FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ON THE DRAFT BILL FOR A NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION, 2021

Prepared by
The Working Group for a Campaign for
National Council for Social Work Education

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

A statutory system to enhance the quality in social work education has long been a desired goal, of social work professionals. The First as well as the Second Review Committees on Social Work Education, sponsored by the University Grants Commission (UGC), had recommended that a National Council for Professional Social Work Education be established in order to upgrade social work education and to maintain standards. If quality of education is improved, the quality of social work practice will consequently improve the quality of services for people, resulting in their enhanced wellbeing.

The first initiative undertaken to prepare a draft Bill for the establishment of such a Council was by the Ministry of Welfare (now Social Justice and Empowerment), in 1993. Based on this Bill, other drafts prepared for a social work council are the following:

1. National Council of Professional Social Work in India Bill (2007)
2. Bill for The Maharashtra Council for Professional Social Work (2015)
3. The National Council of Professional Social Work Practitioners Bill (2018)

On July 14, 2020, a meeting of social work educators was called by Dr Muniraju, Deputy Advisor of the social sector division of NITI Aayog, where the need for a National Council for Professional Social Work was discussed. As a follow up to the NITI Aayog meeting, an informal voluntary Working Group was formed of eminent social work educators most of whom were invited to the above meeting and others who had contributed to the earlier initiatives. The names of the Working Group members are listed in Annexure 1. This Working Group prepared a preliminary Background Note and a draft Bill on a National Council for Social Work (Education and Practice), 2020, based on the earlier national as well as state level drafts.

While preparing this draft bill, the Working Group followed the social work principles of transparency, participation, flexibility, and respect of diverse viewpoints. It widely circulated the preliminary Background Note and the Bill to institutions of social work education, social work professional associations and social work practitioners in India, with a request to discuss these documents with their former and present colleagues, both educators and practitioners, and to send feedback. Overall, 15 professional social work associations, 15 institutions of social work education, two non-government organisations, and two students' groups organised

consultation webinars for educators as well as practitioners, at their institutional, state, or regional levels, covering large parts of India. Two state level professional social work associations also organised regionwise or districtwise webinars within their states. The names of the Working Group Partners are listed in Annexure 2.

A wide range of feedback was received from the panelists and participants of the webinars as well as by email from individual social work educators, practitioners, and students. This feedback has been used to redraft the Bill, which is now retitled "the National Council for Social Work Education Bill", and represents the views of a large number of professional social workers. The focus of the Bill is now explicitly on quality enhancement in social work education, including its linkages with practice, knowledge, and ethical conduct, with the help of social work educators and professional social work practitioners. This may be a landmark Bill for a professional council, which is based on maximum consultation in the history of professional councils. The said Bill was shared with the partners who organised the webinars and individuals who sent their feedback. It has been dispatched to the Hon. Prime Minister, the Ministry of Education, the NITI Aayog as well as other relevant ministries of the Government of India with a request to enact the establishment of the National Council for Social Work Education (NCSWE).

During the course of our consultations with individuals, institutions, and associations, we came across several questions about this Bill. In this booklet, we have tried to respond to these frequently asked questions (FAQs).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Social work should be a passion. How can it be a profession?**

   Every profession requires passion in general, but the passion alone is not enough. Effective social work requires passion and commitment combined with training in knowledge, values and ethics, and methods and skills of working with people and systems. Professional social work is internationally recognised as an academic discipline and practice-based profession in 145 countries. Training for social workers in India was started as early as in 1936. After more than eight decades of social work education, today there are more than 500 Institutions of Social Work Education in India. Over five lakh qualified trained professional social workers are estimated to be currently working with civil society organisations, government systems, and in the corporate sector, as well as with the UN and other international agencies at the state, national and international levels.

2. **How does the NCSWE Bill define professional social work?**

   'Professional Social Work' is defined by the bill as an internationally recognised academic discipline and practice-based profession, based on knowledge, methods, and skills of working with people and systems. It is built on the foundation of values and ethics of human dignity, sensitivity to structural realities, and respect for diversities. It promotes social justice and social development, guided by the Indian Constitution, and by India's commitment to the International Human Rights Law. Professional social work contributes to community and social development through rights-based universal provision for basic needs and adopts culture-sensitive, strengths-based, gender-sensitive, collaborative, and participatory approaches to facilitate empowerment and inclusion of the socially excluded groups, for achieving social justice. Professional social workers also carry out policy analysis and programme development, conduct capacity building programmes, initiate, and manage civil society organisations, implement interventions at the micro, meso and macro levels, and carry out their monitoring and evaluation.

