

Community Based Fieldwork during Covid 19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Yashwantrao Chavan School of Social Work offers BSW and MSW programs and is affiliated to Shivaji University, Kolhapur, and Maharashtra. During MSW II year institute offers three specializations Human Resource Management, Urban and Rural Community development (URCD) and Medical and Psychiatric Social Work. During Covid 19 pandemic URCD specialization students carried out fieldwork in their native place, native place was considered as their fieldwork agency. Students carried out various learning activities by applying methods, techniques and tools of social work in their native communities and tried to learn about their community in depth with social work perspectives. It was observed that even though students were staying in their native since their birth but was not having in depth understanding and knowledge about their native place. 11 students studying in URCD during semester III and IV were from Palghar district of Maharashtra State, it is one of a tribal district of Maharashtra State where Konkana, Varli, Thakar tribes are found, our students from Palghar district also belongs to these tribal communities, they were assigned fieldwork tasks to document the cultural practices followed by these tribes, types of unique vegetables especially found during rainy season, herbal medicines and traditional health practices followed by tribal communities, sources of employment throughout year, agricultural activities, government programs and schemes implemented for tribal development. Students made a good documentation of these components. Other students belonging to rural area were also assigned similar tasks. Since students were living 24/7 in their native during Covid 19 pandemic they could concentrate on all the components of fieldwork more sincerely.

Keywords: *Fieldwork, Social work, URCD, Covid 19 Pandemic*

Introduction

Yashwantrao Chavan School of social work Satara is an institute established in the name of Late Yashwantrao Chavan the first Chief Minister of Maharashtra and the former defense minister of India. This institute was established by Hon'ble Padmashree Laxman Mane, one of the popular writer, activist, and a true Social worker. Man with a different vision. He is been born and brought up from a very poor family. Despite all his hardships he started with a very small organization named Bhartiya Bhatke Vimukta Vikas Va Sanshodhan Sanstha, Satara which is primarily working for Education and Research of nomadic and denotified tribes. Through this organization 5 Ashramschoools and Social Work college is working.

He got inspiration from Yashwantrao Chavan sir which resulted in establishment of this organization. Hon'ble Chavan sir was the first president of this organization. After him since year 1987 the president of this organization is Hon'ble Sharadchandra Pawar. Now under his leadership and guidance this organization is flourishing day by day. It is adding new feathers every year. Under the aegis of this organization Social Work College was established in the year 1994. From day one itself MSW degree course was launched on grant-in –aid basis from State government of Maharashtra. Institute offers three specializations

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Human Resource Management (HRM), Urban and Rural Community Development (URCD) and Medical and Psychiatric Social Work (MPSW) for MSW program. After this BSW degree course was started in year the 1996. Around 2000+graduates have pursued their degrees and are working as professional social workers in different parts of India and abroad as well. Institute is also running two special cells attached with Satara and Karad police station for children and women, it is sponsored by Central Social Welfare Board and Vihaan community support centre for HIV positive people.

Institute is also involved in lot of institutional social responsibilities. During this current covid 19 pandemic situations Institute have raised a donation of around 5 crores of rupees through which institute have distributed ration kits, supported district and taluka level hospitals for infrastructural development, and is carrying out entrepreneurial activities for covid widows.

During Covid 19 pandemic the major issue was faced as far as professional social work institute is concerned was fieldwork. Even though there was a need of trainee social worker in different organizations but could not place trainees in different organizations for fieldwork because of Covid 19 protocol and strict lock down. But just leaving trainee social worker without any learning experiences was also not acceptable hence converted the native place of URCD specialization into social work agency and prepared an action plan of fieldwork.

