencies, and that of a field teaching unit. Both of these have been explained in detail and then compared and contrasted to discuss several issues.

The first model is about placing students in existing organisations and with regard to Criminology and Criminal Justice it would be correctional settings or institutions. This is critiqued on certain grounds of a gap with the educational objectives; the field instructors not being fully tuned in to the training process, a value disconnect with the agencies with regard to education principles, field bureaucratic practices, and finally, of agencies being set in ways of functioning in contrast to a growth dimension in education. Though suggestions were put forth and criteria defined to choose such settings that address the above concerns, minimize them, and offer continued training for their personnel to do away with some of the gaps; this reality still exists.

The current situation is also that many of the field work settings within the Criminology and Justice sector are existing social work agencies or settings within the criminal justice system; like police, prison, courts and allied systems, which are not primary settings of social work. This means that the core focus of that setting is not necessarily social work and in trying to apply social work practice in secondary settings a range of differences emerge; in terms of the need itself, differences in purpose, and perceptions, a role discomfort for the student social worker, or even plain hostility displayed by the CJS functionaries towards the social workers and students.
Another model was the field teaching unit, located at the academic institution, which basically meant that services are directly provided to a specific group or generic issue and faculty (members) will directly be involved (Mehta, 1981). This element of demonstration by faculty members ensured that the energy flow from education into practice and cross learning was nurtured. It demanded additional support like permanent field staff and funding so as to not only be dependent on student field work. There was some resistance to this within the university mandate of education and research and the need to broaden scope and additional responsibility. This aspect has now grown into field action projects which are mainly demonstration projects responding to critical contemporary issues.

Both of these models co-exist and form the core of field work today; the former, of giving an opportunity to understand the state’s role and delivery of services in many issues, and the latter, in its exposure to innovations in response to gaps in the field. Both also demand a different approach to practice; for example the experience of working with the government and dealing with custodial staff as compared to working with organisations similar to voluntary organisations, thus the learning and skills required will be slightly different. The concept of social work intervention in the field of criminal justice has yet to take deep roots in our system and society. The challenge has been to constantly demonstrate and sustain developments that promote scope and value of social work in the criminal justice system.

In the early 80s, the field of Criminology and Corrections became limited to intervention in institutions for women and children. After the human rights movement, attention was brought back on custodial justice with various international activists, bodies and organisations highlighting the human rights of those in custody and the general dignity of all humans. It was around the year 1985-1989 that senior social work students started field work in a Central prison, in the women and young male adult sections. A field action project of the department was set up in 1990 to demonstrate the scope of social work intervention in the criminal justice system (CJS). Initially it had a welfare focus and it looked at vulnerable groups in the CJS mainly women, male youth and children. It also worked with institutions for beggars, children, mentally ill and women out of prostitution. (FAP Mumbai 2011). Since it was an initial exploration phase, reaching out to those in need and offering support and services may have been a way of exploring the need in the sector while at the same time actually helping individuals.
Simultaneously the Family and Child Welfare Department at the Institute along with the High Court, which had approached them with this request, started social work in family courts and through an FAP two social workers were placed in police stations in two districts of Maharashtra. Meanwhile, another city based college of social work started an anti-dowry cell which works with the police to provide support for women affected by domestic violence and field work was started in two police stations, with a focus on welfare of police and police-public relations. An institute of Social Work in Nagpur started family counseling cells for domestic violence and children in collaboration with the Commissioner of Police. This reflects the beginnings of field work in this sector in Maharashtra.

A study to examine the evolution of the profession through its academic portrayal based on a content analysis of 194 articles published in the Indian Journal of Social Work from 1971 to 1990 had interesting findings with regard to Criminology and Corrections (Vijaylakshmi at al, 1996). Articles in Criminology and Corrections were in a considerable percentage in the first decade of study that is, 1971 to 1980 and then declined in the next decade of study that is, 1981 to 1990. During the first decade (of the study that is, 1971 to 1980), only one article on social work field instruction was reported in the sample. It was also found that articles on research methodology in social work and social sciences also appeared in a significant proportion and showed a rise in the second decade as compared to other subjects (of the study that is, 1981 to 1990). Thus one can see an emergence of other subjects, in this case, research methodology highlighting different kinds of researches being done could have taken the focus away from Criminology and Correction after the eighties. Also field work as an area of study in social work was at its nascent stage then. There is a need to look for similar studies after 1980 to see the trends in the last thirty years.

The specialisation focus itself has come up for much discussion and review with past studies indicating that neither do employers nor voluntary organisations insist on certain specialisations, nor do students end up working in the same specialisation as their study (ibid). On the other end of this debate is the need to understand the nuances of a sector and develop a team of professionals with specific skills to work there. Yet in sixty years, the interest of both students and the sector seems to have stagnated. There is a dearth of models of practice, organisations or practitioners who have been able to significantly advocate for this sector, perhaps raising the fundamental question of whether this focus is even necessary, or on the other hand, the necessity of examining the above mentioned aspects of the field of practice in order to contribute to repositioning it, in both curriculum and practice.
Field Work in Social Work in Criminology at the Institute: Content and Structure

Fieldwork in the postgraduate program at the Institute follows a generic placement in the first year and a placement within a chosen specialisation in the second year. The objectives of field work can be summarized as developing professional skills for analysis and problem solving with both a micro and macro focus. It is an opportunity for integration of learning and developing professional attitudes, values, and commitments (Field Work Manual, School of Social Work, 2000). The field work is organised in two formats: concurrent and block field work. Concurrent field work is when the students spend two days of the week in the organisation while in block field work they work continuously for five weeks. Over the last five years each specialisation developed a combination of the concurrent-block format that suited their field and student requirements. The Centre had chosen to follow the traditional practice of a concurrent and block pattern across two semesters keeping in mind the nature of settings in this sector. The agencies within this sector are sub-systems of the criminal justice system and are indirect placements of social work; hence the combination of concurrent and block formats helps orient the student to the challenges of the agencies and then slowly settle down and explore a scope for their own role.

