

An Analysis on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of Social Work Education in the Digital Age

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Abstract:With the acceleration of digital transformation, the role of social work education in cultivating professionals and improving the effectiveness of social services has become increasingly prominent. This paper focuses on the current situation and countermeasures of social work education in China, and discusses the lack of specialization, the disconnection between theory and practice, and the lag of digital transformation, aiming to solve the practical dilemma it faces and help the modernization of social governance. It is found that the current education system has problems such as shallow integration of disciplines, formalization of practical teaching, and weak application of technology, which restricts the quality of professional talent training. In this regard, some suggestions are put forward, such as building a "dual-teacher" teaching team, deepening a multi-level practical teaching system, and promoting the cross-disciplinary integration of digitalization and disciplines, so as to bridge the gap between theory and practice, cultivate interdisciplinary talents with both professional quality and digital ability, and provide practical reference for the construction of a social work education system with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: Social Work Major; Professional Education; The Digital Age

1. Introduction

With the acceleration of social transformation and the rapid development of emerging digital fields, social work is becoming increasingly important in Chinese society. Social work not only plays an active role in promoting social harmony, but also plays a vital role in addressing increasingly complex social issues. As the foundation of social work services, the quality of social

work education directly determines the training effect of professional talents, which in turn affects the effect of social services and the overall welfare level of society. Since the reconstruction of the social work profession in China in 1987, with the country's vigorous promotion of higher education, more than 300 colleges and universities across the country have opened social work majors, covering undergraduate, master's and doctoral levels, and a training system for social work professionals has been initially formed.

However, despite the remarkable progress made in social work education in China, there are still many challenges in its professional development and quality improvement. Social work education not only needs to adapt to the localization needs of Chinese society, but also needs to respond to the changes in the concept, content and mode of social work education in the context of digitalization and globalization. Therefore, this paper analyzes the current situation of social work education in China, combined with the relevant research of scholars, deeply discusses the dilemma of social work education in terms of theory and practice, faculty construction, curriculum system design, etc., and puts forward practical policy suggestions, aiming to promote the development of social work education in the direction of higher quality and higher efficiency.

2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Social Work Education in China

2.1 The Degree of Specialization is Low, and the Integration of Disciplines is Insufficient

Social work education in China started relatively late, and although it has developed rapidly in recent years, its degree of

specialization is still low. The social work curriculum of most colleges and universities relies too much on the knowledge of traditional disciplines such as sociology, psychology and education, and lacks in-depth professional content and systematic localized theoretical system. He Xuesong pointed out that although China's social work education system has been gradually improved in recent years, compared with Western developed countries, China's social work education is still in the early stage of development, and the shortcomings in faculty, curriculum and practical experience are still prominent^[1].

Most of the teachers of social work education are teachers of sociology, psychology and other disciplines, and although these teachers have a strong theoretical foundation, most of them lack practical experience in social work. Many social work teachers in colleges and universities have not received systematic education and training in social work, and lack professional teaching methods and practical experience. This leads to a disconnect between the teaching content of social work education and social work practice, and students are unable to effectively apply the theories they have learned to practical problems.

Problems in the design of the curriculum system are also prominent. Although the curriculum of many colleges and universities is gradually close to the needs of social work, there is still a situation of "copying" the Western curriculum system, and the existing textbooks mainly follow the classic social work methods of the West, ignoring the local and regional differences of Chinese society^[2]. For example, in the practice of social work serving rural areas, many students lack awareness of local social issues, such as clan culture and local people's feelings, which makes them often unable to effectively intervene in practical services. In addition, most colleges and universities lack the setting of cutting-edge social work courses, such as frontier topics in social work, corporate social work, medical social work, etc., which not only help social work students to have a broader and deeper understanding of this discipline, but also help their future employment direction.

2.2 Theory and Practice are Disconnected, and Knowledge and Action are Separated

The learning of theoretical knowledge is an

important part of social work education, but how to effectively transform these theories into practical skills is a major challenge in social work education in China. Today, when digital technology profoundly reconstructs the paradigm of social governance, the traditional education model has encountered a structural contradiction, that is, the "teacher-led" classroom of "education first" can no longer meet the training needs of professional and high-quality social work talents^[3]. The mismatch between the supply side of education and the demand side of practice reflects the current "lag" of social work education, which not only affects the core competitiveness of professionals, but also restricts the process of modernization of social governance.

At present, social work education in most colleges and universities still attaches importance to the teaching of theories, ignoring the depth and breadth of practical teaching. The theoretical teaching in social work education is often too simple, and lacks the cultivation of students' practical ability. Although there are internships in the curriculum, most of the students' internships are mostly limited to basic work such as copywriting and event planning, and lack the opportunity to intervene in practical operations such as case work and group work.

The serious lack of practice in social work education is the main reason for the disconnect between theory and practice. Many social work internships focus on administrative work or simple ancillary services, while ignoring real social work involvement and problem solving. Moreover, there is a lack of necessary social support in the practice. For example, some internship supervisors lack practical experience or even support the work of interns. This training mode leads to the lack of sufficient adaptability and operational experience in the face of complex social problems, and it is difficult for students to cultivate professional ability, and the gap between theoretical learning and practical implementation needs to be bridged urgently.

