

Manpower Supply and Admissions Policy in Israeli Social Work Education

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In my view, it is essential to "loosen-up" traditional social work education methods, copied for the most part from American social work education models of the 1950's and early 1960's. Above all, I believe that it is essential to undertake meaningful experimentation in Israeli social work education. We cannot afford, neither morally, professionally, or economically, to let social work needs and daily practice develop in one corner of our society, and social work education in another.

Israel's current economic situation and the consequent search for areas where the nation's budget can be trimmed has inevitably resulted in a closer look at the costs of university education. The recent decision by the Knesset Finance Committee to slice Israel university budgets was appealed by the Minister of Social Welfare, Mr. Zvulun Hammer, who insisted in January, 1976 that funding for social work education not be curtailed and that students from professions where employment was unavailable, such as sociology, philosophy, history, and political science, be channelled towards social work where full employment was almost certain.¹ Although the issue has been temporarily referred to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Welfare, the academic community has been presented with a challenge that has far-reaching implications for higher education, and social work educators have not been spared.

Schools of social work in Israel, including that of the Hebrew University, have come under fire from many quarters during recent years.² These complaints fall into three major categories: admissions policy, the relevancy of

¹ Report of the Knesset Finance Committee deliberations reported by Menachem Barash in *Yediot Acharonot*, January 26, 1976.

² Yitzhak Kadman, "Problems of Manpower in Social Welfare" *Saad*, Vol. 17, No. 6, (November, 1973), pp. 12-13. See also:

Eliezer Jaffe, "The Social Work Establishment and Social Change in Israel", *Social Work*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (April, 1970), pp. 103-109.

social work teaching content, and inadequate supply of social work manpower.

This article will relate mainly to the related issues of admissions policy and manpower supply and some suggestions for change relevant to developments in the social work field.

Inequity in Admissions

The Hebrew University School of Social Work admits approximately 120 students each year. In 1975 over 620 applicants applied for admission to the School. Of these, 226 received admission letters acknowledging that they had passed the "entrance requirements". Only 117 of the 226 accepted actually appeared for classes.³ This "fall-out" of 109 students who were accepted but opted not to study social work at the Hebrew University is due to a number of reasons: they may have been accepted to other social work schools (multiple applications), or were accepted to other departments in the University; 81 in fact listed social work as their second departmental choice. Some of the non-starters may have decided to delay their vocational plans, many have remained in the army, moved, or gone abroad to study. From year to year over a third of those admitted do not show up for classes. This predictable phenomenon is taken into consideration when the class quota, i.e.

³ Dina Vardi, *Report on Admissions for the Academic Year 1975-1976*, Paul Baerwald School of Social Work of The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, December 12, 1975, p. 1, (mimeo).

the actual size of the incoming class, is determined and admission letters are sent out.

Acceptable candidacy for social work education at the Hebrew University requires a grade point average of 8 or higher on high school matriculation performance, or a weighted score based on a special admissions examination combined with matriculation grades.⁴ Those fulfilling the former requirement are exempt from the latter.

In the final analysis, a list of applicants is drawn up by grade rank, and an arbitrary cutting point is selected which will provide the quota of students to be accepted, specifically taking into account the expected "fall-out" or non-starters among those accepted. The arbitrary cutting-point varies from year to year, and from department to department, based on the quota of students to be accepted and the number of applicants. For example, the cutting-point for admission to the Psychology Department in 1975 was 25.75, for Social Work 20.0, and for the Social Sciences faculty 18.5. Often, slight variations in determining the cutting-point score could result in the acceptance or rejection of tens or hundreds of applicants. For example in 1976, by lowering the cutting-point in social work from 20.5 to 20.0, approximately 30 more students would have been guaranteed admission and lowering the cutting-point from 20.5 to 19.25 would have resulted in 68 more students.

In social work, the determining factors which decide the size of the quota and consequently the arbitrary cutting-point for admission are the availability of academic staff and sufficient field work apprenticeships.

The entrance examination is based on a battery of intelligence tests, past educational performance, general education, and knowledge of English. The entrance examination has been favoured over interviews because it is less subjective and because those who do well on it theoretically will be able to cope with the course requirements of the School.

⁴ School of Social Work, *The School Bulletin: 1975-1976*, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, (no date), pp. 11-12.

Unfortunately, there is yet no reliable research data that corroborate the hypothetical relationship between a good grade on the entrance exam and good grades in social work courses.⁵ There is also some evidence that personal interviews with candidates are not good predictors of their performance in social work; this is due to the great subjectivity of interviews and lack of consensus among them. What has happened, therefore, is that the more economical, impersonal method of admissions testing has become the basic qualitative screening tool and the "incoming class quota" the determinant of the quality of students to be accepted.

