Empowerment-Based Social Work Practice
Issues and Challenges

MOHAMMAD ABUL HOSSEN

All social work activity is concerned with social problems, that is, with alleviating, eliminating, or preventing social problems and the deleterious effects they have on people. It works with the people, organisations and groups who are marginalised, depressed, disadvantaged, powerless and voiceless. Its mission is to change society from one that creates and perpetuates poverty, inequality, and humiliation to one more consistent with social work's fundamental values of humanism and egalitarianism. In order to provide meaningful support to the client, social workers need to empower them. It is often argued that the key to rectifying common people's situation is the empowerment of those who are excluded from the development process and then to build political, economic and social structures which are more participatory and inclusive in nature. But this task is not easy as multiple factors and challenges are involved with this process. This article tries to discuss the various issues and strategies relating to empowerment process. The findings of the article confess that in order to develop social work as a competent profession, empowerment is not only needed for the client, but it is equally needed for the social work professionals themselves.

Mr. Mohammad Abul Hossen is Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. From the Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterllo, Canada.

INTRODUCTION

Framed by a generalist foundation, empowerment practice directs social workers to address challenges at all levels — including those of individuals, families, groups, organisations, neighbourhoods, communities, and society. Empowerment is achieved through synchronised efforts that work with — not on — people, their relationships, and the impinging social and political environment. These simultaneous and coordinated efforts create a spiral of influences that initiate, sustain, and amplify empowered functioning. The empowered individual enters each interaction assuming success, respect, and influence; and when these expectations are rewarded, carries back a sense of personal control and esteem. This realisation of interpersonal success builds confidence for interactions at the institutional level—feelings that drive empowered people forward to assert their rights, develop their privilege, and fashion just environments. In return, a just and ethical
Empowerment-Based Social Work Practice

society offers equal access to power, which is reflected in the lives of each individual citizen.

**EMPOWERMENT: ITS MEANING AND CONCEPTS**

The term 'empowerment' has multiple contemporary meanings which is not surprising in light of its diverse historical referents. Rappaport (1987: 122) defines empowerment as 'a process, a mechanism by which people, organisations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs, and involve themselves in the democratic processes of their community and employing institutions.' According to Karl (1995:14), 'Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation to greater decision making and control, and to transformative action'. Empowerment is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, and communities can take action to improve their situations (Lorraine and Robert, 1991). Empowerment concerns both one's perceived and actual ability to determine the course of one's life and community. Empowerment strategies emphasise the importance of teaching individuals about the dynamics of power and power relationships within their social, political and economic systems. Power is defined as the degree to which we are able to affect our environment, that is to get things done or to make things happen or to keep things from getting done or happening (Lee, 1986: 24-25). Pinderhuges (1983: 332), an authority on empowerment theory and practice, defines power as 'the capacity to influence the forces which affect one's life space for one's own benefit'. Miller (1983: 4) defines power as the capacity to produce a change.

The term 'empowerment' was popularised in the mid1970s, primarily through the publication of Solomon's (1976) book, *Black Empowerment*, and it is typically taken to mean a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, political or economic power so that individuals, groups and communities can take action to improve their life situations. The focus of empowerment practice is not on adaptation, but on increasing the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to ameliorate social problems (Gutierrez, 1990b). This is because the effects of powerlessness can be felt at so many different levels and empowerment strategies have been developed which address individual, institutional and communal structures.

Some authors are examining the interface between macro- and micro-models of empowerment in an effort to understand how individual empowerment can contribute to group empowerment and how the increase in a group's power can enhance the functioning of its individual members (Evans, 1992). It also is common to view empowerment as a process that operates on a single level of practice. Thus, some social workers claim that if a person feels empowered, then empowerment has taken place even if the person has no actual influence in the
community. However, social science suggests an emerging notion of empowerment as a process with multiple levels of practice. For example, Gutierrez (1989) reviews the social work literature on empowerment and finds that the goals of empowerment is most often expressed as an increase in personal power. It tends not to distinguish the individual perception and actual increase in personal power, and that it tends not to reconcile personal and political power. She suggests that the goal of empowerment is not individual, but multi-level, and concludes: 'It is not sufficient to focus only on developing a sense of personal power or working toward social change, but efforts to change should encompass individual, interpersonal, and institutional level of practice.'

