1. Discuss the different stages of social group work formation

Ans: There are a number of stages or phases in formation of a social work group. Ken Heap (1985) discussed these as group formation and planning; the first meetings; the working phase; use of activities and action; and the termination of the Group. According to Douglas (1979) there are five stages viz., conceptualisation, creation, operation, termination and evaluation. He has discussed these as the functions of leader while Toseland and Rivas (1984) discussed the stages under planning phase, beginning phase, middle phase and ending phase.

For our purpose we can discuss the stages of social group work practice under the following five heads:

_ Pre-group (group formation) phase
_ Initial (first meetings) phase
_ Middle (Active working) phase
_ Evaluation of the group
_ Terminating/ending the group phase

In the pre-group phase worker identifies the need for organising a group and initiates steps to form the group. In the initial (first meetings) phase the worker and the group members meet at the place specified --- agency or any other place where group is likely to have its sessions --- and initial orientation to the group’s purpose and other information is given and shared. In the middle (active working) phase the group continues its deliberations and activities to accomplish its goals and in evaluation phase the performance of the group is examined vis-à-vis the group purpose and members, goals. Finally, in the ending or termination phase the group is made to dissolve and the worker enables the members to part with each other on a goodwill note.

Phase I: Planning and Formation of the Group

The social group worker representing an agency providing services such as residential care, day-care and community work may come across situations where the services of the agency are effectively utilised by the client system through a group experience. The needs may even be identified by the other staff or client system itself. Once the worker identifies the need for formation of social work group, he/she starts planning for the formation of the group. For this the worker has to answer some questions with his/her professional background very carefully and systematically. These questions are:

Why is the group? Here, the worker has to look at the need for forming the group. The purpose and goals it can attain have to be

- Formulating group’s purpose
- Composition of the group
- Size of the group
- Enrolling the members
- Contracting

Phase II: Initial Meetings

In this section we are looking into what are the tasks the worker and members have to undertake to begin the group. In fact it is the most crucial stage as the success or failure of the group depends on how well the initial meetings are handled by the worker. The members attend the meeting with a lot of expectations. Member/s attend the meeting with the hope that time has come to get over the problem that has been affecting them over a (long) period of time. How much of it is going to be solved? They are all really deal with their problems effectively. They are also having a number of fears. They do not misuse the confidential self-disclosures the member/s likely to make in the group?

Whether I can participate meaningfully in the group deliberations? Will my situation get more worsened? These are some of the fears of the member/s. Similarly the worker too has his/her own thoughts. How much guidance the group expects from the worker to accomplish its purpose and goals? Whether the professional competence and experience is good enough to handle the group?

The Steps Involved in this Stage are:

--- Self-presentations by the worker and the members
--- Orientation about the group
--- Goal formation
--- Structuring the group session