Chapter 4

Ethical Grounding of Social Work Practices

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ABSTRACT

Ethical awareness is fundamental to the professional practice of social workers. Their ability and commitment to act ethically is an essential aspect of the quality of the service offered to those who engage with social workers. Respect for human rights and a commitment to promoting social justice are at the core of social work practice throughout the world. Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. Therefore, this chapter included the ethical grounds in social work practices in a deep manner.

INTRODUCTION

Social work bases its methodology on a systematic body of evidence informed knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including local and indigenous knowledge specific to its context. It recognizes the complexity of interactions between human beings and their environment, and the capacity of people both to be affected by and to alter the multiple influences upon them including

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3090-9.ch004

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bio-psychosocial factors. The social work profession draws on theories of human development and behavior and social systems to analyze complex situations and to facilitate individual, organizational, social and cultural changes.

On the other hand, social work practice addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society. It responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems. These include counseling, clinical social work, group work, social pedagogical work, and family treatment and therapy as well as efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community. Interventions also include agency administration, community organization and engaging in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development. Moreover, social work by its engagement with specific values and ethics determines the kind of social change that the profession wants to bring. Thus, by the use and interpretation of the professions values, the purpose of the profession is not abstract and could be identified in exploring practice. Through our common values and ethics we gain a common vision and a common identity that no one can take from us or criticize us for being unspecific. Through the professions common values and ethics a vision for change and its identity emerges. Thus criticisms aimed at suggesting social work lacks specificity or remains undefined are unfounded.

Although social work is not the only profession that is dedicated to the promotion of important values, its relationship with social policy, its holistic approach to human needs and its engagement with mutually opposed values create complicated ethical dilemmas. There is an apparent agreement in the literature that social work tries to practice among conflicting interests, and therefore complicated ethical dilemmas are common in every day social work practice (IFSW, 2005).

Furthermore, social works ethics and values are not a matter for finding goodness as Briskman (2001) says a place of innocence in social work practice. Rather, by focusing on ethical social work issues we acknowledge and identify a special characteristic of our professional identity, and we confirm the criteria by which effective or good social work practice is judged. In addition, we acknowledge the process of decision–making as a critical element of professional practice, which thereby necessitates that social workers have the knowledge and skills necessary to interpret the ethical underpinnings of practice.

**BACKGROUND**

**Social Work and Ethics**

There is a different form of social work entail different kinds of ethical problems. An approximate picture of the diversity of social work can be gained by asking what
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