In my opinion, the present admissions procedure is exceedingly inequitable, tends to discriminate unfavourably against low-income and minority groups, both Jewish and Arab, especially from rural areas, and perpetuates a situation in Israel where students from advantaged classes of Western origin become social workers tending the needs of underprivileged, primarily middle-Eastern, clientele. Social work admission policy should look for active ways of recruiting and reaching out to potential social workers from underprivileged backgrounds and provide special tutorial and educational help *after* admission to help them become professional social workers and leaders of their communities. I would not, by any means, want to see an "ethnic" quota system introduced into Israeli social work, but rather more aggressive efforts to recruit and assist disadvantaged groups to take part in the profession, and I would expect this task to be

⁵ Dina Vardi, *op cit.*, p. 4. The U.S. experience regarding admission criteria and predictions is similar to the Israeli experience, see:

Charles O'Reilly, "Issues in Student Recruitment and Selection" in *Educationally Disadvantaged Students in Social Work Education*, Council on Social Work Education, New York, 1968, pp. 85-95.

Dennis M. Dailey, "The Validity of Admissions Predictions: Implications for Social Work Education", *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring, 1974), pp. 12-19.

undertaken as a declared policy of the schools of social work, along with well-defined, public criteria for its implementation. The Hebrew University's pioneering Centre for Pre-Academic Studies has done truly excellent work, but it has not "solved" the problem of recruiting the disadvantaged into social work. Perhaps we need another Center for "Post-Admission Academic Support". The "reaching out" concept that is a treasured principle of modern social work practice is not yet enough in evidence in the admissions policy of many Israeli schools of social work. Haifa University has made an imaginative start in this direction by creating an experimental university-wide "Unit for Bridging the Gap" in 1974. Its modest three-pronged effort reaches out in three directions: (1) to locate and recruit local leadership to come and study at the University in its various departments; (2) to utilize 26 volunteer and salaried "consuls" to identify and recruit students from development towns and disadvantaged neighborhoods; and (3) to provide educational and economic help to disadvantaged students once they are enrolled in their studies. Thus far, approximately 240 students, primarily from middle-Eastern countries of origin, are being aided by the programme.⁶ The Hebrew University and other universities have also begun some support programmes to the disadvantaged, but few post-admission programmes have been developed in social work focussing on calculated risks among the disadvantaged.

Bergman, *et al* studied the social background of 94 social work students enrolled at Tel Aviv University during the 1973-1974 academic year and found that 76 per cent of the students' fathers were from Asia or Africa.⁷

The ethnic composition of the 1975-1976

⁶ Arlet Adler, *Programmes to Support Higher Education in Development Towns and Among the Disadvantaged Population*, The Unit for Bridging the Gap, Haifa University, Haifa, (November, 1975), pp. 1-12.

⁷ Data compiled from students' records by the author especially for this article. (February, 1976).

incoming class at the Hebrew University School of Social Work was remarkably dissimilar to that of students enrolled at Tel Aviv University's School of Social Work. Only 15 per cent of the fathers of the 123 first year Hebrew University social work students were born in Africa or Asia, while 64 per cent of the students' fathers were from western countries.⁸ (The number of western-born parents of the Jerusalem students is probably much higher, since records did not show fathers' birthplace for 9 per cent of the students and another 11 per cent of the fathers were listed as Israeli born).

Dr. Sami Jeraisi, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer from Nazareth, recently complained to the Knesset Social Services Committee that Arab social workers are in short supply "because the University imposes unrealistic entrance qualifications".⁹ Bergman's study revealed that only 5 per cent of Tel Aviv University's social work students were from the low-income group as determined by occupation of the students' fathers; over 48 per cent were from the two highest income groupings on a five-point scale.¹⁰

Manpower Needs in the Next Decade

In addition to the clear ethnic bias of present admission policy, the limited quantity of social work candidates accepted for admission each year is exceedingly inadequate compared to the large number of social work positions now available or about to open up in the coming five years. In a recent report to the Social

⁸ Rebecca Bergman, Tamar Krulik and Itzhak Ditzian, "Opinion (of Social Workers) on Nursing," *International Nursing Review*, 1976, pp. 15-18.

⁹ Testimony from the Social Services Committee of the Knesset, quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*, February 26, 1976, p. 2.

¹⁰ Rebecca Bergman, *et al*, p. 16. The ethnicity issue in Israeli social work is as yet less acute than in the U.S., See:

Seymour Mirelowitz and Leona Grossman, "Ethnicity: An Intervening Variable in Social Work Education," *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall, 1975), pp. 76-83.

