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## Goal setting skills for selection of specialization in social work education

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### Abstract

Two parameters of occupational competitiveness in any profession are academic merits and a penchant for involving in specialized tasks. Social work education, as such, ought to give due importance to the likes and dislikes of students while opting for specializations, which is now missing in institutions. Often social work practitioners are not properly equipped with practical ingenuity, genial attitude and adequate skills for working out issues. As such tangible outcome still remains a pipe dream. But social work education has undergone a lot of transformation over the last few years. Methodology which leads to logical denouement is the vision of contemporary social work practice. It insinuates that (1) proven technicalities should be incorporated in practice, (2) pursuits to strengthen adroitness should be taken up vehemently, and (3) efforts should be taken up to bolster genuine attitude in practitioners, failing which the profession may fall in the doldrums. Keeping this in view, current social work practice has largely started making use of capacity-building, empirical evidence and expertise which are generated from in-depth study of more and more special and specific domains, called specializations. On the basis of resourceful inputs from BSW students studying in various Colleges in Kerala, a scrutiny scale comprising twelve components has been devised for assessing their bona fide interests. The twelve components structured for the purpose consists of Rating card, Appraisal indicator, Assessment charts, Score grading and Terminal evaluative comments. The context for framing such a research scale is to assist students in the process of goal setting in social work education. Goal setting is an exercise which identifies the real strength, affinity and bent of mind of students for social work practice. It would be instrumental in giving direction, professional clarity and true allegiance to students whereby their ethical values also would get stepped up. Selection of specialization involves professional dedication, conviction, hope and confidence. The scale, to all intents and purposes, would be a benchmarking tool to analyze the connoisseur of contemporary social work practice which is sure to add value to evidence based practice. Quality education is something which ensures students' receptivity of right perspectives and appropriate skills besides whipping up their enthusiasm and motivation.

**Keywords:** rating card, appraisal indicator, assessment charts and score grading

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### 1. Introduction

Social work education has undergone a lot of transformation over the last few years. The profession has now turned the spotlight from just process to tangible outcome. Methodology which leads to logical denouement is the vision of contemporary social work practice. Professionalism devoid of pragmatism is simply abstract which is of no use to mankind. Hence social work has to deliver results failing which the profession may lose relevance. Keeping this in view, current social work practice has largely started making use of capacity-building, empirical evidence and expertise which are generated from in-depth study of more and more special and specific domains, called specializations. Specializations give clarity and appropriate direction to practitioners whereby clients are able to receive concrete services.

Social work like any other modern *métier* has multiple areas of thrust. Each area of thrust is a setting, identified as a comprehensive realm of enormous possibilities and potential research which indicates that a large number of services are still in store for humanity. But persistent academic efforts are imperative to augment the ambit of various specializations and also to strengthen their application so that solid benefits reach out to the masses.

Specializations not only enhance expertise but also help develop skills to address issues with conviction. "In aggregate, the problems social workers address are far too vast for any one person (no matter how experienced or well-trained) to understand, much less remedy. That's why social workers specialize in specific fields: to gain the expertise and develop the skills necessary to be effective for the populations they serve." (Nedda Gilbert, 2019) <sup>[4]</sup>. Hence specializations demand more contemplation and cognizance. Job prospects should not be the criterion for opting for a specialization which is now what is pursued by students and institutions. This approach may be dispensed with, and a scientific exercise may be adopted to figure out the exact attitude and aptitude of the student.

The paper presents here a goal setting scale, framed to gauge the skills, interests, tastes and talents of BSW students for helping them pick out the right specialization for post-graduation. Such an initiative would put up a benchmarking tool for facilitating students in the process of standardization.

