



DELHI SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 4 | JULY 2022



Editorial Note



Anjana Anand (Editor)
(Batch 1992-94)

Here is another issue of the alumni newsletter for you. We have decided to increase the frequency of this newsletter from twice a year to four times year and this issue is an effort in that direction to bring to you the news from the alumni and our alma mater DSSW. With utmost pride, I share the news of Prof. Pamela Singla being elected to the Board of Directors at IASSW. Amongst the umpteen stories of inspiration from our alumni, this issue highlights one of the most inspirational journey humbly detailed by Dr. Sherry Joseph. Dr. Sanjoy Roy shares useful insights and challenges along with valuable suggestions for the road ahead to make research by PhD scholars in India more meaningful and effective. Amongst the many initiatives of the alumni association, the most challenging one has been the building of the alumni

We have made a big headway in this direction, thanks to the efforts by our alum Mr. Jayant Jhanb.

Dr. Niraj Seth presents an interesting analysis of our alumni base from across the globe and provides us with a set of very useful representation of our alumni across sectors in their respective professions. Once, again, I swell with pride I read about the diversity of achievements of our distinguished alumni. Continuing with our connect with the department, our alumni started a series of supportive learning sessions for the current students at the department and the sessions conducted so far have been talked about in this issue. Last though not the least, I end my note with gratitude to everyone who has joined the alumni association and a request to everyone else to join in at the earliest so that we continue to bring exciting stories for all our readers. We are so glad and grateful to that Mr. Tarun Sagar, Batch of 2016-18, who has volunteered to design this newsletter. - **Anjana Anand, Editor (Batch of 1992-94)**

“Each of us is a unique strand in the intricate web of life and here to make a contribution” - Deepak Chopra

Our alma mater recognised globally IASSW elects Prof. Pamela Singla to the Board of Directors

Many congratulations to Dr. [Pamela Singla](#) for elected as Member-at-large on IASSW Board of Directors for the period of 2022-2026. She is Professor and Head, Department of Social Work (DSW), University of Delhi (DU), India. [#IASSW](#) [#socialworkeducation](#) [#socialwork](#)



On July 13, 2022, another feather added to the Department's cap when International Association of Schools of Social Work elected Prof. Pamela Singla to its Board of Directors body as the Member at large. As a proud alumna, when I connected with Professor Singla, she shares, “Just like every election, this election too was highly competitive. Through my new position as a Member-at-large of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), for a period of 4 years (2022-2026) I represent not only India but the Asia Pacific region. I look forward to working closely with all the representatives across the globe and shall strive to strengthen social work education in India. I shall strive to ensure that the issues of the developing countries are well represented and addressed. I aim to make a meaningful contribution during my tenure.”

Activities of the Alumni Association



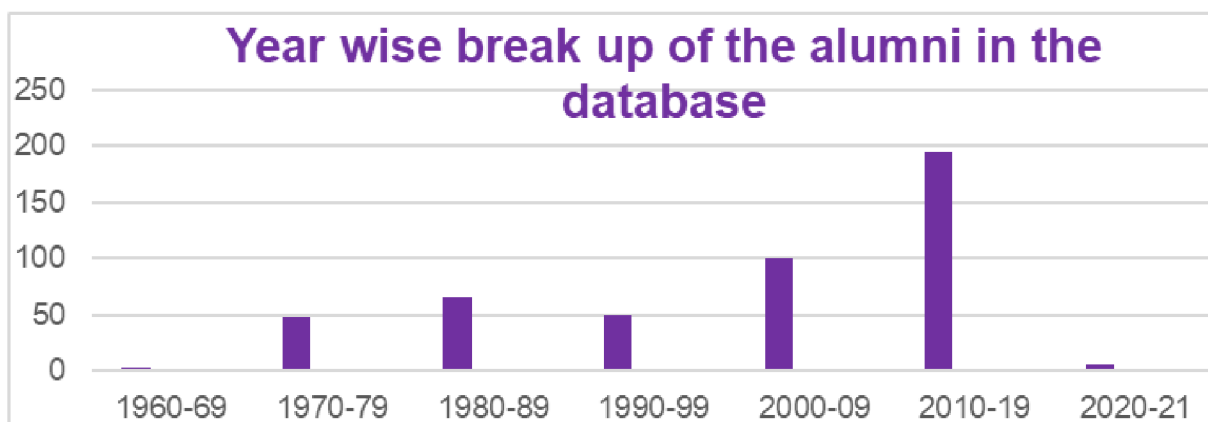
The Department has been organising supportive learning classes for its students. The Alumni Association joined hands with the Department by arranging for the alumni to take some sessions. Starting from May 27th, 2022 four sessions have been organised. This initiative of supportive learning is being coordinated by Ms. Indu Wadhwa and it involves at least two sessions every month.