Services Committee of the Knesset, Mr. Aaron Langerman, Director General of the Ministry of Social Welfare, described Israel's present and projected social work manpower needs.¹¹ As of April, 1976 there existed 1,723 professional positions in social welfare offices. Only 1,077 of the professional positions were filled, leaving 646 available positions. In other words, 38 per cent of the budgeted professional positions were unfilled.¹² Furthermore, recent data from the Israel Social Workers Union shows that 20 per cent (approx. 500) of the presently occupied professional positions are held by non-professional (non-certified) social workers. The Union also reports that approximately 20 per cent of social work graduates do not enter the field after graduation, and that 50 per cent of all government tenders for professional social work positions are not applied for by even one candidate.¹³

Undaunted by the lack of manpower for budgeted social work positions in public welfare offices, the Ministry of Welfare is working towards implementing recent agreements, secured from the Ministry of Interior and the Authority of Local Councils, regarding additional positions based on new caseload standards. According to these new standards there would be an immediate need for 2,635 new social workers in services sponsored by the Ministry of Social Welfare, and an additional 450 social workers in social services operated by other government Ministries such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour etc., a total of 3,085 workers. The approved standards for delivery of all social work services recognized in Israel today, if immediately budgeted, would require 5,241

¹¹ Aaron Langerman, *Manpower in Social Welfare Offices*, Israel Ministry of Social Welfare, Jerusalem, February 23, 1976 pp. 1-8.

¹² Yitzhak Kadman, *Guidelines for Public Relations Work Regarding Social Workers' Salaries*, Association of Social Workers, The Histadrut Federation of Labour, Tel Aviv, February, 1976, pp. 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

professional workers. Since only 2,157 workers are presently on the job, we need another 3,085 social workers immediately.¹⁴

If one projects present manpower standards onto expected growth of target populations in 1980, and expected social work manpower available then, we will need an additional 1,464 social workers, assuming that we can fill the new 3,085 positions now unfilled. Theoretically, between 1976 and 1980 we will have to produce 4,549 professional social workers to fill the positions which will be needed at that time.¹⁵ And all this, on the assumption that new job markets for social workers do not develop, an unlikely prospect in view of relatively active interest in hiring social workers shown by private industry and various government Ministries such as Finance, Absorption, Defense and the Jewish Agency. Indeed, social work has succeeded very well in getting itself onto the professional landscape in Israel, but its professional schools are incapable thus far of meeting these new obligations.

The four schools of social work, the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, Bar Ilan University and Haifa University, "produce" approximately 350 graduates a year, 75 per cent of whom are females,¹⁶ and about 15 per cent of whom will most probably cease being actively employed within five years of graduation.¹⁷ Of the 135 students admitted to their first year of study at the Hebrew University School of Social Work in 1973 ("class of 1976"), only 89 eventually completed their full three years of study, a drop-out rate of 35 per

¹⁴ Aaron Langerman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Mordechai Wertheimer, *Professional Manpower in Israeli Public Welfare*. Israel Ministry of Social Welfare, Jerusalem, 1970. See also:

Yitzhak Kadman, *Guidelines for Public Relations Work Regarding Social Workers' Salaries*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Shoshanna Berlin, *et al*, "A Survey of University Social Work Graduates from 1966 to 1970," *Saad*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (March, 1973) pp. 13-22.

cent for that class of students!¹⁸ Some of them, however, may eventually come back to complete their education or may have taken lighter loads to finish later.

Negotiations are now underway for the opening of a fifth school of social work during 1977 at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheva. Even this addition, and the Ministry of Welfare's six non-university diploma programmes for 50 social workers each year will not meet the demand for social workers. Nor will the gap be closed by the annual addition of approximately 50 social science students who complete special retraining ("HASAVA") and obtain their second B.A. in social work from one of the four universities noted above. The recent attempt by the Ministry of Welfare's Institute for Social Work Training (a non-university diploma programme) to train Russian immigrants for social work has met with difficulty and raises serious questions as to the feasibility of obtaining social workers in the near future from this source.¹⁹ It is felt by many that more success has occurred so far from assisting experienced social work graduates from the Western countries, particularly the U.S. and Canada, in immigrating to Israel and learning the language and culture, rather than educating new Russian immigrants or others from scratch in Israeli schools of social work.²⁰ There is also some Parliamentary support for investing in bringing western-trained professional social work immigrants to

¹⁸ Paul Baerwald School of Social Work, *Data Concerning the Sixteenth Graduating Class*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, (February 19, 1976), p. 1.