### 2. Framing a scale germane to set defined goals

"Specialization allows social workers to gain more experience and knowledge in their field of interest and possibly increases

their chances of employment” (Ashley Miller). But choice of specialization should be in the true interest of the student. As such students should be subjected to appropriate skill tests which would become instrumental in unearthing their preferences, ideally at under graduate level. Here comes the question of framing a suitable research scale germane to set defined goals. On the basis of resourceful inputs from BSW students studying in various Colleges in Kerala, a scrutiny scale comprising twelve components has been devised for assessing their bona fide interests. The twelve components structured for the purpose consists of Rating card (Table-1), Appraisal indicator (Table-2),

eight Assessment charts (Table 3 to 10), Score grading (Table-11) and Terminal evaluative comments (Table 12), presented below.

**3. Rating card**

Rating card consists of eighty statements, serially numbered which represent specific areas of interests, referred to as domains. The student can go through each domain and judge his/her level of interest by numbering it, mentioned as points in the rating column.

**Table 1:** Component 1 - Rating card

Sl No.	Domains	Rating [Each domain has 1 to 10 points. Write the number of your level of interest]
	I like to involve in community activities	
	I feel satisfaction while working in hospital settings	
	I feel satisfaction while working in psychiatric settings	
	I want to work for the welfare of children and families	
	I would like to work in correctional settings	
	Corporate Social Work generates interests in me	
	I want to become a Social Work Educator	
	I prefer to work in disability sector	
	I am confident of creating social consciousness among community members	
	Working with people who are mentally ill gives me satisfaction	
	I like to work for strengthening the social capital of people	
	I am confident of providing relief to local people through social work interventions	
	I like to serve people by working with Multi National Companies	
	I am confident of identifying diverse interests of rural community	
	Teaching is a passion for me	
	I am interested in rehabilitative activities	
	Working with physically ill people gives me satisfaction	
	I want to do something for people with criminal back ground	
	Therapies interest me a lot	
	Training social work trainees gives me interest	
	I like to work among juvenile delinquents	
	I have a special interest in palliative care	
	Skill development among children is an area of interest	
	I look forward to taking up capacity building activities among rural and tribal people	
	I like to work in foster care homes	
	I am confident of working for ethical labour practices	
	Family counselling is an area of interest to me	
	I like to work as a Social Worker in a special school	
	I have a special interest in studying the mind set of convicts	
	I am confident of creating a feeling of self sustenance among community members	
	As a Social Worker I will be able to contribute for making substantial changes in corporate social responsibility	
	I want to expand my social work knowledge through teaching	
	I want to learn more and more therapies to work with autistic children	
	I like to bring in favourable changes in the welfare of children and family members	
	I am capable of controlling my emotions in dealing with psychiatric issues of people	
	Family social work gives me satisfaction	
	I am confident of strengthening of community empowerment through social work interventions	
	I have a mind to work with broken and dysfunctional families	
	I am interested to work in a multi specialty hospital	
	I like to involve in the assessment of a patient’s mental health status	
	I like to work with multidisciplinary team to try to solve the health issues of people	
	I have a caring nature	
	I have a curiosity to take a genuine interest in those around me	
	I think I have talents in supporting people to make lifestyle adjustments	
	I prefer to work as a mental health assistant	
	I would like to work for enhancing corporate conscience	

	Working to create self sustenance gives me a lot of satisfaction	
	I feel a priority to encourage Multi National Companies for creating a positive impact on the environment	
	I think I am having social work talents to improve the lives of patients	
	I like to involve in mental health assessment and counselling.	
	I like to provide patient education.	
	I believe that I have the ability to overhaul teacher training and professional development for the betterment of children with special educational needs	
	I am capable of advocating for the patient's health care rights.	
	I have the talents to empower people with disabilities through skill development	
	Working as an advocate for patients and families is an area of priority to me	
	I have good communication skills to become a teacher	
	I think I am having sufficient talents and patience to evaluate or take up crisis intervention while dealing with mentally ill people	
	I like to take supervisory tasks of field work trainees	
	I have a creative mindset to initiate intervention services for prisoners	
	I like to help people with disabilities set goals and work out strategies to achieve those goals	
	I like preparation of course materials and methods of instruction	
	Collaborating with community agencies to address teaching and research issues is a matter of interest for me	
	I would like to contribute something for the development of skills of differently abled persons	
	I am confident of initiating class room discussions and debates	
	Assessing the situation and determining the correct strategy towards a viable resolution is an area of interest to me.	
	I am a good organizer and social advocate	
	I am too happy to update my knowledge in teaching, internship, and research work	
	I would like to specialize in correctional counseling	
	I think I am talented to influence corporate houses to make a commitment to social causes	
	My priority is to become a child protection social worker	
	I have a favourable mindset to prepare intervention services for prisoners	
	I want to become a part of the efforts of Multinational companies which are concerned with environmental issues and social welfare	
	I have no hesitation to work with convicts and criminals	
	I have a preference to help patients traumatized by chronic/acute illness and also to support their families	
	Working to enhance a company's efforts to improve society in some way gives me a great pleasure	
	I have a curiosity to pursue modern correctional practices creatively	
	I would like to serve as a patient advocate	
	I want to pursue a career which provides counselling and support services to children and parents	
	I have the aptitude to understand what the stakeholders of a company think and how trends in society are changing	
	I want to contribute for the welfare of children who come from troubled families	

