

XIIIth International Conference of Social Service Schools, *Informations sociales, Paris, 1967, No. 4. — Present-day tendencies in social service instruction in Latin America, by Virginia A. Paraiso.*

Social service teaching—like social service itself—is beginning to find a place in the general evolutionary movement. The introduction of social service faculties in universities has created new responsibilities. It may be expected that these faculties will contribute to national programmes designed to transform “marginal masses”.

There is a reciprocal influence between teaching and practice. The structure and content of the various study programmes still have traces of earlier influences. The traditionally practical content of these programmes is evidence of the character of the social workers' functions in former times.

The increase in the number of schools, the longer periods of courses, the higher qualifications required for admission and the orientation of programmes towards a higher degree of education are the characteristics of the preparation for professional social service in Latin America.

The professional social worker today fulfils a number of functions in the framework of social welfare services. However, some of these functions are still in the nature of auxiliary service and do not require preparation on a professional level. There are five forms of training for auxiliary personnel in Latin America. After obtaining the diploma, the technician is ready to work under the supervision of a professional or on his own, particularly in isolated rural regions.

Some trained professionals in direct social service discharge high level functions, but there is no training specifically for such functions.

The teaching of research methods should contribute to the creation of a more dynamic connection between practice and theory.

Social service teaching makes necessary a sharp watch on the selection of students for training.

Demand for higher education at present is such that the number of applicants has increased more rapidly than the number of places available in schools. Selection has a twofold object, namely to choose those candidates who are able to benefit most, and to make certain aspects of the training and the profession clear to the chosen candidates.

Selection is at present based on three attributes: educational level, personal values and characteristics. It is considered essential that the candidate should have an intelligent awareness of social problems and welfare. The personality factors considered essential are at least average intelligence, emotional stability, receptivity, adaptability, concentration, facility of expression and sound physical and mental health. In general candidates are selected by a faculty committee with the assistance of a specialist who submits candidates to psychological tests.

In former times the pioneers of social service belonged to the traditionally upper class. The majority of social service students today come from the middle class; they belong to a section of the youthful population who rebel against outmoded systems and willingly take the lead in movements among university students.

Whereas social service schools used almost exclusively to be for girls, an increasing number of boys now seek admission to them.

One of the aims of social service is to promote the adaptation both of the individual and his social environment. In societies where the majority of the population is "marginal" it is the rôle of social service to educate individuals and mobilize them so that they may exercise their rights. The student learns about society in school, but this knowledge will only be transformed into comprehension if the student has a genuine social disposition.