Building on this, I view empowerment as a multi-level process, which it has various dimensions which including individual involvement, organisational development, and community change. Individual involvement refers to participation of a person in decision-making. Community change refers to the impact of involvement in the community. Organisational development refers to the structures which mediate between the individual and community and facilitates collective action, which lies at the heart of community change.

EMPOWERMENT: AN IDEA WITH A LONG HISTORY IN SOCIAL WORK

The appropriation of power or 'empowerment' must be a major concern for social workers in all aspects of the practice of social work — whether individual, group or community. Though the term 'empowerment' is relatively recent and very catchy, its roots go back to the very beginnings of social work. However, the idea of giving power to — or back to — the most deprived, to social work clienteles, goes back to very origins of the profession. The goal of social work has always been to give more power to the disadvantaged, the poor and the rejected. The role of the social worker is not to help individuals to adjust or accept problems, but to help them to develop the ability to change the situation and prevent its reoccurrence (Lorraine and Robert, 1991). As mentioned by Mckay (1999: 17),

...To support and strengthen people's natural abilities and capacities for handling their own affairs; to improve environments to ensure the conditions are present to maximize social well-being and provide care where needed; and to work toward transforming the conditions and social structures that create an inequitable social order.

Since the early nineties, the term 'empowerment' has become a very widespread expression, which appeals to many people. It can be said that even though the idea has been part of the universe of social work since its beginnings, the term 'empowerment' carries a new message of change in the professional services associated with a radical and innovative image. Empowerment-based practice actuates a strengths perspective, centring the social work process toward competence
promotion and away from the stigmatising notion of deficit reduction. An empowering approach reveals the worker's unwavering commitment to social justice. This approach operates on the axiom that we all benefit when we acknowledge every person's rights and responsibilities to contribute to and receive from community participation in a reciprocal relationship.

Empowerment-based social work practice is concerned with much more than the re-distribution of power in society. As Richan (1989) points out, the experience of powerlessness involves much more than the absence of power. Soloman (1976: 16) defines powerlessness as the inability to manage emotions, skills, knowledge and/or materials resources. Powerlessness sets in motion a series of self-reinforcing defeats which have been described in the literature as learned helplessness, loss of self-esteem and feelings of hopelessness (Evans, 1992).

STRATEGIES OF EMPOWERING PEOPLE

To facilitate empowerment, practitioners integrate a continuum of strategies ranging from individual development to relationship improvement to resource acquisition and reallocation through social and institutional change. Collaborating as partners, clients and social workers can coordinate these efforts simultaneously or sequentially, but no part of the ecosystem transaction can be ignored. Empowerment efforts at the personal level provide only a brief respite if they are not supported by complementary changes within interpersonal and socio-political realms. Likewise, even broad-based social improvements wane if not protected by the continuing influence of empowered individuals, families, and groups. In this regard social workers adopt various strategies to empower the client: collectivisation, establishing a dialogical relationship, consciousness-raising, redefining, advocacy, and so on. In practice, each strategy is unique and does not necessarily fit under one label. This is important because it means they can adapt to local circumstances and the changing needs of the clientele. At this point it would be pertinent to discuss these strategies in brief.

Collectivisation

A small group is presented as the ideal modality for empowering interventions because it allows clients to experience individual effectiveness in influencing others. Small groups can facilitate empowerment by

- creating a basis of social support,
- providing a format for concrete assistance,
- providing an opportunity to learn new skills through role-playing and observing others, and
- serving as a potential power base for future action (Evans, 1992).

Group discussion can be a critical factor in the development of critical consciousness because of the effect of groups on attitude change and
Cohesive groups, consisting of similar others, have a particularly strong influence on an individual's behaviour and perception of reality. Participation in groups can also provide an environment for engaging in risk-taking behaviour (Zander, 1977). In this respect, the group becomes an ideal environment for developing new attitudes and exploring the possibility of social change. According to Longers and McLeod (1980), 'The first step to consciousness-raising is forming groups based on common social statuses' and that 'consciousness-raising in a holistic way is only possible within groups'. This means establishing groups of clients, not staff-led therapy groups, but 'mutual aid' groups, in the best sense. Such groups can discuss common concerns and organise joint demands on workers. They can also provide support and assistance to each other. The presence of such groups could help articulate client demands. They may be a safe place for sharing 'bootleg' information about the agency, and they may give clients a place to do their own 'power analysis' (Withorn, 1984). Collectivisation aims to create change by building powerful organisations at the community level. It assumes that organising can win improvements in people's lives, make people more aware of their own power, and alter the relations of power in the community (Booth, 1977). This can have positive effects of particular importance for excluded groups. In Chicago, older people created an organisation to represent their interest in the city. They identified issues such as housing and transit, held monthly meetings to awaken the community, and used confrontation to increase their influence. When the mayor refused to discuss an issue, they organised protest demonstrations and mobilised the media against him in ways that built their organisation and increased their influence in the community (Checkoway, 1995). The purpose of collectivisation is to assist service users to see that their problems and/or situations are not unique. It is a way of learning that many others of the same social grouping, whatever it might be, also experience the same problems and that in their situation it is not unusual to have such problems.