Community based fieldwork during Covid 19 pandemic

1) Virtual Orientation

Students opted for URCD specialization was in need of specialization orientation and various components of fieldwork; like orientation visits, application of theory into practice, expected learning through fieldwork and skill development. Orientation visits during Covid 19 pandemic was not possible physically hence Virtual orientation visits were arranged. Due to this pandemic it was benefitted in one sense to get exposure of various national and international level organizations, even though it was online mode but still students could get information about various organizations working in the field of development. Throughout semester III, 37 virtual orientation visits along with theory and fieldwork were arranged which was followed with detailed discussion and question and answer sessions. Students could learn various aspects of organizations and social work practice.

2) Action Plan of Fieldwork During Covid 19 Pandemic

Since it was not possible for students to send in different organizations, hence it was decided to convert their native place as their fieldwork agency. A detailed action plan was prepared by taking into consideration the specialization papers which they are supposed to learn during semester III. One day online orientation was arranged to orient students about the fieldwork action plan, the detailed discussion was held to help students about community-based fieldwork and expected learning components during this semester III.

Sr. No	Tasks	Duration	Expected Learning	Outcome	Skill Enhancement
1.	Understanding about Native (Tribal, Rural or Urban) Place	7 Days	1. Profile of Village or Town: Socio-demographic profile, Political Economic, Education, Health profile 2. Local people employed in service sector- Govt, Non Govt, Semi Govt, Cooperative, Private, Professionals (Doctor, Lawyer, etc.) Business sector 3. Occupations based on handicrafts and skills transferred from one	Develop perspectives towards community understanding	Observation and Analytical Skill

			<p>generation to another</p> <p>4. CBOs, NGOs operating in your area</p> <p>5. Local Self Government Bodies, Dairy, water supply (domestic and agriculture (irrigation) adds if any more institutions functioning in your area</p> <p>6. PHC, Veterinary services, Banks, Cooperative institutions and any other organizations</p> <p>7. Educational institutions</p>		
2.	Understanding about resources	3 Days	Natural Resources, Human Resource, Internal and External Resources	Understand about the resources	
3.	Local Self Governance Tribal, Rural, Urban	4 Days	Structure- members, committees and its functioning, Budget, Gender budget, Gram Sabha, Mahila Sabha information	Understand about PRI Act	Acts Pertaining to these sector
4.	Understand about special components of community	2 Day	Women, Children, Youth, Aged and their Condition; Social and economic aspects Physically and Mentally Challenged	Understand the condition of weaker sections	Schemes implemented
5.	Understand about Land holding pattern and information about Farmer's, incase urban learn about livelihood pattern	3 Days	Marginal, Small and Peasants. Cottage, small scale industries and allied agricultural activities- Goatery, Poultry, Bee keeping, Seri Culture, Horti Culture, Open Space animal Rearing Project	Land holding pattern and livelihood practices and livestock	Short-term, long-term planning and budgeting, training
6.	Government and Non-Government Organizations	2 Day	Special groups <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Senior citizens 2. SHGs for women and adolescent girls 3. Farmers Group 4. Joint Liability Groups 5. Farmers groups specially formed by NABARD 6. Artisan's Groups formed by NABARD 	Organizations working with various sections of community	
7.	Preparation of Brochure	1Day	Model Of Brochure of Organization	Develop skill to design brochure	Documentation
8.	NGO registration Process	3 Days	Preparation of constitution and byelaws of organization	Understand process of NGO registration and it is expected students will process their own NGO registration	Writing and presentation skill
9.	Documentary on Social Issues	2 days	Documentary on any social issue with specific reference to your area (Waste water management, waste disposal, tap water leakage,	Develop skill to prepare documentary	Communication and documentation

			community culture (folk dance, folk songs, ukhani, ovi, etc) On Medicinal Plants, Local unique vegetables		
10.	Society Empowerment Activity	7 Days	Water and Sanitation Water—Available water sources and its use. Availability of water- river, well, tube well. Use for domestic, irrigation and industry (Village Water Policy if any) Reuse of water- Kitchen garden Disposal of waste water- Soak pit Sanitation—Type of toilets and its management	Water conservation	Dealing with natural resources