It is run by the alumni completely on a voluntary basis and aims at sharing the expertise of the diverse alumni with the current students. The sessions are planned in consultation with the Department and faculty responding to the needs as suggested by the students. The first session on “Social Research- Opportunities for Social Workers” by Dr. Niraj Seth. The subsequent sessions so far have been on “Leading a successful life by Anjana Anand”, "Career Options in CSR and development sector by Mr. Tarachand,” “Role networking for resource mobilisation” by Seema Malhotra, “Life planning and Career Planning” by Ms. Indu Wadhwa.

These sessions have been received very well by the students with request for more such sessions. The hour long sessions focus on delivery of useful key messages through active participation of the audience. Dr. Seth’s session highlighted the importance of basic social research skills for everyone while those intending to go deeper could look at acquiring advance skills such as use of tools like data visualisation and SPSS. Ms. Wadhwa’s session on career planning focussed on helping the participants understand the significance of self-awareness and having a vision for themselves so as to utilise their time at DSSW to build competencies towards realisation of this vision. The session on “leading a successful life” talked about the key to progressive realisation of a clearly defined goal through the management of our thoughts.

Alumni Database Speaks

In the last few months, the Alumni Association has been trying to develop a database of the alumni. It is still work in progress. We hope to continue with this effort and keep the database dynamic so that any changes in locations or employment in the status of the alumni can be updated. An overview of details provided by 457 alumni provides some interesting insights. It maybe noted that this analysis is based only on limited information. It will require a focused study to get a better understanding of the presence of our alumni across different areas of social work and the job opportunities available to them.



While most of the alumni who responded to our request to provide information about themselves are based out of India, it was heartening to know that the alumni of the Department are spread across most of the continents. Nine percent of the total respondents are based out of other countries. Some countries where our alumni are located are Australia, Canada, Dubai, France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Malawi, Myanmar, Nigeria, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, UK, and the USA. This provides a great opportunity for cross-learning.

There are diverse settings where the alumni are employed. Government agencies provide maximum employment opportunities to the MSWs. About 18 percent alumni mentioned that they work with the government agencies. There is a slight variation in employment opportunities with the Government in India and other countries. While in other countries most of the alumni are engaged in delivery of services especially for children through government departments, most of the alumni in India are working on development programmes and schemes at the community level. Large programmes, especially implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, has expanded the scope of employment for social work graduates in India. At the same time there are some other schemes – such as the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) which is an umbrella scheme for child protection – where none of the alumni (from this database) are employed.

An equal number of alumni i.e. 18 percent are working with NGOs and INGOs across the country. Some alumni have set up their own NGOs but most of them have been engaged by existing NGOs. The areas where the organisations are working is diverse – advocacy, providing shelters, livelihood and many others. More alumni from the earlier batches have set up their own NGOs. Three alumni identified themselves as activists. Furthermore, 11 alumni have worked with the UN agencies, World Bank and WHO.