2.3 Digital Transformation is Lagging Behind, and Technology Application is Weak

With the rapid development of the digital economy, the field of social work services is also facing the pressure of transformation and innovation. The application of digital tools and

technologies in social work has become a future development trend, but the digital transformation of social work education in China is relatively lagging behind. Most colleges and universities still rely on traditional teaching methods for social work education, and lack the effective application of digital tools.

During the epidemic prevention and control period, although online services have become a necessary supplement, many social work agencies and social workers have been at a loss when switching to online services, indicating that indirect intervention services are insufficient. Many students graduate and enter the practice and face the great challenges of digital transformation. Therefore, social workers need to have not only basic social work skills, but also certain digital skills, such as how to use big data to analyze community needs to intervene in community construction^[4], and how to intervene in the digital integration of the elderly by building smart communities^[5].

3. Possible Paths for the Development of Social Work Education

3.1 Strengthen the Construction of the Teaching Staff and Promote the "Dual-Teacher" Education Model

In order to improve the quality of social work education, we must first start with the construction of teachers. Colleges and universities should build a "double-teacher" faculty team with practical experience through a combination of "introduction" and "training". Teachers should not only have a strong theoretical foundation, but also have rich practical experience in social work. To this end, the Ministry of Education can implement a nationwide certification system for the practical ability of social work teachers, requiring teachers to participate in practical operations on a regular basis, ensuring that their teaching content and methods can keep up with actual needs, and cultivating the practical experience of college and university teachers. In addition, professionals in the field of social work practice should be encouraged to serve as part-time teachers, such as senior social workers and civil affairs workers, to participate in the design and delivery of courses and internships. This "dual tutor system" model can promote the close integration of academic and

practical and improve the comprehensive quality of students.

3.2 Deepen the Reform of the Practical Teaching System and Build a Training Model of "Unity of Knowledge and Action"

Practical teaching is the core part of social work education, and efforts should be made to reform the existing teaching system and promote the comprehensive improvement of practical ability. First of all, through the establishment of a multi-level and diversified practical teaching system, students can accumulate practical experience in social service work at different levels. In addition, a three-stage training system is constructed: in the first stage, 200 hours of basic cognitive practice will be carried out to guide students into the community, observe the social work station, and observe the practical process; In the second stage, 400 hours of special practical training will be completed and specific service projects will be participated in. In the third stage, the graduation internship will be implemented, so that they can be independently responsible for the service project with the support of supervision. Secondly, it is necessary to increase students' participation in practice and promote the transformation of social work practice from an auxiliary part of the curriculum to a core teaching content. For example, a "social work training center" can be set up to provide students with a wider range of internship opportunities, and senior social work experts can be invited to serve as supervisors to provide timely comments to help students improve their practical ability. Finally, case teaching and scenario simulation are added to the teaching to improve students' ability to deal with complex cases. For example, simulated scenarios such as community correction services and domestic violence intervention enable students to quickly adapt to the challenges of social work practice under theoretical guidance.

3.3 Promote the Transformation of Digital Education and Promote Interdisciplinary Integration

On the one hand, it is necessary to build a student-centered interactive teaching system, create a special "digital social work" course, and develop virtual teaching platforms such as the "digital social work cloud platform" to

expand the practice scenarios for social work practice, which is helpful to help social work students carry out cognitive practice and promote the cultivation process of social work talents with "knowledge and action". On the other hand, it is necessary to deepen interdisciplinary integration, encourage the cross-integration of social work, psychology, computing science and other disciplines, and cultivate interdisciplinary talents with both professional ability and digital literacy. At the same time, it is suggested to establish an interdisciplinary direction of "digital social governance", strengthen digital ethics education, adhere to the value core of social work "helping people to help themselves" in technology empowerment, and realize the same frequency resonance between education and digital society.

To this end, the Ministry of Education can issue policies to support colleges and universities to build "smart social work laboratories" and "virtual training platforms", and encourage students to use modern information technology for online tutoring, remote intervention, resource integration and other services. Only through all-round digital transformation can we meet the diverse needs of future social work.

4. Conclusions

In the context of the profound changes in society by digital technology, social work education in China has entered a stage of rapid development, but it still faces many challenges. From the construction of the teaching staff to the design of the curriculum system to the practical teaching reform, how to improve the quality and effectiveness of social work education is still an urgent problem to be solved. By strengthening the construction of the teaching staff, deepening the reform of practical teaching, and promoting digital transformation, social work education can gradually improve the professional level. This transformation is not only related to the improvement of education quality, but also an inevitable choice to serve the modernization strategy of national governance, which will help social work better serve the needs of

society and cultivate a group of high-quality social workers with both professional theory and practical ability. The discussion in this study is insufficient, and on this basis, future research can further explore the influence mechanism of digital technology on professional values and the long-term mechanism of interdisciplinary talent training, so as to provide theoretical support for the construction of a social work education system with Chinese characteristics.

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