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UNIT 1

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION: CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVE

Core course-CC8-Social Work with community
1. Learning Objective
2. Introduction
3. Community Organization Meaning, Concept and Objective
4. Summary

1. Learning Objective:

1. To understand dimensions of community organization
2. To gain understanding of the approach to understanding community organization.
3. To Understand the various objective of community organization

2.Introduction

There are three basic methods of working with people (individuals, groups and communities). While social case work is oriented towards helping individuals on one to one basis, social group work aims at facilitating the growth and development of individuals through the medium of a group. The third basic method of working with people is community organization. This method aims at developing the capacity of the community to function as integrated unit. This empowers the community to take planned and collective action to handle its own needs, problems and objectives. Community organization is a well established method in social work. It has value orientation and its practice is guided by a set of general principles.

Meaning, Definition and the Key Concepts of of Community Organization

Meaning:

The community provides the setting and its needs, problems, issues and concerns provide the focus for community organisation, as a method of social work practice.

The terms community work, community practice, community organization and community empowerment are often used in social work literature. Sometimes they are used to refer to the same type of work, while at times they are used to refer to different types of work. In general however, the terms community work, community practice and community organization are treated synonymously, both in the liberal as well as in the tradition of community intervention. In the more

contemporary context, the term “community practice” is acquiring greater usage as it encompasses within itself of four central processes: development, organization, planning and action for progressive social change. Together, these processes form social work’s major method of actively working for social justice (Weil, 2005).

Definitions

To study and to be able to engage in community organization practice, it is necessary to have a clear definition or set of definitions. There are several definitions available in literature. These have evolved at different times and in differing contexts. Let us look at some of the more widely accepted definitions of Community organization.

Murray G. Ross:

In the second half of 1940s, a number of works on community organization appeared, perhaps the best of which was that by Murray G.Ross in 1955. His work contributed to the immense popularization of the practice of community organization in the U.S. He saw community organization as “a process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives, develops the confidence and will do work at these needs or objectives, finds the resources (external and internal) to deal with these needs and objectives, takes action in respect of them, and in doing so, extends and develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community”. He goes further to identify three main approaches to community organization: (i) the ‘specific content’ approach, whereby a worker or an organization identifies a problem or set of problems and launches a programme to meet them; (ii) the ‘general content’ approach, whereby a group, association or council attempts a coordinated and orderly development of services in a particular area; (iii) the ‘process’ approach, where the objective is not the content (facilities or services), but initiation and sustenance of a process which will involve people within the community in identifying and taking action in respect of their own needs and problems. All these three components related to ‘content’ and ‘process’ find a place in his definition.

Harper:

Harper (1959) perceived community organization as an effort to “bring about and maintain progressively a more effective adjustment between social welfare resources and social needs”. It is concerned with (i) the discovery and definition of need; (ii) the elimination and prevention of social needs and disabilities; (iii) the articulation of resources and needs; and (iv) the constant readjustment of resources in order to meet the changing needs better.

On a similar note Arthur Dunham (1958, 1970) who was another important contributor to the practice of community organization felt that social work methodology most commonly associated with society, as opposed to individual change is community work, alternatively defined as community development or the new community organization. This was “a process of bringing about and maintaining adjustment between social welfare needs and social welfare resources in a geographical area or a functional field”.

Younghusband:

In 1973, Younghusband defined community organization as “primarily aimed at helping people within a local community to identify social needs, to consider the most effective ways of meeting them and to set about doing so, in so far as their available resources permit”.

Peter Baldock:

Peter Baldock’s (1974) concept of community work was very close to the definition of community organization given by Ross and Younghusband. Baldock opined that community work “is a type of activity practiced by people to identify problems and opportunities and to come to realistic decisions to take collective action to meet these problems and opportunities in ways that they determine for themselves. The community worker also supports them in the process of putting decisions, to help them develop their abilities and independence”.

Contemporary Definitions of Community Organisation

In a more contemporary context, **Murphy and Cunningham** (2003) have defined community organizing as “the systematic process for mobilizing and advocating by using communal power”. They opine that “Organizing for Community Controlled Development (OCCD) combines community organisations’s mobilization and advocacy power with neighbourhood investment strategies to build a strengthened and revitalized community”. They stress on community organizing as it relates to the small place communities. Further, they characterize ‘place based community organising’ as “a process in which local people, united by concern for renewing their own small territory, plan and act together to form an organizational base that they control. It is a practice that involves collective human effort centred on mobilization, advocating, planning and the negotiation of resources”. In this practice, ‘mobilization’ includes the building and maintenance of an organizational base, ‘planning’ includes fact gathering, assessment and strategic and tactical thinking and ‘negotiation’ refers to persistent pressure and bargaining for sufficient resources to achieve goals. According to this perception, community organizing as a process of change continuously operates on two tracks, the first being the path of pursuit of agree-upon programme goals, and the second is the path of building, maintaining and continually renewing an organizational base. The ultimate aim of this process is to build ‘strengthened’ and ‘revitalised’ communities, where strengthening pertains to the unifying and educating initiatives of the residents to meet their social, civic and economic responsibilities and ‘revitalizing’ refers to making the place livable, democratic, equitable and tolerant, thereby helping its residents to live with dignity and moral integrity.

Objective of community organization:

Weil and Gamble have provided a set of eight objective which provide the basis for most community practice engagement. (Weil and Gamble 2004).

These objectives are:

1. Improving the quality of life of the members of the community.
2. Extending human rights by developing participatory structures and opportunities and deepening democracy for citizens who are excluded and feel powerless to influence policies that have an effect on their lives.

3. Advocacy for a community of interest, such as children; for a specific issues such as political and social rights for women and marginalized populations.
4. Human social and economic development to assure social support, economic viability and sustainability by expanding participation and building grassroots leadership; building economic, social and political assets for the poor in impoverished urban and rural areas.
5. Service and programme planning for a newly recognized or re-conceptualized need or to serve an emerging population.
6. Service integration developing local to national and international means of coordinating human services for populations in need.
7. Political and social action to build political power for the economically and socially marginalized, protect the weak and the poor, foster institutional change for inclusion and equity, and increase participatory democracy and equality of access and opportunity in local, regional and international efforts.
8. Social Justice to build toward human equality and opportunity across race, ethnicity, gender and nationality.

In conclusion, the community worker who has a focus on values and purpose, and who makes those explicit with community groups, will have a greater capacity to develop mutually respectful relationships with the group members and to work as a facilitator to find sufficient common ground for collaborative action.

4. Summary:

1. We have discussed in detail the meaning of community organization and also provided the different definitions in a chronological order, along with their explanations.
2. Acquainted with various objective of community organization.
3. Contemporary definitions and understanding of community organization