3. **What are the objects of the NCSWE that will be useful for professional social workers?**

   The NCSWE aims at formulating a curriculum framework and ensuring minimum standards for social work education institutions and programmes, for self-regulation as well as for accreditation. The NCSWE will also ensure ethical conduct by professional social workers. Besides developing a database of social work education, practice, and professional associations in India, it also aims to identify jobs for professional social workers and plan educational programmes according to the requirements of human resources for professional social work and promote recognition and visibility of the social work profession in social policy making. Moreover, it will promote social work research, knowledge development, dissemination, and retrieval of literature for indigenisation of social work education and practice, and carry out policy analysis. Finally, it will build a greater synergy between social work practitioners and social work educators and strengthen collaborations and partnerships with civil society organisations, government, corporate sector, and other stakeholders in achieving social justice and social development goals. It believes that if quality of social work education is improved, the quality of social work practice will also improve, resulting in social justice and social development.

4. **The quality and standards of education is the responsibility of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). Why is the NCSWE duplicating their work?**

   Yes, UGC is primarily mandated for promoting and coordinating university education, determining, and maintaining standards of teaching, examination, and research in universities. It serves as a vital link between the Union and state governments and institutions of higher learning on the measures necessary for improvement of university education. It works in close association with 14 statutory professional councils in different fields. The NAAC carries out assessment and accreditation of universities and colleges and not of disciplines.

5. Which are the professional councils recognised by UGC? What are the responsibilities of these professional councils?

There are more than 15 statutory professional councils namely: i) All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE); ii) Medical Council of India (MCI) iii) Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR); iv) National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE);v) Dental Council of India (DCI); vi) Pharmacy Council of India (PCI); vii) Indian Nursing Council (INC); viii) Bar Council of India (BCI); ix) Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH); x) Central Council for Indian Medicine (CCIM); xi) Council of Architecture; xii) Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI); xiii) National Council for Rural Institutes (NCRI); iv) State Councils of Higher Education (SCHE). These are mentioned on UGC website. Professional councils are responsible for recognition of courses, promotion of professional institutions and providing grants to undergraduate programmes and various awards, setting code of ethics/conduct, standard of practice etc.

6. Has the Government of India recognised social work education in the past?

The Ministries of Welfare and Education, UGC, and NAAC have recognised social work education since 1950, when the Ministry of Education set up an Advisory Board on Social Welfare, that prepared a uniform syllabus for a two-year social welfare course at the postgraduate level. The UGC has sponsored two review committees on social work education, two reports on curriculum for social work education, and Refresher Courses in social work education. The Ministry of Welfare has published the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Social Work in India*, and a *Directory of Social Work Education Facilities in India.* In 2005, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) sponsored a Manual for Self-Study of Social Work Institutions which included the minimum and quality standards in social work education.

7. Has any government committee or ministry recommended setting up a council for social work education?

The First as well as the Second Review Committees on Social Work Education, sponsored by the University Grants Commission (UGC), had recommended that a National Council for Professional Social Work Education may be established in order to upgrade social work education and to maintain standards. The first initiative was undertaken by the Ministry of Welfare to prepare a draft Bill for the establishment of

the Council, in 1993. The Ministry of Welfare referred the Bill to the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the UGC which consulted the UGC Panel for Social Work Education and finalized a Draft Bill in 1995 for setting up the Council. Subsequent progression of this Bill is not known.

8. Has the government formed the Working Group to prepare the NCSWE Bill?

No. The NITI Aayog had invited some social work eductors for a meeting to discuss the need for a social work council on July 14, 2020. Subsequently, and independently of the NITI Aayog, an informal voluntary Working Group of professional social work educators was formed that prepared the draft Bill for a National Council for Social Work Education. As listed in the Annexure 1, the members of this Group mainly comprise social work educators who were invited to the NITI Aayog meeting on discussion on the Council and those who have contributed to the earlier drafts as well.

9. Preparing a Bill for enactment of legislation is the job of the parliament. Is it legitimate for professionals to prepare bills?

It is true that for making a law, a Bill is normally brought to the Parliament by the concerned Ministry. A private Bill can also be brought by a Member of Parliament. In 2018, Prof Richard Hay has presented similar Bill in Rajya Sabha, but it was not discussed. The NCSWE is a voluntary effort which is legitimate in a democracy. As citizens of India, we have the *right to expression* and *right to freedom of association* among other rights. Therefore, a concerned group of people can come together, prepare a document, and after an adequate process can submit the same to the government for its consideration. Of course, it is the prerogative of the government to accept it or reject it. In fact, there were many initiatives that began from the public to become legislations. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is one such example.