Social Work Intervention for Water and Sanitation, Solid Waste Management, Women Health (Anemia Eradication)

Pre stage	Intervention	Results

Make documentary of social work interventions made as far as Approaches tools and techniques of rural development is concerned

Use of Solar Energy

1. Solar street lights (by Local Self Governance)
2. Domestic purpose; solar heater, solar lamps, solar cooker etc.

Community based fieldwork with tribal communities of Palghar District

Good number of students from different district of Maharashtra and few from other states of India are enrolled in our institute. During academic year 2020-2021, 11 students from Palghar a tribal district of Maharashtra State were enrolled in URCD specialization during semester III; it was not possible to assign them any kind of fieldwork out of their native, their native place was converted into a fieldwork agency and they were assigned various learning tasks 1. To understand their own community with social work perspective 2. Tribal culture and Social Work Practice 3. Implementation of government schemes for various sections of the society. 4. Gender practices 5. Livelihood issues and means to cope up with it during Covid 19 Pandemic 6. Overall life style of tribal communities.

During rainy season variety of indigenous vegetables are available in tribal areas, students were assigned task of its documentation with all the details like, its name, indigenous recipe of cooking particular vegetable and its nutritious and medicinal values. Students documented it in the form of book. Similarly medicinal plants were identified by the students and it is documented in the form of booklet. Students collected information regarding Government schemes implemented for tribal communities and helped families who have not received the benefits due to lack of documents.

Gender Discrimination

It is difficult to find out any individual who have not experienced gender discrimination in their life. Students were provided online training about gender and gender-based violence, students also participated in national level workshops on gender and other issues of women empowerment, online education helped students to participate in such events. Students were assigned few tasks related to gender; discrimination in food, clothing, abusing words, discrimination in wages, property and other social aspects; health and education.

Use of Appropriate Rural Technology

Students were provided training in use of appropriate rural technology and were assigned learning tasks of its implementation in their own native place. This has shown good results since it was going to benefit their own village, students took initiative to practice in the field more seriously. Soak Pits, Compost fertilizer, Vermin compost fertilizers, Roof Water Harvesting (with available local resources) were taken up by the students.

Anemia Eradication

It is commonly observed that women are anemic as compared to men, students were provided information about anemia through a guest lecture, and were told to intervene right from their own home. Insight was developed as far as causes and consequences of anemia and how it can be dealt with locally available resources at home and some kind of modifications in cooking pattern and diet. Students carried out this activity with an enthusiasm because it was supposed to be benefitting them directly. "Food is a Medicine" this slogan was practiced by students.

Environment Sensitivity

To undertake tree plantation activity during rainy season, students were assigned task to collect the indigenous seeds and prepare seed balls to plant in the difficult remote areas where it is not possible to personally plant the trees.

Relief Activities

Students participated in relief activities like, distributions of dry ration kits, health kits, food packages to relatives of Covid patients during hospitalization, and many more.

Conclusion

Covid 19 pandemic identified various means of learning; same is the case with fieldwork. Students took up the challenge of learning during Covid 19 pandemic and successfully completed their fieldwork. During evaluation it was observed that undertaking fieldwork in this manner students could understand about their own community with social work perspectives, whatever activities carried out by them benefitted their own family, this has resulted in changing the attitude of family towards social work education that MSW is not just benefitting the agency in which they will be employed but benefits to the family also. During Covid 19 pandemic social work educators got an opportunity to prove their importance for the society. During every stage of the community-based fieldwork students practiced the expected method, techniques and tools of social work. During online education students were not in position to visit college library physically, hence required references were uploaded on Google Classroom for learning and reference purpose. Various videos, audios of contribution by Ideal village Sarpanch (elected head of Gram Panchayat), environmentalist for ideal development of village were uploaded all these benefitted students to link theory into practice.

References:

This paper is purely based on experiential learning.