**4. Appraisal indicator**

Table 2 presents appraisal indicator which consists of eight specializations, viz Community Development, Medical Social Work, Psychiatric Social Work, Child & Family Welfare, Correctional Administration, Corporate Social work, Social

Work Teaching and Developmental Disability Social Work, coded as A to H respectively. Domains compatible with the specializations are represented by their serial numbers, shown horizontally against each subject.

**Table 2:** Component-2- Appraisal indicator

Subject Code	Specializations	Compatible domains represented by their serial numbers									
A	Community Development	1	9	11	12	14	24	30	37	47	66
B	Medical Social Work	2	17	22	39	49	51	53	55	74	77
C	Psychiatric Social Work	3	10	35	40	41	42	43	45	50	57
D	Child & Family Welfare	4	23	25	27	34	36	38	70	78	80
E	Correctional Administration	5	18	21	29	59	65	68	71	73	76
F	Corporate Social work	6	13	26	31	46	48	69	72	75	79
G	Social Work Teaching	7	15	20	32	56	58	61	62	64	67

H	Developmental disability Social Work	8	16	19	20	33	44	52	54	60	63
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**5. Assessment charts**

Each specialization (Table 3 to 10) has an individual assessment chart wherein serial numbers of related domains are furnished. The rating points in respect of the serial numbers of related domains of each specialization are copied from rating card and pasted in the corresponding horizontal columns against the name of student so that total score can be computed.

**Table 3:** Component-3- Assessment chart in respect of Community Development

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
A	Community development	1	9	11	12	14	24	30	37	47	66			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 4:** Component-4- Assessment chart in respect of Medical Social Work

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
B	Medical social work	2	17	22	39	49	51	53	55	74	77			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 5:** Component-5- Assessment chart in respect of Psychiatric Social Work

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
C	Psychiatric social work	3	10	35	40	41	42	43	45	50	57			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 6:** Component-6- Assessment chart in respect of Child & Family Welfare

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
D	Child & family welfare	4	23	25	27	34	36	38	70	78	80			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 7:** Component-7- Assessment chart in respect of Correctional Administration

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
B	Correctional administration	5	18	21	29	59	65	68	71	73	76			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 8:** Component-8- Assessment chart in respect of Corporate Social Work

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
F	Corporate social work	6	13	26	31	46	48	69	72	75	79			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 9:** Component-9- Assessment chart in respect of Social Work Teaching

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
G	Social work teaching	7	15	20	32	56	58	61	62	64	67			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**Table 10:** Component-10- Assessment chart in respect of Developmental disability Social Work

Subject code	Specialization	Serial numbers of related domains											Total points	
H	Developmental disability social work	8	16	19	20	33	44	52	54	60	63			
Sl. No.	Name of student	R	A	T	I	N	G	P	O	I	N	T	S	Total points
1.	xyz	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	....

**6. Score grading**

Table 11 details score grading on the basis of rating points which would give a perceivable idea about student’s choice.