¹⁹ Ruth Klein and Ilana Schmueli, "A First Evaluation of a Retraining Programme to Social Work for Russian Immigrants," *Saad*, Vol. 18, No. 5 (September, 1974) pp. 63-67.

²⁰ A. Langerman, *op. cit.*, p. 4. See also: Aliza Masiurik, "Opinions on the Value of a Retraining Programme for Social Work," *Saad*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (January, 1976), pp. 30-32.

Israel.²¹

The demand for university trained social work manpower is clearly outrunning the supply, and apparently will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

There is currently a greatly increased sensitivity to social problems in Israel and to the varied roles that social work professionals can fulfill in that arena.²² In this new climate, the schools of social work should adequately relate to the new manpower challenge, and have to face the crucial issue of increasing the number of graduates without endangering the quality of the programme.

Some Conceptual Changes Needed

The present model of social work education and, to a large degree, admission policy, have been copied from the public school and medical school models. That is, an entire cohort of students, the incoming class, enters the programme and about 80 per cent finish together, as a class, three years later. The social work faculty decide *a priori* in admissions if the student can manage the programme, relying heavily on the students' past academic performance.

It is my belief that much of the single cohort concept should be abandoned in favour of larger numbers of incoming students who can present high school degrees, perhaps as part of a trial period, *all* those who have achieved at least a 70 average during their high school education. These incoming students should be offered a series of basic courses in the social

²¹ Esther Herlitz, M.K., submitted a Parliamentary Question to the Welfare Minister on February 21, 1976, asking what was being done to encourage Jewish professional social workers around the world to come to Israel either as immigrants or as short-term contractees to fill empty posts here. Quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*, February 22, 1976, p. 3.

²² Eliezer D. Jaffe, "Poverty in the Third Jewish Commonwealth: Sephardi-Ashkenazi Divisions," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Fall, 1975), pp. 91-99. See also:

Eliezer D. Jaffe, "Alternatives to the Welfare System in View of Israeli Political Realities," *Social Security*, No's. 9-10, (December, 1975), pp. 159-162.

and behavioral sciences which they would have to pass at a predetermined level in order to go on with their social work education. The effect of this procedure would be that students would *screen themselves* out of, or into, social work. In the event that the number of students taking generic first-year courses is too high, it may be logical to offer these general courses in the social science faculty instead of in the school of social work as is the practice today. At any rate, it may be worth the effort to assess anew the rationale for teaching introductory social science courses in the School of Social Work rather than in the relevant Social Science Departments.

The social work curriculum might be restructured in a *modular* manner, whereby basic courses are offered several times during the year, including during the summer, and students could map-out, together with a faculty adviser, annually, the educational path and credits needed to complete their B.A. degree. This would allow for sequenced education to continue, but it would also allow students to retake courses which they fail without necessarily having to abandon the programme, and it would enable students to take courses at their own pace, a factor especially important if they are employed persons or parents of young children.

I would build into the programme special non-credit tutorial help for students having difficulty with their studies, akin to the Haifa model, including teaching them skills in composition, reading of scientific material, and scientific material and other content that must be taught in small groups or individually. A campus-wide service of this type would not be unrealistic, and students from various departments could be referred to these services.

The modular-type curriculum would require additional faculty and field-work placements, but I believe that these could be attracted to an experimental programme and that present faculty could, if properly compensated, take on extra loads rather than work part-time outside of the University which is not

infrequent today. It would also be possible to hire good quality junior faculty personnel to fill a good deal of the teaching positions necessary for a modular programme.

In discussions with colleagues at the School of Social Work in Jerusalem and elsewhere, it is clear that the main bottleneck to a modular curriculum, and to enlarging enrollment in social work, is the fear of not being able to find enough good field work apprenticeships for larger numbers of students. This may be true *if* the present method of field work instruction is maintained, namely, simultaneous field work placement and class-room education. If, for example, the block system were introduced, e.g. 3 to 6 months of full-time, summer or other field work experience in a welfare agency, as is the practice at Smith College and other schools of social work, this might alleviate the problem. Another model currently in use (and about to be discarded) at Tel Aviv University's School of Social Work is the fourth (senior) year apprenticeship with accompanying seminars. Still another model is that used by Israel's law schools where the apprenticeship is a final formal requirement, not accompanied by seminars.²³ All of these systems would also enable selection of field placements *throughout the country*.

