

Book Review

Organisational Behaviour for Social Work. Gavin Bissell, 2012, Bristol, The Policy Press.
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Organizational behavioural knowledge is fast becoming essential for social work practices especially in care management services and consequently in the regulatory bodies in social work education and training for the past two decades. They are being specifically referred to skills in working in organizations which acts as an area of training and assessment. The book under review is a practice linked text catering to the needs of these social work students for knowledge in organizational behaviour.

The rationale of a book on organizational behaviour for social work and the contemporary significance of the study of organizational behaviour for social work students and practitioners are highlighted in the introductory session by the author, Gavin Bissell, who has rich experience in social work education as well as practice in organizational settings and also in inter organizational working. The different aspects of organizational behaviour are discussed in 12 chapters of the volume in a systematic manner with necessary linkages with various fields of social work. A practice-oriented methodology is followed with each chapter having a set of learning outcomes, explanation of the theories or models related to the topic discussed, application and linkages with social work practice and a set of exercises suitable for practice learning.

Chapter one provides an overview of theories and literature of organizational behaviour. The origin of organizational theory, types of organizational structures, relevance of scientific management approaches, effects of organizational context upon social work practice are briefly indicated to explain the organizational aspects of these welfare organizations. The organizational structure of welfare agencies does not easily map onto the mechanistic or organic structures found in the private sector since they are by nature simultaneously enabling and controlling. The second chapter deals with motivation reviews like the classical theories of motivation and explores the application of the same within the social work organizations. The findings of various studies about job satisfaction, job turnovers and career progress of social workers are cited to analyze the motivational factors of the social work profession. Religious and faith based motivation, aspiration to do meaningful and value based work, responsibility and personal growth are also discussed under motivation for social work practice. Kanter's (1977) approach towards motivation in terms of opportunities, organizational positions / power and social composition of the organization seems to be more helpful in analyzing "the social work career that moves beyond a series of salary-linked professional development milestones, to one which will result in more fulfilling work and improved staff retention and motivation" (p.36). The key learning outcome from the analysis of motivation is that the organization is a primary source of motivation (and de-motivation) for individual social workers, despite an emphasis upon intrinsic reward and vocationalism.

The third chapter looks at communication within the social work organizations, detailing the direction of communication, communication roles, obstacles to effective communication,

informal routes of communication such as grapevines and the importance of communication in the supervisory relationship of the social work profession. Even though communication in social work is primarily a matter of interpersonal skills, the structure and culture of the service delivery organization has a significant role in maintaining the effectiveness of communication between social workers and service users hence the organizational aspects of communication are to be standardized for effective service delivery. Models of organizational decision making such as planned and unplanned decisions, classical and administrative models, accountability models and seven models identified by Golensky (2011) suitable for social work practice and obstacles to good decision making are briefly explained in the fourth chapter to examine the impact of the organizations on social work decision making.

Team work is getting more importance among the skills and competence of social work practice. The social work team is becoming multi-professional as well as multicultural in the context of globalization where the up-skilling in teamwork is a challenge for social work practitioners. Chapter five investigates team roles in social work with some considerations given to the theories of primary groups and area teams. The teams in social services organizations have wider connotations i.e. “we have to speak of ‘open teams’ consisting of caseworkers consulting with service users and careers, and liaising with other professional workers in a wide range of partner organizations, rather than seeing teams as tightly knit working groups looking inwards to the organization and its business” (p.76-77). The learning outcome for the social worker is that area where life state organization of teams have been the norm in social work, but this is now being modified by interdisciplinary, inter-organizational out-ward-looking team involving service users. The impact of organizational culture upon the practice of social work is discussed in chapter six. The practice of service user involvement can facilitate openness and mutual care which results in enhancing the performance of the welfare organization.

Chapter seven elaborates on the recent idea of `The Learning Organization (TLO) with explanations of TLO model developed by Senge (1990). The TLO is made of five disciplines namely:

1) Personal mastery: personal goals; 2) Mental models: reflection and inquiry; 3) Shared vision: group commitment; 4) Team learning: collective thinking; and 5) Systems thinking: understanding interdependency and feedbacks.

The TLO model is a popular management strategy which is extensively used in social service organizations. In social work, there have been initiatives towards TLO emerging from the context of a fast moving and globalized environment where all organizations have to confront the prospect of continuous change and adaptation for effective service delivery based on the multifarious demands from the divergent fields of practice. The list of indicators of a learning organization given in the chapter is a good checklist for social workers to evaluate whether they are working in a learning organization or not. The pertinent question posited in chapter eight on leadership and management is whether a social work style of management possible. The theory of distributed management is more applicable in social work practice with core values of social work can be used to inform management practice. The application of the management strategies of management by objectives (MBO) and total quality management (TQM) in social work are discussed in detail in chapter nine.

The models of organizational power and control were examined in chapter ten. The traditional models of power outlined in organizational behaviour literature with rights-based and consumer empowerment models implicit in social work writings are briefly discussed to deliberate on who

really controls the social services. The author observes that right based approaches will not always offer service users power in public services even though there is a strong and popular argument that service users ought to control the social services. Chapter 11 looks at organizational change in social work agencies with emphasis on reorganization for social services and convergences with the voluntary sector. The various models of organizational change, change leadership, strategies of overcoming resistance to change are explained by drawing insights from contemporary management literature. Kotter and Schlesinger's (1979) eight step model for organizational change (identify crisis, form a guiding coalition or steering group, create a vision, communicate the vision, empower people to act on the vision, create short-term wins, consolidate, and institutionalize) are described with illustrations (p.145) and application of the same is explained with examples drawn from the field of social work practice. The organizational change in welfare organizations is often being influenced by local and national policy process. Chapter 12 provides a conclusion to the book, looking at policy and practice changes in social work organizations. The regulatory bodies of social work are currently undergoing organizational changes and this has an impact on the social workers and their social work practices.

The detailed bibliography and the good quality index provided are beneficial for the readers to go deeper into the concepts discussed in the volume. The learning outcomes and practice exercises provided in each chapter shall facilitate enjoyable reading of the text. The volume is written exclusively from the context of social work policies and practices in England hence the readers from other parts of the globe have to relate these concepts and models in their respective practice domain for a better appreciation of the same.

References

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