Eight practices that Moreau (1989) used for the operational definition of collectivisation are useful here:

1. Drawing a service user's attention to the links between his/her personal difficulties and the similar problem situations of other service users.
2. Putting service users of the same agency who are living similar problem situations in touch with each other.
3. Grouping service users for the purpose of mutual aid.
4. Grouping service users for the purpose of creating necessary resources the agency itself should provide.
5. Grouping service users for the purpose of creating necessary resources other agencies should provide.
6. Grouping service users for the purpose of changing aspects of the agency that are problematic to them.
7. Grouping service users for the purpose of changing aspects of other agencies and organisations that are problematic to service users.
8. Referring service users to larger social movements directly related to their situations.

Establishing a Dialogical Relationship

In working with clients, the worker tries to establish a relationship of dialogue with them as opposed to a relationship of vertical imposition (Freire, 1970). This is done by reducing the unnecessary social distance between the worker and client. Practically, this requires, among other things, sharing information and demystifying techniques and skills used to help. It means making every effort to have clients control which services are provided to them and how. Clients are also given access to their own files and no case conferences concerning them are held without their presence. The essence of the dialogical relationship is one wherein all participants in the dialogue are equals, each learning from the other and each teaching the other. Of course, the social worker will have some skills and insights that the service user does not have, but the service user has experiences and insights that the worker does not. The social worker must make conscious efforts to dispel any myths of expert technical solutions to fundamental political problems. In discussing empowerment, Moreau and Leonard (1989) presented the following dialogical practices:

- sharing with the service user the content of case recordings;
- directly involving service users in the decisions that affect them;
- directly involving the service user in providing feedback on the kinds and quality of services provided.
- reducing the social distance between the worker and service user by use of self-disclosure, casual dress, giving the rationale for techniques and questions, personal empathy, home visits, first names, direct clear speech, and use of body language;
- sharing with the service user one's personal biases and limits as part of the 'helping' contract;
- providing information on the role of the agency and the rights of the service user, and
- letting him/her know the worker is there to serve the service user.

Consciousness Raising

Popular education aims to create change by raising critical consciousness of common concerns. It assumes that people are able to participate but temporarily unwilling to do so because they may lack the consciousness, competence or confidence. It is a form of praxis in which people reflect critically on objective reality and act on that reflection to 'transform the world'.
Popular education can take the form of small-group consciousness-raising. In the squatter settlements of Brazil, Freire (1970) brought together small groups of people for 'education for critical consciousness'. They describe the themes that dominate their daily lives, convey these as problems to be examined by the group, select several problems for dialogue and reflection on their root causes, and formulate plans to address the problems. The aim is to alter consciousness from conforming to reforming to transforming society (Checkoway, 1995).

Within the social work community, consciousness-raising techniques have been developed and used extensively in working with women, the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, and the physically and mentally challenged. In Latin America, the concept of conscientisation is having a profound effect on social work practice and education (Alfero, 1972). There are two elements of consciousness-raising:

- reflection in search of understanding dehumanising social structures, and
- action aimed at altering societal conditions.

The two must go hand in hand; action without reflection is as unjustifiable as reflection without action. In order to make people aware of the situation they are facing, dialogue is essential which incorporates how our present society works, including the social functions that poverty, sexism, racism, hetero-sexism, and so on, accomplish. If members of various subordinate groups realise that their personal difficulties are related to their membership within a particular oppressed group and that their oppression is socially useful to the dominant groups, then this awareness should alleviate much of the internalised guilt and blame that exist. In turn, awareness of their oppression, coupled with the energy unleashed from not feeling guilty or responsible for their subordinate status anymore, should lead to some kind of social action against that oppression and exploitation.