While social work is undergoing its own transition because of the emergence of other programs like development studies and specialised courses like disaster management for example; the boundaries among the courses are now blurring, and what was sacrosanct about the social work profession and discipline is slowly getting affected. There are multiple reasons for this; both at the academic front and the employment front but suffice to say a certain questioning and discourse has now affected the position that social work used to or claimed to hold on to, over the years. The reports and discussions at the National Network of Schools of Social Work Workshop (2012) resonate this. If social work overall is going through this phase of change, it is but natural that it will also influence the way the specialisation of Criminology and Justice is perceived by all the stakeholders. In the seventy-eight years of social work education in India, questions of the role and relevance of social work itself and the specialisation of Criminology and Justice have important implications for academicians and practitioners. Criminology itself is a specialised area of work. The general disinterest and apathy by civil society towards people involved in crime, the formidable nature of the CJS and inadequate resources could be some of the reasons why
there are a limited number of organisations working in this sector. This makes field work shoulder an additional responsibility of being both an exploration and demonstration of potential practice.

Thus the students’ understanding and learning of the subject, while helping to build an intervention in a particular setting, needs to rely fundamentally on their own field work experience to understand the sector and its connection to the discipline. There exist limited practitioners in the field to emulate and readings to refer to, an issue with literature for the social work discipline as a whole in India. It is in the background of this reality that it is especially important that student field work, which in a way are examples of indigenous practice in a sector that was only slowly emerging, be studied and documented to further enhance field and theoretical understanding and to develop material for education. This elevates the value field work itself can play not only for the curriculum but for the development of the field of practice.

**Focus of the Study**

This study is situated within the realm of social work education with a specific focus on field work. It aims to examine the field of social work practice in Criminology and Justice in India through students’ field work; its challenges and student engagement with the sector, leading towards a better understanding of the curriculum, and contributing to more relevant practice. It would also attempt to understand the shifts in the evolution of social work in Criminology and Justice. It is based on the experience of a Centre offering a specialisation in Criminology and Justice at the Master’s level Social Work program of a university.

Through the lens of student field work experience, the study could enable an understanding of how the role of the social worker has emerged over a period of time. Therefore it would highlight the evolution of social work in Criminology and Justice in the Indian context. Since field work is an intrinsic part of the social work curriculum, such a close study of field work within Criminology and Justice could also identify gaps in curriculum and field placement.
Rationale for the Study

Social work itself is at an interesting crossroad, with the revival of a peer network by the setting up of a National Network of Schools of Social Work (2012); whose main purpose is to converge on issues around standards of curriculum, any positions that one would now like to take about the specialisation of Social Work in Criminology and Justice will have far reaching implications. For those who have a vision for Criminology and Justice and a passion to nurture it, this study could be an exercise in looking at the past for some direction for the future through the lens of the most important stakeholder, the student learner. Social Work Education at the post graduate level, with Criminology and Justice as a specialisation and within that a focus on field work as an important component of the curriculum is an area that requires further study, to examine its scope and challenges. There is a need to understand the changes of social work practice in Criminology and Justice. This clarity will lead to a strengthening of both curriculum and field work.

On the one hand though there is a dearth of published material in the subject of social work and Criminology and Justice, on the other hand, over the years there is available information, documentation, experiences and narratives in the form of student field work recordings which is a mandatory curriculum requirement of their field work practice. There are student field work recordings that have been maintained at a Centre of Criminology and Justice of a Social Work Institute by some of its faculty members. Some files were also maintained at the field action projects of the Institute. This body of student recordings typically contains issues identified to work on, experiences of working within the system, tasks and activities that have been conducted and its impact on self. These documents contain in-depth experiences of having captured an individual students’ journey of field work. Typically, this is only used for student assessment and has rarely been looked at as a source of information about the sector and its challenges or as a tool of learning about the emerging role of the social worker. There are various dimensions to field work with the student being an important stakeholder and their understanding of the field is reflected in the written format in the form of recordings. It is a documentation of the learning over a period of time and it is also a documentation of the sector and emerging issues thus allowing for an analysis of the evolution of the scope for intervention. An analysis of the recordings may reveal the potential of a specialised focus and put to rest for now the ongoing debate of generic versus
specialized. Also in secondary settings where social work is not the primary focus, it may help understand what the scope for social work is.

An analysis of student field work recordings can also help in answering key questions regarding the scope and challenges confronting social work in Criminology and Justice. Recordings are a valuable source of data to develop insight for learning and to be used as teaching material. This field based examination will present a consolidated identity and futuristic vision for the social worker in this field of practice or sector.