10. Is there a convergence between the draft Bill and the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020?

The NEP 2020 document was carefully examined and some of the important changes recommended by the NEP 2020 were discussed while drafting the Bill. As the implementation of NEP 2020 will need to be gradual and carried out in a phased manner, the Working Group adhered to the current educational system such as the UGC

and its norms, while drafting the Bill. An expert panel is suggested in the Bill to look into these linkages as the NEP gets implemented.

11. What is the place of distance mode of education in social work education in the NCSWE?

The Working Group understands the complexity of the distance mode in social work education. There was a strong feedback from the partners against promoting distance education mode in social work education where fieldwork and direct supervision are key challenges. At the same time, we cannot deny the existence of social work programmes in distance mode all over the world with field practicum and direct supervision arrangements in many places. Development of standards for this mode of education are all the more essential, and therefore an expert panel is suggested in the Bill to look into these challenges.

12. Is the NCSWE Bill based on a western Eurocentric model, and not indigenised?

Social work as a profession started in the West, like most of our sciences and professions. The need is for these sciences and professions to be made relevant to the Indian context. Indigenisation, therefore, means cultural and socioeconomic decolonisation and adaption of western social work theories for relevance to India's diverse socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Since the inception of social work profession in India, there have been many initiatives and continuous progress to make it more and more relevant to India. The initiatives include use of religious scriptures and spirituality, creative literature, incorporation of the Gandhian approach, innovative practice and theorisation from practice, emergence of developmental social work, influence of Indian social movements, identifying fields of Dalit and tribal social work, and so on. It is an ongoing process. Indian professional social workers have also contributed to international perspectives in social work that are not Eurocentric. The Council Bill has been drafted in the context of these indigenous perspectives in the context of internationalisation of social work, as both are essential.

13. Will social workers without social work qualifications have to now stop working or get social work qualifications to continue to work as social workers?

It is a known fact that India's development practice space is vast and diverse with overlapping categories of voluntary practitioners, the contemporary development

practitioners, and professional social work practitioners. The Bill does not have anything to do with the first two types of practitioners or their practice contexts. It covers only the last category of practitioners, and social work educators. Thus, the proposed Council will neither threaten the interests or employment opportunities of the development practitioners working with the welfare and development sectors nor undermine their significant contributions. In fact, the profession of social work has always recognised and valued the contributions made by voluntary workers and professional social workers have been working in collaboration with them in significant ways in the field.

14. Why is the NCSWE only looking at social work education and not practice as well?

Social work education is the foundation on which social work practice gets professionalised and should therefore be a priority for the quality enhancement process. While agreeing to the apparent importance of practice, it is important to recognise that the practice scenario is very amorphous with multiple players, unlike practice in other professions. At the same time, the link of education with practice needs to be strengthened for relevant education and therefore the representation to practitioners in the Council structure and their involvement in its functions are maintained with appropriate balance.

15. Will the government funded NCSWE control the freedom of social work educators?

Professional councils in India are all based on legislation and funded by the government, which will have some control over it. However, it is difficult for a council in India to be self-financed like the one in the United States. Considering India's scarcity of resources, government funding is the best approach for quality enhancement in professions. State is a reality, and we will achieve more for the people of India by working with it in a collaborative manner. While drafting the Bill, the Working Group has tried to ensure that the Council will be managed by professional social workers with the support of government officers. It shall comprise in all 15 professional social workers that include a full-time Chairperson, a full-time Vice-Chairperson, and Honorary Members comprising two professional social workers from each of the six zones of the country, and one representative from a national level professional social work association. In addition, it will have not less than eight and ex-officio government

representatives from NITI Aayog, the University Grants Commission, and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, and cognate ministries.

16. A national council seems highly centralised. How will the NCSWE work be decentralised?

For the purpose of decentralisation, the National Council shall conduct elections for a Director, a Deputy Director, and two members from each state and union territories (UTs) of the zone to constitute the six Zonal Councils for Social Work Education. Registration with the National Council is the basic criterion for all the nominations to the Zonal Council as well as to be voters for the election. The Director and the Deputy Director of each Zonal Council shall represent the respective zone at the National Council as Honorary Members. The Zonal Council shall support the professional functions of the National Council in the zone.