Corporates are also providing employment opportunities to the graduates of MSW by way of employing them for HR functions and to run CSR programs directly or through Foundations set up by them. 10 percent alumni mentioned that they were working with corporates. The passage of Indian Companies Act 2013 has made it mandatory for the Companies of specified size and net worth to provide services to the under privileged. This has provided an excellent window of employment for professional social workers.

Teaching is an attractive occupation for about 10 percent alumni. They are working in Universities across the country and also in other countries. About eight percent alumni are engaged in research work – as research scholars to get a Ph.D degree or working in agencies undertaking research. Since a Ph.D degree is required to take up teaching in colleges, this is attracting students, especially of the recent batches. There has been a spurt in the number of colleges offering courses in social work, which clearly provides employment opportunities to social workers.

Among the areas of social work, 7 percent alumni are working in the health sector – mostly in hospital settings as social workers or as mental health professionals. With the recent notification by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for allied health workers – which includes medical and psychiatric social workers – there is a lot to learn from the experience of our alumni working in similar setting in other countries.

Out of 5 alumni who are working in schools as School social works/counsellors three are based out of other countries. Over the years there has been a decline in the school counselling and social work services in India. The new Education policy makes explicit mention of school social workers. This will, hopefully, revive these services in school settings. Interestingly there has been greater involvement of social workers in work related to teaching in schools and imparting training. Some are working as teachers in schools or teaching children through NGOs – even independently. Consulting is another upcoming area for social workers. 14 members mentioned that they were undertaking consultancy work – majority of them as independent consultants or with multi-national consultancy firms – Accenture, KPMG, PwC and EY.

Other alumni were working diverse fields such as Banking, Defense services, Administrative Services, Police, Communication, IT, lawyers, entrepreneurs and home makers. As mentioned earlier this note is based on limited information from the database which is being developed with the aim of networking among alumni. Yet this provides a flavour of post DSSW scenario.



Ph.D, research and its upshot: How much quality do we produce?

Prof Sanjoy Roy, (Batch 1998–2000), Faculty Department of Social Work

The PhD research programme is supposed to aim to produce graduates who would contribute to the body of knowledge in their specific fields of study and develop innovative, theory-based, systematic, and practical solutions to the significant concerns of specific issues. Though it is challenging, it is also rewarding. As per the most recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, less than 2 per cent of the world's population has a doctorate degree today. According to the US Census Bureau, only 1.2 %

of the US population has a PhD, whereas Slovenia and Switzerland have the highest percentage of the population with a doctorate, at 5 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. Producing slightly over 24,000 doctoral graduates, India is ranked fourth against the USA, which produces 68,000 graduates and tops the list. An All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) report from 2019 revealed that the number of PhD degrees awarded has increased by 60 per cent in the last five years. However, of the 1043 universities, 42,343 colleges and 11,779 standalone institutions listed on the AISHE portal, only 2.7 per cent offer PhD programmes and 35.04 per cent of colleges run postgraduate (PG) level programmes.

Does Research Help Mankind?

PhD research has its dependability and importance in education, especially when we speak about educational institutions. But, in today's scenario, Ph.D research is not looked at as intellectual development. Rather, it is done for the sake of doing to earn a degree. That's because a serious methodology is not justified or rationalised and no newness and indigenous knowledge are produced through new models or theories. Therefore, the question is, how robust or actual is our Ph.D research?

Though research is compulsory in PhD, scholars often do not select or explore tough or new areas. They rather select an 'easy-going' area, problem or issue. It is also observed that in India, most Ph.D findings are not so good, with no newness in knowledge production. Why is indigenous knowledge through PhD research lacking in India? Why does India lack in quality research? That's the million-dollar question today in the intellectual arena, even though we know the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 talks about promoting Indic knowledge through indigenous empirical study.

So, what should be done? How should it be done? And what actually should our PhD research, including the process and timeframe be? I think the time has come to re-think the whole process of PhD from admissions to submissions.

The Way Forward?