According to Horton (1989), the basic philosophy is that people know the solutions to their own problems and that the 'worker's job is to get them talking about those problems, to raise and sharpen questions, and to trust people to come up with the answers'. The idea is that the answers lie in the experience and imagination of people as communities rather than as individuals (Glen, 1988).

Longers and McLeod (1980) make two additional points about consciousness-raising as a social work practice. First, because consciousness-raising focuses on the negative features of society and politicises people around these features, social workers will not be favoured by politicians, administrators, and many other conventional social workers. Therefore, consciousness-raising will not make life easier for the social worker. Second, although consciousness-raising should be a cornerstone of social work practice, it does not represent the totality of practice; giving support, dealing with crises, providing hard services, advocacy, making referrals, and helping to make people's immediate lives more bearable are also important activities.
In general, social work techniques within the conscientisation approach must encourage the development of awareness in human beings, both the people with whom social workers are involved and social worker themselves. Once conscientisation becomes incorporated into social work, we must keep in mind that we, as professionals, cannot conscientise others if we have not reached a specific degree of conscientisation ourselves (Alfero, 1972).

Redefining
Redefining is a consciousness-raising activity in which personal troubles are redefined in political terms, exposing the relationship between objective material conditions and subjective personal experiences. Redefining represents an alternative social reality — an alternative definition of problems. Redefining is a technique that may be used to stimulate clients first to react to another view of their situation and then to see things differently for themselves. It is one of the best ways to turn an apparent negative and even hopeless situation into one with at least some potential for change. Redefining can be used to alter clients' negative perspective on their circumstances. In this regard the worker may:

1. Reframe a problem so that clients can see that change is possible
2. Convey a genuine belief in clients' ability to improve a situation they previously considered to be unchangeable. (Hepworth and Larsen, 1993: 363).

Moreau (1990) outlines a number of redefining or 'refraining' techniques. These include: critical questioning, dialectical humour, metaphors and storytelling, cognitive dissonance, the checking of inferences, mental imagery, persuasion, and the use of silence. Such techniques help to contextualise not only the service user's problem, but often the service user's behaviour as well. Behaviour that may be labelled as inappropriate and self-destructive according to the personalist problem definition may be re-labelled as perfectly appropriate and normal with an alternative problem definition (Mullaly, 1993).

Advocacy
Advocacy is central to any discussion of involvement and empowerment in social work practice. Advocacy has been a part of social work from the time of the charity movements in the 1870s and 1880s (Burghardt, 1987). Advocacy is about standing up for and sticking with a person or group and taking their side. Advocacy is about standing alongside people who are in danger of being pushed to the margins of society. Advocacy is a process of working towards natural justice. Mickelson (1995: 95) offered a more complete definition of advocacy:

In social work, advocacy can be defined as the act of directly representing, defining, intervening, supporting, or recommending a course of action on behalf of one or more individuals, groups, or communities, with the goal of securing or retaining social justice.
It can give people a say they have previously been denied and turn paper entitlements into real rights. While advocating for people, social workers generally promote personal contacts with public officials, conduct investigative research and release findings to the media. Social workers used local groups to show grassroots support, and build coalitions with other groups to expand resources beyond the reach of any one group acting alone. For example, the Children's Defence Fund works 'to provide a strong and effective voice for children who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves'. They monitor government policies, present an annual legislative agenda, and litigate in the courts. They gather data and disseminate information on key issues affecting children, maintain a network of local advocates, and develop nationwide cooperative projects (Hughes, 1989). There are also the cases of advocacy in which traditionally excluded people advocate for themselves. In Wisconsin, for example, disabled citizens testified in transportation hearings, campaigned for home care, and petitioned the city council to install curb cuts for wheelchair users (Checkoway and Annette, 1986). They met personally with public officials, conducted telephone and letter-writing campaigns, and placed representatives on key boards and committees. They helped persons with severe multiple disabilities to educate officials about needs, and helped persons with cerebral palsy to approach transit authorities to increase access to services (Checkoway, 1995).

Three forms of advocacy can be seen in social work profession.

1. **Self-Advocacy**: It means people speaking for themselves and asserting their own rights, both as individuals and in groups with shared experiences or beliefs. Self-advocacy is concerned both with people's personal and political needs, offering warmth, friendship and support as well as teaching social skills and representing people's interests in local and national affairs.