17. How will the Council make use of the expertise in different aspects of social work education all over India?

The Council shall constitute Expert Panels, for its major professional functions that will comprise registered Professional Social Workers (educators and practitioners), known for their expertise and experience in the respective field, based on gender balance, zonal representation, and representation from socially excluded communities. Experts from other fields may also be invited as special invitees as and when considered necessary. (For details see section 22 of the Bill.

18. Will it be compulsory for professional social workers to register with the Council? Is registration same as licensing?

The 2021 version of the Bill makes the registration with the Council voluntary for educators as well as the practitioners. Only professional social workers who wish to associate with the Council and its activities, need to register with it. Through, registration, it will ensure their proper placement, continuous and lifelong education, career development, delivery of quality services, and proper guidance, mentoring and monitoring. Registration is not same as licensing as the former is voluntary and the latter is compulsory to work as professional social workers. Not registering with the Council will not criminalise anyone.

19. How will the NCSWE help in improving standard of social work education?

The NCSWE shall develop minimum standards for institutions of social work education for the management, vision, and governance of social work institutions; physical infrastructure and resources; process of curriculum development, board of studies, and implementation; field practicum arrangements with state and civil society organisations; student matters such as admission, support services, development programmes, career counselling and job placement, and alumni database and alumni network or associations; social work extension through consultancy, continuing education, and field action projects; recruitment, workload, training, appraisal, and promotion of social work educators; faculty research and publications; and adequate and relevant libraries with book and journal collection on social work.

20. Will the NCSWE develop a uniform syllabus for social work education all over India?

The Council shall not develop a uniform syllabus for social work education all over India, but formulate a curriculum framework for social work education programmes. The Council shall develop a sequential continuum of curriculum framework based on graduate attributes and learning outcomes, for Pre-Bachelor certificate and diploma, Bachelor's, Bachelor's Honours, and Master's programmes, and integrated five-year programme with provision for multiple-entry and multiple-exit possibilities. The Council shall also develop a curriculum framework for the post-Master's certificate and diploma programmes, and Doctoral Degree Programmes in social work. The curriculum framework shall be flexible to include emerging areas of work and be adapted to meet the differential requirements in the region, state, and local contexts.

21. What are the advantages of the NCSWE for social work research and knowledge development?

The Council shall undertake the promotion of social work research, knowledge development, dissemination, retrieval, and utilization. It will promote documentation of the history of indigenous methods and values of social services in the diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and regional contexts that can be fed into social work knowledge. It will also promote interdisciplinary knowledge development for social work education and practice. This can be done by a critical analysis and synthesis of international and Indian literature on historical and professional social work, applied

social sciences, development studies, etc. It will further promote practice-based research, documentation of practice, development of case studies, and policy analysis in the Indian context that can feed into development of textbooks and e-content for social work teaching and learning. It will facilitate dissemination of social work literature through publication of peer-reviewed journals and books in English, Hindi, and state languages, and retrieval of social work literature through a Professional Social Work Information Centre and libraries in social work institutions; and encourage utilisation of updated social work knowledge in course syllabi.

22. How will the NCSWE promote ethical behaviour in social work education, research, and practice?

A Code of Ethics is an integral part of any profession. The NCSWE shall develop a Code of Ethics for Professional Social Workers, comprising its values, principles, and pledge;and ethical standards to guide the conduct of professional social workers with reference to responsibilities in areas such as the profession, service users/ individuals and people they work with, practice and field practicum settings, co-workers and employing organisations, social work education, students, research, etc. The Council will develop a procedure for adjudication of ethics-related complaints from service users, employers, co-workers, or students, filed against professional social workers registered with the Council, assessment of whether they have engaged in unethical conduct, and carry out deregistration, or disciplinary rulings or sanctions based on it.

23. How will the National council help students studying social work?

When the NCSWE is in place, student studying social work will have access to quality social work education, competent social work educators, update social work libraries, student support services and development programmes, career counselling all over India, and opportunities for relevant jobs in the field.

24. What are the advantages of the NCSWE to the social justice and the social development sectors?

The NCSWE will facilitate social work education to achieve ‘social justice’ which comprises empowerment and inclusion of the socially excluded groups such as children, older persons, persons with disability, organised, unorganised, and migrant labour, women, persons with different sexual orientations and gender identities,

historically and ethnically marginalised communities, survivors of displacement, social conflict, and environmental disasters, the stateless, refugees, etc. The NCSWE will facilitate social work education to achieve ‘social development’ that means development that aims at developing human capabilities through education and health, poverty eradication, livelihood and employment, food and nutrition security, housing, natural resource management, etc. through participatory, gender aware and sustainable development and rights-based approach by state and civil society systems at the national and community levels. Because of quality enhancement in social work education, the overall fields of social justice and social development and the specific fields within, these fields will get better qualified professional social workers for education, policy analysis, and practice.

ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: NCSWE Working Group

Name	Designations
Coordinator: Prof Vimla Nadkarni	Immediate Past President, International Association of Schools of Social Work & Former Dean, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Advisors:	
Prof Armaity S. Desai	Former Chairperson, University Grants Commission & Former Director, TISS
Late Prof R.R. Singh	Former Director, TISS & Former President, Association of Schools of Social Work in India (ASSWI)
Prof Ghandi Doss	Former Head, Department of Social Work, Bangalore University & President, India Network of Professional Social Workers Association
Prof Sanjai Bhatt	Former Head, Department of Social Work, Delhi University & Former President, National Association of Professional Social Workers in India
Drafting Committee Members:	
Convener: Prof Murli Desai	Former Head, Social Work Education & Practice Cell, TISS & Former Convener, Working Group for Maharashtra Council for Social Work Bill
Prof B. Devi Prasad	Former Head, Department of Social Work, Andhra University & Former General Secretary, ASSWI
Prof Helen Joseph	Former Faculty Member, College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan & Former President, Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers
Dr Shewli Kumar	Faculty Member, School of Social Work, TISS

Annexure 2: NCSWE Partners

Professional Associations that Organised Webinars

No	Name of the Representative	Name of the Association
1	Prof Ghandi Doss, President	India Network of Professional Social Work Associations
2	Prof Sanjai Bhatt, President	National Association of Professional Social Work in India
3	Dr Jose Antony, President	Association of Schools of Social Work in Kerala
4	Mr Vasudev Sharma, President	Karnataka Professional Social Workers Association
5	Dr Ipe Verghese, Secretary	Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers
6	Dr Ambadas Mohite, Founder President	Maharashtra Association of Social Work Educators
7	Prof Andrew Sesuraj, Secretary	Professional Social Workers' Association
8	Mr Syed Rizwan Ali, President	Uttar Pradesh Association of Professional Social Workers
9	Ms. Sneha Mishra, President	Odisha Professional Social Workers Association
10	Mr. Sanjay Jangde, President	Social Work Association of Chhatisgadh
11	Dr Sobhana H, President	Association of Psychiatric Social Work Professionals
12	Ms Jaspreet Singh, PhD student	Professional Social Work Association of Jammu and Kashmir
13	Ms. Chitra Shah, President	Puducherry Professional Social Workers Forum
14	Dr. Rajiv Maikhuri, Secretary	AIIMS Medical Social Service Officers' Association
15	Ms. Mitchelle Crasto, Member	College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Alumni Association, Mumbai

Institutions of Social Work Education that Organised Institutional or Regional Webinars

No	Name of the Representative	Name of the Institution
1	Dr Lidwin Dias, Principal	College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai
2	Prof Anandi Patel, Head	Department of Social Work, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad
3	Prof Archana Dassi, Head	Department of Social Work, Jamia Milia Islamia University, New Delhi

4	Prof Shubhada Maitra, Dean	School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai
5	Dr S. Srinivas	Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad
6	Prof Kalpana Sarathy, Deputy Director	Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati
7	Prof K Visweswara Rao	Department of Social Work, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam
8	Prof Prashant Ghosh, Former Head	Department of Social Work, Visvabharati University, Shriniketan
9	Dr. Miriam Samuel, Head	Department of Social Work, Madras Christian College, Chennai
10	Prof Victor Paul, Head	Department of Sociology and Social Work, Christ (deemed to be) University, Bangalore
11	Prof R. Dhanasekara Pandian, Head	Department of Social Work, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore
12	Dr Deepak Walokar, Principal	Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune
13	Dr. Swati Dharmadhikari, Principal	Tirpude College of Social Work, Nagpur
14	Prof R. Nalini, Head	Department of Social Work, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry
15	Prof Pratibha Mishra	Department of Social Work, Guru Ghassidas Vishwavidayalaya

Non-Government Organisation that Organised a Regional Webinar

1	Mr G. Gopala Krishna Murty, Member Secretary	Academy of Gandhian Studies, Tirupati

Students that Organised Webinars

1	Mr Deepak Kumar Nanda	TISS Research Scholars Association, Mumbai
2	Mr Mridul Jain	Social Work Student**,** Department of Social Work, University of Delhi