Another suggestion might be to provide the field apprenticeship *before* the student even enters the academic social work programme, immediately after acceptance to the programme.²⁴ Perhaps field work could be simulated by use of video-tape and other devices in the

²³ Post block-placement seminars in social work education are lucidly described in: Sheldon R. Gelman, "Integrated Learning Through a Post-Placement Seminar", *Social Work Education Reporter*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Sept.-Oct., 1971), pp. 42-44.

²⁴ Elizabeth Torre, "Student Performance in Solving Social Work Problems and Work Experience Prior to Entering the M.S.W. Programme," *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring, 1974), pp. 114-117.

classroom setting.²⁵ Perhaps field work should be dispensed with entirely and students required to come back to the University for systematic "refresher" coursework based on experiences and new developments subsequent to their graduation as is the practice in branches of medicine.

The field work bottleneck, admittedly, needs conceptual and logistical expertise, but it is solvable, and no "solution" need exist forever if changing needs and circumstances dictate otherwise. Ironically, enlarging the student population may be directly correlated with solving the fieldwork problem. Without field supervisors, admission must be limited; without more students graduating, we can't find enough supervisors. And around it goes.

Perhaps this is also the place to suggest that the time has come in Israeli social work education for the Universities to develop a *consortium* of field work placements for all of the schools to use in a pooled, coordinated manner. The country is so small and the number of adequate placements so limited that we may soon begin to hoard or to compete for field agencies and supervisors, and the trend of providing varied field experiences during the students' stay with us, will, I predict, hasten the need for establishing a sophisticated national consortium of agency placements. What makes me impatient about solving the field-work bottleneck is not the dearth of possible solutions, but the rather conservative approach to grappling and experimenting with them on the part of many social work faculty. The status-quo has a relatively strong grip on us, and we have sanctified and ritualized much of how and what we do to the point that we often feel too much is at risk in change.

²⁵ Roland G. Meinert, "Simulation Technology: A Potential Tool for Social Work Education", *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 8, No. 3, (Fall, 1972) p. 50-59. See also:

Stephen F. Canfield, et al, "A Laboratory Training Model for the Development of Effective Interpersonal Communications in Social Work," *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter, 1975), pp. 45-50.

Modular Spin-Off

Some positive spin-off which could result from modular teaching and more liberal admission procedures would be, perhaps, more extensive use of the classroom facilities presently available. By all measures, these facilities today are extremely underused. The social work buildings could be utilized long after 5 p.m., including the libraries. Classroom hours in social work should be geared towards the role of the urban university, and evening hours would make for economization of heat and utilization of space, both crucial items in the university's financial situation. A modular curriculum and liberalized admissions policy might draw into the School of Social Work new types of students, in addition to the young army veterans and young single women who overwhelmingly populate the School today. I believe that night, evening, and late afternoon classes would be heavily concentrated with veteran social workers who never had a chance to leave work and complete their education, or people from neighboring professions who want to learn about social work, but not study towards the degree, and mature citizens who want to register for a social work course without credit because it simply interests them. Continuing education for graduate social workers and for staff development could well be offered in the evening sessions.²⁶

In my view, it is essential to "loosen-up" traditional social work education methods, copied for the most part from American social work education models of the 1950's and early 1960's. Above all, I believe that it is essential to undertake meaningful experimentation in Israeli social work education. We cannot afford, morally, professionally, or economically, to let social work needs and daily practice develop in one corner of our society, and social work education in another. We

²⁶ Frank Loewenberg, ed. *Essentials for Undergraduate Social Welfare Teachers*, New York, Council on Social Work Education, 1969. See also:

Kay Dea. *The Instructional Module*. Council on Social Work Education, New York, 1971, pp. 1-50.

cannot insist that government welfare policy in Israel change and welfare services expand, without taking stock of what we as social work faculty are willing to contribute to the effort and how willing we are to change our own set ways and to experiment with new ones. We cannot expect our graduates to be involved with change and social reform, unless we as faculty are prepared to demonstrate these traits in our own daily work and lives.

Lois G. Swack, "Continuing Education and Changing Needs," *Social Work*, Vol. 20, No. 6 (November, 1975) pp. 474-480. See also:

Armand Lauffer, "Trends Affecting Social Work Education and Their Implications for Continuing Education," in *Social Work Continuing Education Yearbook*, University of Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973, pp. 127-128; Thomas Walz, "A Continuing Education Curriculum for the Graduate Social Worker," *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 9 (Winter, 1973), pp. 68-78.

Georgia Pinnick, "The Educationally Disadvantaged — Implications for Social Work Education" in *Educationally Disadvantaged Students in Social Work Education*, Council on Social Work Education, New York, 1971, pp. 101-110.