

CIHE SSS 15th Anniversary International Conference

Ethical Consideration of Human Services: Who Should Care?

Topic:

Social work values in social services administration
textbooks:

A profession overshadowed by a managerialist approach

PAK Chui Man, Michael

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

sspak@polyu.edu.hk, achinman@gmail.com

Tsui Ming Sum

Caritas Institution of Higher Education

Values and ethics in SSA textbooks

- Previous studies focused on theory, knowledge, and skills content of textbooks but not on their values and ethics content.
- We have examined forty major textbooks published between 1965 to 2014 (see Appendix)
- To identify how such an important ingredient, social work values, is upheld in the profession and presented in textbooks for social services managers and administrators.

Values and ethics in SSA textbooks

- The extent to which social services administration texts paid attention to social work values and ethics *varied considerably*
- Very high level: More than one chapter to discuss ethics and values of social work. E.g. Hardina et al. (2007)
- High level: A full chapter or a specific section to discuss values and ethics E.g. Brody and Nair (2014)

Values and ethics in SSA textbooks

- Moderate level: Inserted or mentioned Code of Ethics or social work values in the text. E.g. Furman & Gibelman (2013)
- Low level: Gave only a short statement mentioning that social work has a professional code of conduct. E.g. Lewis et al. (2012) *Management of human service programs.*
- Very low level: Failed to find any statements or content directly related to social work values and ethics. E.g. Tropman (2006) *Supervision and management in nonprofits and human services: How not to become the administrator you always hated.*

Values and ethics in SSA textbooks

- Books whose title included the phrase “social work” did not necessarily contain much discussion of social work values and ethics. E.g. Coulshed et al. (2006) *Management in social work*. (Moderate level)
- Page Limit? Perlmutter and Crook (2004), it was almost fifty pages shorter than Coulshed et al. (2006), it devoted two chapters to discussing issues of values and ethics.

Values and ethics in SSA textbooks

- Textbooks serve a critical role in social work teaching and learning; they influence readers' knowledge and competencies by their pervasiveness, accuracy, and quantity of subject matter
- A matter of belief and choice
- Good sign: Awareness of author on the 'missing' value content.
- E.g. Brody & Nair (2014) has one chapter on Ethical dilemmas (Seven pages)
- In previous version, Brody (2005), Very low level.

Values and ethics in social work

- Values and ethics are central to social work (Banks, 2006; Bartlett, 1970; Reamer, 1998).
- Bisman (2004), social work is distinctive, having a set of humanistic values that are vital to social work as a profession.
- Social work practitioners are aware of the need to examine their own personal values
- Develop decision-making strategies in facing difficult ethical judgments.

Values and ethics in social work

- Code of Ethics: guide social workers' professional conduct.
- Not only applicable to frontline practitioners but to social workers in general, including administrators.
- Example: "Social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet clients' needs" (NASW, 2008, standard 3.07).
- Code helps ensure professional accountability to the public.

Values and ethics in human services

- Human service executives are not required to possess recognized qualifications in social work.
- In favour of an MBA (Master of Business Administration) for consideration for appointment to top-level positions
- Inclusion of social work values and ethics in social services administration texts is seen as less important than bringing business concepts and managerial sciences into the discussion.

Values and ethics in human services

- National Organization for Human Services' (NOHS) approved ethical standards for human service workers was seldom mentioned in the reviewed texts.
- Human service organizations have a vision and mission based on humanistic principles, and what they practice is *moral work* (Hasenfeld, 2010) and mandated by society.

Values and ethics in human services

- Tension between bureaucratic and professional cultures—that is, calling for *loyalty to the organization* while at the same time adhering to the core values of the profession.
- Austin (2002) adopted “*managerial ethics*” as an umbrella term that included other ethical obligations that helped executives in nonprofit service agencies to deal with the tensions of conflicting values:

Values and ethics in human services

- “The executive must balance a professional commitment to a *professional code of ethics* and the obligation of a nonprofit or governmental executive to respect the policy authority of an official *board of directors*. (Austin, 2002, p. 347)
- How to uphold professional code of ethics as the guiding principles? and
- to align these values with organizational goals that justify the organization’s existence
- Or to resolve possible conflicts between them (Warham, 1967).