At the very outset, I must say that quality should not be compromised in PhD research and that favouritism should be stopped at the entry level. Sometimes, preference is given to family members or friends, or to someone who comes with a recommendation from the higher authorities. This must stop. We must also have strong guidelines, both qualitative and quantitative, for an analytical entrance examination

UGC scholarship can be fixed to up to 4 years, and scholars must complete their PhD within the 4-year time. Because longer time does not guarantee quality research, and there is no scientific proof of it.

As per a Hindustan Times report, dated March 17, 2022, the draft UGC (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of PhD Degree) Regulations, 2022, has proposed several changes, including making undergraduates who have been in the four-year programme with a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 7.5 eligible for PhD admissions, and also removing the mandatory requirement of having the research paper published before the submission of the thesis. It could sooner or later compromise the quality of research. Even continuous changes of regulations may confuse and complicate the process for the research scholars. I feel UGC should have a long-term — maybe 10 years — robust procedural research regulations and then continuously monitor and evaluate to see the gaps, if any, along with proper checks and balances regarding quality publication.

I sense educational institutions must admit only those students in PhD programmes who have a passion for research and rationality in the area, or want to work at the grass-root level with people's issues and problems, not mediocre nor having UGC NET/JRF only.

Another observation is that rejection of thesis is very few in India, though it is written in the evaluation form. Let's have an evaluation system that is very confidential. Supervisors often take advantage by giving the external evaluators names of a known person to easily complete the evaluation without any critical analysis of the thesis. I call it biases in the evaluation system. So, a strict system of evaluation should be developed after examining the areas of expertise of the examiners, even if it is an international examiner. There is a saying in India that thesis submission means it is done. This notion has to be changed now.

Centralised planning for quality research has to be given priority as it is limited in India. Industry-partnership building for collaboration and research should be a must because this approach is well known and very successful in Australia and other countries. Strong research infrastructure through international journals, magazines, computing and networking infrastructure, and international collaboration through a Memorandum of understanding (MOU) is also desirable. An E-Research Unit can be introduced like Australia, and Support for Intellectual Property (IP) Management and its commercialisation for filing patents and protecting them should be reinforced.

We must develop not only 'helping tools' but also more 'knowledge tools' because every social science subject should have their own knowledge tools used in research. Whatever we have now, is old, and indigenous and more tools for empirical knowledge need to be developed. A single window system from a research governance perspective, like the passport seva, needs to be developed for a smooth procedural facet of research in India. More academic writing in research must be done and teaching jobs and promotions in teaching should be done based on quality research now onwards.

Finally, impact on society through PhD research has to be ensured, and a rewards system should be introduced for faculty and scholars encouraging them towards quality research, both at national and international levels. Only then can we achieve a level of quality in our research in India, which then would be able to compete at an international level.

This write-up is an abridged version of the Article that was written by Prof. Sanjoy Roy for India Today, May, 2022
<https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/india-higher-education-ecosystem-needs-today-nep-2020-1949206-2022-05-13>

Meet our Alumni

Voyage from Mall Road

Dr. Sherry Joseph, (MPhil, Batch 1993-94)

When I boarded the Kerala Express to Delhi in July 1993 for my M.Phil., the main thought was to find a better job in North India/Delhi while I stay in the university. Funding for my M.Phil. studies, hostel fees and sundry expenses in Delhi became a concern which motivated me to prepare well for the JRF examination as well. Luck stuck me with a Junior Research Fellowship from UGC soon. My MPhil colleagues, Jayashree, Kamal, Manoj, Sishir and Vani created a momentum in the Department and the MPhil course became more lively, interesting and active since then. After completing the MPhil (course work and research) in record time, I joined the DSSW faculty and started drafting synopsis for my PhD registration. I cherish the encouragement received from the senior professors to do

