

BOOK REVIEWS

H. Y. Siddiqui, *Group Work: Theories and Practices*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2008, ISBN 81-316-0171-4, hard cover, pp. 220+xvi, price: Rs.525

The author of the book, Siddiqui has made an attempt to highlight the importance of group work and the application of the globally developed insights and theories of group work in the Indian context. Though the book has been written with the students and educators of social work in mind, the author hopes that the students and educators of adult education, rural development and child development, and professionals working with groups will find the ideas and information in the book helpful to them in understanding the importance of group work and practising them with various groups of people. The author proposes the book to be a resource material, especially for the schools of social work in India in the context of the rising cost of foreign textbooks, which is making it difficult for the students to acquire them. The book is presented as a useful reading and learning material for the students, professional social work educators and practitioners who are interested in the practice of group work in the Indian context.

The subject matter of the book is organised into eleven chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to group work practice in India and its development with reference to the needs of the local clients. In his review the author says that, though group work has been part of the social work curriculum since the beginning of social work education in India, in practice social workers have not made full use of the potentials of the method of group work. As a result, the method has not received the attention it deserves. It is neither adequately learned nor used in actual practice. However the author states that the future of group work in India is very bright, as the popularity of self-help groups not only in India but also in many developing countries indicates. In the introductory chapter the author also defines group work in the Indian context as working with small group (of 7-10 members) and medium size group (of 10-20 members) of a variety of

clients ranging from children to elderly persons for different purposes beginning from recreation to behaviour modification on the one hand, and accomplishing tasks including social change and development on the other.

In the next two chapters the author has tried to explain the social science findings on groups and various theories developed globally to explain different facets of the functioning of groups. The studies provided a framework for group work practice, to use group as a medium to induce change in the individuals, groups and communities and to accomplish other objectives. The theories in the context of group behaviour discussed in the book include Psychoanalytic theory, Learning theory, Field theory, Systems theory, Conflict theory and Exchange theory. The author reports that, while considerable research has been done on the internal working of groups and group as an instrument for growth and change in individuals and while social scientists have recognised the role of group in linking the individual to the wider society, there seems to have been very little theory building or research on group as an instrument for modification of the wider society.

The fourth chapter discusses group processes as the major events in a group. The behaviour of individuals and the group as a whole is what we need to understand by way of group processes according to the author. Where members wish to stay on in a group, the power of the group over the members increases and the group is able to influence members' behaviour. Goal attainment improves as members put extra efforts to achieve group goals. Creation of such environment in the group to increase the commitment of members is central to group work. The effectiveness of a group is measured on two main indicators, i.e., the emotional environment and the task orientation. The various stages of group development also are discussed in this chapter. A stage of development or growth in a group is defined as a specific level of achievement in task accomplishment and emotional integration of members in a group. Two specific indicators of group development are (a) members' feeling of being settled and happy in the group and (b) progress of the group in achieving its objectives.

The fifth chapter deals with the principles of working with group in a historical perspective in order to provide the reader an idea of the process of thinking that went into conceptualising these principles. The principles of

group work have the objective of providing a set of guidelines for the workers to achieve the desired professional competence. According to the author supervision in the application of the principles of group is greatly helpful in reducing the risks involved in misinterpretations or lack of sensitivity to client's feelings and needs. Proper handling of team relationships, flexibility to transcend boundaries and develop cooperative attitudes of sharing and transparency, also enlarge the scope for a more client-friendly competent practice. Chapter six deals with the process of working with a group, giving a detailed account of the different stages involved. The chapter provides specific guidelines for different activities in the Indian context, such as planning, consolidation, evaluation and termination.

There is a separate chapter - seven - on the skills needed for social workers such as communication, empathy, observation, listening, and logical reasoning. The eighth chapter looks at the techniques to be used in working with group. Some of the techniques frequently used by the professionals in working with group, discussed in the book, are group counselling, group discussion, decision-making, role-play, programme media and individual session.

Two chapters of the book are devoted to specific groups and clients of group work. While chapter nine discusses practice of group work with children, youth and elderly, chapter ten has working with women as the subject matter of discussion on the practice of group work. The last chapter deals with the practice of working with self-help groups. It discusses the formation, functioning and importance of self-help groups in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The book clearly presents the basic theoretical premises of group work and the practical principles and techniques in its application. The author has been quite successful in bringing together the relevant materials on group work that are useful to both academics and practitioners in the field. However, one is not sure if the author can claim to have developed principles and techniques of group work practice specific to the Indian context. Except for the reference to the characteristics of certain groups specific to Indian situation, the various aspects of group work discussed in the book are not any different from those found in the textbooks produced in the western context. This, of course, is not to devalue the worth or relevance of the

contents of the book for the practice of group in the Indian context. It means that the book does not offer ready made techniques of group work in the Indian context. As far as social work education is concerned, the book is a useful textbook on the theory, principles and techniques of group work as a method in social work. It is a source material for students and teachers of social work education, and professional field practitioners working with groups in different settings.