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- The role of a manager is to explain organization policy and help the social worker to see the *justification for the decision and to execute it* (Weinbach & Taylor, 2011, p. 212).
- Business-like service model in social work (Harris, 2003)
- Contradictions are found between commercial and social work values when welfare services have been commodified (Cheung, 2016).

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- Managerial ethics, which are dictated by top management and shareholders
- A set of principles and rules that help *regulate the standard of behavior* in an organization when a conflict of values is presented.
- Social work managers were reminded by the textbooks to *avoid ethical complaints and legal disputes* against their subordinates.
- The consideration of values and ethics in social services administration thus reverted to discussions of managerial ethics and the management function of control.

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- The basic control process: (1) establishing standards. (2) measuring performance against these standards. and (3) correcting deviations from standards and plans.
- Performance standards, KPI, etc.
- Readers were merely guided by the texts to perform as *a manager of social workers* rather than *manage social work as a social worker*.

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- “there are times when the agency’s action is not inconsistent with its own purposes, but the social worker perceives it as a violation of the professional ethics to which he feels committed” (Levy, 1976, p. 175).
- Slavin (1985) states clearly that “to be professional is to be ethical” (p. 204).
- Ethical administrator is an advocate of social change in pursuit of justice.

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- Gardner (2006), social work administrators are not value free ... social workers should also take account of the context when applying them (postmodern view)
- Perlmutter and Crook (2004) stressed that “the role of the administrator related to *administrative advocacy* is central to the social work core value of social justice. . . . (They) has the opportunity to provide information about the target population that can *elicit a sympathetic view* of the situation” (Perlmutter & Crook, 2004, p. 177).
- Ethical administrators vs. managerial ethics (top management and shareholders)

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- Lohmann and Lohmann (2002), social work administration must be “ethically informed”
- Not Rule-based form of management in human services. i.e. code of ethics was presented as a form of behavioral guidelines that did not leave much room for further negotiation
- But in Taylor’s sense of strong evaluations and concerned not only with the right but also with *the good*

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- Yuen (2010) adds that a hermeneutic social worker is an active participant with value involvement ... social work leaders should perform as active moral agents.
- Those who can “persevere and remain proactive on ethics may discover that ethical management builds and strengthens community, both within the organization and in the larger environment” (Healy & Pine, 2007, p. 103).

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- Banks (2016) suggests to view ethics as embedded and embodied in everyday practice.
 - Ethics work—that is, the practice of ‘ethics work’ by professional practitioners, is unquestionably an antidote to rule-based managerialism.
- (1) Framing work— different seeing/framings of a situation can change participants’ understandings of what is ethically right or just ... being alert to what may be important

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- (2) Role work— Ethical dimensions are highlighted when conscious dilemmas and choices over role positions arise—for example, between carer and controller
- E.g. Restraints of hostel inmates, meal choices
- (3) Emotion work—being caring, compassionate and empathic; managing emotions; building trust; responding to emotions of others.
- Put this before your administrative duties

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- (4) Identity work—working on one's ethical self; creating an identity as an ethically good professional; negotiating professional identity; maintaining professional integrity.
- E.g. negotiate with board of directors to issue statements in responses to government policy (convince them not yourself)

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- (5) Reason work—making and justifying moral judgements and decisions; deliberation with others on ethical evaluations and tactics; working out strategies for ethical action.
- E.g. numbers or needs fulfillment?
- (6) Relationship work—engaging in dialogue with others; working on relationships through emotion, identity and reason work (dialogue work)

Values and ethics for managers and administrators

- (7) Performance work—making visible aspects of this work to others; demonstrating oneself at work (accountability work).



Conclusion:

- Administrators' knowledge of social work values and ethics could influence their expectations of subordinates' behavior.
- We urge social workers and social work administrators committed to social work values to promote the humanistic causes advocated by the profession to other stakeholders.
- Levy (1976): "For what is expected of the social worker, beyond occupational competence, is expected because he is a social worker and he does social work" (p. 26).