qualitative research on a non-conventional subject of MSM for a PhD thesis. The Capital continued to draw my energy and the job demands compromised the time left for my thesis work. I decided to join Visva Bharati as a full-time faculty member- moving from the bubbling capital city to the sleepy rural Sriniketan for the next 9 years. Though I would have loved to remain in Gwyer Hall enjoying my JRF for another 4 years, I traded for 'permanent' employment in Visva Bharati, as it improved my rating as an eligible bridegroom. I don't know how many of you knew that Visva Bharati was the only university in India that had Wednesdays as its weekly off (which is now changed to Sunday). This gave me more time for doing my field work in Kolkata for my data collection. I don't regret this phase of my career as it gave me the best opportunity to complete my PhD and publish two books during my stay there.

The decision to transition from academics to practice was daunting. Leaving a 'permanent dignified teaching job' to a contractual stressful work in the development sector was a tough decision to take. The career move from academics to practice was socially unacceptable as people used to consider 'social work' as 'sociology' and/or the social workers' identity was predominantly a person with a thaila (थैला/bag) on your shoulders. I was really lucky to get a 'tax-free' job in India in the field of evidence-based advocacy on AIDS/SRH in India. My research work on MSM and the advocacy work on influencing discriminatory policies and programmes kept me going for the next 12 years. While working with UNAIDS Technical Support Facility for South Asia, I provided access to high quality technical support and capacity building programmes to the National AIDS Authorities, NGOs and PLHIV networks, especially on Global Fund grant recipients in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka



Serving in Africa was my next passion - the journey started with Sudan for four years, then in Nigeria and later in Kenya. While the 'haboob' showered with micro dust and sand in the scorching heat of 48-52°C in Khartoum, the wild beast migration in Masai Mara and lush-blue beaches of Zanzibar and Mombasa are paradise in Africa. In those days international development assistance was channelised through the United Nations primarily, as Sudan was under the UN Sanctions and her President was accused of genocide in Darfur. I got the opportunity to manage the UNDP PMU with four Global Fund grants to Sudan as the Principal Recipient. In one sense, this was the highest realm in my career, holding the highest professional level position in the UN (P5). I proved to myself that the thaila identity of a MSW can also be transformed to a diplomatic status with a United Nations laissez-passar. I realised that it is not worth the stress of being pulled between international diplomatic politics and human sufferings. Search of a work close to the lives of people brought me to the International Federation of Red Cross in Nigeria. This opened my eyes to health emergencies in Africa- Lassa fever, yellow fever, measles, polio, Ebola, acute malnutrition etc., some of which we have never encountered in India. COVID-19 brought me to support the regional operations in Africa and later on in Europe where I designed and supervised the preparedness and response to COVID-19 by the Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies as auxiliaries to the government. I was extremely lucky to be in the team that planned the COVID-19 preparedness programme for the worst-case scenario in the African region and (subsequently) the response programme in the badly affected European region.

My suggestion to budding social workers- don't ever get into a comfort zone, take challenges, explore new pastures, be ready to move horizontal to climb vertically, keep your passion to serve, be honest and stick to values, love your job-not the organisation.... It is incorrect for me to say that I had a smooth sailing in my career. I had taken many 'sabbatical' from my regular work just to gauge where I should be moving next- freelance consultancy is also an option for those of you who wants to check out the water.

As I conclude this piece, I am contemplating on taking a position to support the Ukraine conflict! How deep into the war-torn region should I go? Or take up something in Lebanon? Why not go back to academics and my passion for research? Will this meet my retirement plans? Time will tell.....





We look forward to your feedback on dssw.alumni@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.dsswalumni.com>

THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION HAS 90 REGISTERED MEMBERS AS ON JULY 25, 2022 .

We invite our seniors, juniors and contemporaries to make this alumni association of our alma mater even stronger. Each one of us are making a difference and have a story to share. Register here to join us and share with us your marvellous change-maker stories of social work.

Membership link: <https://dsswalumni.in/Membership>

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 *Thank you!*