2. **Legal Advocacy**: Social workers along with lawyers and other professionals, assist people to exercise or defend their rights, for example, through a local law centre or representation project in a psychiatric hospital.

3. **Professional Advocacy**: Social workers with welfare rights and other skills offer people services. At the provincial and national levels, social workers and social work as a profession advocate for policies, regulations, and legislation protecting and guaranteeing the right of all people to have their basic human needs met and have the opportunity to pursue their growth and developmental needs.

**Limitations**

In the preceding sections, the various strategies used by the social workers to empower people have been discussed. In practice, social workers follow a range of activities depending on the situation, reality and demands of the clientele. Clients' particular circumstances and
needs and the workers' preferences and judgements are variables that
determine which strategies will be used with which clients. Workers
pick and choose from a variety of approaches to a problem. Here, it
would be pertinent to discuss some limitations in applying the strate­
gies that have been mentioned earlier — that, to some extent, empow­
erment is a political activity. Moreover, this is a sensitive issue for both
the clientele and social work professionals. Sometimes, the clients
themselves became indifferent and reluctant regarding empowerment.
Simultaneously, among the social workers themselves, there still exist
arguments regarding empowerment of the clients. Some professionals
have raised the issue that the professional social workers themselves
are disempowered. So as a member of a disempowered profession, how
is it possible for them to empower their clients? Here, I would like to
mention the problem from two points of view:

**Difficulties with the Clientele**

As social workers, we are committed to apply the empowerment ap­
proach everywhere but this task is not easy to perform. It is very com­
plicated as the client with whom we work themselves present a
considerable challenge. The most serious problems come from the fact
that, by definition, we work with people who are the most powerless,
are the furthest away from power, who do not know how to appropriate
power and do not know how to use it. The greater the need for empower­
ment. The greater the uneasiness regarding power (Rondeau, 2000)
Moreover, these individuals are the very ones who have always had a
bitter relationship with the individuals who hold the power, those who
most fear the powerful, those who feel the most oppressed by them and
those who always see themselves as losers and incompetent, whose list
of failure is endless. At the individual level, it is not easy to give power
to the homeless or the drug addicts, those who have cut themselves off
from the world and those who live on the road. As mentioned by Ron­
deau (2000: 219-220), the poorer, more marginalised, oppressed and
alienated peoples are the more they need to appropriate power, but the
more they find it difficult to achieve it.

**Difficulties Related to the Social Worker**

The main problem with the empowerment issue is that it brings each of
us back to our own relationship with power. This is, unfortunately, an
area in which social workers are perhaps strong in theory and in fine
phrases, but weak in practice. They are not a particularly powerful or
much listened to group in society. In recent years, there has been much
discussion in professional literature about the theory of empowerment
and its implications for the provision of social services. However, an ex­
amination of these writings reveal that they contain little hard data on
the factors that create empowerment. This being the case, we realise
that few studies point out the importance of self-empowerment among
social workers as a condition likely to promote the appropriation of power by their clients (Rondeau, 2000: 220). Under these conditions and with such values, it becomes difficult for social workers to be consistent and to teach appropriation of power when they themselves feel uneasy about exercising it fully and freely, or feel dispossessed of it in their workplace or disapproved of by their colleagues.

Empowerment is a compelling topic for social work for three major reasons. First, the people that social workers work with tend to be in marginal and disadvantaged positions and are among the most oppressed, alienated, and powerless. Second, social work is a profession disproportionately staffed by women, who themselves comprise a group that, historically, has been oppressed and powerless, even within the profession of social work (Cummings, 1980). And third, social workers of both genders are no strangers to the experiences of being discounted, scape-goated, dislodged, underpaid, and overlooked by legislatures, public administrators, executive directors of agencies, colleagues in other professions, academics, clients, and the public. It has also been mentioned that social work experiences subordinations in occupation. Also, we are often stigmatised because of our association with marginalised groups. Thus, we may be vulnerable in terms of compensating for the powerlessness we experience at work and may use our professional role to gain a sense of power. Mullaly (1993) cites the response of some social works:

> We may use our professional role to gain a sense of power. Rather than empowering the people with who we work, we may actually reinforce their victim status by playing the role of benefactor and exploiting the power differential between ourselves and service users. (Dale and Foster, 1986:14)