**Table 11:** Component-11- Score grading

No	Score grading	Points
1	Highest level of interest	80>
2	High level of interest	65 to 79
3	Moderate interest	50 to 64
4	Below moderate interest	<50

**7. Terminal evaluative comments**

On the basis of the rating points in respect of each specialization the Faculty may briefly put his/her comments/observations/clarifications/ interpretations in the extreme right column against each student. They would give an unambiguous discernment and discretion to the student about the direction he/she sincerely would like to pursue.

**Table 12:** Component-12- Terminal evaluative comments

Sl. No.	Name of student	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Observation/Comments of the Faculty in brief words
1.	xyz	...	....	...	....	...	....	...	....	.....

Assessing the exact interests of students, particularly in the early part of learning, would be instrumental in enhancing clarity of thoughts and developing distinct social work insights in students. Such tools are very much essential for evidence based practice to empower the profession to full extent. It may also be viewed as a good mechanism for improving the quality of services provided by various social work agencies.

#### **8. Goal-oriented education helps delivery of de facto benefits to clients**

The inference from the past experience shows that generic practice hardly contributes delivery of de facto benefits to the various client populations. Often practitioners are not equipped with practical ingenuity, genial attitude and suitable skills for working out issues which can bring out visible outcome. That means social work pundits should be more serious about specializations and skill orientation rather than tagging them as just customary or academic ritual. "Social work specializations are larger hubs of practice and knowledge that steer the long course of an MSW track into an area of focus, such as mental health, schools, or leadership and development. Sub specializations fit within certain social work specializations to focus the latter portion of MSW curricula into advanced training and certifications in specific practice settings." (Jenn Miller Scarnato, 2017).

"The professionals alone have not yet acquired any dominant place to shape and formulate social policies or to administer social welfare organizations. Again, the professional group itself has not developed any social code which the profession also should accept and practice as the fundamental feature of their profession." (Rambabu Botcha Research and Teaching Assistant School of Social Work, 2012). It is a telling pointer that (1) proven technicalities should be incorporated in practice, (2) pursuits to strengthen adroitness should be taken up vehemently, and (3) efforts should be taken up to bolster genuine attitude in practitioners, failing which the profession may fall in the doldrums. "Even terminology such as *concentration*, *practice area*, *program track*, or *specialization* may be confusing as you try to figure out what social work is all about. These terms are used frequently, but may not be clearly explained or applied consistently. One MSW program's concentration may be another school's practice area." (Nedda Gilbert, 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>. In social work, unlike other disciplines, attitude and aptitude are key determinants in casting the professional perfectly well. Hence, in the larger interest of social work profession, it should be made obligatory that goal oriented education is based on a well-designed modus operandi.

#### **9. Mindset of students decisive in rendering qualitative services effectively and efficiently**

Two parameters of occupational competitiveness in any sphere of activity are academic merits and a penchant for involving in clear-cut tasks. Social work education, as such, ought to give due importance to the likes and dislikes of students, which is now missing in institutions. Quality education is something which ensures students' receptivity of right perspectives and appropriate skills while whipping up their enthusiasm and motivation. It is here the concept of "professional socialization" arises. "Despite the centrality of values to professional socialization, the social work literature lacks an extensive exploration of the readiness of

students to be socialized into the profession and taught the theoretical framework and skills for ethical decision making". (Stephanie Valutis, Deborah Rubin & Melissa Bell, 2012). The psyche of the student is pivotal in not only rendering qualitative services effectively and efficiently but also strengthening ethical considerations. Hence it is imperative that choice of students is entertained and articulated on the basis of a standardized technique.

#### **10. Conclusion**

The context for framing a research scale is to assist students in the process of goal setting in social work education. Goal setting is an exercise which identifies the real strength, affinity and bent of mind of students for social work practice. It would be instrumental in giving direction, professional clarity and true allegiance to students whereby their ethical values also would get stepped up. Selection of specialization involves professional dedication, conviction, hope and confidence. The scale, to all intents and purposes, would be a norm-setting tool for analyzing the connoisseur of contemporary social work practice which is sure to add value to evidence based practice.

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