

Back to the “Social” of Social Work: Reviving the Social Work Profession’s Contribution to Promoting Social Justice

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Abstract

Social justice is internationally recognized as the organizing value and the primary mission of social work. The new definition of social work endorsed and announced by the International Federation of Social Workers in 2000 clearly states that “principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work”. However, in actual practice, the social work profession has been found to become less and less engaged with struggles for social justice. More and more critiques have been raised that social changes and professionalization have moved social work practice away from advancing social justice to the domination of individual treatment and clinical therapies. One of the reasons for this change is due to the profession’s increasingly neglect of the “social” of social work. This paper thus aims at re-directing social workers’ attention to the meaning and the importance of the “social” to social work. It argues that the social work profession has to keep the social in social work practice and suggests how this re-focusing helps to revive the social work profession’s contribution to promoting social justice.