**EMPOWERMENT-BASED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN CONTEXT**

India is a large country with its geographically dispersed, economically stratified, culturally and religiously diverse populations. With a total population of 1.03 billion, India is one of the largest democratic countries in the world. Since its Independence, the Constitution of India prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person's race, sex, religion, place of birth, or social status. Despite different laws relating to discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and national, racial and ethnic minorities wide discrimination still exists in Indian society. The traditional caste system, as well as differences of ethnicity, religion, and language, has deeply divided the society. Domestic violence, the issue of the high rate of marriage of underage girls, and dowries is prevalent in the Indian society (US Department of State, 2004). Though the law prohibits discrimination in the workplace, enforcement is inadequate. In both rural and urban areas, women are paid less than men for the same job. Women experience economic
discrimination in access to employment and credit, which act as an impediment to women owning a business (US Department of State, 2004).

India's caste system is perhaps the world's longest surviving social hierarchy. A definite feature of Hinduism, caste encompasses a complex ordering of social groups on the basis of ritual purity. Despite its constitutional abolition in 1950, the practice of 'untouchability' — the imposed social disabilities on persons by reason of birth into a particular caste — remains very strong in various parts of rural India. According to the 2001 Census, Scheduled Castes, including Dalits, made up 16 per cent (166.6 million) of the population, and Scheduled Tribes were 8 per cent (84.3 million) of the country's population face this problem (US Department of State, 2004).

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code punishes acts of sodomy, buggery and bestiality; however, the law is commonly used to target, harass, and punish lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. Gays and lesbians faced discrimination in all areas of society, including family, work, and education and have faced physical attacks, rape and blackmail.

On the basis of existing socioeconomic contexts, it can be said that the above mentioned empowerment-based social work practice can be fruitfully introduced in India on the basis of the basic philosophy of collectivisation. Collectivisation aims to create change by building powerful organisations at the community level. It is a process by which people gain control over their lives, realise their potentials and strength, raise their voice in the community, and get a critical understanding of their environment. This can have a positive effects on excluded groups. An example of a collective strategy is what has been implemented by the Self-Employed Women's' Association (SEWA) in India, a trade union for women employed in the informal or unorganised sector (Datt, 1997: 8).

Founded in 1920, SEWA organised women working in the informal sector of the Indian economy for improved economic and social security, who were previously excluded and denied access to fair wages, decent working conditions, protective labour and social security (Hill, 2001). Approximately, one-third of SEWA members are home-based workers working in the beedi (cigarette), agarbatti (incense stick), textile and garment industry, or as artisans such as weavers, potters, embroiderers and block printers. Other members work as small-scale vendors, traders and hawkers selling vegetables, fruits and a variety of household goods. Daily labourers and service providers, including agricultural workers, head loaders, handcart pullers, cooks and cleaners, are also members. The SEWA example has demonstrated how collectivisation on the basis of the empowerment philosophy can give voice to excluded groups and act as an agent of their economic and social security. This philosophy works not only in the developing world, but in the developed world like the United States and Canada. Both economic and political empowerment can be achieved through this process.
CONCLUSIONS

The goal of empowerment in social work is to conceptualise a society in which every person is afforded maximum opportunity to enrich his or her spiritual, psychological, physical, and intellectual well-being. Empowerment of oppressed clients requires that a social worker not only acts as an advocate with and on their behalf, but also help them identify and change the dynamics that enable them to contribute to their own situation of oppression or to that of other. The practice implications of a progressive social work committed to client empowerment and to the opposition of all forms of oppression, domination, subordination, and exploitation. The empowerment method focuses on the achievement of goals and change of systems by utilising available strengths, resilience, and resources. By focusing on competence rather than deficits in individual or social functioning, the empowerment model supports resourcefulness and the development of skills to remove social barriers for individuals and communities. In light of the increasing violation of human rights around the world, the growing privatisation of social welfare and the alarming rise in poverty among certain groups in both industrial and developing nations, it is essential that we continue to search for strategies and techniques that will empower the oppressed. The mission of progressive social work is to make the world happier, but in the present state of the world it seems impossible to achieve as this is divided into two groups — the rich who have the power and the poor who are powerless and victims of the policy formulated by the power holders group. So, to achieve the goal of social work at this point social worker is fighting for clients right which is not an easy task.

REFERENCES


