

Global Definition of Social Work

International definition of the social work profession :

The social work profession facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

1. “Global Definition of Social Work” or “International Definition of the Social Work Profession” ?

Reading the proposed draft, we wonder if the definition is that of “social work” or of “social work profession.” The two are not completely the same, with the latter being a component or an aspect of the former. It is our opinion that a definition of the social work profession should be included and described within the broader “definition of social work” so entitled.

Furthermore, we suppose that “social work profession” is not necessarily the same as the “social worker,” possibly referring to a wider range of professions involved in social work. If so, we would like to see an illustration of such professions in the commentary.

2. “Global Definition of Social Work” or “International Definition of the Social Work Profession ” ?

The draft says “global” at one time and “international” at another time. We should make it clear that it is unambiguously the “global” definition. Calling it “international” would be confusing because regional definition is also “international” by definition.

3. Importance of Local Knowledges

We propose that “indigenous knowledges” is replaced by “indigenous and local knowledges” as the latter expression can cover important popular knowleges of many different parts of the world that are not regarded as strictly “indigenous.”

4. Social Cohesion or Social Inclusion?

Some people are worried that “social cohesion” may entail more or less coerced obedience to organizations and the state, and proposed “social inclusion” instead.

5. Individuals Fading Out?

Some people expressed a concern that the individual and the significance of rearranging one’s immediate environment seem to be fading out in the wake of increasing emphasis on social development and social action. More explanation in the commentary on what kind of arguments in the review process prompted this move would be helpful to understand that the current draft values both individuals and society and attempts to balance the two, correcting the earlier bias that favored the former.

6. Theoretical System of Concepts

There was an opinion that the draft enumerates many concepts and values (social change and development, social cohesion, empowerment, liberation, social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, diversity, wellbeing) without explaining their relationship to each other. Shouldn’t we highlight the essence of social work more clearly and show what would be the ultimate goal(s) and/or value(s) and what would be more instrumental values led by the former?

It seems that the current draft has not yet become the best definition easy to understand for everyone. To come up with a better definition in the future, it will be necessary for us to try to reconstruct a distinct theoretical system of social work through a series of logical reworking on its various aspects and/or components (subject, object, goal, principle, reason, content, time/place, method, etc.).

7. Social Justice

Some concern was expressed on the “social justice” set in place at the core of social work without clarifying on its definition, as what “social justice” means can be radically different from place to place, depending on culture.

8. Battle against the West?

There was an opinion that the wording of the criticism of Western hegemony in the

commentary may be a little too strong and dividing. There may be a softer way of saying it to connote constructive argument and cooperation rather than a battle between two camps.

9. Request for the Outcome of Feedbacks

We would welcome a brief report on what opinions were expressed by other countries and how they will have been reflected in the final definition.

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