Lizy P.J., Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Work, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, Kochi - 683104. Email: lizy_pj@yahoo.co.in

G. Satyanarayana, *Voluntary Effort and Rural Development*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2007, ISBN 81-316-0086-6, hard cover, pp.295 + xvi, price: Rs.650

The book under review is the outcome of a research study that had the objective of evaluating the voluntary efforts being made in rural India in organising the marginalised and vulnerable sections of the society for their development and liberation through greater participation of people. The main focus of the book, therefore, is on the role of the non-government organisations, also called the “fifth estate” which has been gaining increasing importance in the development of the underprivileged.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the basic concepts, issues and concerns in the field of rural development and second part presents the report of a research work undertaken by the author on the role of a non-government organisation in rural development through the promotion of volunteerism. The organisation covered under the study is the Weaker Community’s Action for Development and Liberation (WCADL) in the Mahabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. The main objective of the study was to examine and evaluate the effort of the WCADL in the development of various sections in the society. It examined the nature and types of programmes designed by the WCADL for the beneficiaries in terms of its organisational objectives and goals and their relevance to the target people. The author had also the objective of attempting a objective evaluation of the WCADL as a representative voluntary organisation in the context of increasing criticism regarding the approaches, integrity, resource utilisation of the agencies in the voluntary sector.

The subject matter of the book is presented in ten chapters. Chapter one, by way of introduction, presents the views of different authors on voluntary effort in development, basic concepts of rural development and role of voluntary organisations in rural development. Chapter two of the book gives a historical account of the WCADL, the non-profit organisation started by the young Malayalee couple, Francis and Luzu in Andhra Pradesh in 1976 as part of their social commitment and concern towards tribal community.

Chapter three provides the methodological details of the research study undertaken by the author. The study covered all types of beneficiaries of the various programmes run by the WCADL since its inception in the different villages of the Mahabubnagar. Methods of data collection included observation, group discussion, case study, historical and evolutionary approach and survey. The data collection was undertaken during the period of July-September 2000. The study contacted 304 respondents belonging to diverse socio-economic backgrounds from 36 villages.

In the fourth chapter the author describes the socio-economic features of Mahabubnagar district as well as the beneficiaries of the programmes of the WCADL. In this chapter the author tries to give a historical account the social situation and cultural traditions of Mahabubnagar. Chapter five discusses the relationship of the beneficiaries with the WCADL. It presents a good case of how voluntary organisations can build good relationships with their target constituency. The chapter elaborates on the nature and extent of the interaction between the WCADL and its beneficiaries, as well as the outcome of the interaction.

The subject matter of chapter six is the programmes introduced by the WCADL for the economic development of the target population. The author has obtained the views of the beneficiaries on the effectiveness of the different developmental programmes implemented for their economic development.

In chapter seven the author discusses the involvement of voluntary organisations in the socio-economic and political development of the vulnerable and marginalised sections of the society. The importance of adult education in the process of the development of the weaker sections of the society is highlighted. Specifically the chapter presents the case of the partnership between the WCADL and the Panchayati Raj Institutions in this community development endeavour.

Chapter eight is on the subject matter of the development of rural women through voluntary effort. Here the author makes special reference to the study conducted by the Delhi School of Economics on the role of women in rural development in India.

In chapter nine the author deals with the issue of tribal development through voluntary effort. The programmes of the WCADL for economic

development and education among the Lambada tribals of Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh and the Pochammagedda Tanda tribals are discussed in this chapter.

The concluding chapter presents the major findings and conclusions of the study undertaken by the author. The author emphasises the importance of the role of stakeholders in rural development through voluntary effort and appreciates the leadership and initiatives of the WCDAL in rural and tribal development as a noteworthy contribution in nation building. The author lauds the efforts of WCDAL in rural development that emerged from the initiative of Francis and Luzy, their Christian faith based commitment and hard work. They have spent the major portion of their life in pursuit of the goal of the development of the tribals in Andhra Pradesh through education and other programmes of socio-economic change.

Voluntary Effort and Rural Development is a good effort in documenting some of the successful activities of the voluntary sector in the field of rural development. It has analysed the participation of the voluntary organisations in rural development, with special reference to their objectives, organisational structure and various programmes of development. It has pointed out the importance, problems and prospects of involving the target groups in the programmes for their development. In short, it highlights the importance of the voluntary organisations and their impact on the development of weaker sections of the society. The book has also examined the issue of external funding in the case of the voluntary organisations. It has brought out the limitations of seeking funds from outside sponsors and their utilisation. The book is a useful work that helps the readers understand the various features of voluntary effort undertaken by different types of non-governmental organisations in rural development. It also presents various views of different authors on voluntary efforts and rural development, and their interrelationships. In that respect, the book is a good reference material in the area of volunteerism in rural development. The book is written in simple and clear language, and in the production the publishers have brought it out well.

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All notes are serially numbered as they appear in the text and placed at the end of the text under the heading **Notes**.

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Editorial correspondence is to be addressed to the Executive Editor, Rajagiri Journal of Social Development, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, Kochi – 683104 (India). Email: journal@rajagiri.edu

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